

## **Columbia University School of Social Work**

### **T6801: Social Welfare Policy Fall 2004**

#### **Common Core Course Outline: Course Description, Objectives and Major Content Themes**

##### **Course Description**

The policy foundation course is designed to meet a series of objectives. It is central to students' preparation as social workers and provides a critical context for education as social work practitioners. The overarching goals of this course are that students learn about the major social policies and programs that affect people's well-being or quality of life and various aspects of social service delivery; understand the ways in which direct social work practice enacts social policies and is shaped by them; and develop beginning expertise in understanding social policy content and the skills needed to influence social policy.

##### **Course Objectives:**

T6801 has the following educational objectives:

1. To develop students' understanding and a critical view of the "social sector" in the U.S. (non-market transfers, goods, and services distributed by "other-than-market" criteria). The welfare state concept and the economic, social, and political context of the U.S. are examined.
2. To help place students' practice experience in a broader policy context ("practice enacts policy").
3. To provide essential information and understanding relevant to the immediate needs of clients about the resources available to meet them.
4. To create awareness of field-specific and more general policy issues and choices relevant to the broader policy actions of agencies, professional associations, and political bodies.
5. To provide an introductory experience for students who will become professionally active in one or more policy fields as analysts, advocates, planners, or administrators.
6. To provide a foundation in—and a point of departure for—field of practice platform courses.
7. To offer perspectives on the role of the social work profession within the social sector.
8. To provide basic historical, intellectual and cross-national perspectives on current U.S. social policy issues.
9. By providing the above, to prepare students to practice more effectively.

## Major content themes

The major content themes of T6801 include:

1. **The social work profession:** history, mission, philosophy, and methods.
2. **Overview of the “social sector” in the U.S.:** concepts and definitions, human service systems, composition of and trends in public social expenditures, selected historical trends and comparisons, selected cross-national trends and comparisons, and criteria for assessing outcomes.
3. **Targets of social policy:** social problems (e.g. poverty and inequality, unemployment, domestic violence, homelessness) and populations at risk (e.g. the aged, children, women, people of color, gay men, lesbians, persons who are disabled).
4. **Organization and structure of social policies** (including federalism, public and private sector roles).
5. **Major social policies and programs.**

**Income transfer/income maintenance:** the social insurance programs (OASDI, UI), public assistance, food stamps, tax benefits, employer fringe benefits.

**Health policy and programs:** Medicare, Medicaid, maternal and child health, private health insurance.

**The personal social services** of particular interest to social work: categorical and non-categorical services for the aged, children and their families, the disabled, etc.

**Introductory overview of three other systems:** employment, housing and education.