

S0 308 Australian Social Policy Syllabus

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Course Credits: 4 BU credits

BU Hub Credits: 3: Social Inquiry II; Global Citizenship; Critical Thinking.

Approved Hub Units:

On successful completion of this course, a student will be able to claim transfer of the following 3 Hub areas:

1. Capacity: Scientific and Social Inquiry

- Area: Social Inquiry II (SO2)
2. Capacity: Diversity, Civic Engagement, and Global Citizenship
Area: Global Citizenship and Intercultural Literacy (GC1)
3. Capacity: Intellectual Toolkit
Area: Critical Thinking (CRT)

Course Description

What social arrangements should be embodied in public policy? Social policy is an interdisciplinary subject. It is both a vast field of academic study and a major area of real action in society. This course draws on philosophy, history, sociology, economics, politics, psychology and real case practice to introduce the field of Australian social policy. The first part introduces the general ideas and issues that define the field and distinguish its history, both in Australia and internationally. The second part turns to specific policy areas, namely health care (including harm minimisation), human rights, Aboriginal Australians, and women and work, plus there is an opportunity for students to study a social policy area or issue of their own choice.

Course Objectives

Students will develop a *critical* appreciation of:

- the theory and practice of contemporary social policy in a global context;
- the history of Australian social policy within an international framework;
- a diverse range of major current social policy areas and issues.

Program Learning Outcomes

A demonstrable knowledge of Australian culture and society with respect to a combination of the following areas: Australian politics, industry, economics, social policy, environmental policy, literature and the arts, film, marketing, advertising, and mass media.

Instructional Format, Course Pedagogy, and Approach to Learning

The logic of the course is that each week will unfold into the next in an increasingly specific line of exposition and study. In sequence, the lectures are arranged to cover:

- (1) the challenges in the meaning and application of the concept of 'social policy';
- (2) the national and global policy context;
- (3) current policies and trends;
- (4) specific policy areas; and
- (5) alternate perspectives.

The course consists of lectures, group discussions, a field trip and a conference. There will be video presentations and guest lecturers. Students are expected to join in class discussion, identify current social policy issues, submit a brief argument, participate in the field trip, make a presentation, write a major essay and sit for an exam.

The brief argument comprises approximately 800 words. The major essay is 2500–3000 words on a chosen designated question, or on another question of your own choice selected *in consultation* with the course co-ordinator. Students will nominate their major essay questions in week four. As part of the field trip in week five, a social policy conference will be held when students will present 10-15 minute work-in-progress papers on their major essays.

Lecture Program — Part I: General ideas & issues

Week 1: Introduction & overview

This week will gently introduce the subject and the issues involved in defining social policy. Where are the subject's boundaries? Why is social policy such a contested domain? What is the difference between politics and policy? What is the difference between social policy and economic policy? Is policy-making a positive concept?

- Class 1: *What is public policy?*
- Class 2: *What is social policy?*

Week 2: The Australian policy context

There are many definitions of social policy but is this a weakness or a strength? How can we differentiate between the many definitions? What has happened in Australian social policy over the past 200 or so years? We will grapple with the key concepts of 'equity' and 'equality', review the Australian history and take a glimpse at what is happening at the moment.

- Class 3: *The history of Australian social policy*
- Class 4: *Recent policies & current trends*

Week 3: The international policy context

How do we compare the policies of different countries? We will initially focus on basic comparative techniques, the role of central global institutions, and the key organising concepts applied in critical analysis at the international level. We will then turn to the current international context and the emphasis on market-based solutions to improving social welfare, which has shaped policies over recent decades. The turn to the market has also led to, or at least been accompanied by, growing economic inequality. The first part of the course will conclude with a look at the dimensions of, and social policy issues associated with, economic inequality.

- Class 5: *Australia, the US & Europe compared.*
- Class 6: *Globalisation, the market & inequality*

Lecture Program — Part II: Policy case studies

Week 4: Hospital services & health care

The first case study is health care, an example of a major mainstream social policy area and an outstanding point of policy difference between Australia and the U.S.A. We will begin with hospital care, the costliest health service and a prime example of the application of market principles in a social policy setting. We will then turn to Australian health policies generally, principally the universal health insurance and pharmaceutical benefits schemes.

- Class 7: *Australian hospital care*

☞ *The brief written argument will be handed up in class* ☞

- Class 8: *Australian health policy generally*

☞ *The topics for the major essay will be nominated in class* ☞

Week 5: Harm minimisation; human rights

This week features a field trip to a cutting edge of health policy: 'harm minimisation'. This will be followed by a conference that will include a lecture on human rights, another mainstream social policy area and another major point of difference with the U.S.A., for Australia is the only country with a fully developed modern economy that does not have a bill of rights.

- Class 9: *Field trip: harm minimisation, policy conference*

- Class 10: *Human rights (included in the above field trip)*

Week 6: Indigenous Australians; Women & work

Closely related to both health policy and human rights, this week will focus on policies with respect to Aboriginal Australians, a unique policy area, and a deeply troubled area. The final case study will be on women and the workplace. The postwar movement of women into the workplace has presented major policy challenges for all countries and are ongoing.

- Class 11: *Indigenous Australians*

- Class 12: *Women & work*

Lecture Program — Part III: General perspectives

Week 7: Postmodernism & social policy; course review

The course is orientated to mainstream approaches to social policy, but these are not the only approaches. To round off the introduction, we will return to the general definition of social policy

and consider alternative approaches. We will conclude with a review of the course. Where have you done? What have you learned? What use is it? What is the form of the final exam?

- **Class 13:** *Alternative approaches*

- **Class 14:** *Course review*

👉 *Major essay deadline: 8.00 p.m.* 👈

Exam: *Exam: 10.00 a.m. - Noon*

Books and Other Course Materials

Readings will be posted on the Blackboard. In creating an argument, making presentations and researching the major essay, students are also expected to develop their own bibliographies. The textbook and readings support the lectures but should not be interpreted as exhaustive.

Newspapers

Students will pay attention to current social policy issues featured in the Australian media. This means reading at least one newspaper for the Monday classes during the first part of the course, such as the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Australian*, *Australian Financial Review* or *Daily Telegraph*. Current issues will be raised and discussed at the beginning of class.

Textbook

McClelland, A., P. Smyth and G. Marston (eds) (2021), *Social policy in Australia: understanding for action*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

Other useful books and general background reading

Althaus, C., P. Bridgman and G. Davis (2007), *The Australian policy handbook* (fourth edition), Allen & Unwin, Sydney (probably the most popular Australian policy textbook).

Dye, T. R. (2012), *Understanding public policy* (fourteenth edition), Upper Saddle River, Longman (the standard US policy textbook).

Head, B. and K. Crowley (eds) (2015), *Policy analysis in Australia: the state of the art*, Policy Press, Bristol (the latest major overview).

Macintyre, S. (2020), *A concise history of Australia* (fifth edition), Cambridge University Press, Melbourne (a history book for foreigners).

Piketty, T. (2014), *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, Harvard/Belknap, Cambridge (Mass) (international best-seller on inequality).

Yeatman, A. (ed.) (1998), *Activism and the policy process*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney (an alternative approach).

There are numerous relevant academic journals, including the *Australian Social Policy Journal*, *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, *Agenda - A Journal of Policy Analysis and Reform*, *Australian Journal of Political Science*, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, *Journal of Australian Political Economy*, *Medical Journal of Australia*, *Health Affairs*, and many others.

Assignments and Grading

Assessment	Due Date	Weighting
Argument	Week 4:	15%
Presentation and Participation	Week 5:	20%
Major Essay	Week 7:	40%
Exam	Week 7:	25%

Final Grades

All Grades out of 100 Points			
Grade	Max	Avg	Min
F	59.4	50	0.0
D	69.4	65	59.5
C-	72.4	72	69.5
C	76.4	75	72.5
C+	79.4	78	76.5
B-	82.4	82	79.5
B	86.4	85	82.5
B+	89.4	88	86.5
A-	93.4	92	89.5
A	100	96	93.5

Course Matters

Attendance at all classes is mandatory.

Any absence for medical reasons or other misadventure must be supported by a medical certificate or a letter offering a satisfactory explanation. Strict penalties apply, on a pro rata basis, for any unapproved absence. Missing one class without reason would attract as much as a 10% penalty.

Statement on Plagiarism

All students are responsible for having read the Boston University statement on plagiarism, which is available in the Academic Conduct Code. Students are advised that

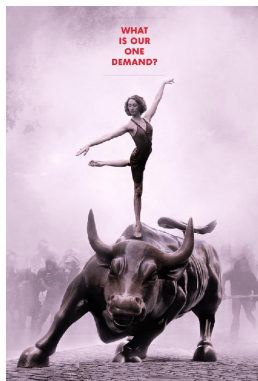
the penalty against students on a Boston University program for cheating on examinations or for plagiarism may be "... expulsion from the program or the University or such other penalty as may be recommended by the Committee on Student Academic Conduct, subject to approval by the Dean".

Late Work

In general, there will be no extensions granted for any coursework. The exception is where there are clear and acceptable reasons. In such cases, a written statement outlining any serious illness or misadventure together with supporting documentation (e.g. medical certificates) must be provided or a strict penalty of 5% per day will apply.

About the course image

The ballerina on the bull is from a poster advertising the social protest that began in New York's financial district on September 17, 2011, which became known as the 'Occupy Wall Street' movement. The 'Occupy' movement spread world-wide, reaching more than 950 cities in over 80 countries, including Sydney. The movement's main thrust was to protest over growing economic inequality, giving rise to the slogan 'We are the 99%'.



'We put together a poster for the July issue of Adbusters. The poster was a ballerina — an absolutely still ballerina — poised in a Zen-ish kind of way on top of this dynamic bull. And below it had the hashtag #OccupyWallStreet. Above, it said, "What is our one demand?" I felt like this ballerina stood for this deep demand that would change the world. There was some magic about it.'

— Kalle Lasn, film maker, author, magazine editor, activist, and co-founder of Adbusters.