Public Policy and the Family – HDFS 274- Fall 2007

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Course Description

Course Description: This course is a general survey of government programs and policies that affect families. First, we will place family policy within the broader historical context of American social policy. Why is the United States often referred to as the “reluctant welfare state?” Next, we will examine some of the major family issues that are currently being debated. What are the issues and why are certain groups and individuals on one side or the other on important policy questions? Finally, we will examine one case in particular, the development of family leave policy, and conclude the course by comparing U.S family policy to other countries. How should the United States address family issues and what lessons, if any, can be learned from other countries with respect to this topic?

Important: This course is being offered as a VISTA/WebCT course. You need to go to http://webct.uconn.edu to login.

Course Objectives: The objectives of the course can be presented in the form of five (5) basic questions.

1. Why doesn’t the United States have a formal family policy?
2. What are the major policies and programs (both direct and indirect) that have been proposed or adopted to meet the needs of families?
3. What major issues are being raised in the current debate over family policy?
4. Where should we draw the line between what the family is expected to do and what the government (federal, state, or local) is obligated to do?
5. What does the future hold for family policy in the United States?

Required Readings: There are no books required for this course. All required readings will either be posted on the course’s Vista website or you will be referred directly to the web.

Note: Readings posted on Electronic Course Reserve (see Vista site) are identified on the syllabus as ECR. All other readings are accessible via the links provided in the syllabus.

Assignments and Evaluation:

There will be three (3) exams, including the final, for this course. The exams will count 80% of the final grade. A short paper, class participation, including active engagement and regular attendance, will count for the remaining 20% of the final grade. I take attendance for each class.
**Class Schedule and Reading Assignments**

**Week 1 - August 28th  Aug. 30th** - Course Preview and Distribution of Syllabus. Review of course requirements, grading system, and learning materials. Overview of public policy as a discipline and family policy as a specialty.

Questions: What is public policy? What is family policy?


APPAM – Association of Public Policy Analysis and Management. This is the primary organization for those who study or work in public policy. For information on careers and education in public policy go to [http://www.publicservicecareers.org/](http://www.publicservicecareers.org/) and then explore three areas on the horizontal menu: “Career Advice,” “Why Public Service?” and “Degrees.”

"Guide to Careers in Child and Family Policy" - Go to the web site [www.igpa.uillinois.edu/cfp](http://www.igpa.uillinois.edu/cfp). Click on "Search and Browse” on left, and then explore at will, looking for a grad program, an internship, or a job.

**Week 2 - Sept. 4th and Sept. 6th** – American Political Culture

Questions: What are the key characteristics of American political culture? How does our political culture differ from other nations?


Visit/read: [http://www.socialstudieshelp.com/APGOV_Political%20Culture.htm](http://www.socialstudieshelp.com/APGOV_Political%20Culture.htm)

**Week 3 - Sept. 11th and 13th** - Making Sense of American Government

Questions: How is our government structured? How does it work?

Visit/read: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_the_United_States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_the_United_States)

Reading: “How our system of government works” S. Wisensale (to be e-mailed)
Week 4 – Sept. 18th and 20th - The Politics of the Family

Questions: What is the political history of U.S. family policy? Why are discussions about families so politically charged?


Case: Wisensale, S. "Family as Ground Zero in the Culture Wars" (ECR)

Week 5 – Sept. 25th and 27th – Changing Family Demographics

Questions: What are the major demographic trends in family life? What are the policy implications of these trends?


Visit/read: http://www.prcdc.org/summaries/family/family.html

Visit/read: http://www.hoover.org/publications/digest/3020821.html

Week 6 – Oct. 2nd and 4th – The Politics of Marriage  (Exam #1 on Oct. 4th)

Questions: Should government promote marriage? Should government prevent same-sex marriage?


Visit/read: http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=900712&renderforprint=1

Note: Be sure to complete the reading on the next page for this week also.

Week 7 - October 9th and 11th - Children and Family Policy

Questions: Does the village or do the parents raise a child?
How can family policy address children’s issues?

Readings: National Summit on America’s Children – May 22, 2007

Visit and read: http://speaker.gov/issues?id=0032
Play the video and then scroll down and click on “Legislative Priorities: Addressing the Needs of Young Children in the 110th Congress.” Read all proposals.

Child Care Policy (refer to link below)

Visit and read: http://www.policyalmanac.org/social_welfare/childcare.shtml

U.S. Child Care Policy (see link below)
http://zfacts.com/p/712.html

Early Education: An International Comparison (see link below)
Be sure to click on the item at bottom: England and France
http://zfacts.com/p/717.html


Week 8 – Oct. 16th and 18th – Youth Policy within the Context of Family Policy

Questions: What is America’s policy on youth?
When do rights of parents and youth, conflict with the responsibility of government?

http://www.jimcaseyouth.org/docs/youthpolicy_in_us.pdf

Note: The other assignment for this week is on the next page
The HPV Debate: A News Hour broadcast on Public Broadcasting

Click on the link below, watch the video, and form an opinion. You may watch the video, listen to audio or read the transcript.

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/health/jan-june07/vaccine_02-27.html

Week 9 – Oct. 23rd and 25th – Aging Issues and the Family

Questions: What are the policy implications of an aging society? How are families affected by an aging society?


“You Valuing the Invaluable: A New Look at the Economic Value of Family Caregivers.” (AARP Public Policy Institute)

http://assets.aarp.org/rgcenter/il/ib82_caregiving.pdf

Week 10 – Oct. 30th and Nov. 1st – The Economic Aspects of Family Life

Questions: What is the economic status of America’s families? How does economic policy affect families?

Readings:


Alan Greenblatt, “Upward Mobility.” In Controversial Issues for Debate in Public Policy, (Chapt. 5) pp. 95-117. (ECR)

Case: "The GI Bill as Family Policy" - Visit and read web sites below.

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/military/july-dec00/gibill_7-4.html

Week 11 – Nov. 6th and 8th – Poverty and Low Income Families (Exam 2 on 8th)

Questions: What are the causes of, and solutions to, poverty in the U.S.? Who are the working poor and what policies are geared to them?


http://www.clasp.org/publications/targetingpovertytakingaimatabullseye10_06.pdf


“Book Conversation: The Working Poor” (2004). The News Hour, PBS TV broadcast, April 1, 2004 (Watch video and/or read transcript)


http://www.epinet.org/content.cfm/issueguides_minwage_minwagefaq


http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earned_income_tax_credit

Week 12 - Nov. 13\textsuperscript{th} – Nov. 15\textsuperscript{th} – Balancing Work and Family Life

Questions: Are employers insensitive to the family needs of workers?
Are family responsibilities balanced in the household?
What is government’s role in addressing such questions?

Note: Be sure to read all 9 articles – a total of 23 pages. Also when you open the link, click on the 3\textsuperscript{rd} item, which is labeled “March 2007: Mother Load.”

http://www.prospect.org/cs/archive/view_report?reportID=1

Week 13 – No Class – Thanksgiving Break

Week 14 – Nov. 27\textsuperscript{th} and 29\textsuperscript{th} – Family Leave Policy

Questions: What is the political history of the Family and Medical Leave Act?
What are the strengths and weaknesses of leave policy in the U.S.?


Note: See two more readings for this week on the next page.


Week 15 – Dec. 4th and 6th – Toward the Future. Lessons from Abroad?

Questions: What is the future of family policy in the U.S.? What lessons, if any, can we learn from other nations?

Readings:


Become familiar with the site above and be able to explain how the family policies of select countries compare to family policies in the U.S.

Exam Dates: Thursday, Oct. 4th and Thursday, Nov. 8th.

Final Exam: Date and time to be announced.