

**GEORGE WARREN BROWN SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY**

SPRING 2002

**SEMINAR ON SOCIAL THEORY, SOCIAL POLICY &
POLITICAL ACTION TOWARD HUMAN LIBERATION**

S65-5046.01

CREDIT HOURS: 3

INSTRUCTOR: David G. Gil

GRADE: L/G

OFFICE: Goldfarb 232

ROOM: Brown 205

OFFICE HOURS: By Appointment

TIME: February 14, 15-18

ADDRESS: Heller Graduate School

M 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Brandeis University

Th 5:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Waltham, MA 02454-9110

FSaSu 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

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I. COURSE DOMAIN AND BOUNDARIES

The domain of this seminar includes:

Social institutions and social policy

Human needs and human interests

Human consciousness

Social and individual values, social work values and ethics

Social change toward social justice for individuals, social groups and social classes

Integration of political action for social justice and human liberation into social work practice

II. OBJECTIVES

The seminar develops theoretical perspectives on social policy and social change, and a framework for analyzing and developing social policies. It identifies major institutional systems that function in some form in any society throughout human evolution. These institutional systems may be considered key variables of social policies and of social change practice.

The seminar studies also the symbolic universe of human societies, the consciousness of individuals, and social and individual values, all of which emerge from, and in turn influence, the living conditions of people, and the quality of human relations within and among societies.

The seminar explores also strategies for social change toward human liberation and social justice for individuals, social groups and social classes, and integration of political action into social work practice.

The seminar aims to assist students to think critically, to clarify their assumptions and values, and to develop their own positions on social issues, rather than to accept uncritically unexamined assumptions and positions which tend to be taken-for-granted in their cultures.

The orientation of the seminar is historical, cross-cultural, and multi-disciplinary. Accordingly, it uses insights from anthropology, biology, demography, ecology, economics, history, philosophy, politics, policy studies, psychology, and sociology; and from studies of minority issues and women's issues. In addition to readings, the seminar uses the knowledge, experiences, reflections and insights of students as sources for studies and discussions.

Assumptions and Values

The seminar is neither free of assumptions, nor value-neutral. More specifically, it involves the following assumptions and values:

- * Social ills and social problems, perceived and experienced by individuals, social groups, and social classes, are usually rooted in social institutions, values, and policies. To overcome and prevent such ills and problems, they need to be confronted on societal rather than merely individual levels, and development-inhibiting institutions, values and policies would have to be transformed into development-conducive alternatives.
- * All people should be considered and treated as equals in intrinsic worth, rights, and responsibilities, in spite of diversity among them.
- * Scholarship and practice ought to promote conditions conducive to human development for everyone, anywhere, and ought to aim to overcome and prevent natural and societal obstacles to such development.

III. EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

Students are expected to gain insights into the nature and dynamics of human needs and social policy, the emergence and functions of consciousness, the role of values in the policy process, strategies for social change toward social justice and human liberation, and integration of political action toward social justice into social work practice.

IV. RELATIONSHIP TO PRACTICUM LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Knowledge gained in this course will provide a basis for meeting the following practicum learning objectives:

1. Student is able to apply basic humanitarian and social work values and ethics to practice at the concentration practicum site.
2. Student demonstrates an ability to use supervision to improve the student's practice.
3. Student is able to apply and evaluate empirically supported theories to practice at the practicum site.
4. Student demonstrates an understanding of and the ability to use service delivery systems and resources relevant to the practicum site.
5. The student's conduct and communication demonstrate social work professionalism.
6. Student demonstrates competence in work with diverse clients.
7. Student understands the dynamics of social and economic justice, especially the consequences of poverty, discrimination, exploitation and oppression in human societies in the context of concentration practicum work.
8. Student can effectively assess and intervene in client systems at an advanced level.

V. READINGS

The instructor's books, *Unravelling Social Policy, 5th edition* (Rochester, VT: Schenkman Books, 1992) and *Confronting Injustice and Oppression* (New York: Columbia University Press 1998) serve as texts for the seminar. A classified bibliography of recommended readings is attached.

VI. ORGANIZATION OF SEMINAR

Seminar Themes

Fragmented vs. holistic perspectives on social policies and social change.

Aspects of the human condition relevant to social policies and social change.

Real and perceived human needs and human interests

Conceptual model of social policies, social institutions, and social change.

Criteria for evaluating and comparing systems of social policies.

Variability of social policies and social change.

Social policies and social problems.

Social policies and economic policies.

Social policies and human nature.

Social reality, symbolic universe, and individual consciousness.

Themes of individual consciousness:

Images of established ways of life.

Systems of ideas, beliefs and meanings.

Perceptions of individual and collective interests.

Social and personal values.

Ideologies.

Critical consciousness and social change.

Processes affecting human needs, social institutions, social policies, and social change.

Major stages of social evolution.

Analysis and development of social policies.

The social context of the United States.

The "welfare-state" or "fine-tuning structural ill-fare".

Social policies and values conducive to human development.

Strategies and practice for social change toward human liberation.

Implications for practice in human services.

VII. ROLE OF FACULTY AND STUDENTS

In accordance with the educational philosophy of this seminar, motivation to study is enhanced when people assume responsibility for their own learning. Students are, therefore, expected to develop learning goals and study projects, write papers on topics of their choice related to the seminar, and evaluate their own learning. Written work should be submitted during or after the term. By the end of the term, students should submit a statement indicating their goals for the seminar, the work they did to accomplish their goals, and an evaluation of their accomplishments. The instructor serves as facilitator of seminar discussions and as a resource person and consultant. The seminar is conducted through discussion on themes, rather than through lectures.

Please Note: If you have a learning disability, sensory, or physical disability or other impairment, or if English is your second language, and you may need special assistance in lecture, reading assignments, and/or testing, please contact the instructor.

VIII. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING CRITERIA

See comments under item VII above.

IX. COURSE OUTLINE

See Seminar Themes under item VI above.

X. MAILING ADDRESS FOR CLASS WORK

Please mail written work and learning evaluations to:

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