

HDFS 497H: FAMILY POLICY

Tues & Thurs 2:30 – 3:45

Fall 2007

Contact Information

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Office Location: 105R White Bldg

Office Hours: Tuesdays 4:00 – 5:00

Wednesdays 2:00 – 3:00

You read a newspaper article.

One group advocates one solution to a problem faced by families.

Another group advocates a very different solution.

Which one do you think is right?

How do you decide?

Course Description

This honors seminar is designed help students learn to think systematically about possible solutions to complex social problems. We will begin with an overview of social policy in the United States. You will learn an analytic framework that will help you ask intelligent questions and organize complex information as you think about possible ways to address social problems. We will apply this framework to a series of case studies that address contemporary debates on topics such as maternity leave, child care, income assistance, and marriage promotion. We will compare our policies to those of other industrialized countries. You will end the semester by conducting research on a social policy topic that we have not covered during the semester – from understanding the initial social problem all the way through to making a policy recommendation – to help you learn to independently explore a new topic.

Course Format

Class time will be used for lecture and discussion. This is a nice small class, allowing for ample participation from each student. You must complete all of the readings before class.

Course Requirements

Exam Sets: This course is designed to help you improve your writing and critical thinking skills. In place of a mid-term exam, you will write two exam sets. These exam sets will be in essay form (approximately 2 pages in length) and will require you to analyze a social problem or policy based on what you've learned. Exam sets will be take-home, so you have time to think about your answers and draw from the readings, handouts, and lecture notes.

Grading of exam sets: Exam sets will be graded on both content and style. Clear writing is an essential skill to develop during college and this class provides you with a good opportunity to hone your writing skills.

Purpose: These assignments are designed to help you improve your writing skills while learning and applying the course material. We will be working in class and through these assignments on skills such as structuring written responses, identifying the most relevant pieces of information to support an argument, and identifying valid sources of information.

Reflection Questions: At five different times during the semester you will write reflection questions. These will only be about a page in length. After doing the reading and looking back over your class notes

on a unit, you will write two or three questions that you have. For each question, you will write a paragraph providing some context: what are you curious about and why?

Grading of reflection questions: You will receive a grade of 0, 1, or 2 for each set of questions you submit. Scores are based primarily on whether you complete the assignment thoughtfully (3), complete it partially (1.5), or do not complete the assignment (0).

Purpose: These reflection questions will provide you with a chance to slow down and think about the material you have been reading and learning about in class. We are covering a lot of ground and I want you to have an opportunity to reflect on what you understand, what you don't understand, and what you wish you knew. These questions are also helpful for me as I plan discussions and lectures.

Cumulative Examination: There will be one cumulative take-home examination during the semester. The exam consists of a series of questions that will require from one to several paragraphs to answer. The exam provides an opportunity for you to systematically work with the material from readings, lectures and discussion. This "final" exam will be in late March, allowing you time to focus on the final paper for this course.

Grading of exam. Exams that are handed in late will be marked down one full letter grade for every 24 hours they are late.

Purpose: The take-home exam will test not only your understanding of the course material, but also important skills that we will work on in class such as reading tables, synthesizing information from multiple sources, and providing logical arguments to support your conclusions. It will also provide you with an opportunity step back and think about which policies you support and why.

Final Paper: We will spend the last few weeks of the semester working on a final project, which will culminate in a paper that will be due at the start of the exam week. Using the social policy framework outlined in the beginning of the semester, you will research and write a paper that defines a social problem, discusses possible causes of the problem, discusses possible policy solutions to the problem, and ultimately includes a policy recommendation. You will have homework assignments due each day during the final project period in order to keep you moving along on your research. Some of these assignments will be drafts of sections of your paper, allowing you to receive feedback before handing in the final version.

Grading of final paper assignments: The assignments are designed to keep you moving forward on your final projects. You will be graded on a scale of 0 – 2 for completing the work (0 = no assignment handed in, 1 = assignment only half complete, 2 = complete assignment). There will be seven final paper assignments; your grade will be calculated based on your top 5 scores.

Grading of final papers. Each section of your final paper will be graded separately then weighted according to the details provided in the final paper assignment packet. Due to the tight timeline between handing in final papers and the end of the semester, final papers that are up to 24 hours late will be marked down one full letter grade, final papers more than 24 hours late will not be accepted except in very extreme situations (e.g. hospitalization).

Purpose: When you graduate from college, particularly if you are working in the social service sector, you will frequently need to make difficult decisions about what the "best" thing to do is in a given situation. This project is designed to help you develop both writing and critical thinking skills that will facilitate that process.

Evaluation

10	Exam Set 1
15	Exam Set 2
15	Reflection Questions
25	Cumulative Exam
10	Final Paper Assignments
<u>25</u>	<u>Final Paper</u>
100	Total Points

Grading

A = 93 – 100
A- = 90-92
B+ = 87 – 89
B = 83 – 86
B- = 80 – 82
C+ = 77 – 79
C = 70 – 76
D = 60 – 69
F = 59 or lower

HDFS Departmental Policy on Student Responsibilities and Classroom Conduct*Student Responsibilities and Conduct*

- Students are responsible for attending all classes, taking notes, and obtaining other materials provided by the instructor, taking tests, and completing assignments as scheduled by the instructor.
 - Requests for taking exams or submitting assignments after the due dates require documentation of events such as illness, family emergency or a university sanctioned activity.
 - Conflicts with dates on which examinations or assignments are scheduled must be discussed with the instructor or TA prior to the date of the exam or assignment.
- Students are responsible for keeping track of changes in the course syllabus made by the instructor throughout the semester.
- Students are responsible for monitoring their grades.
- Students must contact the instructor as soon as possible if they anticipate missing multiple classes due to events such as chronic illnesses, travel related to team sports, or other university activities. The instructor will determine the minimal attendance and participation required in order to meet course responsibilities.
- If extra credit assignments are offered, they must be offered to all students and should not be used to boost the grade of an individual student.
- Behaviors that disrupt other students' learning are not acceptable (e.g., arriving consistently late for class; cell phone use, reading non-course related materials, or social conversation during class), and will be addressed by the instructor.

University Statement of Academic Integrity (Policy 49-20)

Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner. Academic integrity is a basic guiding principle for all academic activity at The Pennsylvania State University, and all members of the University community are expected to act in accordance with this principle. Consistent with this expectation, the University's Code of Conduct states that all students should act with personal integrity, respect other students' dignity, rights and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts. Academic integrity includes a commitment not to engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation or deception. Such acts of dishonesty violate the fundamental ethical principles of the University community and compromise the worth of work completed by others.

More detailed information about what constitutes cheating and the university policies for cheating are posted on [Angel](#) and detailed information about procedures and sanctions can be found under Academic Integrity at the website of the Office of Judicial Affairs: <http://www.sa.psu.edu/ja/conduct.shtml>

Additional Expectations and Policies for HDFS 497H

More on Academic Integrity: Academic integrity violations will be taken seriously in this class. In particular, students **may not** consult with other students after a take home examination or any written assignment has been distributed and before the assignment has been handed in. Any discussion of course

material or assignment content will constitute cheating. If students engage in sharing material (e.g. one student willingly allows another student to copy from his or her assignment or written work), BOTH students will receive the same disciplinary action. All cheating will result in the students failing the class. All infractions will be reported to the proper university authorities as outlined above.

Syllabus Changes: The syllabus represents my best estimate of when particular readings and assignments will be due. However I reserve the right to change the syllabus at any time if we need to spend more time on a particular topic, if guest speakers need to reschedule, or for any other reason. This flexibility allows me to respond to your needs, interests, and concerns as we go through the semester.

Absences: You are responsible for all material presented in class. There is not a textbook for this course, so it is especially important that all students attend class every day and take notes. If you miss class due to illness or other unavoidable issues, you are responsible for getting notes, handouts, and information about any announcements from a classmate. If necessary, contact the TA for announcements and handouts – note that the TA will not provide you with class notes.

Handouts and In-Class Material: Because there is not a textbook, I will frequently present tables and graphs in class and will either hand them out or post them on Angel. These documents will be necessary for your exams and papers, and you are responsible for keeping them. I would recommend starting a folder that you can put them in.

Late Assignments and Make-Up Exams: Assignments will be marked down **one letter grade** for **each 24 hour period** (including weekends) they are late. Exams and papers will only be accepted late and not marked down under extreme circumstances such as a documented medical or family emergency. See notes under particular assignments for specific policies pertaining to each.

Students with Disabilities: If you have a disability that requires special accommodations, please come see me during the first week of the semester by visiting my office hours or setting up a separate appointment so we can discuss ways to meet your needs.

ASK FOR HELP: My first priority is for you to learn the skills and information presented in this course. If you are having problems – not understanding the material, confused for any reason, having a hard time accessing the readings, or any other problems that interfere with your learning – **please let me know** by sending me an e-mail, stopping by my office hours, or scheduling a time to talk with me. Often there are simple changes that I can make to create a better learning experience, but I cannot make these changes if I do not know about the problems. While we will work hard to help you understand the material in this course, you are ultimately responsible for your education. So please help us to help you by letting us know early on if you are having problems.

Course Readings

Most of the readings are available on-line, but you should buy the following three books. They are paperbacks and are readily available through Amazon.com.

Books to Buy

Janet Gornick & Marcia Meyers. 2003. *Families that Work: Policies for Reconciling Parenthood and Employment*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Kathryn Edin & Maria Kefalas. 2005. *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Lee Rainwater & Timothy Smeeding. 2003. *Poor Kids in a Rich Country: America's Children in Comparative Perspective*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

COURSE OUTLINE

August 28 – Introduction

Background Information

August 30 – Framework for thinking about social policy questions and issues

Gillon, S. (2000). "Introduction: American exceptionalism and the promise of unintended consequences." In *That's not what we meant to do: Reform and its unintended consequences in twentieth-century America*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, pp. 17 – 41.

September 4 – Background information on social policy in the United States

Dye, T. (2002). "Policy analysis: What governments do, why they do it, and what difference it makes." In T. Dye, *Understanding public policy*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, pp.1-10.

Howard, C. (1997). *The Hidden Welfare State: Tax Expenditures and Social Policy in the United States*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 17 – 37.

September 6– Demographic changes in the American family influencing today's policy agenda

Available on-line through electronic journals. McLanahan, S. (2004). "Diverging destinies: How children are faring under the second demographic transition." *Demography*, 41, 607 – 627.

Reflection Questions Due (#1)

September 11 – Putting the US in Context

Gornick & Meyers, Chapter 3: "The United States in cross-national perspective: Are parents and children doing better elsewhere?" pp. 58 – 83.

Case Study # 1: Work & Family: Maternity Leave

September 13 –The basics of maternity leave and maternity leave policy in the U.S.

Available on Angel: Hynes, K. (2003). "What should we consider when assessing the impacts of maternity leave policies?" Bronfenbrenner Life Course Center Working Paper #03-03, pp. 1 – 21.

September 18 – Maternity leave policy options and their potential impacts

Available on Angel: Hynes, K. 2003. "What should we consider when assessing the impacts of maternity leave policies?" Bronfenbrenner Life Course Center Working Paper #03-03, pp. 21 – 34.

Reflection Questions Due (#2)

September 20 –International Comparisons

Gornick & Meyers. "Ensuring time to care during the early years: Family Leave Policy", pp. 121 – 146.

Case Study # 2: Work & Family: Child Care

September 25 – Child care use and its impacts on child development

Reading available on-line at www.futureofchildren.org

Phillips, D. & Adams, G. (2001). "Child care and our youngest children." *Future of Children*, 11: 35–51.

Exam Set 1 Due

September 27 – The basics of the U.S. child care system and child care policy

Reading available on-line at <http://waysandmeans.house.gov/Documents.asp?section=813>

Committee on Ways and Means. (2004). *Greenbook*. Chapter 9: Child Care. pp. 15 – 22, and 26 - 40.

October 2 – Child care policy options and their potential impacts

Reading available through on-line journal. Gormley, W. (2007). “Early childhood care and education: Lessons and puzzles.” *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 26, 633 – 671.

Reflection Questions Due (#3)

October 4 – International Comparisons

Gornick & Meyers, Chapter 7, “Providing public care: Child care, preschool, and public schooling.” Pp. 185 – 235.

Case Study # 3: Income Assistance

October 9 – Overview of Welfare Policy and Welfare Reform

Edin & Kefalas. Pp. 1 – 70.

Exam Set #2 Due

In Class Handout: http://www.nccp.org/media/cpt06a_text.pdf

National Center for Children in Poverty. “Who are America’s Poor Children?” Fact Sheet #2, Sept 2005.

Supplemental resource for welfare facts: available on-line at

<http://waysandmeans.house.gov/Documents.asp?section=813>

Committee on Ways and Means. (2004). *Greenbook*. Chapter 7: Temporary Assistance to Needy Families.

October 11 – Guest Lecture: Karen Peetz, Alumni Fellow and senior executive vice president at The Bank of New York Mellon

Edin & Kefalas, pp. 71 – 167.

October 16 – Consequences of Welfare Reform

Reading available on-line through library catalog. Nathan, R (Ed). (2007). “Welfare reform after ten years: Strengths and Weaknesses.” *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 26, 369 – 385.

Reading available on-line at <http://www.rand.org/publications/randreview/issues/rr.12.02/benefits.html>

Grogger, J., Karoly, L., & Klerman, J. “Conflicting Benefits: Trade-Offs in Welfare Reform”

October 18 – Beyond TANF: Supports for low-income families – Minimum wage policy and the Earned Income Tax Credit

Edin & Kefalas, pp. 168 – 220.

IN CLASS HANDOUT http://www.epinet.org/content.cfm/issueguides_minwage_minwagefacts

Economic Policy Institute. “Minimum Wage: Facts at a Glance.” March 2005.

October 23 – Marriage Promotion

Cherlin, A. (2003). “Should the Government Promote Marriage.” *Contexts*, 2(4). Available on-line at

http://www.contextsmagazine.org/content_sample_v2-4.php

IN CLASS HAND OUT Mathematica. (2005). “What We Know About Unmarried Parents: Implications for Building Strong Families Programs.” *Mathematica In Brief*. Available on-line at

<http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/PDFs/bsfisbr3.pdf>

Reflection Questions Due (#4)

October 25 – International Comparison

Rainwater & Smeeding. Read pp. 17 – 22 and 68 – 108, skim pp. 109 – 131.

Case Study # 4: Retirement: Social Security and Medicare

October 30 – The Future of Social Security and Medicare

Social Security Administration. (2005). “Understanding the Benefits.” Available on-line at <http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/10024.pdf>

Reading available on-line at <http://www.ssab.gov/documents/WhyActionShouldbeTakenSoon.pdf>
Social Security Advisory Board. (2001). “Why action should be taken soon.” Read pages 1 – 19.

November 1 – Policy Strategies for Reforming Social Security

Reading available on-line at <http://www.ssab.gov/documents/WhyActionShouldbeTakenSoon.pdf>
Social Security Advisory Board. (2001). “Why action should be taken soon.” Read pages 20 – 39.

Reflection Questions Due (#5)

Handing out Cumulative Exam

November 6 – Introduction to final paper project

Cumulative Exam Due

Case Study # 5: Final Paper Work Days

The remainder of the semester will be spent working on a final paper. There will be assignments due in class each day that will prepare you for your final papers and you will hand in draft sections of your final paper as outlined below. Class will meet on each day, instruction will be on-going, and attendance is required. I will hand out a more detailed plan for the final paper work days as we get closer. But below are due dates for particular assignments, to help you with planning.

November 8

November 13

November 15

November 19 – 21 THANKSGIVING BREAK – NO CLASSES

November 27 – Draft of sections 1 & 2 due

November 29

December 4 – Draft of sections 3 & 4 due

December 6

December 11 – Draft of sections 5 & 6 due

December 13

December 17: Final papers are due by 4:00 pm.