Overview
This advanced concentration course examines urban social problems and social policies developed to address these from the perspective of their impact on individuals, families and communities focusing on at-risk populations in the context of the urban environment. The course builds on policy content offered in the professional foundation year and links policy to practice and research skills. Diversity, inequality, social and economic justice are continuing themes of study in the advanced concentration year. The first part of the course reinforces the central role of social work in the policy making arena, and presents an overview of policy making cycle inclusive of social problem definition, policy formulation, implementation, evaluation and a critical analysis of policy impact on many stakeholders including practitioners. The course overviews theories related to organizational change and strategies for practitioners to influence policies and promote change in the interest of service consumer, agency and society. This section focuses on mental health policies. Required core content includes a framework for understanding the policy formulation process, and the examination of a variety of theoretical models for conducting policy analysis and opportunities to apply these skills in an in-depth study of a problem area/population group of interest.
Course Goals:

1. To facilitate an appreciation for the role of clinical social workers in the policy formulations process
2. To enhance appreciation of social policies as the tools for achieving the social justice goals of a democratic society
3. To support an understanding of the underlying values and ideologies that influence shape and drive American social welfare policy over time and continuing residual influences of these in contemporary social welfare policies and programs
4. Support an appreciation of social work as an agency based profession and implications of the organizational and policy context of clinical social work practice
5. To deepen understanding of the process of policy formulation, analysis and evaluation and the impact of these on vulnerable populations of historical concern to the profession of social work

Educational Objectives:

1. To support an ability to articulate the link between broad social policies, concepts of social justice and the role of the social work practitioner in the policy formulation process.
2. To develop a basic understanding of social problems endemic to the urban environment and the impact of these problems on the social and interpersonal functioning of individuals, families, and communities.
3. To develop a basic understanding of the complexities of the policy making process and an appreciation of the socio-political forces that influence social problem definition, policy formulation and implementation.
4. To develop a basic understanding of the role that social work practitioners play in the implementation of social policies at the agency level.
5. To apply an analytical framework in conducting a critical analysis of a social policy affecting a population at risk in an urban environment.
6. To critically evaluate an agency policy from the perspective of the clients, practitioners and communities.
7. To promote an enhanced understandings of organizational change theories and implications for clinical practice.
8. To develop a basic understanding of strategies for promoting change at the level of agency, community and society.
Required Texts:


President’s New Freedom Commission on Mental Health [Link].

Recommended Text:


Articles and web links will be posted on Blackboard.

Student with Disabilities: Any student with a documented disability (e.g. physical, learning, visual, psychiatric, hearing, etc.) and in need of special assistance must be registered with and must make arrangements for reasonable accommodations with the Center for Students with Disabilities located at 240 Greene Street, 4th Floor, (212)998-4980. Students needing this assistance should contact this office at the beginning of the semester.

Course Assignments

There will be three written assignments for the course, a short paper, a mid-term and final. These will be distributed in class by the instructor.
Course Outline

Class 1 – Introduction to Mental Health Policy (1/21)

Class 2 – Defining Mental Illness (1/28)

Mechanic, Chapters 2 & 3


Class 3 – Delivering Mental Health Care (2/4)


Class 4 – Funding Mental Health Care (2/11)

Mechanic, Chapters 7 & 8


Class 5 – Transforming Mental Health Care (2/18)


Class 6 – Discrimination (2/25)

Mechanic, Chapter 4


Dobranksy, K. (2009). The good, the bad, and the severely mentally ill: Official and informal labels as organizational resources in community mental health services. *Social Science and Medicine, 69*, 722-728.

Class 7 – Mental Health and Physical Health (3/4)


Class 8 – Community Integration (3/11)

Mechanic, Chapter 5 & 9


**SPRING BREAK NO CLASS (3/18)**

**Class 9 – The Consumer Movement (3/25)**


**Class 10 – Children’s Mental Health (4/1)**


**Class 11 – Higher Education (4/8)**


Class 12 – Evidence Based Practices (4/15)


SAMHSA (n.d). *Assertive Community Treatment: Evidence-based practices kit.* Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Rockville, MD.

Class 13 – Evidence Based Policy (4/22)


Class 14 – Health Care Reform (4/29)