

**UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE**  
**COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK**

**SW 512 Social, Economic, and Political Environments**  
**Wednesday 1:00-2:50 (2 credit hours)**

**Instructor:** Phyllis Thompson, LCSW  
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**Code of Conduct**

It is the student's responsibility to have read the College of Social Work Ethical Academic and Professional Conduct Code that is in the College of Social Work MSSW Handbook ([www.utk.csw.edu](http://www.utk.csw.edu)).

**The Honor Statement**

An essential feature of The University of Tennessee is a commitment to maintaining an atmosphere of intellectual integrity and academic honesty. As a student of the University, I pledge that I will neither knowingly give nor receive any inappropriate assistance in academic work, thus affirming my own personal commitment to honor and integrity. (*Hilltopics*, 2007).

**Disability**

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a documented disability or if you have emergency information to share, please contact The University of Tennessee Office of Disability Services at 191 Hoskins Library (865-974-6087). This will ensure that you are properly registered for services.

**Course Description**

This course is a required foundation course. Examines the profound influences on and critical interfaces of client systems with the world in which we live. Incorporates local to international information about social, economic, and political trends and innovations, and about effects of social problems, injustice, and power on client systems and on social change and service delivery systems. The course pays special attention to the process of devolution and globalization and the influence of these economic and political forces on the distribution of resources. International comparative social patterns are analyzed to understand economic justice from a national and international perspective. The history of the social and political environment, both nationally and abroad, are considered to enhance students' understanding of how political decisions shape the social welfare arena in which we practice.

**Course Rationale**

The Social, Economic, and Political environment course provides a foundation for understanding the interconnectedness of various economic, social, and political theories and systems that influence oppression and social injustice, and the challenge of social workers to change oppressive social systems. Social work students, therefore, must

understand and critically analyze local, national, and international interconnectedness of macro level social arrangements and how these arrangements may result in structural oppression, discrimination, and social injustice. Students require evidence-based knowledge in preparation for culturally competent practice in work with multicultural client systems, organizations, agencies, and communities.

### **Course Competencies**

By the completion of this course, the students are expected to be able to demonstrate (through course activities, assignments, and/or exams):

1. Trace the history and trends of the economic and political system in the United States that affect how the U.S. welfare system is constructed. (*content: define the political economy and the relationship with social welfare; identify the historic trends in economic theory and the changes in political ideology over time (e.g. supply side economics and neo-liberal/conservative movements; utilize information technology to analyze economic and political trends).*)
2. Describe the political process in the United States, and how power, and influence prevent or promote social and economic justice within and across multicultural populations. (*content: how interest group politics influence the political process; understanding the political system; global hegemony, first and third world economic issues and immigration; structural inequality; distributive justice).*)
3. Use social and economic justice as a basis for analyzing the effects of social, economic, and political trends and the resultant interactions between individual, families, groups, organizations and communities. (*content: the influence of values of the dominant culture of societal choices in economic and political systems and the profession; privilege; the differential effect on client systems, communities, and organizations of tax systems and benefits).*)
4. Connect economic and political decisions to peoples' access to resources, locally, nationally, and internationally, and recognize the ethical dilemmas inherent in lacking resources. (*content: tax system; economic, distributive justice; disparities in health and welfare; devolution of resources and services; corporate welfare; poverty gap and income/wealth inequality; use information technology to analyze access to resources).*)
5. Analyze and compare national and international social, economic and political conditions using existing available statistics to identify differences in societies' access to resources. (*content: use existing national statistics to compare social welfare and access across states; use international comparative literature to assess differences across countries in social welfare policies and practices; use information technology to identify disparities in access to resources).*)
6. Analyze client systems and the relationships of power among individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities and societies, using theories of empowerment, participatory change, conscientization, and social construction to understand the

relationships of power and advantage in society. (*content: theories of empowerment, social construction, popular education, and participatory change in the context of group/population membership; how groups attain powers*).

**Course Requirements/Plan for Evaluation:**

Active Participation.....	15%
Attendance.....	15%
Critical Thinking Assignments.....	20%
Final Paper .....	50%

See the appropriate BlackBoard link for instructions about each of the above.

**Students are expected to attend every class session.** It is essential that students notify the instructor by e-mail ([pthomp11@utk.edu](mailto:pthomp11@utk.edu) ) in a timely manner if circumstances interfere with class attendance or the completion of course assignments.

**The final course grade will be based on the following:**

- A = 95-100 (Superior performance, exceeds expectations)
- B+ = 90-94 (Better than satisfactory performance)
- B = 85-89 (Satisfactory performance, meets expectations)
- C+ = 80-84 (Less than satisfactory performance)
- C = 73-79 (Performance well below the standard expected of graduate students)
- D = 66-72
- F = <66

**Required Texts:**

Fine, M. & Weis, L. 1998. *The unknown city: The lives of poor and working-class young adults*. Beacon Press. Massachusetts.

Ehrenreich, B. (2001). *Nickel and dimed*. Henry Holt and Company, LLC. New York.

**Course Content Outline:**

**Session 1 (Aug. 22)**

***Note that readings should be completed before the first class.***

**Required reading:**

Ehrenreich, B. (2001). *Nickel and dimed*, pp. 1-119.

Fine, M. & Weis, L. 1998. *The unknown city: The lives of poor and working-class young adults*, pp. 1-38.

**Session 2 (Aug. 29)**

The political processes and political system in the United States, how interest group politics influence the political process; how power, and influence prevent or promote social and economic justice within and across multicultural populations

**Required readings:**

- Andersen, M.L. & Collins, P.H. (2007). Systems of power and inequality. In M.L. Andersen & P.H. Collins (Eds.), *Race, class & gender: An anthology (6<sup>th</sup> Ed.)*, (pp. 61-90). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Andersen, M.L. & Collins, P.H. (2007). The structure of social institutions. In M.L. Andersen & P.H. Collins (Eds.), *Race, class & gender: An anthology (6<sup>th</sup> Ed.)*, (pp. 267-282). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.
- DeLaney, A. (2002). *Politics for dummies (2nd Ed.)* "Truth in advertising" (pp. 155-170). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Publishing Co.
- DeLaney, A. (2002). *Politics for dummies (2nd Ed.)* "Ten common political mistakes" (pp. 309-312). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Publishing Co.
- Fine, M. & Weis, L. 1998. *The unknown city: The lives of poor and working-class young adults*, pp. 38-83..
- Rubin, L. (2007). Is this a white country, or what? In M.L. Andersen & P.H. Collins (Eds.), *Race, class & gender: An anthology (6<sup>th</sup> Ed.)* (pp. 190-197). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Moore, R.B. (2007). Racist stereotyping in the English language. In M.L. Andersen & P.H. Collins (Eds.), *Race, class & gender: An anthology (6<sup>th</sup> Ed.)* (pp. 365-375). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

**Session 3 (Sept. 5)—CT #1 is due**

Understanding the relationships of power and advantage in society using theories of empowerment, participatory change, conscientization, and social construction

**Required readings:**

- Andersen, M.L. & Collins, P.H. (2007). Why race, class, and gender still matter (pp. 1-16). In M.L. Andersen & P.H. Collins *Race, class & gender: An anthology (6<sup>th</sup> Ed.)* Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Fine, M. & Weis, L. 1998. *The unknown city: The lives of poor and working-class young adults*, pp. 84-107.
- Fook, J. (2002). *Social work: Critical theory and practice*. Sage Publications. Chapter 4- pp. 45-56.
- Lorde, A. (2007). Age, race, class and sex: Women redefining difference. In M.L. Andersen & P.H. Collins *Race, class & gender: An anthology (6<sup>th</sup> Ed.)*, (pp. 52-59). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Schraver, J.M. (1999). Harry Lawrence Lurie and social work's questionable commitment to social and economic justice. In G.R. Lowe & P. N. Reid (Eds.), *The professionalization of poverty: Social work and the poor in the twentieth century* (pp. 121-140). New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Larson, G. & Allen, H. (2006). Conscientization – The experience of Canadian social work students in Mexico. *International Social Work*, 49, 507-518.

### **Session 4 (Sept. 12)**

Historic trends in economic theory and the changes in political ideology over time (e.g. supply side economics and neo-liberal/conservative movements); the political economy and its relationship with social welfare

#### **Required readings:**

- Allard, S. (2007). The changing face of welfare during the Bush administration. *The Journal of Federalism*. 37(3). pp. 304-332.
- Fine, M. & Weis, L. 1998. *The unknown city: The lives of poor and working-class young adults*, pp. 108-132.
- Karger, H.J., & Stoez, D. (2005). Social policy and the American welfare state. In H.J. Karger & D. Stoez, *American Social Welfare Policy: A Pluralist approach* (pp. 1-24). Allyn and Bacon, Inc. (Chapter one)
- Lewis, M.A., & Widerquist, K. (2001). The economic perspective. In M.A. Lewis and K. Widerquist, *Economics for Social Workers: The application of economic theory to social policy and the human services* (pp. 1-14). New York: Columbia University Press. (Chapter one)

### **Session 5 (Sept. 19)**

The influence of values of the dominant culture in terms of economic and political systems and the social work profession; privilege; the differential effect of tax systems and benefits on client systems, communities, and organizations.

#### **Required readings:**

- Fine, M. & Weis, L. 1998. *The unknown city: The lives of poor and working-class young adults*, pp. 133-160.
- Stoesz, D. (1999). Ideological nostalgia, intellectual narcosis. In G.R. Lowe & P. N. Reid (Eds.), *The professionalization of poverty: Social work and the poor in the twentieth century* (pp. 141-160) New York: Aldine de Gruyter. (Chapter nine)
- McIntosh, P. (2007). White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. In M.L. Andersen & P.H. Collins (Eds.), *Race, class & gender: An anthology (6<sup>th</sup> Ed.)* (pp. 98-102). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Kilty, K., & Vidal de Haymes, M. (2000). Racism, nativism, and exclusion: Public policy, immigration, and the Latino experience in the U. S. *Journal of Poverty*, 4(1/2), 1-25.

### **Session 6 (September 26) CT #2 is due**

#### **Required Readings:**

- Ehrenreich, B. (2001). *Nickel and dimed*. Henry Holt and Company, LLC. New York. pp, 121-221.

Fine, M. & Weis, L. 1998. *The unknown city: The lives of poor and working-class young adults*, pp. 161-185.

### **Session 7 (Oct. 3)**

The effects of social, economic, and political trends and interactions between individual, families, groups, organizations and communities in relation to social and economic justice.

#### **Required readings:**

Fine, M. & Weis, L. 1998. *The unknown city: The lives of poor and working-class young adults*, pp. 186—205.

Friedman, T. (1999). *The lexus and the olive tree: Understanding globalization*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux. Chapter 2- pp. 25-37.

Jennings, J. & Kusbnick, L. (2002). Poverty as race, power, and wealth. In M.L. Andersen & P.H. Collins (Eds.), *Race, class & gender: An anthology (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.)*(pp. 139-143). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

Sklar, H. (2007). Growing gulf between rich and the rest of us. In M.L. Andersen & P.H. Collins (Eds.), *Race, class & gender: An anthology (6<sup>th</sup> Ed.)* (pp. 116-117). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

Passel, J.S. Capps, R. & Fix, M.E. (2004). *Undocumented immigrants: Facts and figures*. Retrieved on July 16, 2007 from <http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=1000587>

Vidal de Haymes, M., & Kilty, K. (2007). Latino population growth, characteristics, and settlement trends: Implications for social work education in a dynamic political climate. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 43(1), 101-116.

### **Session 8 (Oct. 10)**

How economic and political decisions (e.g., tax system, economic and distributive justice) impact peoples' access to resources, locally, nationally, and internationally; social welfare and access across states; the ethical dilemmas inherent in lacking resources

#### **Required readings:**

Fine, M. & Weis, L. 1998. *The unknown city: The lives of poor and working-class young adults*, pp. 206-227.

Friedman, T. (2007). *The world is flat: A brief history of the twenty-first century*. "If it's not happening, it's because you're not doing it" (pp. 489-514). New York: Picador/Farrar, Straus & Giroux

Jordan, B. (2005). Social theory and social policy: Choice, order and human well-being. *European Journal of Social Theory*. 8(2). pp.149-170.

Jurik, N.C., Cavender, G. & Cowgill, J. (2006). Searching for social capital in U.S. Microenterprise Development Programs. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 33, 151-170.

Reingold, D., Pirog, M., & Brady, M. (2007). Empirical evidence on faith-based organizations in an era of welfare reform. *Social Service Review*. 81 (2), 245-283.

### **Session 9 (Oct. 17)**

Disparities in health and welfare; devolution of resources and services; corporate welfare; poverty gap and income/wealth inequality; use of information technology to analyze access to resources

#### **Required readings:**

- Collins, C. (2007). Aid to dependent corporations: Exposing federal handouts to the wealthy. In M.L. Andersen & P.H. Collins (Eds.), *Race, class & gender: An anthology (6<sup>th</sup> Ed.)* (pp. 422-426). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Fine, M. & Weis, L. 1998. *The unknown city: The lives of poor and working-class young adults*, pp. 228-250.
- Langston, D. (2007). Tired of playing monopoly? In M.L. Andersen & P.H. Collins (Eds.), *Race, class & gender: An anthology (6<sup>th</sup> Ed.)* (pp. 118-126). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Lewis, M.A., & Widerquist, K. (2001). The economics of poverty. In M.A. Lewis and K. Widerquist, *Economics for Social Workers: The application of economic theory to social policy and the human services* (pp. 129-142). New York: Columbia University Press.  
(Chapter nine)
- DeNavas-Walt, C., Proctor, B.D. & Lee, C.H. (2006) *Income, poverty, and health insurance coverage in the United States: 2005* (P60-231). Washington, DC: U. S. Census Bureau.

### **Session 10 (Oct. 24)**—

Differences in societies' access to resources according to national and international social, economic and political conditions

#### **Required readings:**

- Fine, M. & Weis, L. 1998. *The unknown city: The lives of poor and working-class young adults*, pp. 251-263.
- Friedman, T. (2007). *The world is flat: A brief history of the twenty-first century*. "The virgin of Guadalupe" (pp. 403-440). New York: Picador/Farrar, Straus & Giroux
- Friedman, T. (2007). *The world is flat: A brief history of the twenty-first century*. "The unflat world" (pp. 533-579). New York: Picador/Farrar, Straus & Giroux
- Furman, R., Langer, C., Sanchez, T., & Negi, N. (2007). A qualitative study of immigration policy and practice dilemmas for social work students. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 43(1), 133-146.
- Lewis, M.A., & Widerquist, K. (2001). The economics of health care. In M.A. Lewis and K. Widerquist, *Economics for Social Workers: The application of economic theory to social policy and the human services* (pp. 143-156). New York: Columbia University Press (Chapter ten).
- Harford, T. (2007). *The undercover economist*. "Beer, fries, and globalization" (pp. 189-217). New York: Random House.
- Harford, T. (2007). *The undercover economist*. "Why poor countries are poor" (pp. 166-188). New York: Random House.
- Walton, M. (2004). Neoliberalism in Latin America: Good, bad, or incomplete? *Latin*

**Session 11 (Oct. 31)- CT #3 is due**

Global hegemony, first and third world economic issues and immigration; structural inequality; distributive justice

**Required readings:**

- Askeland, G., & Payne, M. (2006). Social work education's cultural hegemony. *International Social Work*, 49(6): 731–743.
- Fine, M. & Weis, L. 1998. *The unknown city: The lives of poor and working-class young adults*, pp. 251-263.
- Friedman, T. (2006). *The world is flat: The globalized world in the twenty-first century*. Penguin Books. (Chapter 13, pp. ).
- Soifer, S. (2002). Principles and practices of community economic development In A.R. Roberts & G.J. Greene (Eds.), *Social Workers' Desk Reference* (pp. 557-562). New York, NY: Oxford University Press. (*chapter 101*)

**Session 12 (Nov. 7)—**

Differences across countries in social welfare policies and practices

**Required readings:**

- Amott, T., & Matthaei, J. (1996). Race, class, gender, and women's works. In Andersen, M. & Collins, P. (Eds.) (2006), *Race, class, & gender: An anthology*. Sixth Edition. (pp. 283-292). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.
- Andersen, G., & Hussey, P. (2000). Population aging: A comparison among industrialized countries. *Health Affairs* (May/June), 191-203.
- Fine, M. & Weis, L. 1998. *The unknown city: The lives of poor and working-class young adults*, pp. 264-313..
- Friedman, T. (2007). *The world is flat: A brief history of the twenty-first century*. "What happens when we all have dog's hearing?" (pp. 515-532). New York: Picador/Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

**Session 13 (Nov. 14)**

Popular education, and participatory change in the context of group/population membership; how groups attain power

**Required readings:**

- Carroll, J., & Minkler, M. (2000). Friere's message for social workers: Looking back, looking ahead. *Journal of Community Practice*, 8 (1), 21-36.
- Castelloe, P., Watson, T. & White, C. (2002). Participatory change: An integrative approach to community practice. *Journal of Community Practice*, 10, 7-31.
- Spadacini, B. & Nichols, P. (1998). Campaigning against female genital mutilation in Ethiopia using popular education. *Gender & Development*, 6, 44-52.

Martinson, M., & Minkler, M. (2006). Civic engagement and older adults: A critical perspective. *The Gerontologist*, 46(3), 318-324.

**Session 14 (Nov. 21)--**

The use of information technology in analyzing economic and political trends

**Required readings**

Friedman, T. (2007). *The world is flat: A brief history of the twenty-first century*. "The new age of connectivity: When the web went around and Netscape went public" (pp. 60-77). New York: Picador/Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Friedman, T. (1999). *The Lexus and the olive tree: Understanding globalization*. Thorndike Press. (chapter 18-pp. 349-378)

**Session 15 (Nov. 28)**

Last Class

Semester Review/Wrap-up

Final Papers Due