Instructor:  Jeannette Diaz, PhD

Contact:    Please use our Course Den site for all email correspondence. If you would like to speak by phone just let me know and we can arrange a time.

Course Description: This course will introduce you to the relationship between psychological research and public policy. The central intent of the course is for you to explore a current area within the broader domain of social, economic and political policy and explore how psychology research in specific, and social science research in general, can inform discourse in the area.

Learning Objectives:

1. Become familiar with a social issue of your choosing, including an exploration of your own perspective on the issue and relevant psychological literature in the domain.
2. Become familiar with current policy and legislation related to your issue of concern.
3. Become familiar with how psychologists are currently addressing policy issues as related to your issue of concern.
4. Develop your ability to link psychological thought to your issue of concern.
5. Explore and develop your ability to write a policy brief.
6. Become familiar with the work of psychologists who are engaged in policy work.

Required Reading:

All students are responsible for reading the articles posted in our Course Den Site. Beyond that, each of you will create become familiar with the literature related to your specific policy issue.

Course Deliverables: The central deliverable is a policy brief on the issue of your choice. This brief will review current policy debates and positions on the issue, including how the policy/policies impact different ethnic, age, and ability groups. Your brief will also discuss and review current and potential applications of psychological and social science research and perspective to the policy issue of your choice. The following deliverables are designed to move you to this final project.

1. Summary of required course reading.
2. Deconstructing two policy briefs using the worksheet provided.
3. Outline of your proposed policy brief using the worksheet provided.
4. Policy Brief on your chosen issue.
Possible Policy Topics:

Health Care
Immigration
Abortion
Gun Control
School discipline
Response to drug use, both legal and not legal (i.e. mandatory sentencing; opioid prescription and use).
Housing
Environmental concerns (global warming, land management, etc.)
Animal Protection
Voting
Student Loans

This is certainly not an exhaustive list as there are federal and state level policies for all kinds of things. Think deeply about what it is that you are passionate and/or concerned about and gain an understanding of what policies are related to that topic. I’m here to be a sounding board and also a resource as you finalize your topic and create your reading list.

Grading

1. Short Paper Summary 20%
2. Deconstructing a policy brief 20%
3. Beginning your own policy brief 20%
4. Policy brief 40%

Course Schedule

Week 1  8/14-8/16
Week 2  8/19-8/23
Week 3  8/26-8/30
   Due: Short Paper: 8/30 by midnight via dropbox
Week 4  9/2-9/6
Week 5  9/9-9/13
Week 6  9/16-9/20
Week 7  9/23-9/27
   Due: Deconstructing a policy brief: 9/27 by midnight via dropbox
Week 8  9/30-10/4
Week 9  10/7-10/11
Week 10 10/14-10/18
Week 11 10/21-10/25
   Due: Beginning your own policy brief: 10/25 by midnight via dropbox
Week 12 10/28-11/1
Week 13 11/4-11/8
Week 14 11/11-11/15
Week 15 11/18-11/22
Week 16       11/25-11/29
Due: Policy brief: 11/29 by midnight via dropbox
Week 17       12/2-12/6

Additional information regarding course deliverables.

Summary Paper:

Based on the readings and websites assigned, what is your understanding of the relationship between psychology and public policy? In your response please make sure to draw from all the readings and to include information from two of the positions statement available on the SPSS website.

Policy Brief Worksheets (Assignments 2 and 3)

The worksheets are self-explanatory. Please answer each question and be thorough in your responses.

Final Policy Brief

As we more through the semester, the content and format of your policy brief will become clear to you. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have questions or need assistance.

General Note:

I expect good work from each of you, meaning that your work is well written, proofread and thoughtful. Please use this class as an opportunity to engage with an issue of concern to you.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the act of taking someone else’s words and using them as your own. It can also mean taking someone else’s ideas and passing them off as your own. Plagiarism in either form is an act of academic dishonesty and is not tolerated. If I suspect you are plagiarizing in your paper I will, at the minimum, ask for a complete rewrite of the assignment and give you partial credit for the assignment as well as take appropriate disciplinary action. Please see Appendix A, Section 2.00 in the Student Handbook for a thorough discussion of academic dishonesty and its consequences.

University Policy: Please see the following website for university policy regarding common academic concerns as well as general study well-being:

https://www.westga.edu/administration/ypaa/common-language-course-syllabi.php