...it is, as it always has been, the daily lives of women which most directly absorb the shocks and contradictions of these mean yet widely disparate times. What women do, when they do what is most expected of them as women, is not something best organized according to the dictates of profit or capitalist market relations. Therein lies the radical potential of feminism as an oppositional politics: one which dares to fight a culture and a political system which tries to numb us into acceptance that it can fulfill our needs and desires.

Why feminism? Because a feminism which is serious about the potential and obstacles to political change, and which knows that we are never outside either the personal or the cultural, still has something unique - if hardly ‘new’ - to offer. Part of that offering should be an understanding of the complexity of subjectivity, and the significance of presentation, not to mention the difficulty of arguing for a socialist economics in the present climate. The special legacy of feminism lies in its striving to keep relating the personal and cultural to the economic and political, however forbidding and precarious that enterprise may be.

Why feminism? Because it’s most radical goal, both personal and collective, has yet to be realized: a world which is a better place not just for some women, but for all women.

-Excerpted from *Why Feminism?* by Lynne Segal

**Course Description**

The welfare state is often conceptualized as a state committed to modifying the play of social or market forces in order to achieve greater equality: in the broadest sense, a collection of programs designed to enhance and advance human well-being. Among the programs offered are social insurance and assistance programs that provide income protection and supportive services to persons experiencing unemployment, retirement, disability, ill health, death of a family breadwinner, or poverty as well as programs of education, housing, nutrition, and health. Not all state interventions, however, are aimed at, or actually produce, greater equality among citizens.

This course explores the gender bias of social welfare policy in the US, revealing a welfare state whose adherence to central elements such as the Protestant work ethic, "family values", and a laissez-faire economy excludes over half the population. Programs established under the presumption that they secure protection for and maximize independence of women (and men) instead reflect the gender regulatory
functions of the welfare state which exacerbate women's dependent status. From both historical and theoretical perspectives, the course examines the emergence and development of the American welfare state and assesses its impact on women's lives. Policies such as Social Security and TANF (welfare) are examined as are policies focused on education and employment and work.

The course is interdisciplinary, relying on ideas and perspectives from the fields of philosophy, political science, economics, sociology, women's studies, geography, history, education and law. It critically evaluates dominant models of social welfare benefits distribution, discriminatory sexual divisions of labor in the family and in the labor market, notions of citizenship and current "obligations" required for participation and access to rights, debates about maternalism and paternalism in welfare provision, and the demographics of poverty which are notably high among women and people of color. Particular attention is paid to issues of gender, race, and class.

Prerequisites: SOC 100 and 210e, Junior/senior standing or permission of instructor.

Targeted audience: Upper level Sociology majors as well as Social Work (undergraduate and graduate), Women's Studies (undergraduate and graduate), Political Science, and Economics majors.

Note: This course has been previously taught as: SWO 456 and SOC 380
It is also cross-listed as WST 365.

Required Texts

The following text is available at the USM Bookstore in Portland:

Readings cited in the syllabus will be available on Blackboard
Other readings may be handed out in class
Regular reading of a U.S. newspaper, print or online: *New York Times, Boston Globe, Washington Post*

Course Credit

This three-credit course fulfills the Class and Inequality requirement for Sociology majors.

Course Policies

Assignment Due Dates. It is my expectation that papers will be passed in on the date on which they are due. Unexcused late work will not receive full credit: for each day an assignment is late, it will be reduced by one grade level (i.e. B to B-). You must complete and hand in all written assignments to receive a grade in this course. Please make sure that you keep a hard copy of all of your work.
University Policies

Plagiarism. Plagiarism is sufficient grounds for course failure. See the USM Navigator for a definition of plagiarism.

ADA. If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please make an appointment with your instructor or the Office of Academic Support for Students with Disabilities as soon as possible. Their number is 780-4706.

University Email policy: Beginning this fall, it is imperative that students understand that most University information will be sent to them only via their University assigned e-mail account (student assigned e-mail accounts will be in the form of firstname.lastname@maine.edu). Confidential information will continue to be sent using traditional mail. Students should activate their assigned e-mail account at https://mail.maine.edu.

For assistance in activating your University Account, go on-line to http://www.usm.maine.edu/computing/networking/unet.jsp, or visit the HelpDesk location in 144 Luther Bonney Hall, Portland (780-4029, or Helpdesk@usm.maine.edu). Any help resetting confidential passwords and account activation must be done in person with a current USM I.D. The complete E-mail Communication Policy is on line at http://usm.maine.edu/doit/email_communication.html.

Course Instructional Methods

I will use a variety of tools to investigate and explore gender bias in social welfare policies. These tools may include films/documentaries, guest lectures, student presentations, and group activities. Readings provide the background for centering the discussions and examination of social welfare policies that have discriminated and continue to discriminate on the basis of gender, race, and class. We will devote a significant amount of class time to discussing them. In-class discussions are expected to be substantive and exploratory. Students may work in small groups to formulate responses to questions raised by the readings. Students should be able to contribute thoughtfully in class discussions. Timely completion of required reading and writing assignments is important. Regular participation in class discussion is expected.

Conduct of the Class

This is a course for serious students willing to grapple with the complex, intellectually challenging and intensely interesting field of social welfare policy. The issues we discuss have major implications for the overall quality of life in this society.

We can all learn a great deal if we are clear about and faithful to our respective responsibilities for the successful conduct of this course. Careful preparation for class
is your responsibility. My responsibility is to assist you to make the best use of class time. I shall try to avoid unnecessary repetition of what you are perfectly capable of reading and understanding. The class will be conducted with the expectation that you have read the material, thought about it, and are prepared to raise questions to clarify what you don't understand as well as to contribute to our collective effort to think through the significance of the ideas presented in the assigned reading. I shall try to help you (a) clarify what you do not understand, (b) encourage you to explore more deeply the significance of key ideas, and (c) supplement your reading with related material.

Grading

Grading Schema:
Class attendance and participation, includes:
- Individual Assessment of Class Participation 25%
- Insight/Reaction Papers 25%
- In-class Facilitation of article, as assigned 20%
- Final Paper 30%

NOTE: You will receive a grade for this course only if you complete all of the above requirements.

Course Requirements

Class attendance and participation/preparation, includes
- Individual Assessment of Class Participation
- Insight/Reaction Papers (10)
- Class facilitation
- Research Paper

Class Attendance: You are expected to attend all classes; failure to attend regularly will result in a grade reduction. Students who miss more than 2 classes will be expected to meet with me immediately to discuss their absences. On the basis of this discussion, the student may be asked to drop the course. Students with more than 3 unexcused absences* over the course of the semester will automatically fail the course.
[*Excused absences are those absences which have been discussed with and approved by me prior to your absence from the class.]

Class Participation and Preparation: Adequate class participation requires that you discuss your understanding and interpretation of assigned readings; raise questions about the readings and ideas raised in class; present and examine your point of view about ideas under discussion; and respond to points of view expressed by the instructor and students in the class.
Adequate preparation for this course requires setting aside adequate time each week for reading and thinking about assigned material and formulating questions for class discussion. Careful preparation for class is your responsibility. The class will be conducted with the expectation that you have read assigned material, thought about it, and are prepared to raise questions to clarify what you don’t understand. You will also be expected to contribute to our collective effort to think through the significance of the ideas presented in the assigned reading.

Participation and preparation will be evaluated on the basis of regular attendance, demonstrated knowledge, insights, analytic ability, and interpersonal skills. In addition to attendance, grades for participation are based on asking questions, sharing experiences, actively participating in class and small group discussions, and giving respectful feedback to others during class. Merely being present in/for class will not ensure credit toward the final grade; participation means demonstrating personal and professional engagement in the learning process: it means reading in advance of class and devoting some time to critical reflection. Your primary goal should not be to simply to complete the reading assignments but to engage them in conversation.

Courtesy about punctuality is also important: students who arrive late to class may be asked to leave and as such will be counted as absent for the day.

Grading Rubric: I will utilize the rubric below in determining your grade for this component of the class. You will also be required to thoughtfully assess your participation and preparation using this rubric, responding to each of the criteria listed under the grade that you have assigned yourself.  

See also: Principles for Seminar Discussion, adapted directly from Erik Olin Wright (at end of syllabus)
DUE: December 12th

An “A” student

- proactively contributes to class by offering ideas, examples, comments about the readings, and/or asking questions during class;
- listens when others talk, both in class and in small group meetings;
- builds off the ideas of others or clarifies what others have said;
- is alert and respectful, thinks before speaking and does not ramble or offer tangential comments; and
- is prepared for class, has read assigned material and relates comments to it.

A-level work displays excellent reasoning and problem solving within and works consistently at a high level of intellectual excellence.

A “B” student

- proactively contributes to class by offering ideas, making comments about the readings, and asking questions during class;
- is respectful, listens when others talk, both in groups and in class;
- is usually prepared for class and assignments; and
• offers comments that are informed but not always carefully thought through.

B-level work displays sound reasoning and problem solving with and works consistently at a competent level of intellectual performance.

A “C” student  
• sometimes raises questions and issues;  
• sometimes analyzes questions and problems clearly and precisely;  
• lacks depth in considering relevant competing points of view;  
• is not sensitive to important implications and consequences;  
• is often not well prepared for class; and  
• does not demonstrate a clear commitment to reason carefully from clearly stated premises in a subject.

C-level work displays inconsistent reasoning and problem solving and works, at best, at a competent level of intellectual performance.

A “D” student  
• rarely contributes to class by offering ideas and asking questions, or alternatively, may dominate the conversation;  
• rarely analyzes questions and problems with appropriate depth or detail;  
• does not demonstrate an understanding of key concepts or of relevant competing points of view;  
• is rarely prepared for class; and  
• often makes spontaneous and uninformed comments.

The D-level student is insensitive to important implications and consequences. D-level work displays poor reasoning and problem solving within a field and works, at best, at a low level of intellectual performance.

A Failing student  
• never contributes to class by making comments or asking questions;  
• does not listen when others talk;  
• often interrupts when others speak; and  
• is not prepared for class.

The F-level student is oblivious to important implications and consequences. F-level work displays incompetent reasoning and incompetent problem solving within a field and consistently poor intellectual performance.

Please also review the appended “Principles for Seminar Discussion”.

**Insight/Reaction Papers:** These are short insight/reaction papers of 1 to 2 pages each on the set of readings for each week of class. In this paper you should provide a concise summary of the key points of each reading, and/or set of readings, and raise 3 substantive questions for discussion which we can use in class. Try and integrate the
readings as the course progresses – how do they compliment or play off each other – rather than just writing a summary of each. The insight/reaction paper will provide you with an opportunity to think more carefully about the readings and enable you to actively participate in the discussion of them as well as enrich and “push” the dialogue. These will be graded with check pluses, checks, and check minuses.

DUE: Each class beginning September 10th

Class Facilitation
This assignment requires that you take on a leadership role in the classroom. You have been assigned a reading from one of the weeks in this course. It will be your responsibility to facilitate a discussion of this reading among your fellow classmates and me. To prepare for this you should read the article thoroughly at least a couple of times. Identify the topic of the article and provide a brief synopsis of the reading, specify the key points/issues raised by the author(s), the conclusions she/he/they reach, and the evidence they use to link the issue with the conclusion. Discuss the substance of the evidence, the logic of the presentation and conclusion, build on previous readings, think about the implications that emerge, consider alternative interpretations of the reading. Please also feel free to incorporate issues of contemporary concern into your discussion. Develop at least three substantive questions that will enable us to explore the topic in more depth, questions that will enrich our conversation.

(See also Class Facilitation Grading Rubric at end of syllabus.)

Note: If you miss your presentation, you will receive an F.

DUE: As assigned

Research Paper:
The purpose of this assignment is to explore a U.S. social welfare policy in depth and reveal the implications of the policy on/for women. The paper requires a historical overview of the policy; a discussion of the target population, the demographics (who benefits, eligibility criteria, etc); a discussion of ideological and values that are the basis of/inherent in the policy; an analysis (feminist) of the policy in light of its intent - a substantive discussion of the implications of the policy in regard to gender, race, and class; and consideration of alternative approaches that might better embrace a social justice perspective, or affirmation as to why and how the policy is working to attain its goal.

Outline with introductory statement and preliminary Bibliography

DUE: October 8th, 2008

Final Paper DUE: December 12th, 2008

More complete details at end of syllabus.
Course Outline

It is incumbent on those who would improve society to defend the dimension of the possible against all the forces that work to flatten what could be into the single dimension of what is. Things don’t have to be the way they are. Human nature is not so stingy as to permit only minor variations on oppressive themes. The set of possible human worlds is not one-dimensional or limited to the way we live today. It is important to keep thinking and talking about more desirable visions, and to keep refining what we want. And it is important to keep analyzing what will get it and what will not. There is no other way to “keep the dream alive.” Because if the dream dies, there is nothing.

-Excerpted from Stop the Killing Train

WEEK 1
September 3  Introduction
Course Overview
Video: “It Was a Wonderful Life”

WEEK 2
September 10  The Idea of a Welfare State:
Dimensions of the Welfare State
Dominant Models of Distribution
Assignment: The Idea of the Welfare State
Noble, “The Problem”
“Public Social Welfare Expenditures”

WEEK 3
September 17  Gender and the Welfare State: Family Ethic, Care Ethic
Assignment: Abramovitz, Chapter 1
Mettler, “Divided Citizens”
Sapiro, “The Gender Bias of American Social Policy”

WEEK 4
September 24  Establishing Policy: Family Ethic in Colonial Times
Assignment: Abramovitz, Chapters 2 and 3

WEEK 5
October 1  Establishing Policy: Family Ethic in the Industrial Era
Assignment: Abramovitz, Chapters 4 and 5

WEEK 6
October 8  Establishing Policy: Family Ethic in the 20th Century
Assignment: Abramovitz, Chapters 6 and 7

WEEK 7
October 15  Old Age Assistance: Gender and Race
Assignment: Abramovitz, Chapter 8
IWPR, “Six Keys Facts on Women and Social Security”
Rockeymoore, “Social Security and Black Families”
Herd, “Reforming a Bread Winner State: Race, Class, and Social Security”
Mettler, “The Stratification of Social Citizenship: Gender and Federalism in the Formation Of Old Age Insurance and Aid to Dependent Children”

WEEK 8
October 22

**Income Support for Female-Headed Households**

**Assignment:** Abramovitz, Chapter 10
Christopher, “A ‘Pauperization of Motherhood’? Single Motherhood and Women’s Poverty Over Time”
Mettler, “State’s Rights, Women’s Obligations: Contemporary Welfare Reform in Historical Perspective”
“Untangling the Stigma of Welfare, Welfare in Maine” – A Report

WEEK 9
October 29

**Income Support for Female-Headed Households (cont)**

**Assignment:** “Wheels versus Welfare”
“Single Moms’ Poverty Spikes After Welfare Overhaul”
“Mixed Marks for Montana”

**Video:** “Ending Welfare as We Know It”

WEEK 10
November 5

No Class

WEEK 11
November 12

**The State of Women: From the 20th into the 21st Century**

**Assignment:** Abramovitz, Chapter 11
Katz, et al, “Women and the Paradox of Economic Inequality in the 20th Century”
Pay Equity: Congressional Hearings, 2007 History of the Struggle for Pay Equity”
Gatta, “Gender Gap in Pay”
“Women are now equal as victims of poor economy”

WEEK 12
November 19

Women and Citizenship
Assignment: Kessler-Harris, “In Pursuit of Economic Citizenship”
“Why women in Washington County are dying too young”

WEEK 13
November 26
Thanksgiving

WEEK 14
December 3
No Class

WEEK 15
December 10
Equity and Equality?: Getting There
Assignment: Abramovitz, Conclusion, pages 391-397
IWPR, “The Best and Worst State Economies for Women”
Orloff, “Gender in the Welfare State”

December 17th will be a make-up day if we need it.
GRADING RUBRIC FOR CLASS PRESENTATIONS

[ 5 = Excellent, 1 = Poor, not at all]

How well did the presenter begin the presentation/frame the issue and discussion?

5      4            3                2                  1

How clear and well organized was the presentation?

5      4            3                2                  1

To what extent did the presentation demonstrate depth, fullness, and complexity?

5      4            3                2                  1

How well did the presenter hold the attention of the audience?

5      4            3                2                  1

How well prepared did the presenter seem to be?

5      4            3                2                  1

How well did the presenter integrate the presentation into/with the topic under discussion?

5      4            3                2                  1

How well did the presenter conclude the presentation?

5      4            3                2                  1

Total Points ____________________________ Grade__________

Comments:
Principles for Seminar Discussion, Adapted directly from Erik Olin Wright:

The following guidelines are intended to facilitate seminar discussions. Some of them may sound obvious, but past experience makes it clear that they need to be made explicit.

Preparation for Seminar Discussions: (a) Always come to the seminar discussion with at least one question written down. These questions do not need to be grandiose or profound -- they can deal with issues of clarification, meaning, interpretation, or reflect something you don't understand. The point is to enter the discussion with something you'd like to learn from it. (b) For each reading, write a paragraph that reviews the major themes of the article/book, what you think the "punchline" is, and your thoughts on reading this piece. If you do this diligently, you will be well-prepared a lifetime of scholarship and (c) above all: do the reading carefully.

Readings: Discussions should revolve around the week's readings, rather than the larger topic or something that one or more students find interesting. There can be a tendency in seminars toward a "bull session" about the topic that is not informed by the readings. This can be in part because students are rushed and don't find the time to complete the readings before class, but when this happens, the interaction crucial to a seminar simply can't occur. In this course, the issues raised and problems analyzed will center on the assigned texts.

Comments & Brevity: Not every comment needs to be earth-shattering or brilliant. One of the reasons that students can feel intimidated in seminars is because it seems that the stakes are high, and the only legitimate comments are those that show complete mastery of the subject matter. There are several general rules about comments that should facilitate broader participation: (1) Every comment that reflects an attempt to engage the material seriously is valuable; simple questions often turn out to be the most difficult to answer; and (2) asking for clarification of readings or previous comments are as appropriate as substantive comments. In addition, comments should be kept short and to the point. It's always possible to add elaboration as necessary.

Listening & Equity: In a good seminar, comments from different participants are linked one to another. A given point is followed up, and the discussion has continuity. In some seminar discussions, however, comments become disconnected, because participants are not listening to each other and reflecting on what is actually being said. For this class, we should attempt to maintain continuity in our comments and discussion. In addition, while we should acknowledge that different exposures to the material and different personalities lead to different levels of active participation, it should be our collective goal to have as equitable participation as possible.

Arguments, Competitiveness, Consensus: Despite the emphasis on equity, our seminar discussions are meant to expose theoretical debates. We won't all agree on a given issue. However, arguments and debates must at all times be grounded on respect for the other participants. Aggressiveness and competitiveness are simply not acceptable. While we won't usually reach consensus, we should pursue "cooperative conflict": theoretical advance that comes out of constructive but not antagonistic conflict.

The Right Answer: By now, most students realize that for the most part "right" answers are few and far between. This is why theoretical debates exist. The theoretical approach that a person takes may clearly influence her/his interpretation of even specific empirical evidence. As long as a student is willing to debate her/his position and can provide a clear justification for the position s/he takes, s/he is fulfilling the requirements of the class. Trying to discover what the instructor "thinks" about a subject is frequently beside the point, and it almost certainly will not provide the "right" answer to a question.

Discussion Leading: In order for discussions to have continuity, equity, and the other dynamics mentioned above, it is necessary that the discussion leader take a strong role. The discussion leader needs to have the ability to tell someone to hold off a point that doesn't relate to the current discussion, cut rambling points short, etc. However, seminar participants have the responsibility of letting the leader know when too much monitoring is going on.

Collective Self-Evaluation: The success of a seminar is a collective responsibility of all participants. Professors cannot waive magic wands to promote intellectually productive settings. It is essential that we treat the seminar as something under our collective control, and something that can be challenged and transformed. Any problems should be dealt with through open discussions. We can work together to make the seminar exactly what we hope it will be.
Research Paper

The purpose of this assignment is to explore a U.S. social welfare policy in depth and reveal the implications of the policy on/for women. The paper requires a historical overview of the policy; a discussion of the target population, the demographics (who benefits, eligibility criteria, etc); a discussion of ideological and values that are the basis of/inherent in the policy; an analysis (feminist) of the policy in light of its intent - a substantive discussion of the implications of the policy in regard to gender, race, and class; and consideration of alternative approaches that might better embrace a social justice perspective, or affirmation as to why and how the policy is working to attain its goal.

The paper has 5 parts:

1) an identification and discussion of a social policy and a brief historical overview of the policy. Include in your discussion an explanation of how this social policy affects or impacts women as well as society as a whole. In your historical review, examine and discuss the development of the social policy, pursue why it was developed and to what issues or problems it was responding, and identify what it was intended to accomplish;

2) a description/discussion (including statistical descriptors) of the demographics of the target population including who benefits and under what conditions (eligibility criteria) and for how long (time, age limits;

3) a discussion of ideological and values that underpin this social policy. If there are specific political influences, discuss them;

4) an analysis of the policy in light of its stated intent: a substantive discussion of the implications of the policy in regard to gender, race and class. Does the policy “do” what it intended to? If not, why? If so, how well?; and

5) the consideration and presentation of alternative approaches that might better embrace a social justice perspective, or affirmation that the policy is working to attain its goal: What approaches or solutions might better embrace a social justice perspective? If the policy is working to attain its goal, discuss how and why. In this section you should pay particular attention to how this policy is working (or not) to advance women within society.

Format for written assignment

- The paper should be between 10 and 15 pages in length and must have an outline appended as well as a properly formatted bibliography.
- The paper must be computer-printed/generated on white paper, double-spaced, paginated, with one-inch margins, in a 12 point font, and free of grammatical and spelling errors.
- Footnotes/endnotes and Bibliography must conform to either ASA (American Sociological Association) or APA style.
• In assessing your written work, attention will be given to what you say and how you say it: style, grammar, organization, presentation, and content. Work that is not acceptable may be returned.

Cautions: Be careful in your use of online resources

Suggested areas of investigation:

Employment and Work: Pay Equity, wage gap
Family Medical Leave, Parental Leave, Sick Leave
Unemployment Insurance
Retirement, Social Security, Insurance, Pensions

Health: Birth Control/Contraception
Reproduction
Sterilization

Family: Child Care
Income Assistance: Welfare
Battered Women/Domestic Violence
Nutrition/Hunger/Food Stamps

Other: Housing
Child Support
Education

More Specific:
Challenges of securing safe, affordable housing for women – either living on their own or with children: home ownership or rental
Historical overview of the YWCA as it provided women with transitional Housing
TANF: Best practices (survey of state programs) for women with multiple barriers such as: domestic violence victims
children with disabilities
disabilities but not legally defined as disabled – do not meet federal definition of disabled (might include those with conditions such as chronic depression, etc)
age
Importance of support services (child care, health care) in enabling women to secure and sustain work – the notion that work and support services go hand-in-hand
Challenges of the low-wage labor market for women, women heading families
Public opinion on women working outside the home, low-income women, programs for those who cannot support themselves