1. Course Description

This course will analyze those policies and services that promote or inhibit the development of civil society, enhance or deny human rights, and contribute to the attainment of social justice or sustain the existence of social injustice. Emphasis will be placed on those policies and services which serve to enhance social participation, economic security, respect for diversity, voluntary action, and community and corporate responsibility. The course will also integrate an intensive focus on how policies and services, particularly at the local level, maintain or diminish the existence of oppression and privilege in U.S. society. Programs provided by various units of government, nonprofit and social service organizations, and corporations will be reviewed, and various partnerships and collaborations among funders, service providers, and community groups will be examined. The course will also explore ways in which the involvement of community members can lead to the construction of socially just policies and services that can overcome the effects of privilege and oppression.

2. Course Content

Students will learn that community well-being is enhanced when social problems are managed, human needs are met, and social opportunities and human rights are optimized. Both problems and needs are the outcome of interactions between individuals, collectivities, and the larger society. The implications of these interactions will be examined in the context of a diverse society, with special attention given to the relationship between policy development and implementation, the attainment of social justice goals, and the eradication of oppression and privilege. Attributes of such policies and programs include, but are not limited to, enhanced opportunities for social participation, economic security, heightened respect for diversity, increased voluntary action, and greater corporate responsibility.

Selected laws, programs, and structures that enhance citizen participation within diverse populations will be described and compared. Emphasis will be placed on those that enable the sustained and meaningful participation of diverse and oppressed populations and on the social worker’s responsibility for facilitating such participation. Examples will include the use of mediating structures, such as citizen boards, advisory groups, commissions, and consumer involvement in promoting and guiding positive social change. In many of these, participation is intended to enhance citizen capacity to initiate and oversee action. However, participatory structures are also intended to assure the responsiveness of programs of a promotional, service,
or preventive nature. These programs are designed to promote social justice by reducing poverty and economic insecurity; address personal crises and community emergencies (such as those brought about by violence against persons and property, nature and environmental disasters, war and terrorism, or economic dislocation); resettle and integrate refugees and other immigrant populations; overcome the consequences of privilege; and respond to the needs of oppressed groups seeking social justice (e.g., women, racial, religious, ethnic and sexual minorities, the disabled, and other oppressed groups). In addition, the participatory opportunities provided via self-help, grassroots associations and informal networks, and congregational-based service providers will be explored.

3. Course Objectives

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

1. Within the context of a diverse society, analyze relevant policies and services that promote social justice, encourage social participation, community well-being, human rights, and economic security, and enable individuals and groups to overcome the consequences of privilege and oppression.
2. Demonstrate familiarity with selected aspects of the structures, legal standing, and roles of the nonprofit sector in providing human services, advocating for human rights, and promoting community participation and well-being.
3. Locate and apply commonly used indicators of social, economic, and other measures of community well-being to diverse populations that are experiencing the effects of social injustice and oppression.
4. Analyze how privilege, oppression, and injustice affect the levels and types of participation possible and desirable for members or representatives of diverse communities in mediating structures that are intended to promote well-being.
5. Identify the political, social, economic, and cultural factors that lead to or detract from such participation among oppressed populations.
6. Understand the roles social workers can play at the community level in promoting the well-being and sustained participation of its members.

4. Course Design

In-class activities, readings, and course assignments will be coordinated so as to enhance course objectives. For example, simulations of real-work processes, films, videos, and speakers presented in the classroom will provide the contextual background for student assignments in the community. Lectures by the instructor will be complemented by student presentations and by speakers representing consumers, providers, professionals, and volunteers involved in advocacy, community education, and service delivery.
5. Relationship of the Course to Curricular Themes

- **Multiculturalism and Diversity** will be addressed in this course through the emphasis on enhancing the well-being and community participation of populations and groups that have been historically subject to discrimination, injustice, and oppression. The issues to be examined will include the motivations for, content, and impact of laws and regulations affecting human rights and nondiscrimination on the basis of race, gender, disability, age, religion, and sexual orientation.

- **Social Justice and Social Change** underlie the creation of mediating structures, programs, and policies expressly designed to enhance community well-being. Students will examine these issues as well as social work’s historical engagement in planned change and the meaning of its underlying commitment to social justice in the contemporary environment.

- **Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation** will be examined in terms of whether programs and policies are effective or ineffective in their promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation efforts. Sometimes, programs designed to express these themes complement each other— for example, when participation enhances promotion and prevention, and both are part of a comprehensive strategy of change. The course will also focus on how policies and services can promote the goal of social justice and, by addressing the structural causes of privilege and oppression, prevent the emergence or reemergence of their consequences. For these reasons, the extent to which programs and policies are infused with these themes and how they interact with each other will receive critical analysis.

- **Behavioral and Social Science Research.** This course will be based on the twin assumptions that the programs and policies to be studied can be understood through social scientific methods and that scientific concepts can also be used in the design of effective programs and policies. However, even this assumption needs analysis. Scientific perspectives can lead to very different interpretations of social issues and, consequently, different policy and programmatic responses. For example, much of sociology can be divided into (1) structural-functionalist perspectives which advocate the eliminating of cultural and behavioral skill differences between groups and the legal, economic, and other barriers to full participation; and (2) conflict perspectives, which assume that societies tend towards conflict because power and resources are inequitably distributed and that, in the long run, conflict is positive because it increases the likelihood of expanding access to social goods. These perspectives infuse many of the readings and analyses presented in this course. Applying one or the other can lead to different interpretations of events and social processes and to very different social agendas and programs for social change. For this reason, even the social science knowledge base of this course will itself be subject to examination.

- **Social Work Ethics and Values.** This course will address ethical and value issues related to policies and services directed at social participation and community well-being. The NASW Code of Ethics and other sources of the profession’s ideology and values will be used to inform practice in this area. Special emphasis will be placed on the social worker’s responsibility to promote social justice in a diverse society by preventing and eliminating discrimination, oppression, and privilege, ensuring equal access to resources, expanding
choices and opportunities for all persons, encouraging respect for diversity, advocating for changes in social policies, and encouraging informed participation by the public. In addition, ethical issues related to working with various client systems will be reviewed, such as the meaning of self-determination in a multicultural society, the impact of information technology on client confidentiality and privacy rights, and the concept of the client’s interest, proper and improper relationships with clients, interruption of services, and termination.

6. Required reading:

Coursepack is available at Excel Text Preparation, 1117 South University Avenue and copies of the required reading are on reserve in the Social Work Library.

7. Assignments:

Assignment 1: Commentary Papers, 40 Points (4*10 Points each). On four of the following dates (January 21, January 28, February 3, February 11, March 11, March 18, March 25 and April 1) you will submit, via e-mail, 1 short commentary paper between 600-900 words in length which should consist of your reaction to, and critical comment on at least two of the readings for the upcoming week. Specifically you should discuss the relevance—or lack thereof—to your social work practice, of the themes and/or the specific points raised in the readings. You should make specific reference to the particular articles you are discussing in making your commentary and provide examples from your professional experience or observations to support your comments. The intention of these papers is to get you to think critically about the readings and to understand their usefulness to social work(ers). Therefore, simply summarizing the readings will not receive a very high grade. You will sign up for your four weeks within the first two weeks of the term.

In one of your four commentary papers you will discuss the readings in relation to a news item, that you will identify, and make a brief (5-10 minutes) oral presentation. In this paper and presentation, you should discuss the following: how the news story is related to the week's readings; how the issue is related to social work, social justice and your social work practice in particular; and, what you think your role as well as social work's role in general should be regarding the issue. Where applicable, you may comment on how the issue is depicted in the news item (e.g. one-sided, distorted, biased, etc.) and how this may affect the public’s interpretation of the issue. You should make direct references to the readings (as well as the NASW code of ethics, where applicable). The oral presentation should not simply be a recitation of your paper. The goal here is to demonstrate your ability to apply course concepts to current events while also demonstrating your ability to effectively communicate basic information as well as your own thoughts on a topic. This commentary paper should be between 750-1000 words. You should provide a copy of the news item (if text based) or a summary (if broadcast) by e-mail to everyone in the class by 12:00 on the Monday before it’s due. The news item need not be from a 'mainstream' source (e.g. one that targets a mass audience such as the New York Times) nor only from a print media source. I encourage you to use material from sources that are geared toward a narrower audience or represent 'alternative' viewpoints (e.g. The Amsterdam News-www.amsterdamnews.org; Disability World-www.disabilityworld.org; Echo Magazine-
This assignment is an opportunity for you to contribute your particular interests and in so-doing help, all of us take advantage of the diversity represented by all of you. It is also a way of helping us understand how the media contributes to our understanding of social problems and policy solutions.

All commentary papers should e-mailed to me as an attachment no later than 12:00 p.m. (noon) on the Monday before class. I will e-mail you to confirm that I received your paper. If you don’t get an e-mail from me then it is your responsibility to contact me to ensure that I actually received your paper. My intent is to integrate these papers into class discussion and therefore I will likely quote from your paper and ask you to discuss your commentary and I will also invite reactions from the class. Please be aware of these possibilities as you compose your thoughts.

Assignment 2: Analytic Paper, 25 points. This assignment requires each student to analyze the policies and processes in one component of the community’s subsystems covered in the course syllabus in terms of how they enhance community well being within the specific area of concern. The final product will be a written paper of 6 to 8 pages, ‘documenting’ --via literature review as well as primary and secondary data analysis-- the effects of the policies, programs, and services in the area selected. In this paper you should incorporate one or more areas of our special focus; privilege, oppression, diversity and social justice. This assignment will be worth 25% of your grade. Papers are due at the beginning of class on March 4 however students are welcome to submit these earlier if they wish.

Assignment 3: Mock Testimony, 25 Points. (Group Presentation). This is a small group effort requiring community–based research and participation. Each group of 2-4 students will prepare and present testimony (approximately 30 minutes) to ‘policymakers’ in support of a particular policy or program which promotes community well-being and participation. In making your argument you must present ‘evidence’ that demonstrates how the current policy (or lack thereof) fails to support, facilitate, enable, etc. community participation (or actually prevents it) in one component of the community’s subsystems covered in the course syllabus (e.g., economic development, housing etc.). In addition, the group must argue why the proposed policy would address the flaws in the current policy in this regard. Your goal is to convince ‘policymakers’ to take your suggestions and incorporate them into public policy so the more you can base your testimony on facts and data (as compared to opinion and ideology) the stronger your argument is likely to be. You should incorporate the focus on privilege, oppression, diversity, and social justice. Groups will be required to submit a 3-page outline of their testimony on the day of their presentation. Presentations will be held on April 8 (Economic, Social, Children & Youth) and April 15 (Housing, Choice #1, Choice #2). Groups will be created during the first two weeks of class.

NOTE on written assignments: Lateness will result in reduction of your grade for that assignment and consequently for the course. Only emergencies will be considered as an acceptable excuse for lateness.
**Class Participation.** Students are expected to attend every class session, come prepared by doing the required reading, and participate in discussions and exercises. Overall your grade will be based on your attendance, the quality (and quantity) of your contributions to discussions and in-class activities, your attention and response to other's contributions, and your courtesy and respect to others. Class participation will be worth 10% of your grade.

**8. Grading**

Grades are earned by successfully completing the work on the assignments and by attending and participating in class. A 100 point system is used. At the end of the term, the numerical grades earned for each written assignment will be translated into letter grades according to the following formula:

- **A+** 98-100
- **A** 94-97
- **A-** 90–93
- **B+** 87-89
- **B** 84-86
- **B-** 80-83
- **C+** 77-89
- **C** 74-76
- **C-** 70-73
- **D** <69 (no credit)

**9. Readings and Class Schedule**

Students should come to class having read the assigned readings and prepared to discuss and integrate them with classroom and field content. Some in-class exercises have been developed to synthesize and apply readings to practice situations however, I will also call on you individually to solicit your thoughts and analysis of the readings and the topic at hand. It will be helpful if you bring each week’s set of readings with you to class to facilitate class discussion.
1. January 7  Introductions, Course Overview, Group roles review and Coursetools Review

2. January 14 Concepts of Community Well-Being


3. January 21 Promoting Economic Well-Being at the Community Level


2) Chuck Collins (May/June1995):“Aid to Dependent Corporations”, *Dollars & Sense*:5-17 40.


4. January 28 Promoting Social Well-Being at the Community Level


5. February 3 Improving the Well-Being of Children and Youth


6. February 11       Creating Affordable and Safe Housing


7. February 18       “Choice” Week

*February 25*       Spring Recess – No Class
8. March 4  Concepts of Community Participation

Mid-term papers Due


9. March 11 Promoting Economic Well Being through Participation at the Community Level


10. March 18 Promoting Social Well-Being at the Community Level through Citizen Participation.


11. March 25 Improving the Well-Being of Children & Youth through Community Participation.


12. April 1 Creating Affordable and Safe Housing Through Community Participation


13. April 8  Presentation Week #1 Economic, Social, Children & Youth,
14. April 15 Presentation Week #2 Housing, Choice #1, Choice #2