

**HUNTER COLLEGE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
City University of New York**

**Mini Paper Assignment For All SSW 701 Sections
Fall 2009**

**SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY & SERVICES; I
Introduction to Social Welfare Policy & Services**

MINI PAPER ASSIGNMENT

ALL your papers are based on the readings found on the syllabus. Most of the assigned readings are in the Course Pak (CP) or available Online (OL), directly from your syllabus. A few books or journals are on reserve in the HCSSW library. There are 1 or 2 books that you may want to buy. There is no textbook.

I MINI-PAPERS The following series of 10 Mini-Papers are intended to (1) develop an understanding of the basic concepts, principles, and themes of social welfare policy and services; (2) to promote your informed classroom activity as participants and listeners; and (3) to develop skills in identifying and distilling key ideas and expressing them concisely. The six mini-papers that you write comprise your written work for the class. There is no term paper.

1. Of the 10 Mini Paper assignments, you will be expected to write 6. Of the 6 mini-papers, two are required: Unit I (Defining Social Policy and the Social Welfare System) and Unit X (Policy Meets Practice: Changing Social Welfare Policy). You may select the four other mini-papers from any of the remaining units. All papers except the first one will be graded. (HCSSW uses a Credit, No Credit system)
2. Each mini-paper corresponds to a specific unit on the syllabus.
 - a). The Mini-Paper assignments are listed by Unit Number. The Unit numbers for each assignment correspond directly to the Unit numbers on the course syllabus.
 - b) Each Mini-Paper includes several questions that need to be addressed. You can answer the questions separately or integrate them into a single essay as long as you cover all the points.
 - c) Each Mini-Paper should be from 4-5 double-spaced typed pages except for the last paper (Unit X) which should be 5-7 pages.
 - d) If you cannot submit a typed paper, very neatly hand-written papers will be accepted. If you choose this option, used lined paper and skip lines to facilitate legibility. Hand-written papers must be an equivalent length to a typed paper. One double-spaced typewritten page is about 250 words.

DUE DATE: Each mini-paper is due **THE DAY THE TOPIC IS SCHEDULED FOR CLASS DISCUSSION**. At the end of class you will be asked to hand in your mini-paper OR a note saying you are exempting yourself from that paper (include your name, date, and the Unit Topic and number.) I will let you know each week if a paper is due the following week.

THE MINI PAPERS

UNIT I Defining Social Welfare Policy and the Social Welfare System (EP2.1.1)

1. Based on the Pople & Leighninger and the Phyllis Day readings write a brief definition of social welfare policy that makes sense to you at this point.

- 2 The core of the US social welfare system consists Social Insurance programs (Social Security, Unemployment Insurance, Worker's Compensation, Medicare) and Public Assistance programs (AFDC/TANF, Food Stamps, Medicaid etc). The Social Insurance and Public Assistance programs serve different populations and represent very different social welfare philosophies.
 - a. Drawing on Tussing's article and the other readings discuss why the Social Insurance programs are more popular than public assistance programs.
 - b. After you understand the difference between the two kinds of programs, ask someone you know (who is not otherwise informed) what they think about "Social Security" (social insurance) and "welfare" (i.e. public assistance) and why? How did their comments compare to Tussing's observations?" (Don't tell them what you've read until after you heard from them).

3. How did the definitions of social policy presented in the readings compare to your own ideas prior to doing this mini-paper. Identify two facts, statements, or points in the readings that either surprised, interested, or disturbed you and indicate why

4. How do Jansson's rationales for participating in advocacy mesh with your understandings of what professional social workers do?.

UNIT II—Historical Background of the US Social Welfare System. (EP 2.1.3)

The readings in this unit discuss the history and development of the social welfare system (also referred to as social welfare policy or the welfare state). Since the 1900s changes in social, economic and political conditions have created the need for national social welfare provision.

- 1 Based on Blau and Abramovitz identify the main historical periods in US social welfare history in the 20th century (1900s). *Select two of these periods.* Identify and discuss (a), the major policy developments in the period (b) the ideology of the each periods and how it shaped social policy, and (c) two or three social, economic or political developments that also influenced social policy.

2. Discuss the role of race and racism in the development of the welfare state (see Omni and Winant).

3. Orloff brings a feminist perspective to the discussion of the history of US Welfare State. What does this add to our knowledge of the social welfare system?

UNIT III—Ideological Perspectives or Welfare State Frameworks (EP 2.1.3)

Ideas about the role and function of the welfare state vary widely across the political spectrum.

1. Compare, contrast, and discuss the conservative, liberal, radical views regarding the role and function of the welfare state. Look at what each has to say about (a) human nature, (b) the role of the government (see also Mullaly;s discussion of economic and political beliefs) in society (c) the causes of social problems and (d) the view of social welfare.

2. In what ideological perspective would you place Obama's view of domestic social policy. Explain your choice.

3. Summarize both (a) Feminist Perspective on the welfare state and (b) the concept of Welfare Racism? Why are these perspectives important to social workers?

4. Discuss your own reactions to the different frameworks presented in this unit.

UNIT IV-The Welfare State Today (EP 2.1.3, 2.1.5, 2.1.9).

1. The U-Turn. Abramovitz (IV--A) explains the changes in the welfare state since the mid-1970s as a U-Turn in Public Policy. She argues that since the mid-1970s US social welfare policy has sought to "undo" the social welfare policies established in response to the Great Depression of the 1930s (i.e. the New Deal) and replace them with

another model(various referred to as Reaganomics, neoliberalism conservatism) .Discuss the main goals of the shift from a pro to an anti -welfare state approach and why it occurred (economic crisis).Draw also on Martinez and George (IV-B) as needed

2.What does William Greider (IV-A) mean when he says that social welfare policy has “rolled back the 20th century.” What is your reaction to his discussion of conservative social policy?

3. Give a Brief definition of Neoliberalism (See Martinez and George, IV-B_

3. Debate has begun as to whether or not President Obama’s policies represent *another and a different* U-Turn in public policy. Based on Obama’s views the role of the government (see Unit III) what do you think and why?

UNIT V. Retrenchment Methods and Impact on Social Programs (EP 2.1.2, 2.1.3,2.1.9)

The readings in Unit V discuss various strategies for shrinking the welfare state that appeared in the mid-1970s and continue to this day. Although the social welfare system has survived and in some cases grown, the policies proposed and implemented since the early 1980s (Reagan Administration) dramatically changed the size, impact, and direction of the social welfare system.

The readings in Unit V provide an overview of the main methods (or strategies) used to dismantle the welfare state: (1) tax cuts, (2) defunding (budget cuts), (3) privatization, (4) devolution, (5) punishment and deterrence, and (6) the impact of these methods on service workers and agencies, It also include readings on Obama’s Stimulus Package

Describe and discuss (1) tax cut tactic and its impact on people and programs, (2) one other tactic & its impact on people and programs and (3) the impact of retrenchment on agency workers and programs.

Ask some people who have been at the agency for a while how such strategies have affected agency programs and the lives of clients.

How does Obama’s stimulus package differ from the Retrenchment Approach?

UNIT VI--The Social Welfare System-Who Benefits? Who Loses? (E.P.2.1.3, 2.1.9)

Popular wisdom holds that money for government programs goes only to the poor. But ,in fact these government dollars serve a host of non-poor individuals and organizations.

1 Abramovitz claims that "everyone is on welfare" Discuss Abramovitz's argument. Given this, why do you think the public believes that *only* the poor benefit from government spending?

2. From Unit VI-B (1-3) Discuss two groups that benefit from social welfare policy and how and why they benefit. Indicate some ways that you or people you know have benefited from the social welfare system. (You may want to ask you parents, relatives, or friends what government programs they have used and find out what difference if any, it made in their lives.

3. From Unit IV B (1-5) Discuss two groups that lose t from social welfare policy and how and why they loose. Indicate some ways in which your clients or people you know have lost out in the social welfare system and what might be done to reverse this.

4. Identify the population *served by your agency* and indicate how clients benefit or loose from your program and more generally from government social welfare policy.

UNIT VII--Poverty and Inequality: Who's Poor and Why? (EP 2.1.3, 2.1.4, 2.1.5, 2.1.6, 2.1.9)

Poverty is not evenly distributed in the United States (or elsewhere or that matter)

1 Who's Poor? Drawing on the readings in Unit VII-A (Who’s Poor). Identify the main groups of people who live in poverty

2. Ask the following Gallop Poll question to two people you know and (if appropriate to one of your clients):" *People who have income below a certain level can be considered poor. That level is called a poverty line. What amount of annual income would you use as a poverty line for a family of four (husband, wife, two children) living in this community?*"

- a. How does their answer compare to the official (US government) 2009 poverty line of \$22,050 family off four (four) and \$18,310 (family of three) and to the Sufficiency Standard described or one of the other alternative measure of poverty?
- b. Discuss with them the difference between their estimate, the poverty line, and the Self- Sufficiency Standard which is a few years older than the poverty line and has not been updated)
- c. Indicate their reaction as well as your own to any discrepancies that emerged
- d. Ask the same people why they think the poor are poor and indicate their answers.

3 **Causes of Poverty.** Unit VII-C indicates that there is more than one way to explain the cause of poverty and inequality. Compare and contrast the explanations of poverty discussed by Popple and Leighninger, Highlight the key arguments made for each explanation and how their recommendations for reducing or eliminating poverty. The authors identify each explanation ideologically. Drawing on this information as well as Mullan, indicate the ideological perspective of each explanation and suggest why it has received that label

4. What do feminist explanations add to our understanding of the causes of poverty?
5. What does the Aspen Roundtable say about race and poverty.
6. Which view (s) on poverty do you think best explains the poverty faced by one of your clients (or someone you know)? And why

UNIT VIII--Racism and Social Welfare Policy (EP 2.1.4, 2.1.5, 2.1.9)

Racism has been a major and divisive factor in electoral politics and in the development of social welfare policy.

1. Unit VIII-A defines the structure and operation of racism in general. Write a brief essay that discusses that meaning of race and the difference in the meaning of prejudice, racial discrimination, institutionalized (structural) racism. You may want to take another look at the article by Omni & Winant "The Racial State" (Unit II-History)
2. The readings in Unit VIII-B look at how racism shapes social welfare policy.
 - a. Select two issues and discuss how racism affects social welfare policy. You may want to look again at the article by Neubeck and Casenave on "welfare racism" (Unit III-Ideological perspectives)
 - b. Thinking of your own agency, how does racism affect its practices, programs and policies? Do not identify the agency by name, but do indicate the type of service it provides.

UNIT IX--Women and Social Policy. (EP 2.1.4, 2.1.5, 2.1.9)

The majority of social work clients and workers are women. Women are also over- represented among the poor. Nonetheless, social welfare policy does not always meet the needs of women effectively.

1. Based on Unit IX-A write a brief overview essay that defines and discusses sexism and heterosexism) in social welfare policy.
- 2/ The readings in Unit IX =B look at how sexism and heterosexism shape social welfare policy. Select two issues and discuss how sexism and heterosexism affects social welfare policy,
- 3 Based on the readings and your own observations of a social agency with which you are familiar, describe any evidence you see of sexist practices. (identify the agency by type not by name).

UNIT X: Policy Meets Practice: Changing the Social Welfare System (5-7 pgs). (EP 2.1.1, 2.1.8, 2.1.9 Select an advocacy or policy/action group known to you or that you are interested in. Based on interviews the group's leaders/members and any written or online material about the agency that is available, describe the group, its goals, its membership and major type of funding source(s). What policy issues/problems does the groups addressing and why? What type and level of policy or program change they are seeking, if any and why? What strategies are they using and why? What problems/constraints/successes /failures have they faced and why? What is their next step? What is their vision for future in relation to their goals? Integrate one of two readings assigned for this unit into your discussion