Social policy is the large and heterogeneous set of programs and laws that aim to improve society’s wellbeing by redistribution, direct government provision of social services and regulation of private provision of those services. In addition to health, education and welfare, it covers such policy areas as criminal justice, immigration and preventing or mitigating homelessness. We are concerned with describing and analyzing not only the laws and programs themselves but also the problems that they are intended to reduce and with the factors that determine the policy choices. Because the set of potential topics for the course is so very large, the coverage of the course has varied over the years. We can discuss possible other topics that might be substituted for those in the final two classes:

This course is designed to provide you with an understanding of: (1) demographic changes, their sources and impacts on policy choices; (2) the principal U.S. social programs; (3) the differences between social policies in the US and in other nations; and, (4) policies to help particularly vulnerable populations. It involves explicit analysis of economic, political and normative aspects of social policy.

Grades will be based on four activities:

(1) Policy memo. By October 8, each student will prepare a roughly 7 page memo analyzing a specific demographic issue, with an emphasis on assessing the data sources (assignments given after class on September 16). [15%]

(2) One paper (length 15 pages) due in final form by week 13. This paper should typically involve an analysis of the working of a program or institution, but I am open to suggestions. A list of past topics that yielded interesting papers is given below; you are invited to develop your own topic. Specific paper proposals (one to two page description of goals and sources) are due October 15, and drafts by November 22; comments will be provided by Nov. 29. There will be presentations on Dec. 2. Final drafts are due Dec. 8[30%]

(3) Final Exam. An open-book, take-home exam, given out after the final class and due back one week later.[30%].

(4) Class participation. Since classes will include a substantial discussion component; the readings need to be digested before the class session. Some questions during class will be directed at specific students and responses to those questions will weigh particularly heavily in the participation grading. Other questions will invite answers from whomever feels that she has something relevant to say. The grade will be based on willingness to participate and evidence of preparation and thoughtfulness. Each of you will participate in one specific exercise in class. [25%]

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1Page refers to space and a half, 12 point Times New Roman type.
All exams and memos are to be delivered in electronic form as Word documents; send them as email attachments to me directly. The filename should be your name plus the sequence of the assignment; for example the final paper will be #3. I will provide comments using the “Tracking Changes” mode. Please also provide Powerpoint slides for the oral presentation that you make in class; those files should also be sent directly to me as email attachments.

**Required Books**

Cancian, M., S. Danziger (eds.) *Changing Poverty, Changing Policies* Russell Sage Foundation [referred to as CP2]
Jencks, C. *The Homeless* Harvard University 1994

These books should be available from Amazon or the Book Store. Cancian and Danziger is dry as dust but it does provide in a compact and rigorous form much of the relevant data and analysis about poverty and programs that deal with it.

The other readings are available electronically on the course Blackboard web site. Each reading will appear in a folder with the title of the class. The required readings will appear without indentation; optional readings will be indented. These folders will have additional items; they are simply available for your use if you become interested in the topic.

**Illustrative Potential Paper Topics**

The ideal paper covers economic, political and normative issues for a single policy topic. Consider for example "The Child Support Enforcement Program: factors limiting the effectiveness of paternity establishment programs." The paper would examine the alternative methods that have been suggested for establishing paternity and how they may affect behavior and collections, then turn to the value issues involved and finally discuss political and/or bureaucratic obstacles to specific options. Not all dimensions would be treated in equal length;

The proposal requirement is a serious one. It is not sufficient to name a topic. In the past students have encountered problems when they have not established that there is enough accessible material to produce a paper. Hence you need to have done enough research that the proposal shows the feasibility, as well as interest, of the topic. The proposal should be at least one full page in length but no more than two (excluding references)

Most of the following were successful paper topics in previous years:

- Availability of high quality child care for rural low-income families and implications for school readiness
- Effects of Sex-Separated Education for Girls and Implications for Race-Separated Models of Education
- How has No Child Left Behind affected minority and low income children
Course Outline and Readings

   Overview of the course; what constitutes social policy and what we can cover in one semester. Patterns of demographic change (age, location, family composition etc.). The causes and demographic consequences of higher female labor force participation. Techniques and limits of population projections.

   Questions for Discussion
   What are the social and policy consequences of: high percentage of children growing up with only one parent and of decreased household size? How do these affect poverty rates? Should the government attempt to influence fertility rates?

   Readings
   Cancian and Reed Chapter 4 in CP2 (92-108)
   Jacobson, Mather and DuPuis (2012) Household Change in the United States
   Population Reference Bureau [10 pages]

   Optional and Supplemental

2. September 16: Immigration
   Immigration is both a social policy issue in itself and an influence on social policy more generally. Patterns of immigration; source countries, demographic characteristics of immigrants, where they settle. Effects of immigration on composition of U.S. population. Factors influencing flow of migration..

   Questions for discussion
   How should the U.S. decide on the number of immigrants to admit and on the composition of that group? In particular, does the U.S. have obligations to any but its own citizens/residents? How much can the U.S. affect the flow of new arrivals, as opposed to just determining the fraction that are legal? What are the long-term consequences of more permissive immigration policies?

   Topic for debate [Did not occur]
Immigration reform is one of those topics that over 20 years has recurrently risen to the top of the political agenda. Once again an Immigration Reform bill is making its way through Congress, amid heated debate. The debate in our class room will be cool and analytic.

Readings
Jencks, C. “Who Should Get In?” two part essay in the New York Review of Books Vol. 48, Nos. 19 and 20 (2001). Part I and Part II (35 pages) [Though these essays are dated, they capture historical developments very well and raise issues that are just as pertinent now]
For an annotated list of organizations involved in immigration policy issues see: http://www.annenbergclassroom.org/pages.aspx?name=critical-thinking-resources-for-immigration&AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1
For statistics on immigration flows and on program administration see the Migration Policy Institute FAQ page: http://www.migrationinformation.org/USfocus/display.cfm?id=931

Memo topic provided

3. September 23: The growth of the aged population and its consequences [guest lecturer: Professor Haaga]
Analysis of the sources of rapid increase in the fraction of the population aged 65 and over and 85 and over. The service demands of the elderly and who meets them. Principal public programs for the elderly. Political and policy consequences of population aging.

Questions
Is increased health spending for the aged a social (as opposed to just a budget) problem? Can (or should) the state shape the relationship between adult children and elderly parents? Does the growing share of elderly threaten programs for the young? Should the state encourage retirement at 65 or some similar age?

Readings

4. September 30:
(a) The Origins of Policy Numbers
Approaches to measurement of major social phenomena. Examples will be drawn from housing, crime, education, poverty and labor policy. Emphasis is on the dominant role of surveys; problems of sampling frames, conceptual fuzziness, low response rates and validity of responses. The politics of policy numbers.

Questions
Under what circumstances is it sufficient to measure rate of change rather than the size of a problem? How good a measure of homelessness is necessary? What are the inherent limits of measures of illegal immigration?

Readings
Jencks, C The Homeless pp. 1-20 and pp.128-137 (Derivation of Table 2); read this just for the methodology.
Best, J. (1988)”Missing Children, Misleading Statistics” The Public Interest 92 Summer 84-92

(b) Measuring Poverty
The variety of concepts and measures used to describe poverty. Trends in poverty and income inequality and the factors that have driven them.

Questions
Why do poverty measures focus on income rather than resources or expenditures? How adequate are existing measures for assessing the effectiveness of anti-poverty policies?

Readings
Edin, K. and L. Lein Making Ends Meet pp. 20-59 [background; describes how poor mothers survive. Easy read]


**Memo due back**

5. October 7. Anti-poverty programs

It is now more than 15 years since the sweeping changes of welfare reform brought about by the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act. Income support has largely been replaced by work support. How has that affected the poor?

*Topic for Debate*

The United States has relied almost exclusively on absolute measures of poverty, whereas Western Europe has relied almost exclusively on relative poverty measures. Both have information but if the public and policy makers can only pay attention to one (which is not an unreasonable view) which should we rely on? Mariana Jordan will argue for absolute measures. Malia Howell will argue for relative measures.

**Readings**

- Scholz, J.K. “Trends in Income Support” in *CP2*
- Waldfogel, J. “Role of Family Policies in Anti-Poverty Policy” in *CP2*
- *The Economist* (2013) “America’s welfare state is not working nearly as well as it should” [5 pages]

6. October 14: Delivery Mechanisms

Social insurance can be provided through an array of private as well as public mechanisms. An examination of America’s unique social policy arrangement. Discussion of a wide range of various delivery mechanisms.

*Topic for Discussion: Child Care Delivery Choices*

Students will be formed into four groups for discussion of alternative methods for delivering delivery of child care services at the federal level. Separate tasking memo on web site. Fischer, Guo, Wilks, Lacy will lead the groups and present the findings.

**Readings:** [all except DWS are on the web site in the folder called Delivery Systems]

- **DWS:** "American Exceptionalism Revisited”, pp. 5-31
- Thaler: ”Libertarian Paternalism is not an Oxymoron”, AEI, 2003
Ellwood: “Values & the Helping Conundrums”, pp14-44; from Poor Support: Poverty in the American Family

Mkandawne: “Targeting and Universalism in Poverty Reduction”, UN Research Institute for Social Development, 2005


Cox: “Block Grants” for National Academy on Aging (optional).

**Paper proposals due**

**7. October 21: Disability**

Those with handicap have a clear moral claim to help. But “handicap” turns out to be a subjective and flexible condition. How views of what constitutes “handicap” and “help” have changed over time. The development of programs to help and compensate the handicapped.

**Topic for Debate**

The relentless rise of the disability rolls has led to calls for substantial changes that would make disability status both more difficult to enter and easier to leave. David Autor offers one such plan, which is fairly complicated. Kate McCabe will explain the plan and Rachel Kaplan will critique it.

**Readings**


Clegg, Roger (1999)“The costly compassion of the ADA” Public Interest; Summer pp.100-112


Switzer, Jacqueline “Table 3 from Compensation & Rehabilitation” p.51-52.

Scotch, R. From Good Will to Civil Rights: Transforming Federal Disability Policy Chapters 1-3

Kelman, M “The Moral Foundations of Special Education Law” in Finn, Rotherman and Hokanson (eds) Rethinking Special Education for a New Century pp.77-84

**8. October 28: Education and Training**

What can schools do to increase productivity and reduce inequality ?Federal & state roles in preschool and elementary and secondary education as well as training programs.

**Readings:**
Jacob & Ludwig: Improving Educational Outcomes for Poor Children (CP2)
Holzer: Workforce Development as an Antipoverty Strategy: Up, Down and Back Up? (CP2)
Schiller, B. (2004) “Education and Ability”, from The Economics of Poverty and Discrimination, Prentice-Hall,

Topic for Debate
No Child Left Behind transformed the federal role in K-12 education. Diane Ravich, a highly regarded scholar of school reform, in her recent book (above) argues that the very theory behind NCLB was fundamentally flawed. Certainly, there is much more awareness now than in 2002 of the limitations of measurement, competition and accountability to improve American school systems. Charter schools have been a particularly important in the District of Columbia. Have charter schools helped or hurt the District’s children? (Parslow, Kane)

9. November 4: Health policy for the non-elderly

Health is viewed differently from other goods and services; the market works less well but there is a distinctively American struggle over limiting the role of the government. The 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act represents not the end of this struggle but just another milestone. Examines the market for health care, the problems of access and pricing for programs that serve the non-elderly poor in particular.

Questions for Discussion
Why does the market work poorly for health care? Should we be concerned that health care takes a large share of GDP since it provides great gains in wellbeing? Does society have an obligation to ensure health care for all?

Topic for Debate

No piece of legislation in the last 25 years has been more comprehensive or more controversial than the Affordable Care Act. Every Republican contender promised to repeal it and on September 30, 2013 it was the source of the impasse on passing a Continuing Resolution to keep the government running. In the meantime the ACA has begun to change various aspects of the American health care system. The focus of this debate is on just one element, but perhaps the most critical one and certainly the most inflammatory, the requirement that all residents of the United States obtain health insurance The point in contention is whether it is good public policy. Emphasis again on providing criteria for making that decision and representing the criteria, other than legal, for the two sides. Schober, Gross

Readings
Tsung-Mei Cheng (2010) “Understanding The 'Swiss Watch' Function Of Switzerland's Health System” *Health Affairs*, 29, no.8 pp1442-1451 (optional but a very interesting read)

10. November 11: Homelessness

Case study in emergence of a new social problem. Liebow's work constitutes an instant classic of ethnographic description of a population. Jencks book is a fascinating example of piecing together a variety of sources to describe an elusive phenomenon. Difficulty of developing effective policies for such a multi-risk population.

*Topic for Debate*

Is there a housing solution to the homeless problem? Hunt, Mullaney-Loss

*Readings*

Jencks *The Homeless* pp.21-40, 61-74, 103-124
Liebow, Eliot *Tell Them Who I Am* pp.1-49
Burt, M "*What Will it Take to End Homelessness*" Urban Institute

11. November 18: Long Term Care Policy

The cost of long-term care can bankrupt even middle class elderly couples. Yet it is hard to motivate couples to think about the problem of financing such care at an age when insurance is affordable. What are the potential solutions to this? How do other countries manage the problem?

*Topic for Debate*

Should Medicare cover long-term care? Xiao, Baizer

*Readings:*
Feder, Komisar and Friedland: 2007 “Long Term Care Policy Options for the Future”, Georgetown University (read pages 1-34 carefully; skim after that)  
Brown and Finkelstein (2011): "The Market For Private Long-Term Care Insurance" NBER (25 pages)  
Smith: “The Role of Long Term Care in Health Reform” Heritage Foundation, 2009 congressional testimony (12 pages; skim)  
Estes and Weiner: “The Politics of Long-Term Care” The Urban Institute, 1999  
German Ministry of Health (2004) Brief Outline of the German Long-term Care System (6 pages)  
Clark: “Additional Health Issues: Long Term Care”, pp 316-343, The Economics of an Aging Society, 2004 (optional)  

First draft of paper due

12. November 25: Public and Private Health Insurance for the Elderly

Historical evolution of US health policies for the elderly. Discussion of Medicare debate and future challenges. How should Medicare and Medicaid be co-ordinated? Part D, the Prescription Plan for Medicare recipients, has proven politically very popular and extremely expensive. How should it be evaluated in terms of equity and efficiency?

Topic for Debate

Social Security can be saved; it faces only normative and political obstacles. But can Medicare be saved? Berday-Sachs, Chen

Readings:  
DWS: pp.175-269 (skim).  
National Research Council (2010): “Medicare and Medicaid”, from Choosing our Nation’s Fiscal Future, pp.75-102  

13. December 2. Presentations

Making a presentation is very helpful for understanding the strengths and weaknesses of your paper, which is why I schedule it before the end of the semester. There are 21 students in the class so not all presentations can be made in the regular class time. Some of the presentations will be made at a different time in the same week. We will work out a mutually convenient second period.
14. December 9. How do other wealthy nations deal with poverty alleviation and income inequality?

Other nations have very different approaches to reducing poverty, providing education and helping the elderly. These differences reflect variations in history, culture and institutional arrangements. Examining how other countries deal with these matters can inform US debates.

Questions

What are the sources and consequences of the more redistributive policies of Western European nations? How do we learn from the experiences of nations that have very different histories, attitudes, governmental and economic structures? How will Western European countries change social policy in face of their long-term fiscal crisis?

Topic for Debate

The United States is almost unique among rich Western nations in its refusal to mandate paid parental leave. Should the US move toward paid maternal and or parental leave? This should draw on the experiences of other countries. Peightel, Ogle,

Akramov will present on inequality and social policy in Uzbekistan.

Readings

Jencks “Does Inequality Matter?” Daedalus 2002 49-65
Siegelman, R. "Welfare and Dependency in Switzerland" Public Interest (1986), #82 pp.106-121. [old and flawed but interesting]

Final exam handed out December 10, due back December 17