

University of Tennessee College of Social Work

SW 512- 004 Social, Economic, and Political Environments
(2 credit hours)
Fall 2008 Nashville Campus Online
(Revised 8/20/08)

Instructor: Kate M. Chaffin, CMSW

Office Hours: By appointment

Email: kmccclern@utk.edu

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).

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*, 2008).

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 2227 Dunford Hall (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. (Practice-F.1; Values/ethics-F. 1; Pops at-risk & SJ-F.2; Policy- F.1). *(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. (Policy-F.7; Pops at-risk & SJ- F.2, F.3; Practice-F.8; Diversity-F6). *(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. (Values/ethics-F.1; Pops at-risk & SJ-F.4, 5; Policy- F.1, F.7, CT/EBP- F.4). *(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. (Pops at-risk & SJ-F.3, F.4; Values/ethics-F.1, F.2, F.3, F.4).*(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.(CT/EBP-F.3; Pops at-risk & SJ-F.3; Policy-F.7; Research-F.1). (*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, **recognizing the role of social worker as learner and engaging client systems as experts of their own experience**. (Pops at-risk & SJ-F.2, F.3). (*content: theories of empowerment, social construction, popular education, and participatory change in the context of group/population membership; how groups attain powers*).

Grades and Assignments:

Discussion Board	25%
Group Project:	25%
Group Presentation and Discussion	25%
Final Paper:	25%

Discussion Boards: Discussion Boards in this class will focus on social, economic and political environments on a local, national and international level. Students will be expected to critically examine a topic and apply their weekly readings to form an informed and knowledgeable opinion about a topic. This topic will be open for debate amongst all students and all students will be expected to reply critically to other student's posts. Students will be expected to discuss social work implications within their posts.

Group Project: Since this is an election year, this is a good time to explore oppressed populations within this country and how economics and politics play a role in their lives. Students will work in groups to present information to the class as a whole. Students will be expected to use PowerPoint and various other media in order to enhance the presentation experience. This project should address the impact politics and economics has on these populations. Students will work in groups that I select and will submit their project on Blackboard. Students will be expected to discuss each other's projects via the blackboard discussion board in order to gain greater insight into the issues conveyed.

Final Paper: The final paper will review a film from the list below and integrate the required readings throughout the semester. Be forewarned that these movies contain adult content that may be offensive to you and may challenge your belief systems. With that said, they are accurate portrayals of oppression and human suffering that are encountered by people all over the world. Students will be able to thoughtfully and critically discuss how economic and political decisions impact access to resources both

nationally and/or internationally and also integrate how global hegemony has created a system of inequality. Students will demonstrate and understanding of theories of empowerment, social construction, popular education, and participatory change in the context of group/population membership and how groups attain power.

Approved List of Films: *Please note that some of these films are graphic and difficult to watch. Films with stars next to them are less controversial.*

**Recount*

Syriana

The Last King of Scotland

The Constant Gardener

Blood Diamond

Guidelines: Paper will be between 10 and 15 pages, no more and no less. Double Spaced, using APA format.

Introduction: Purpose of Paper. (10 pts)

Film Synopsis: Brief description of film and issues and characters to be discussed. (10 pts)

Application of Course Materials: This section will cover application of course materials regarding social, economic, and political trends in relation to social justice. Students will be expected to critically analyze the film and structural inequalities as well ethical dilemmas faced as social workers in lacking resources. Students will be able to use theoretical perspectives and apply them directly to the issues of the film. (40 pts)

Conclusion: Students will discuss relationships between film and economic and political relationships with resources. Ethical concerns should be stated here as well as detailing social work implications and how social workers can practice empowerment based skills when working with these populations. (40 pts)

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:

Ehrenreich, B. (2001). *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) getting by in America*. NY: Metropolitan Books. [available local bookstores]

Course Sessions

August 20: Introduction

Discussion of syllabus and course requirements
Introduction of Blackboard site
Nickel and Dimed: Introduction through the end of Chapter 1

August 27: Political systems within the United States and how they affect social and economic justice across multicultural populations.

-Discussion Board #1 *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) getting by in America. Pg1-49*
After Reading pages 1-49 Please discuss how your perceptions may have changed about low wage workers getting by on scarce resources. How does this effect women and minorities and have you found yourself in a similar situation. If so, how did you make it?

Andersen, M.L. & Collins, P.H. (2007). Systems of power and inequality. In M.L. 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 (6th Ed.)*, (pp. 267- 282). 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 (6th Ed.)* (pp. 365-375). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

Session 3 (Sept. 3)—Discussion Board #1 closed 8am CST.

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

Required readings:

Ehrenreich, B. (2001). *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) getting by in America*. NY: Metropolitan Books. Pp.51-119
Fook, J. (2002). *Social work: Critical theory and practice*. Sage Publications. Chapter 4- pp. 45-56.
Schriver, 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.

Session 4 (Sept. 10)

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.

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)

Session 5 (Sept. 17)

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:

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)

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 24) Discussion Board #2

-Discussion Board #2 *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) getting by in America.*

Please discuss worker reluctance in forming labor unions as is the case with Wal-mart, how can workers lobby to change working conditions.

Required Readings:

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

Session 7 (Oct. 1) Discussion Board #2 Closed 8am CST

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:

Friedman, T. (1999). *The Lexus and the olive tree: Understanding globalization*. New York, NT: 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 (4th 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 (6th 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>

Session 8 (Oct. 8)

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:

- 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. 15) Discussion Board # 3:

-Discussion will surround corporations and how this in turn effects working Americans.

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 (6th Ed.)* (pp. 422-426). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Langston, D. (2007). Tired of playing monopoly? In M.L. Andersen & P.H. Collins (Eds.), *Race, class & gender: An anthology (6th 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. 22) — Discussion Board #3 Closed 8am CST.

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

Required readings:

- 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
- 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 America Research Review*, 39, 165-183.

Session 11 (Oct. 29)-**-Submit group presentations via Blackboard**

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.
- 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. 5) — Discussion Board #4

-Please research another countries social welfare policy and discuss the differences you see with the U.S. What would you change, what would you keep the same?

-Begin question and answer sessions of each group presentation

Differences across countries in social welfare policies and practices

Required readings:

- Amott, T., & Matthaiei, 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.
- 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. 12) Discussion Board #4 Closed 8am CST.

-Continue question and answer sessions of each group presentation

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

Session 14 (Nov. 19)—

-Final Paper Due

-Continue question and answer sessions of each group presentation

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. 26)

Last Class

Semester Review/Wrap-up