Course Description

This course will critically analyze the various human/social services and policies that provide prevention, case management, treatment, and rehabilitative services aimed at children and youth. The role of social services in the broad context of both formal and informal systems that influence the life course of children and youth is addressed. The course will examine how services are articulated at various levels of intervention and in policies and regulations and how this affects the ethical practice of social workers and other family and child serving professionals. Particular emphasis will be placed on community-based agencies, child welfare services, and the juvenile justice system. Students will develop critical frameworks for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the policies, organization, and delivery of child-oriented social services based on social and behavioral science research evidence and through the lens of multi-culturalism and social justice values. In addition, illustrative historical and cross-national comparisons of services and policies for families with children and youth will be included.

Course Content

Substantive areas addressed in this course will be critically analyzed and addressed in terms of the four curricular themes: social change and social justice, multiculturalism and diversity, social and behavioral science research, and the continuum of care (promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation). Students should use this list to select research paper topics for their policy briefing and program design papers:

1. Indicators of the well-being of children and families in the United States.
2. The legal and service delivery frameworks that shape the current system of family and children’s services, including the Indian Child Welfare Act and other statutes and policies relevant to Native American self-determination and the recently passed Adoption and Safe Families Act.
3. Legal and cultural constructions of childhood and adolescence.
4. Early childhood interventions, including Head Start and child-care.
5. Family Support Services, including home-visiting programs and family support centers.
6. Programs designed to encourage positive youth development and frameworks for youth participation.
7. Services and policies affecting children and youth with special needs (e.g. children with disabilities, gay and lesbian youth) and children in minority and/or non-traditional families.
9. The service response to violence against women and other forms of domestic violence.
10. Family preservation, family reunification, and wraparound services for families who have come into contact with the child protective service system.
11. Foster family care and its alternatives, including kinship care, group homes, residential treatment facilities, institutional care, and training schools.
12. Delinquency services and other issues concerned with juvenile justice.
13. The juvenile court.
14. Adoption services, including infant adoption, special needs adoption, transracial adoption, open adoption, and international adoption.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Describe and critique services and policies affecting children and youth from historical and cross-cultural perspectives.
2. Understand cultural and legal constructions of childhood and adolescence and their role in the development of policies, services, and programs.
3. Assess services to children and youth with regard to their scope (the extent to which they provide necessary and appropriate services to populations in need) and their effectiveness.
4. Identify and describe alternative strategies for delivery of services to children and youth including those found in other countries.
5. Recognize and articulate concerns related to the differential impact of these services on ethnic minorities and other cultural groups.
6. Understand the relevance of advocacy for clients in the children and youth services delivery system and knowledgeably, ethically, and professionally advocate for children and youth at the policy and/or direct service level.
7. Discuss typical ethical concerns related to services and policies for children and youth.
**Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes**

- **Multiculturalism and Diversity** will be addressed through, for example, discussion of the client populations served by the service systems discussed in the course; the design of programs so that they will be responsive to the special cultural and ethnic circumstances of their clients; and the special child and family policies related to issues of ethnicity (e.g., the Indian Child Welfare Act, and international and transracial adoption).

- **Social Justice and Social Change** will be addressed by considering the differential impact of policies and programs on the poor and minorities and the role of social work practice in maintaining or transforming social structure.

- **Promotion, Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation** will be addressed by examining the continuum of care present in the programs and services provided to children, youth, and families. Thus, neighborhood-based or community-based programs will be contrasted with approaches that target families at risk or services recommended to families once they are referred to protective services, services that are court ordered, or other services that are available only once the state has intervened into the family’s life.

- **Behavioral and Social Science Research** will be addressed through review of studies and academic literature on, for example, the changing demographics that affect demand for services, and comparative legal and administrative policies and services and their impacts on families. Finally, we discuss program evaluations that can inform child and family welfare policies and service delivery.

**Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values**

This course covers the complexities of ethical dilemmas as they relate to services and policies for children and youth populations, as well as the ways in which the professional Code of Ethics may be used to guide and resolve value and ethical issues. In particular, the course will review the ethics and values related to confidentiality, self-determination, and respect for cultural and religious differences. The course includes consideration of the social worker’s responsibility to promote the general welfare of society (e.g., the prevention and elimination of discrimination, equal access to resources, services, and opportunities, and advocacy for changes in policy). In addition, ethical concerns of special importance to social work with children and youth are considered, such as the child’s ability to report and understand at various levels of development, conflicts between the child’s best interest and the family’s best interest, and ethical issues related to the treatment of minors.
Required Texts


This textbook is available at Ulrich’s, Michigan Book and Supply, and Michigan Union Bookstore.

A coursepack of required readings is available at Accel Copying on E. Williams.
**Recommended Readings**

A set of recommended readings is available on reserve at the SSW Library.

This text is recommended for further discussion and synthesis of many of the major topics we will discuss in this course:


In addition, several free government reports are recommended and each student can order their own copies or download from the internet:


**To order this free publication, call 1-800-638-8736 or e-mail askncjrs@ncjrs.org**


**To order these free publications call (202) 512-6061 or e-mail info@www.gao.gov**

They may also be downloaded from [http://www.gao.gov](http://www.gao.gov)

Further, all articles that appear in any issue of *The Future of Children* can be downloaded from [http://www.futureofchildren.org](http://www.futureofchildren.org)

**Course Requirements**

1. Students must attend all class sessions. Students who miss a session should notify me and are responsible for securing lecture notes from their peers and handouts from the instructor.
2. Students must complete all course assignments by the date they are due.
3. Active participation in class discussions is required.
Class Assignments

The class assignments require students to conduct additional research that builds upon the information contained in both the readings and lectures. Students will be responsible for completing all assignments by the due date and in accordance with the guidelines that follow. For helpful hints on writing and conducting research for papers, please refer to the section “Writing term papers and research papers at the University of Michigan,” pp. 65-79 in the Student Guide to the Master’s in Social Work Degree Program. Additional handouts describing assignments will be provided.

Attendance and participation: Students must attend the entire session every week and participate in the classroom discussions. Attendance is vital because we will explore the required readings in-depth and often move outside of these readings in an attempt to provide a critical assessment of the major principles and themes. The ability of students to bring different perspectives to the discussion of policies and services for children, youth, and families is important to the class. Frequent absences will not only affect grades and a student’s overall performance in the course, but will also affect the class as a whole. While I understand that emergencies and illnesses do arise, I expect that students will attend every session and inform me of any absence. I also expect that students will arrive to class sessions on time.

Participation in class discussion is also vital to a successful course. In my opinion, one of the most important aspects of this course is the ability to think critically about policies and services and their relationship to social work practice. Gaining an understanding of the components of these policies and services, as well as the assumptions upon which they are based is instrumental to developing this critical assessment. Because of the breadth of material we will review in this course, it is essential that students actively participate in order to generate diverse perspectives on the major principles and themes we review. I fully understand that some students are more comfortable participating in a classroom environment than others. Consequently, it is important that we all take care to create an environment that facilitates participation by all. One suggestion I will make with regard to participation concerns course papers (described below). These papers require students to synthesize course material and outside research and create excellent opportunities for students to share this knowledge with the rest of the class.

Short readings memos (2): Students will write two 2-4 page memos on topics that synthesize material covered in class sessions and required readings. The first will be due early in the semester and the second one is due on the last day of class. These memos are intended to be short summaries and thoughtful reactions that address specific topics.

Memo #1, will be an OPTIONAL choice between three topics: “The state of America’s families and implications for social work.” Much of the early readings in the course and class lectures cover how America’s families with children are faring and how policies and programs address or fail to address their needs, especially for impoverished families and families of color. In 2-4 pages, describe your sense of some of the most important findings in this material and
some of your greatest concerns for policies and services for families with children. This topic is due on January 29.

“Cultural and legal constructions of childhood and adolescence and implications for social work.” Several of our early readings focus on the role of culture and law in shaping definitions and meanings of childhood and adolescence and the impacts these constructions have in policy development and service delivery. In 2-4 pages, describe how you believe these constructions affect social policy development, service delivery and social work practice. This topic is due on February 5.

“The state of knowledge of early childhood development and implications for services and policies for diverse young families.” Many of the readings, especially the monograph by Shore, review policy, service delivery, and model programs in light of recent insights regarding cognitive development. In 2-4 pages, summarize highlights of these findings and propose responsive, research-based policies and services to promote well-being in early childhood. This topic is due on February 12.

Memo #2 will be an OPTIONAL choice between two topics:

“Components of successful programs for children and youth: what we know and don’t know.” Many of the readings throughout the term review what is known about effectiveness and quality of services for this population. In this 2-4 page memo, identify some critical components that need to be in place for programs to succeed with particular at-risk children, families, and youth. The memo should also point out some unanswered questions for research, policy, program design, and/or practice. You may choose to frame this memo around the question of the ideal target population and ideal program in which you hope to practice, design and/or administer services, or promote in community or policy work. This topic is due on April 16.

“The juvenile court.” Several of our readings focus on the origination of the juvenile court in the U.S., concerns regarding its major premises, changes in practice and legal codes, and its current operation. In this 2-4 page memo, discuss how the court has changed from its original ideals and what key issues exist in its future. Focus on what we currently know about youth crime, the types and number of cases being processed, legislative changes, and notions of childhood and adolescence produced by the court. This topic is due on April 16.

Legislative Briefing Paper: This assignment is a simulation that requires students to think like policy analysts working for a member of Congress or a state legislator. Students are to select a policy topic of interest, from the topics listed in the Course Content section above. The briefing papers should review: 1) the issue’s policy or legislative history at the federal level (but can include relevant state laws), 2) some of the major weaknesses and strengths of the policy in terms of the structure of service delivery, funding mechanisms or mandated professional practices and procedures, 3) relevant comparative historical or cross-national policies, where available. The paper should also 4) recommend policy changes, and 5) identify the pros and cons of the recommended policy changes from a social work perspective. These briefing papers should not exceed 10 pages of narrative, and may include additional pages for charts or tables the student may wish to use in illustrating points made in the narrative. The
briefing should make ample use of the internet and outside reading sources and reference these properly in footnotes/bibliography. This paper will be due the week of February 19, before Winter Break.

Program Analysis Paper: This assignment is a program case study in a topic area from the Course Content section listed above, but it SHOULD BE FROM A DIFFERENT TOPIC THAN THAT USED FOR THE LEGISLATIVE BRIEFING PAPER. The program analysis should: 1) describe the service delivery model, 2) describe what is done in the program, for whom (target population), and how it compares to other comparable programs in this field, and 3) report available evaluation or demonstration research results on the model. Finally, the paper will 4) propose changes in this program based on literature or information from site visits, professional practitioner interviews, etc. The paper should not exceed 10 pages in length and should make ample use of the internet, outside reading sources, and local site visits or contacts with local service providers. The paper should reference these properly in footnotes/bibliography. This paper will be due the week of April 9.

Grading Criteria

A student’s overall grade will be based on their entire performance in the class. Attendance and participation will be based upon attending class on a regular basis and actively participating in class discussions. While attendance and participation is worth 10% of the overall grade, strong performance in this part of the class can potentially increase a student’s overall grade. Continual unexcused absences will result in the reduction of a student’s grade.

Short memos will be judged on the clarity of writing, the synthesis of material, and the level of analysis. These memos are intended to thoughtfully synthesize and critically assess course material and will be graded based upon the perspective they bring to the discussion. The memos are worth 20% of the total grade (10% each).

The Legislative Briefing and Program Analysis papers will be judged on clarity of writing, quality of the presentation of the material, and depth of understanding of the policies and research findings. These papers are intended to show in-depth understanding of particular topics and should be based upon relevant research in the chosen area. Additionally, the papers should critically assess the respective legislation and program in order to thoughtfully pose changes or alternatives. The two papers are worth 70% of the overall grade (35% each).

All written assignments submitted by students should be double-spaced, with 12 pt. font and 1-inch margins. Please page number and proofread your papers for clarity. Also use the word processing program’s spelling and grammar check. Students should use the Student Guide to the Master’s in Social Work Degree Program or other style manuals to assist them in writing their papers. Students are strongly encouraged to make and keep a copy of their papers. Grading criteria will follow the School of Social Work’s Grading Policy, as reviewed on pp. 14-15 in the Student Guide to the Master’s in Social Work Degree Program. Grades will be based upon the maximum number of
percentage points an assignment is worth as listed below. Your final grade in the class will be calculated by adding up your scores on the individual assignments.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percent of Grade</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance and participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short readings memos</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>Legislative Briefing Paper</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program Analysis Paper</td>
<td>35%</td>
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**Weekly Outline**

**Session 1. January 8, 2000**
**Introductions, Course Overview, and the Idea of Family Policy**

Hand-outs:

Course Outline

Activity:

STARPOWER

NO CLASS: January 15, MLK DAY activities

**Session 2. January 22, 2000**
**Policies for Families and Child Well-being: An Analytic Overview and Indicators**

**REQUIRED READINGS:**

Handouts:

Child well-being Indicators
Coursepack:


• RECOMMENDED READINGS


Cultural and Legal Frameworks for Services and Policies for Children and Youth

REQUIRED READINGS:

Coursepack:


• Readings Memo #1 DUE (or on Feb. 5 or Feb. 12)

**Session 4. February 5, 2000**

**Frameworks for Service Delivery**

**REQUIRED READINGS:**

Coursepack:


**RECOMMENDED READINGS**


**Readings Memo #1 DUE (or on Jan. 29 or Feb. 12)**

**Session 5. February 12, 2000**

**Early Childhood Intervention**

**REQUIRED READINGS:**

**Text:**


**Coursepack:**


**RECOMMENDED READINGS**


- Readings Memo #1 DUE (or on Jan. 29 or Feb. 5)

Session 6. February 19, 2000
Family Support Services

REQUIRED READINGS:

Coursepack:


- RECOMMENDED READINGS


- Legislative briefing paper due before Winter Break

**WINTER BREAK – FEBRUARY 26**

**Session 7. March 5, 2000**  
Youth Development

**REQUIRED READINGS:**

Coursepack:


• RECOMMENDED READINGS


Session 8. March 12, 2000
Family Violence and Child Protection

**REQUIRED READINGS:**

Handout:

State of Michigan Child Protection Law

Coursepack:


- **RECOMMENDED READINGS**


**Session 9. March 19, 2000**

**Family Preservation**

- **REQUIRED READINGS:**

  Coursepack:


- **RECOMMENDED READINGS**


**Session 10. March 26, 2000
Foster Care, Kinship Care**

**REQUIRED READINGS:**

Coursepack:


**RECOMMENDED READINGS**


**Session 11. April 2, 1999
Adoption, Independent Living, Emancipation**
REQUIRED READINGS:

Coursepack:


RECOMMENDED READINGS


Session 12. April 9, 2000
Juvenile Justice

REQUIRED READINGS:

Coursepack:


RECOMMENDED READINGS


- **Program Analysis Paper DUE April 9**

**Session 13. April 16, 2000**

**Juvenile Justice**

**REQUIRED READINGS:**

Coursepack:


Additional readings will be provided.

- **LAST DAY OF CLASS, Readings Memo #2 DUE**
REQUIRED READINGS


RECOMMENDED READINGS


