PLSC 2830 – Law and Social Policy
Course Syllabus

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Office Hours: Monday 11-12, Wednesday 11-12, and by appointment

In this course we will be examining social policy in the United States, with an eye to the ways in which the law and the courts have been responsible for bringing about social change – or failing to do so. The goal of the course is to explore a host of arenas of social policy, and for you to develop an understanding of the policy area, and where our current system of laws and programs comes from. We will look at both the normative and positive elements of social policy, and how the law has impacted a range of groups in this country. The central questions to be explored in this course will be what explains change in social policy, under what circumstances does change occur, and which institutions of government are best suited at producing social reform (with a special eye to Congressional statute and the role of the courts in interpreting law).

Required Text


Grading

Your grade for this class is comprised of the following components:

Participation (20%)- Being present in class and participating regularly is essential for success in this class. It is important that you share your ideas and ask any questions that you may have. Doing so will result in better understanding of the course material and subsequently, higher grades.

Midterm Exam (25%)- The Midterm will be on April 21st.

Final Exam (25%)- The Final will be on June 2nd.

Paper (25%)- You will be writing a paper which assesses the arguments made by the main text for this course The Hollow Hope, in one of the policy areas that is specified. More details will follow.

Discussion Leadership (5%)- Along with your paper, you will turn in 5 discussion questions and be expected to help lead discussion on the topic which you write your paper on.
Final Grades will be based on the following distribution, though please note that I reserve the right to curve point totals should I decide that is necessary:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>&gt;93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt;60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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A: Designates student performance of an extraordinarily high level, indicates a comprehensive understanding of course material, and reflects original insight and thought.

B: Designates student performance of a high level, indicates a thorough understanding of course material, and reflects solid insight and well-considered thought.

C: Designates student performance that completely fulfills the basic requirements of the course, indicates a basic understanding of course material, and reflects basic insights and a surface-level understanding of concepts.

D: Designates student performance that mostly fulfills the basic requirements of the course, indicates a basic or weak understanding of course material, and reflects poor, basic, or weak insights and a poor understanding of concepts.

F: Designates student performance that fails to fulfill the basic requirements of the course, indicates a weak or inaccurate understanding of course material, and reflects poor or misinformed insights and a lack of understanding of concepts.

Administrative Policies

Late Work: Late assignments will not be accepted.

E-Mail and Web Communication: An email list has been setup to contact you with class updates, additional readings, and questions you might consider while reading. It is critical that you regularly check your DU email account and Canvas for updates. Students will be held accountable for assignments and syllabus changes communicated via email. I will always give you reasonable notice for any changes or additions to the syllabus.
The Classroom Environment: Tardiness, early departures, ringing phones, etc. detract from the learning environment. Therefore, I ask that students arrive on time and remain in class for the duration of the period. Please turn off cell phones and other electronic devices when you enter the classroom. While the use of a computer for note-taking is certainly encouraged, web surfing, text-messaging, emailing, etc. not only reduces your engagement and comprehension of the material during class, but is highly distracting for the students around you. Please do not participate in these activities during class.

Academic Integrity: I take issues of academic integrity very seriously. Plagiarism and other academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. All work is expected to be original, and not previously or simultaneously turned in for credit in another course. All forms of academic dishonesty will result in an F for the course.

Disability Services: If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please contact me about this during the first week of the class so that I can prepare to make accommodations ahead of time.

Religious Accommodations: University policy grants students excused absences from class or other organized activities or observance of religious holy days, unless the accommodation would create an undue hardship. Faculty are asked to be responsive to requests when students contact them in advance to request such an excused absence. Students are responsible for completing assignments given during their absence, but should be given an opportunity to make up work missed because of religious observance. Once a student has registered for a class, the student is expected to examine the course syllabus for potential conflicts with holy days and to notify the instructor by the end of the first week of classes of any conflicts that may require an absence (including any required additional preparation/travel time). The student is also expected to remind the faculty member in advance of the missed class, and to make arrangements in advance (with the faculty member) to make up any missed work or in-class material within a reasonable amount of time.

Classroom Behavior: Students and faculty each have a responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

Quarter Schedule

Note: Syllabus is subject to change.

Part 1: Statutory Law and Social Welfare (with an emphasis on the history of poverty, gender, and race)

Week 1
3/24: Introduction, Syllabus, Papers


Week 2


Week 3


Part 2: The Courts as Agents of Social Change Across Policy Areas

Week 4

4/14: What About the Courts? A Look at Two Perspectives
   -Readings: Hollow Hope, Chapter 1

4/17: Class Cancelled – I’m attending a conference in Chicago.
Week 5

4/21: Midterm Exam

4/23: Civil Rights and the Court – Brown v. Board and the Civil Rights Revolution

-Readings: Hollow Hope, Part 1 Introduction and Chapter 2

Week 6

4/28: Civil Rights and the Court – Constraints, Conditions, and the Courts

-Readings: Hollow Hope, Chapter 3

4/30: Civil Rights and the Courts – Planting the Seeds of Progress?

-Readings: Hollow Hope, Chapter 4

Week 7

5/5: Civil Rights and the Courts – The Current of History

-Readings: Hollow Hope, Chapter 5

5/7: Abortion and Women’s Rights – Courts and Abortion

-Readings: Hollow Hope, Part 2 Introduction and Chapter 6

Week 8

5/12: Abortion and Women’s Rights – Courts and Women’s Rights

-Readings: Hollow Hope, Chapter 7

5/14: Abortion and Women’s Rights – Court as a Catalyst? History.

-Readings: Hollow Hope, Chapter 8-9

Week 9

5/19: Environment and Reapportionment

-Readings: Hollow Hope, Chapter 10

5/21: Reforming Criminal Law

-Readings: Hollow Hope, Chapter 11
Week 10

5/26: Same-Sex Marriage

-Readings: Hollow Hope, Chapters 12-13

5/28: Conclusion, Review, Wrap up

-Readings: Hollow Hope, Chapter 14


Final Exam:

June 2nd, 10:00-11:50