

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
Study Abroad Sydney Programs

SO 308 AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL POLICY

COURSE OUTLINE

Co-ordinator

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Classes & Deadlines

- The course extends over 7 weeks, and meets twice per week at appointed times
 - Class times will be advised
 - The short essay deadline is 7.30 p.m., Monday of Week 3
 - A field trip and an all-day conference will be on Monday of Week 6.
 - The major essay deadline is 7.30 p.m., Monday of Week 7.
 - The examination will be held at the end of the course as advised in academic schedule.
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COURSE OVERVIEW

Social policy is an interdisciplinary subject. This course draws on history, economics, politics, sociology, philosophy, psychology and law to introduce the field of Australian social policy. No knowledge of social policy is assumed. Students will develop a critical appreciation of:

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

There will be case studies on policies for health care, Aboriginal Australians, human rights and women and work, plus an opportunity to study a social policy area or issue of your own choice. The course will place an emphasis on the major ideas and issues involved in defining, critiquing, developing and implementing social policy. A key issue is the boundary of the subject, particularly the relationship between social and economic policy. A central theme is comparisons between Australia and the United States and other parts of the world.

Methodology

In sequence, the course is designed to deal with: (1) the difficulties in the definition of social policy; (2) the national and global policy context; (3) current policies and trends; (4) specific policy areas; and (5) alternate social policy perspectives. The logic is that each week will unfold into the next in an increasingly specific line of exposition and study.

The course will consist of lectures, group discussions, a field trip and a conference. There will be DVD presentations and guest lecturers. Students will be expected to participate in discussion, identify and follow current social policy issues, participate in the field trip, make a presentation, write one short and one major essay, and sit for an exam.

The short essay is 800-1000 words. The major essay is 2500–3000 words on a question selected from a distributed list or on a topic of the student's own choice (selected *in consultation* with the course co-ordinator). Students will nominate their major essay topics in week four. An all-day policy conference will be held in week six, when students will present 10-15 minute work-in-progress papers on their major essay topics.

Grading criteria

Presentations and participation:	20 per cent
Short essay:	15 per cent
Major essay:	40 per cent
Exam:	25 per cent

Terms & Conditions

All students are responsible for reading the Boston University statement on plagiarism, which is available in the Academic Conduct Code. The penalty 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'. Attendance at class is mandatory. Essays must not have been presented for any other course, must be presented on time, and they must comply with academic conventions for citing references and include a bibliography. A penalty of 5 per cent per day will apply to missed attendance and late essays, although this may be waived if there are clear and acceptable written reasons (such as a medical certificate for illness).

AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL POLICY: LECTURE PROGRAM

Week 1: Introduction & overview

The course will begin by introducing the issues involved in defining social policy. There are many definitions of social policy, but is this a weakness or a strength? Why is social policy such a contested domain? What is the difference between politics and policy? Where do we draw the line between economic policy and social policy? Can we call policies that aim to conserve the environment social? What are the main concepts? Who are the main players?

- Class 1: What is public policy?
 - Class 2: What is social policy?
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Week 2: The Australian context

We will survey the general historical development of Australian social policy and current policy issues and trends. Key topics are the development of the Australian wage earners' welfare state, the creation of the postwar welfare state, and the return to the liberal model.

- Class 3: The history of Australian social policy
 - Class 4: Recent policies and current trends
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Week 3/4: The international context

How do we compare the policies and approaches of different countries? How have the issues associated with globalisation and the market liberalism manifested in social policy? We will look at the comparative techniques and the current global context, and then focus on the way that the trend to market-based policies has shaped Australian hospital care.

- Class 5: Australia, the US and Europe compared, and the implications of the global financial crisis

Note: Deadline for submitting the short essay

- Class 6: The market and Australian hospital care

Note: Topics for major essay topics to be nominated in class

AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL POLICY: LECTURE PROGRAM (cont'd)

Week 5: Social policy areas: policies for health care and Indigenous Australians

Health care is a major mainstream social policy area and a major point of policy difference between Australia and the United States, while developing policy approaches for Aboriginal people has presented unique challenges for modern Australia

- Australia's health care policies
 - Indigenous Australians
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Week 6: Social policy areas: policies for human rights and women & work

This week will feature a field trip to a controversial cutting edge of health policy known as 'harm minimisation', as implemented in the case of Australia's only medically supervised drug injection centre. This will be followed by an all-day policy conference at the local hub of public policy making, NSW Parliament House. The conference will include a lecture on policies to protect human rights, another major mainstream social policy area and another major point of policy difference between the United States and Australia, which is unique among the world's democracies in not having a bill of rights. A related issue is the movement of women into the workplace, which has presented policy challenges worldwide, a topic that will conclude the survey of specific social policy areas.

- Field trip, policy conference, human rights
 - Women & work
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Week 7: Alternative perspectives and course review

The course is orientated to mainstream policy approaches, but these are not the only approaches. In the final class we will consider alternatives and review the course. What were you supposed to learn? What have you learned? What do you do if you want to learn more?

- Alternate policy approaches and course review

Note: Deadline for the long essay: 7.30 p.m.

Exam: Four essay questions to be attempted during one and a half hours at a time to be scheduled.

AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL POLICY: READING

Students making presentations and preparing essays are expected to develop their own bibliographies. Specially selected readings will support the lectures, but these should not be interpreted as exhaustive.

Newspapers

Students will follow current social policy issues in the Australian media for the duration of the course. This means reading at least one newspaper for the (longer) Monday classes, such as the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Australian*, *Australian Financial Review* and *Daily Telegraph*. Current issues will be discussed at the beginning of class.

Textbook

- McClelland, A. & P. Smyth (eds), *Social policy in Australia: understanding for action*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2006.

Other key references and background reading

For essays and research generally, the following are also recommended:

- Althaus, C., P. Bridgman & G. Davis, *The Australian policy handbook* (fourth edition), Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2007.
- Fenna, A., *Australian public policy* (second edition), Pearson, Sydney, 2004.
- Maddison, S. & R. Denniss, *An introduction to Australian public policy: theory and practice*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2009.

More generally

- Dye, T. R., *Understanding public policy* (twelfth edition), Upper Saddle River, Longman, 2008 (the standard US text).
- Yeatman, A. (ed.), *Activism and the policy process*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1998.
- Macintyre, S., *A concise history of Australia* (second edition), Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2004.

There are many relevant academic journals, including the *Australian Journal of Political Science*, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, *Journal of Australian Political Economy*.

Essay questions will be distributed in class.
