

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE**  
**COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK**  
**SW 548 ADVANCED POLICY PRACTICE: ADVOCACY, POLICY, AND**  
**LEGISLATIVE PRACTICE**  
**Credit Hours: 2**

Spring 2009  
TR 3:40 – 6:40  
206 Henson Hall

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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 (<http://www.csw.utk.edu/mssw/>).

**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 Office of Disability Services at 2227 Dunford Hall, (865-974-6087). This will ensure that you are properly registered for services.

**Course Description**

This is a required advanced course that focuses on the theory and evidence-based skill sets of policy analysis, development, implementation and change. The course focuses on policy practice in organizations, communities, and regions, and in national and international policy venues. It is guided by the knowledge of, and practice within such areas of policy as health, education, welfare, housing, children, aging-elders, income security, social, economic, and environmental rights and justice, and other areas of significance and interest to the general public and students of social welfare. It provides a framework for policy interventions in client systems including individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, and national and international systems. Students are expected to critically assess and design professional policy practice actions to accomplish evidence-based policy outcomes.

**Course Rationale**

Social workers professionals are first and foremost agents of change for the advancement of human well-being and they can only excel in such an endeavor when they are equipped with the intellectual and experiential tools of advanced advocacy and policy practice. Policy practice, which is heavily influenced by the legislative process, is an integral and essential part of professional social work practice. Defined as social work interventions that formulate, implement, change and analyze policies within the frameworks of evidence-based practice, and critical thinking, and within the context of organizational, community, and legislative venues and processes, it requires not only foundation but also advanced study of social welfare policies, organizational and legislative environments within which they are made, and social work professionals' roles in bringing about progressive changes in the formulation, implementation, and analysis of these policies.

### **Course Competencies**

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

1. The appropriate use of methods of individual advocacy and social change strategies with and on behalf of client systems, including culturally relevant services and programs for clients and potential barriers to those services and programs. SJ-c.2; Diversity-c.1. (*Content: individual versus class or group advocacy; various types of policy practice in organizations, communities, and regions and in national and international policy venues*).
2. Analyzing social problems and the policies designed to alleviate them with an evidence-based policy practice framework. CT/EB c.1. (*Content: planned change policy practice problem solving framework; problems, goals, and objectives, and appropriate policies using a planning framework*).
3. Appropriate application of critical thinking skills in evaluating policies in organizations, communities, governments, and other institutions. CT/EB c.3. (*Content: problems and policies in the context of evidence-based information; stages of the legislative process; policy interventions in client systems, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, and national and international systems*).
4. Utilizing a planned change strategy, develop a plan of advocacy and social change that focuses locally, nationally or globally on an at-risk population to create or change policies to promote social and economic justice, combat discrimination, or increase access to resources. SJ c.1; Policy c.2. (*Content: appropriate target systems at different levels of the problem (e.g. problems at school: targeting school board; problems with laws: target legislation; problems with implementing laws: targets, such as bureaucratic regulations); legislative work in action: federal state, and/or local levels of policy formulation and implementation procedures local and state legislatures and processes*).
5. Design strategies and tactics to target change in organizations, communities, and/or legislative policies that assure culturally responsive and integrated systems for clients. Policy c.2; Diversity c.3. (*Content: types of strategies for change. The media and which*

*type of media on has the most control over. Decision-makers, letter, phone, and email campaigns, and the effectiveness of these tactics).*

6. Recognizing and planning resolution of ethical dilemmas that arise when assessing the strengths and limitations of various strategies for change in organizations, communities, and legislative bodies. Values/Ethics c.2. (*Content: pros and cons, barriers and supports for different strategies; forward planning and recognition of coercive and harmful strategies to client systems*).
7. Explicating a planned change strategy, evaluation for the progress of the strategies(ies) and adaptation to a changing policy environment across systems and cultures, changing the strategy as necessary to adapt to complex situations. CT/EB c.2.; Diversity c.4; Practice c.1. (*Content: plans in action, plan stages for success, or for needed change; planned change strategy and creation of policy practice projects across substantive groups, such as health, education, welfare, housing, children, aging-elders, income security, social, economic, and environmental rights and justice, and others within values and ethics of social work*).

## I. Text

### Required Text:

Rocha, C. (2007). *Essentials of Social Work Policy Practice*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons

Other required readings are available on Blackboard.

## II. Course Instructions

- All journal article assigned readings are available on Blackboard.
- Please complete all readings prior to the class for which they are assigned on the course outline.
- Submit all written assignments using Blackboard's digital dropbox. Submit each assignment at any time prior to the beginning of the class on which it is due. I will not accept paper submissions. Please contact me if you are unfamiliar with Blackboard or require special accommodations.
- Attendance is mandatory. Please contact me if you cannot attend class.
- Participate in class discussions substantively.
- Please contact me via email and allow 24 hours for a response.

## III. Group Participation

This course is built around small group activities. Most of the assessment criteria derive from group work. The emphasis on group work stems from the subject, policy practice, which is inherently a group process, and the experiential nature of the course instruction. The theoretical and conceptual information is reinforced by implementation of policy practice efforts during the course. To conduct effective and realistic policy practice, one must participate in a group process. Therefore, it is imperative that students engage substantively in the group processes and acquire the skills to integrate multiple ideas and activities respectfully and successfully. Class participation grades are partially based on group participation.

## III. Assignments

*Readings:* Students will complete all required readings (textbook and articles) listed on the outline prior to each class. We will use the readings as the foundation for class discussion. Class participation will be based partially on the student's ability to contribute to class discussions with knowledge gained in the readings. In addition, completing assigned readings will substantially improve student's performance on the exam.

*Policy Practice Project:* Students will complete a policy practice project in groups throughout the semester. This will involve two written assignments: (1) a detailed planning paper that analyzes the identified problem/policy and the proposed policy change plan, and (2) a final paper that reports on the implementation of the policy change efforts and results. Students will be asked to evaluate their group members as part of the grade for this assignment. The proposal is due Feb. 26. The final report and peer assessments are due Apr. 29.

*Class Presentation:* Groups will present their policy practice projects to their peers. This will involve a formal presentation of the problem analysis, strategy, and outcomes of implementation. Groups will present during class on Apr. 23.

*Written Communiqué:* Students will prepare a written communiqué utilizing the policy change skills learned in class. Students must complete this assignment independently. They may choose to from one of the following types of written communiqué: 1) legislative testimony, 2) an op-ed, 3) a letter to the editor, or 4) a news release. The written communiqué is due Mar. 5.

*Class participation:* Students will be expected to attend class, and participate actively in class discussions and all group work.

#### IV. Evaluation

##### Grading scale:

A = 94-100

B+ = 93-90

B = 89-85

C = 84-70

D = 69-60

F = <60

##### Grade distribution:

Class participation: 10%

Written communiqué: 30%

Policy practice planning paper: 25%

Policy practice final report: 30%

Peer Assessment: 5%

\* The course outline is subject to change based on instructor and student needs.

## V. Class Outline

Class	Date	Topics	Reading* and written assignments
1	1/08	1. Introduction 2. Policy practice projects	Hardina (2003) Rothman (2007)
2	1/15	1. Rationale for policy practice 2. Rationale for individual case advocacy 3. Evidence-based practice in policy practice	<u>Articles:</u> Rocha, C. & Johnson, A. (1997) Rocha, C. (2000)
3	1/22	Introduction to social welfare policy	<u>Articles:</u> Rocha, C. & Johnson, A. (2007) Seccombe, K. (2002) Lieberman (2006)
4	1/29	Policy practice	<u>Rocha:</u> Ch. 1 – Introduction to Community-Based Policy Practice <u>Articles:</u> Figueira-McDonough, J. (1993)
5	2/05	Policy assessment and planning	<u>Rocha:</u> Ch. 2 – Essentials of the Planning Process
6	2/12	1. Policy intervention strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Written Communication</li> <li>▪ Testimony</li> <li>▪ Organization</li> </ul> 2. Examples from previous Social Work groups	<u>Rocha:</u> Ch. 7 – Essentials of Community-Based Policy Practice <u>Articles:</u> Richan, W. (1996). Ch. 2 – Lobbying in the Information Age Richan, W. (1996). Ch. 10 – Testifying in a Hearing
7	2/19	Communicating with the media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Op-Ed</li> <li>▪ Letter to the Editor</li> <li>▪ News Release</li> </ul>	<u>Rocha:</u> Ch. 4 – Communicating with the Public through the Media <u>Articles:</u> Stoesz, D. (1993)
8	2/26	Computer use in policy practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Desktop publishing</li> <li>▪ Internet organizing</li> </ul> <i>*Bring laptops to class</i>	<u>Rocha:</u> Ch. 5 – Using Technology in Policy Practice <u>Articles:</u> Dunlop & Fawcett (2008) <i>Policy Change Proposal due</i>
9	3/05	1. Coalition building and citizen advocacy 2. Task force building	<u>Rocha:</u> Ch. 6 – Essentials of Interest Group Politics: Coalition Building and Task Force Development <u>Articles:</u> Hoefler (2005) Mizrahi, T. & Rosenthal B. (2001) Hyde (2003) <i>Written Communiqué Due</i>

10	3/12	Policy change projects (Class attendance voluntary)	Work independently in groups
11	3/26	Policy change projects (Class attendance voluntary)	Work independently in groups
12	4/02	Policy change projects (Class attendance voluntary)	Work independently in groups
13	4/09	Policy change projects (Class attendance voluntary)	Work independently in groups
14	4/16	Policy change projects (Class attendance voluntary)	Work independently in groups
15	4/23	Class conclusions (Class attendance mandatory)	<i>Course Evaluations</i> <i>Policy Project Presentations</i>
	4/29	<i>Turn in Final Report via Blackboard by 5 p.m.</i>	

\*Full citations for all articles are found in the References (pp. 15-16).

## **Policy Practice Project**

Description and instructions: The policy practice project is the main component of the course. It is a semester long project, involving several hours per week for the duration of the semester. The project is intended to involve students actively in an advocacy effort aimed at changing social policy that affects disadvantaged or vulnerable populations. Students will engage in advocacy activities, and reflect on and critically evaluate their advocacy effort and their own effectiveness.

Students will work in groups for this project and identify their own policy change issue. Groups can identify an advocacy effort at the agency or community level. The problem should directly affect vulnerable and disadvantaged populations. Some class time may be allocated for the project, but students will need to meet in groups outside of class.

The first task will be to define and assess the problem being addressed. Once the problem has been defined, use the criteria specified in Chapter 2 of the text (Rocha, 2007) to plan a change effort employing the stages of the problem-solving process. The most efficient way to do this is to work with an existing organization, either the organization where you work or a local advocacy organization. Although this is not mandatory, most advocacy organizations will welcome the chance to educate you on their cause and have your help and ideas. Advocacy organizations will allow you to view the problem first-hand and from the community's perspective.

The range of possible change strategies is unlimited, except by the time limit of the semester. Consider employing a range of tactics so that group members are exposed to different mechanisms. Examples could range from public awareness about an issue to actual policy change and implementation. I will provide examples in class.

Implement your group's planned change effort. Meet regularly and keep a record of the group process, activities and outcomes. Monitor your efforts both for the success in attaining your original goals and for possible unintended side effects, positive or negative. Revise your strategy as needed.

The project involves two written assignments and a class presentation. Each group will submit a planning paper during the first half of the semester documenting the proposed policy change efforts. They will submit a final report on the last day of the class summarizing their efforts and the outcomes of their strategies. They will then present the project to the class. Specific criteria for these assignments is listed on the subsequent pages.

## Policy Practice Planning Paper

Papers should be typed, double spaced, using 1 inch margins, 12 point Times New Roman font. Title and reference pages are required. Follow the outline listed below. Limit the text of the paper to 10 pages (this excludes title page and references).

### I. Problem Identification and Analysis

#### A. Problem description (10 pts)

1. Who is affected? (Is it an individual problem requiring case advocacy or a larger problem affecting a class or system?)
2. How are they affected?

#### B. Problem analysis (Literature Review) (10 pts.)

1. What is the problem?
2. What policies influence this problem?
3. What knowledge is available regarding need?
4. What are the barriers to meeting need? (cultural, socioeconomic, programmatic, policy, etc.)
4. What other efforts have been attempted to deal with the problem?

#### C. Advocacy effort identification (10 pts.)

*An appropriate critical assessment of the literature is required; do not make assumptions. Provide evidence your assertions.*

1. What change in policy is needed?
2. What is the organization level of your target (agency, county, state, or federal)?
3. Who has the authority to change the policy?
4. Identify any other people, groups who are working on the change effort.

### II. Advocacy Intervention Plan

*Your planned change strategy should develop a plan of advocacy that focuses on programs, policy, or popular education at the local, state, federal, or international levels.*

#### A. Goal (5 pts.)

#### B. Measurable, outcome objectives (10 pts.)

#### C. Potential intervention strategies (10 pts.)

1. Advantages (resources available)
2. Disadvantages (obstacles anticipated) for each

#### D. Interventions chosen (10 pts.)

1. What do you plan to do?
2. Who do you plan to do it with?
3. Who or what is your target?
4. Who is responsible for doing it?

5. What are your time frames for doing it?

*\*It may be useful to put this information in a table form.*

E. Rationale (10 pts.)

1. Why did you choose the stated change plan?
2. Why did you choose not to use the alternative interventions?
3. Use the literature review and description of the problem to support the plan

F. Evaluation (10 pts.)

1. How will you measure success or failure of the effort?
2. What measures will you use?
3. How will you collect your data?

G. Status Report (10 pts.)

1. What have you done to date?
2. Have you cleared with your agency, or others involved?
3. List key activities (meetings, phone calls, interviews, requests for information)

III. Technical Components (5 pts.)

*Use APA style. Pay particular attention to headings, page numbers, the title page, running heads, and grammar.*

## Policy Practice Final Report

Report the results of the proposed policy practice implemented during the course of the semester. This paper is a continuation of the planning paper. Therefore, it will include planning paper. Incorporate the revised proposal into final paper. Papers should be typed, double spaced, using 1 inch margins, 12 point Times New Roman font. Title and reference pages are required. Limit the text of the paper to 15 pages (excluding title page, references, and appendices).

### I. Report on Project Activities

#### A. Interventions (10 pts.)

1. What have you accomplished?
2. Who or what was your target?
3. Who did what?
4. What were your time frames?

#### B. Outcomes (10 pts.)

1. Intended?
2. Unintended?
3. Unfinished activities
5. Are you planning to continue the effort?

### II. Evaluation

#### A. Analysis of the advocacy effort (15 pts.)

1. Did you meet your outcome objectives?
2. Did you complete your strategy?
3. To what degree did you use the tactics/techniques as planned?
4. To what degree did you alter the tactics during implementation?

#### B. Critique (20 pts.)

1. Did you identify the appropriate target?
2. Did you partner with the appropriate organizations?
3. Was the policy change beneficial to the clients?
4. Were there any ethical dilemmas that arose when assessing your strategy?

#### C. Analysis of policy practice (15 pts.)

1. Is policy practice effective?
2. To what degree can social workers engage in effective policy practice?
3. What factors facilitate policy practice?
4. What factors impede policy practice?

### III. Project Planning Revisions (15 pts.)

- A. Given what you have learned in the planning and strategic process, what would you do differently in the future?
- B. How would you adapt strategies if you implemented the plan in a different community, culture, or organizational environment?

IV. Technical Components (5 pts.)

*Use APA style.*

Appendix A: Materials used in the advocacy effort (10 pts)

## Class Presentation

**Instructions:** Groups are expected to present their policy change projects to the class. Limit presentations to 15-20 minutes in length. The primary requirement is that the policy topic is covered in a thorough, professional, and change-oriented manner. Use power point, handouts, or role-playing, if necessary, and practice before presenting. Include the following components in the presentation.

1. Describe the problem (20 pts.)
  - a. Who is affected
  - b. How affected
  - c. Legislation problem
    - i. New legislation
    - ii. Amend existing legislation
  
2. Describe the change plan (20 pts.)
  - a. Goal
  - b. Objectives
  - c. Interventions
  
3. Describe the evaluation process (20 pts.)
  - a. Degree to which met objectives
  - b. Degree to which met goal
  
4. Critique the plan's overall effectiveness (30 pts.)
  - a. Degree of benefit to target group
  - b. Most effective strategies
  - c. Least effective strategies
  - d. Strengths of the plan
  - e. Challenges/barriers to success
  
5. Professionalism of presentation (10 pts.)

## Written Communiqué

Instructions: Prepare a written communication about a social welfare policy issue of concern to you. You may choose to write a legislative testimony, an Op-Ed piece, letter to the editor or News Release. You may use your policy practice topic or you may choose another issue. Review Ch. 4 (Rocha, 2007) from the assigned readings for specific instructions. Communiqués will be graded according to the following criteria:

1. Explanation - explain the issue effectively and informatively (use research and data when appropriate) (25 pts)
2. Argument - make an argument about how to address the issue (25 pts.)
3. Persuasion – use language and information meant to influence people’s opinions (10 pts.)
4. Style - use a style appropriate to the form (does the communiqué’s style follow the guidelines in the text for the particular communiqué form, e.g. length, target audience, language, visual presentation?) (30 pts.)
5. Technical elements (spelling, grammar, etc.) (10 pts.)

## References

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### Supplemental References

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