

American Social Policy – Political Science #281

Illinois Wesleyan University

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Course description and requirements:

This course examines several cases of social policy in the United States – historically and in the contemporary period – to highlight patterns of policy making and points of consensus and profound disagreement that result from both ideological and procedural concerns. We will address many of the normative concerns raised by various federal and state programs, in addition to the related areas of gender and race. Class discussions, readings, assignments, and in-class debates will cover cash assistance to low-income families, housing assistance and homelessness, Social Security, health care, affirmative action, same-sex marriage, and pornography/obscenity as a 1st amendment issue, among others. Of particular interest is how the ideological and cultural melting pot/salad bowl of America historically – and still – poses moral conflicts over the appropriateness of the welfare state and of individual rights more generally. Students are encouraged to examine the changing structures of the American welfare state, including the values these programs have reflected, and how they fit with or challenge students' own perspectives. This course carries general education credit in analysis of values and the U.S. diversity flag.

It will be very important, for our collective success and for your individual benefit, that the class actively cultivate an ethos of respectful honesty regarding our normative reactions to these issues. Self-censoring, on the one hand, and unchecked anger, on the other, are both strongly discouraged. Openness and honesty about our differences will take us a long way toward better mutual understanding and will, frankly, make our class discussions much more informative and interesting.

Students' grades will be based on two essay-type exams, two short reflection papers, and class participation. The mid-term and final exams are each worth 30% of the overall course grade. The short papers are each worth 15% of the grade. Regular and thoughtful participation in class discussions comprises the remaining 10% of the grade. A few days before each of the exams I will distribute a list of questions resembling the questions that will appear on the up-coming exam. This should give you a framework for study and should be taken as a rough indicator of the level of difficulty and style of the actual exam questions. Taking an exam at a time other than the regularly scheduled time requires advance approval from me.

This class will involve a few in-class debates on topics we jointly will select. Each student will need to take an active role as part of his/her team in researching the team's positions and in representing those positions in class. Opinions will, of course, matter, but marshalling relevant facts and cogent arguments will matter more. Your individual and our collective success in these projects depend on your significant dedication to them.

Each of the reflection papers needs to consider how the cases put forth by the authors fit together or clash on a question or topic that you identify. Each paper should include ideas from three authors appearing on the syllabus (not from other handouts) that you believe speak to a common theme. These papers should only minimally summarize the authors' arguments and should be comprised mainly by your reflections, critiques, and syntheses of them. There are several ways to approach these papers. One is to create a partial or even reasonably complete reconciliation among claims that the authors implicitly or explicitly offer as contradictions of other authors. Another is to draw out previously unexplored ideas or lessons by synthesizing material across authors. A third is to use material from one author to critique another and to

evaluate how well those criticisms stand up to your scrutiny. I suspect many of you will find these papers challenging. I'll distribute further written guidelines. An early start, well ahead of the due dates listed below, will be very helpful. Late papers will suffer a 5 percentage point reduction in grade for each day they are late, weekends included. Papers should be typed, double-spaced, and between 5 and 6 pages long (double-sided printing conserves paper).

Grading policy and statement on academic integrity:

Final course grades will be assigned on the following basis: 90-100% = A/A-; 80-89% = B+/B/B-; 70-79% = C+/C/C-; 60-69% = D; below 60% = F. Taking a grade of incomplete in this course is very strongly discouraged. Under no circumstances will a student be granted a grade of incomplete without discussing the matter with me well in advance of the end of the semester.

I am aware that academic dishonesty has become common at some institutions. While I am sure that very few, if any, Illinois Wesleyan students would cheat on class assignments, the university's policy and my policy on academic dishonesty bear repeating. Academic dishonesty fundamentally undermines the mission of the university and cheapens our collective enterprise. Students caught cheating on an exam or engaging in plagiarism on written assignments will receive a failing grade for the course. In these cases I will also file a formal complaint with the administration. The university's academic dishonesty policy states that the administration will move to expel from the university any student who is the object of two such substantiated complaints. See the university catalog for further explanation.

Course readings:

The following texts are required reading and are highly recommended for purchase:

The Welfare Debate, Greg Shaw, Greenwood Press, 2007

One Nation, Uninsured: Why the U.S. Has No National Health Insurance, Jill Quadagno, Oxford University Press, 2005

Selected chapters from the following are on traditional reserve (see the circulation desk):

Don't Think of an Elephant!, George Lakoff, Chelsea Green Publishers, 2004

Social Security: History and Politics from the New Deal to the Privatization Debate, Daniel Beland, University of Kansas Press, 2005

Selected chapters from the following books are on electronic reserve (password = poverty):

La Vida: A Puerto Rican Family in the Culture of Poverty, Lewis, Random House, 1965

Making Ends Meet: How Single Mothers Survive Welfare and Low-Wage Work, Kathryn Edin & Laura Lein, Russell Sage Foundation, 1997

Reaching Beyond Race, Sniderman and Carmines, Harvard University Press, 1997

"The Coming White Underclass," Charles Murray, *Wall Street Journal*, 10/29/93

"The Work Ethic State," Mickey Kaus, *New Republic*, 7/7/86

Mortal Peril: Our Inalienable Right to Health Care? Richard Epstein, Addison-Wesley, 1997

Reflections of an Affirmative Action Baby, Stephen Carter, Basic Books, 1991

The Shape of the River: Long-Term Consequences of Considering Race in College and University Admissions, William Bowen and Derek Bok, Princeton University Press, 1998

Rituals of Blood: Consequences of Slavery in Two American Centuries, Orlando Paterson, Basic Civitas Books, 1998

“This is Your Death,” Jacob Weisberg, *New Republic*, 7/1/91

With God on Our Side, William Martin (PUBLISHER, YEAR)

Of Little Faith: The Politics of George W. Bush’s Faith-Based Initiatives, Amy Black, Douglas Koopman, and David Ryden (PUBLISHER, YEAR)

The Politics of Same-Sex Marriage, ed. by Rimmerman and Wilcox, Univ. of Chicago Press, 2007

Marriage Under Fire, James Dobson, Multnomah Publishers, 2004

The New Politics of Pornography, Donald Downs, University of Chicago Press, 1989

Hate Speech, Pornography, and the Radical Attack on Free Speech Doctrine, James Weinstein, Westview Press, 1999

Topics

Week of:

Readings

Introduction and course overview

Beginning the desert island simulation

Examining our values

Lakoff, *Don’t Think of an Elephant!*,
chapters 1-3

Poor relief from the colonial period thru
the mid-20th century

Shaw, *The Welfare Debate*, Intro., chapt. 1-3
Lewis, *La Vida*, excerpt from introduction

The war on poverty to the present

Shaw, *The Welfare Debate*, chapters 4 - 8
Murray essay in the *Wall St. Journal*, 10/93
Kaus essay in the *New Republic*, 7/86
Edin & Lein, *Making Ends Meet*, 1, 2 & 8
Edelman, “The Worst Thing Bill Clinton Has
Done” (available at:

<http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/97mar/edelman/edelman.htm>)

Health Care	Quadagno, <i>One Nation</i> , chapters 1-4
Health Care	Quadagno, <i>One Nation</i> , chapters 5-8 Epstein, <i>Mortal Peril</i> , pp. 1-4, 19-23 of the <u>introduction, chaps. 3, 4, 11, and postscript</u>
<i>1st reflection paper due in class</i>	
Social Security	<u>Beland, chaps. 4-6</u> Student presentations on Thursday
<i>First exam: (covering all material through this week)</i>	
Race in America	<u>Patterson, chapter 2 (“Feast of Blood: ...”)</u> <u>Sniderman & Carmines, <i>Reaching Beyond Race</i>, chapter 3</u>
Affirmative Action	<u>Carter, <i>Reflections of an Affirmative Action Baby</i>, chapters 1-3</u> <u>Bowen & Bok, <i>The Shape of the River</i>, chapters 1, 9 & 10</u>
Capital punishment	<u>Weisberg essay, “This is Your Death”</u> Bureau of Justice Statistics report, “Capital Punishment, 2005” [http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/cp05.pdf]
Abortion policy	U.S. Supreme Court opinions in <i>Roe v Wade</i> (1973) [http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/historics/USSC_CR_0410_0113_ZO.html], and <i>Gonzales v Carhart</i> (2007) [http://supremecourtus.gov/opinions/06pdf/05-380.pdf]
Make time this week to view a documentary on intelligent design	
Religion in public life	Martin, <i>With God on Our Side</i> , ch. 8 Black et al., <i>Of Little Faith</i> (selections) Reichley, <i>Faith in Politics</i> (ch. 7; optional)
Same-sex marriage	<u><i>The Politics of Same-Sex Marriage</i>, intro. & chapter by D’Elimio</u> U.S. Supreme Court opinion in <i>Loving v Virginia</i> (1967) [http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/historics/USSC_CR_0388_0001_ZO.html] James Dobson, <i>Marriage Under Fire</i> (2004), excerpts on e-reserve (26 pages)

Pornography/obscenity and free speech

Downs, *The New Politics of Pornography*,
chapters 2 & 3
MacKinnon, *Only Words*, chapter 1
Weinstein appendix on effects of porn

2nd reflection paper due in class

Pornography/obscenity and hate crime legislation
Conclusions & review

no further readings

Final exam: cumulative w/ emphasis on 2nd half of the course

Some of you may want to read more about some of these topics. In the interest of helping you in your quest for knowledge, I've jotted down some suggestions for further reading. These are organized by topic. By no means is this list exhaustive.

Abortion: For a general overview, see McFarlane and Meir's *The Politics of Fertility Control* (2001). See also Lawrence Tribe's *Abortion: The Clash of Absolutes*. For a history, see Linda Gordon, *Woman's Body, Woman's Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America* (1976)

Affirmative action: Bowen and Bok's *The Shape of the River* is the single best account of the effects of affirmative action in college admissions currently available.

Capital punishment: For an overview of capital punishment see Harry Henderson's *Capital Punishment*. For a discussion of the morality of capital punishment, see *Executing Justice: The Moral Meaning of the Death Penalty* by Lloyd Steffen.

Health care: For an early history of public health provision in America, see Paul Starr's *The Social Transformation of American Medicine: The rise of a sovereign profession and the making of a vast industry*. See Johathan Oberlander's *The Political Life of Medicare* for an excellent treatment of that program. For broad examination of healthcare politics, see Philip Funigiello's *Chronic Politics*, or Greg Shaw, *The Healthcare Debate*.

Race, politics and public opinion: One important beginning point here is W.E.B. Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk*. See also Gunnar Myrdal's *The American Dilemma*. Regarding lingering racism in America, see Sniderman and Piazza's *The Scar of Race*. For a thoughtful treatment of cross-race differences in opinions on broad questions of economic achievement, see Jennifer Hochschild's *Facing up to the American Dream*. For an excellent account of African-American public opinion, see Michael Dawson's *Behind the Mule: Race and Class in African-American Politics*. For accounts of the intersection of race and the welfare state, see Jill Quadagno's *The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermined the War on Poverty*, or Robert Lieberman's *Crossing the Color Line*. See also William Wilson's *The Truly Disadvantaged* and *When Work Disappears* for discussions of race and poverty.

Religion in public life: For a thoughtful discussion of charitable choice, see *Of Little Faith: The Politics of George W. Bush's Faith-Based Initiatives* by Black, Koopman, and Ryden. For a historical treatment of religion in politics, see A. James Reichley, *Religion in Public Life* (1985).

Welfare: One of the best and reasonably comprehensive histories of welfare in America is Michael Katz's *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse*. Histories of welfare in the U.S. prior to the Social Security Act of 1935 include Theda Skocpol's *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, and Linda Gordon's *Pitied but Not Entitled*. Michael Harrington's *The Other America* prompted some soul searching in the 1960s about the need to address poverty. Piven and Cloward's *Regulating the Poor* offers a well developed argument about the coercive functions of the welfare state. R. Kent Weaver's *Ending Welfare As We Know It* is probably the best account of the 1996 ending of AFDC and launch of TANF. Rebecca Blank and Ron Haskins' *The New World of Welfare* offers some good accounts of post-1996 welfare.