

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY RELATIONS AND APPLIED NUTRITION

FRAN 6270 FAMILY-RELATED SOCIAL POLICY

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Class meetings: Wednesdays, 1:30 – 4:20, MACS 331

OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE

This course is designed to offer students a broad perspective on the subject of family policy -- viewed as a subset of social and public policies; as a field of scholarship and research; and as the context in which existing programs, benefits, and services are delivered. It also addresses policy-making as a process and a political activity.

Social policies affect individuals, families, workplaces, communities and the range of health and human services available to support them. Increasingly social policies are seen as integrally connected to changing demographics (population aging, increasing immigration and diversity), labour markets and labour force characteristics, gender equity, and as a basis for economic prosperity and social cohesion. Social policies reflect values and assumptions about gender and family roles, individual responsibility, the role of the private sector, and the role of the state and reflect different political views about the role of the state in a changing, more global world. This course aims to familiarize students with selected social policies that affect children and families in Canada and other Western countries. In addition, the course should help students understand the relationship between research and social policy, become familiar with the roles of federal and provincial governments in policy development and program delivery, and develop skills for policy analysis.

By its nature, social policy analysis is interdisciplinary. Students will be expected to develop an understanding of how economic, demographic, historical and political factors intersect to frame ideologies and policy goals. Course readings include book chapters, journal articles, policy papers and government reports. In class, research and policies will be discussed from an interdisciplinary perspective. That perspective will include analysis of the historical, economic, social, and political contexts in which specific policies are developed and how they are implemented as programs; as well as the diverse ways in which policies and programs affect children, families, and individuals.

The course lends itself to a wide range of policy and personal interests, only some of which are identified as examples on the second page. Specific student interests shape the topics that will be covered, particularly in the second half of the course.

MATERIAL TO BE COVERED

Course material will include the following areas:

- A. Definitions and perspectives on social policy; Characteristics of family-related policies; How policies are developed and why.
- B. Demographic shifts, economic and labour market forces, Families and trends in Canadian families as a backdrop to policy framing; population aging; political realities affecting social policy development and change; Dominant ideologies and discourses; Globalization and restructuring: The changing role of the state;
- C. The relationship between research and social policy.
- D. Issues and approaches to policy analysis
- E. The roles of federal, provincial, and municipal governments in selected policy areas and in policy making in Canada; the Social Union approach; cross-sectoral collaboration (or not) across departments and/or Ministries.
- F. Social policies from a global perspective – impacts of globalization, international influences on national policies; recession as a political and economic context;
- G. Other contributors to policy development and policy change: advocates and the media, stakeholder groups, non-governmental organizations, think tanks and research institutes, etc.
- H. Specific policy issues (partially dependent on student interests):
 - Income security – policies, programs, population-specific approaches (e.g. child benefits, pensions, income supports for people with disabilities); federal and provincial jurisdiction; poverty reduction strategies
 - Reconciling work and family responsibilities: - Gender, work and care across the life course. Public policies (e.g. parental/caregiving leave, caregiver credits/allowances); employer supports / private responsibility
 - Child care; new policy developments, directions and processes
 - Preparing for and enabling an aging society -- pensions, caregiving, health and home care services
 - Disability issues -- policies, services, funding approaches, employment equity
 - Immigration policies and supports
 - Single-parent families – a policy challenge
 - Current efforts to reform Canada's social programs
 - What is being proposed, what is not
 - The relationship between economic and social goals
 - Financial constraints on policy change and program coverage
 - Models of prevention and intervention re: high-risk children, youth, families
 - Targeted vs. and universal approaches
 - Philosophical approaches
 - Other policy, service, or population-specific issues, depending on student interest

METHOD OF COURSE PRESENTATION

The course will utilize a seminar format, involving students in active discussion. The course requires extensive reading of published works, policy reviews, and government reports. More formal lectures and guest presentations will enhance students' learning. Students are encouraged to read/skim a daily newspaper and monitor how various issues are presented in the media. Students are expected to develop skills in accessing policy relevant information on the net, and to download and share material from various sites.

COURSE READINGS

Course readings will be drawn from book chapters, journal articles, government reports and policy analyses. Students will be expected to gain skills in using a wide array of resources to facilitate learning. Required readings will provide a basic knowledge of policy, policy making, and specific policy issues.

STUDENT EVALUATION

Students will make one major seminar presentation during the term and will prepare an integrative paper and/or policy analysis on a topic related to family/social policy. It is expected that you will use appropriate audio visual aids for your presentation and distribute an outline and other materials to help students understand key terms and provide them with a brief summary of your main points.

The presentation will count for 40% of your grade and the final paper for 60% of the grade. It is recommended that students submit a first (working) draft of their paper approximately 3 weeks before the end of the term as a basis for one to one discussion with the professor.