

# POL 3005: Social Welfare Policy

Michael Hankinson

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Lecture (FMWA): M/W, 4:10-5:25 pm, Vert 5-165

Lecture (PMWA): M/W, 5:50-7:05 pm, Vert 4-220

Office Hours: M/W, 3-4 pm, Vert 5-271

Fall 2018

## Course Description

This course will introduce you to the politics of social policy in the United States. We will begin by surveying the state of poverty and inequality, then review the origins of modern social insurance and redistribution. Next, we will unpack what social science can tell us about why these policies look the way they do and what their future may hold. Finally, we will dive into specific policy areas, addressing current debates using the social science lens we've developed. The course will finish with a final project wherein small groups will analyze a current policy and propose legislative changes.

## Learning Goals

By the end of this course, a successful student will be able to:

1. Navigate the array of policies designed to address poverty, inequality, and misfortune in the United States.
2. Apply concepts of institutional and behavioral political science to current policy debates discussed in mass media.
3. Write an original qualitative research paper within a current policy arena.
4. Present research findings to large audience of peers, defending proposals during extensive questioning.

## Readings

All readings will be posted on Blackboard. **You do not need to purchase the textbook listed at the campus bookstore.**

## Course Assignments and Grading

Grades will be composed of the following:

- 10% attendance and participation
- 20% midterm exam (if higher than final exam grade, then shift to 30%, with final as 20%)
- 30% final exam
- 15% group presentations
- 25% individual final paper

## Attendance and Participation Policy

A focus of this class will be learning from your peers through discussion. As a result, attendance is necessary and will be noted at each class. You may miss up to 3 classes. Beyond those 3 classes, absence will negatively affect your grade and may cause you to be dropped from the course. You are also required to come to class on time. If you cannot arrive on time owing to extenuating circumstances, let me know in advance. If you are not present at the beginning of class, you will be marked absent.

Participation requires reading the materials before class. You are expected to actively contribute to the discussion, both in small groups and as a whole. A component of participation is respect for your peers. Laptops are permitted for note taking. However, checking email, text messages, social media, or unrelated websites in class is unprofessional, will count against your participation grade, and may result in you being asked to leave lecture.

## Exams

There will be a midterm and a final exam. The midterm will be held on October 29th and the final will be held on December 17th, either from 3:30 to 5:30 pm (F section) or 6:00 to 8:00 pm (P section). Exams are closed book and closed notes. The final exam will include questions based on your classmates' final presentations. Makeup exams will not be given, unless approved *before* the exam.

## Final Project

The final project consists of working in groups of three on a social policy area of your choice. As a group, you will present your research in front of your peers. As individuals, you will each turn in a final paper. I will provide more information about the project at the midpoint of the semester.

## Disabilities Accommodation

It is college policy to provide accommodations and academic adjustments for students with disabilities. Any student with a disability who may need accommodations in this class is requested to speak directly to Student Disability Services located in Newman Vertical Campus, Room 2-271 as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential.

## Academic Integrity

Students are encouraged to work together to understand and synthesize the readings and materials. However, Baruch College's policy on academic honesty will be enforced. Any plagiarizing or cheating will result in a failing grade for the course and will be reported to the Dean of Students Office.

## Important Dates

- Wednesday, August 29th - No class
- Sunday, September 2nd - Last day to add a course
- Monday, September 17th - Last day to withdraw with a 'W'
- Monday, October 29th - **Midterm exam**
- Wednesday, November 21st - Paper draft due
- Monday, December 3rd - Final paper due
- Monday, December 17th - **Final exam**

# Course Calendar

Readings should be completed before the assigned class date. Dates and readings are subject to change with at least one week's notice.

- Monday, August 27th
  - *No assigned reading, come ready to discuss*
- Wednesday, August 29th
  - *No class, canceled*
- Monday, September 3rd
  - *No class, College closed*

## Module 1: What is Social Policy?

- Wednesday, September 5th - The State of Society  
*What is the need for social welfare policy in modern society?*
  - Lepore, Jill. 2015. “Richer and Poorer: Accounting for Inequality”. *The New Yorker*.
  - Rasmussen, Dennis. 2016. “The Problem With Inequality, According to Adam Smith”. *The Atlantic*.
- Monday, September 10th
  - *No class, College-wide*
- Wednesday, September 12th - Inequality in a Democracy  
*Why don't inequality and poverty self-correct?*
  - Treisman, Daniel. 2018. “Why the poor don't vote to soak the rich?”. *The Washington Post*.
  - Gilens, Martin. *Why Americans Hate Welfare*. Chapter 2.
- Monday, September 17th - Building the American Welfare State I  
*What did social policy is the US look like before and during the New Deal?*
  - Katz, Michael B.. 1996. *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse*, Chapters 7 and 8.
- Wednesday, September 19th
  - *No class, College-wide*
- Monday, September 24th - Building the American Welfare State II  
*How has social policy developed since the New Deal?*
  - Katz, Michael B.. 1996. *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse*, Chapters 9 and 10.

## Module 2: The Political Science Behind Social Policy

- Wednesday, September 26th - Turnout  
*Who votes and why does that matter for social policy?*
  - McElwee, Sean. 2015. “Why Non-Voters Matter”. *The Atlantic*.
  - Schlozman, Kay Lehman, Henry E. Brady, and Sidney Verba. ”The Big Tilt: Participatory Inequality in America.” *The American Prospect* 8, no. 32 (May-June 1997): 74-80.
- Monday, October 1st - Identity and Race  
*How does identity influence support for social policy?*

- Enos, Ryan. 2017. “How Segregation Leads to Racist Voting by Whites”. Vox.
- Gilens, Martin. 1999. *Why Americans Hate Welfare*. Chapter 3.
- Wednesday, October 3rd - Interest Groups  
*How do interest groups of citizens, labor, and business influence social policy?*
  - Hertel-Fernandez, Alexander. “Employers are increasingly using their workers as lobbyists. Here’s why that’s a problem.” Vox.
- Monday, October 8th
  - *No class, College closed*
- Wednesday, October 10th - Congress and Parties  
*How does the structure of our Congress and political parties affect representation?*
  - Drutman, Lee. 2017. “This voting reform solves 2 of America’s biggest political problems”. Vox.
  - Wang, Sam and Brain Remlinger. 2018. “How to spot an unconstitutionally partisan gerrymander, explained”. Vox
- Monday, October 15th - Taxes  
*How is social policy funded?*
  - Williamson, Vanessa. 2017. *Read My Lips: Why Americans Are Proud to Pay Taxes*. Chapters 1 and 4.

### **Module 3: How to Design a Policy?**

- Wednesday, October 17th - Policy Feedback  
*How does policy design create its own constituency?*
  - Hacker, Jacob and Paul Pierson. 2005. “Abandoning the Middle: The Bush Tax Cuts and the Limits of Democratic Control”. *Perspectives on Politics*.
- Monday, October 22nd - Implementing Policy  
*How is policy implemented and what is the role of state and local government?*
  - Peterson, Paul E., 1981. “The Interests of the Limited City”.
  - Zacka, Bernardo. 2017. “Bureaucrats to the Rescue”. *The Boston Review*.
- Wednesday, October 24th - The Private Welfare State  
*Is there social policy for the wealthy?*
  - Lowenstein, Roger. ”The End of Pensions?” *New York Times Magazine*. (October 30, 2005).
- Monday, October 29th - **Midterm Exam**

### **Module 4: Becoming a Policy Expert**

- Wednesday, October 31st - Medicare and Social Security  
*What makes social policy for the elderly untouchable?*
  - Campbell, Andrea. *How Policies Make Citizens: Senior Citizen Activism and the American Welfare State*. Chapters 1 and 2.
- Monday, November 5th - The Affordable Care Act and Medicaid  
*How do we deal with sick Americans?*
  - Barrilleaux, Charles and Carlisle Rainey. 2014. “The Politics of Need: Examining Governors’ Decisions to Oppose the ‘Obamacare’ Medicaid Expansion”. *State Politics & Policy Quarterly*.

- Knapp, Fred. 2018 “Nebraska May Join Utah, Idaho in Putting Medicaid Expansion Before Voters”. *NPR*.
- Wednesday, November 7th - Welfare and Families  
*Has policy kept pace with gender equality?*
  - Campbell, Andrea. *Trapped in the Welfare State*. Chapters 3 and 4.
- Monday, November 12th - Labor: Unemployment and Minimum Wage  
*Is the American worker better off today than they were 40 years ago?*
  - Kwak, James. “The Curse of Econ 101”. *The Atlantic*.
  - Furman, Jason. “The real reason you’re not getting a pay raise”. 31 July 2018. *Vox*.
- Wednesday, November 14th - Housing, Homelessness, and Neighborhoods  
*Why does it matter where you live?*
  - Massey, Douglas S. and Nancy A. Denton. *American Apartheid*, Chapter 2.
  - Desmond, Matt. 2016. *Evicted*. Chapter 1.
- Monday, November 19th - Education  
*Is education the equalizer?*
  - Freedman, John. 2013. “Why American Colleges are Becoming a Force for Inequality.” *The Atlantic*.
  - Halpert, Julie. “What If America Didn’t Have Public Schools?” *The Atlantic*. Mar 4, 2018.
- Monday, November 21st
  - *No Class, Thanksgiving*
- Monday, November 26st - Corporate Welfare  
*Should we invest in people or places?*
  - Millsap, Adam. “Should Government Help People or Place?” *Forbes*.
  - Casselman, Ben. “Promising Billions to Amazon: Is It a Good Deal for Cities?” *New York Times*.

## Module 5: Presentations

- Wednesday, November 28th - The Future of Social Policy  
*What is the future of social policy?*
  - Scheidel, Walter. 2017. “The Only Thing, Historically, That’s Curbed Inequality: Catastrophe”. *The Atlantic*.
- Monday, December 3rd - Presentations I
  - *No assigned reading*
  - **Final paper due**
- Wednesday, December 5th - Presentations II
  - *No assigned reading*
- Monday, December 10th - Presentations III
  - *No assigned reading*
- Monday, December 17th - **Final Exam**
  - F Section, 3:30 to 5:30 pm
  - P Section, 6:00 to 8:00 pm