

SOC 180: HUMAN SERVICES & SOCIAL POLICY

Westmont College
Fall 2025

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Course Description: This course provides an introduction to the human services professions from a sociological perspective. Specifically, we explore the breadth of this field and some of the career paths which may be of interest to you. We examine the history of social welfare programs and policies in the United States, so as to contextualize the debates and controversies in contemporary society. We consider what it means to be a Christian helping professional in a variety of contexts—ranging from work with children to older adults, work in the health care system to the criminal justice system, and work with individuals struggling with substance abuse to persons living with disabilities. We also explore the ethics, common challenges, and professional responsibilities of human services professionals.

Course Learning Outcomes: When you have completed this course, you should be able to:

- 1) Describe the breadth of the human services field—including the types of client systems, the variety of settings, and the range of activities with/within which helping professionals engage;
- 2) Explain how sociological theories, concepts, and perspectives inform the helping professions (*PLO #1*);
- 3) Demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the historical context of several contemporary social programs, policies, and controversies;
- 4) Analyze the ways in which gender, race/ethnicity, social class, culture, identities, power, and privilege impact social policies and the human services professions (*PLO #2 and Institutional Learning Goal regarding Critical Thinking*);
- 5) Discuss what it means to be a Christian helping professional and what Christ-centered responses to poverty, inequality, and human suffering might look like (*PLO #2, PLO #4, and Institutional Learning Goals regarding Christian Understanding / Practices / Affections and Competence in Written and Oral Communication*);
- 6) Explain the code of ethics and professional responsibilities of human services professionals; and
- 7) Effectively communicate orally as informed by rhetorical situation, audience, genre, and purpose (*PLO #5, and Institutional Learning Goals regarding Competence in Written and Oral Communication*).

Required Course Materials:

- Suppes, M. A., Wells, C. C., & Kiltz, M. L. (2024). *The social work experience: A case-based introduction to social work and social welfare* (8th ed.). New York: Pearson. [ISBN: 9780137849185]
- Corbett, S., & Fikkert, B. (2014). *When helping hurts: How to alleviate poverty without hurting the poor...and yourself* (2nd ed.). Chicago: Moody. [ISBN: 9780802409980]
- Additional course readings (or their URLs) will be posted on Canvas.

General Education: This course fulfills the **Understanding Society** requirement because students will apply appropriate foundational theories to analyze social, political, economic, and/or cultural phenomena. This course also fulfills the **Oral Communication** requirement because students will develop their abilities to articulate information and ideas, as well as facilitate discussions, in oral discourse.

Requirements and Grading:

<i>Course Component</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Class Preparation and Active Participation	10%
Reading Responses (6)	12%
Reading Response Mini-Presentation	4%
Discussion Facilitation	10%
Analytical Paper	14%
Social Policy Group Project (Draft 5%, Presentation 10%, Ratings 1%)	16%
Midterm Exam	17%
Final Exam	17%
Total	100%

Class Preparation and Active Participation

Class preparation, attendance, and active participation will be very important in determining how well you do in this class. I expect you to complete all required course readings *prior* to the start of each class period. An “A” preparation and participation grade will require *excellent* preparation (shown by your ability to use the readings to initiate and enrich discussion), and a willingness to share your ideas and opinions with others. In addition, numerous in-class exercises will be assigned during the semester, which will count toward your preparation and participation grade. Since students have different learning styles and different levels of comfort with speaking out in class, there will be a variety of opportunities for both small and large group discussions and in-class activities.

Note: This is a reading-intensive, upper-division course! It is my expectation that you will do each day’s reading *prior* to lecture and come to class prepared to discuss the reading(s). Subsequently, I highly recommend that you take notes on each reading and come to class with your questions on—and thoughts regarding—the material. I reserve the right to give unannounced quizzes if it becomes apparent that students are not coming to class prepared to discuss that day’s reading assignments.

Reading Responses

To enhance your interaction with the course readings, each student will complete six reading response assignments. In general, these are approximately 350-450 words in length. The purpose is to both demonstrate your understanding of the course material, as well as elaborate upon your reactions to and thoughts regarding the reading. Reading responses are submitted on Canvas, and they are generally graded as receiving full credit, half-credit, or no credit. Instructions and question prompts will be

posted on Canvas. ***Due Dates: September 3rd, September 15th, September 29th, October 10th, November 10th, and November 19th***
Reading Response Mini-Presentation

In conjunction with either Reading Response #3 or Reading Response #5, students will complete a 4-minute mini-presentation related to the content of their write-up. Student presentations will also be evaluated for clarity and presentation style. This is an opportunity to practice good oral communication techniques—including speaking voice (i.e., tone, pitch, and rate) and physical presence (i.e., eye contact, gestures, posture, and energy). Students will have the opportunity to sign-up for their Reading Response topic during the second week of class. Non-presenters will provide peer feedback.

Discussion Facilitation

Each student will be expected to summarize the main points and sub-points of one of our readings and then lead a short discussion on that chapter or article. Students will prepare PowerPoint, Canva, or Google slides that: 1) outline 4-6 of the most important ideas in the reading, 2) emphasize several sub-points, examples, and/or quotations from the reading that illustrate the key ideas, and 3) contain 4-6 discussion questions that are thought-provoking, spark class dialogue or debate, and (with at least two questions) seek to connect this reading to other class materials and/or current events. The presentation / discussion facilitation should be 20-25 minutes in length, with approximately equal time given to the chapter/article overview and the class discussion. Students will have the opportunity to sign-up for a reading of their choice during the second week of class. ***Various due dates.***

Analytical Paper

You will complete an analytical paper, approximately 7 pages in length. This essay will be based upon Part II of our course, which focuses upon poverty, public assistance, the history of social welfare in the U.S., and Christ-centered responses to poverty. Your essay will present an argument (i.e., a thesis), weave together several course themes, and use numerous examples from course readings. The details of this paper will be explained in-class and instructions will be posted on Canvas. The assignment must be completed *prior* to the beginning of class on the day that it is due. **No late assignments will be accepted** without a valid excuse and official documentation (see “Policies,” below). ***Due October 17th.***

Social Policy Group Project

This project provides you and several of your classmates with the opportunity to explore past and current social policies on a particular topic in more depth. You will examine past and current controversies related to your topic, as well as consider what Christ-centered social policies might look like. The project culminates in your group leading a 45-minute presentation to the class on your topic. The details of this project will be explained in-class and instructions will be posted on Canvas. You will have the opportunity to rank-order your topic preferences during the third week of class. ***Project Draft Due November 14th. Workshop / Presentation Dates Vary (December 8th or 10th).***

Exams

There will be a midterm and a final exam. Each exam is worth 17% of your grade. The final exam will, in part, be cumulative. Both exams will assess your understanding of the readings, lectures, videos, discussions, in-class exercises, and other materials we cover in class. The exams will be a combination of multiple choice, matching, true/false, fill-in-the-blank, short answer, and essay questions.

No make-up exams will be given without a valid and documented excuse (e.g., a true medical or family emergency); in such circumstances, it is the student's responsibility to contact me within 24 hours of the emergency and to request a make-up exam. No early final exams will be given, with the exception of circumstances covered under the College's final exam rescheduling policy (see: http://www.westmont.edu/_offices/registrar/exam-schedule.html).

Hint: Students who take notes on the readings as they do them *and* take notes during our class discussions and activities tend to have an easier time studying for (and doing well on) the exams.

Grading Scale			
A	93-100%	C	73-77%
A-	90-92%	C-	70-72%
B+	88-89%	D+	68-69%
B	83-87%	D	63-67%
B-	80-82%	D-	60-62%
C+	78-79%	F	< 60%

Policies:

Attendance

I will take attendance every session and attendance is expected. No grade penalty will be assessed for up to *two* unexcused absences. Absences are excused in such cases as medical illness, serious injury, family emergency, intercollegiate sport competition, etc.; however, to excuse an absence, you must provide me with documentation within one week following the absence.

Class preparation and active participation comprise a significant portion of your course grade. Students who frequently miss class will likely find it quite difficult to pass this course. If you are absent from lecture, it is *your* responsibility to keep abreast of course happenings. You are responsible for all material covered, in-class exercises, video clips, schedule changes, and deadlines announced.

Assignment Submission Procedures

All written assignments must be submitted on Canvas prior to the beginning of class on the day that they are due (i.e., 11:30am Pacific). Unless otherwise specified in the assignment description, all assignments must be typed and double-spaced (with approximately 1" margins and 12-point font). Please note: I am only able to open the following types of documents: **MS Word (and other MS Office files), Google Docs (and other Google files), and PDFs**. *I am not able to open Pages files*. It is your responsibility to ensure that you submit a file type that I can open!

Late Work/Make-Up Exams

Late work is NOT accepted. Meeting your deadlines is an important skill, it cultivates discipline and effective time management, it demonstrates your commitment to your academic courses, and it will be expected throughout your professional life. Make-up examinations and extensions on assignments will *only* be given in *extreme* circumstances (e.g., medical emergency, death in the family), and only with official documentation. Be sure to notify me within 24 hours of the emergency.

Academic Integrity

Westmont College holds all students responsible for maintaining academic integrity. Plagiarism, lying, unacceptable collaboration, submitting papers to more than one class, using AI-generated text or ideas, and cheating are all examples of violations of academic integrity.

Westmont's academic integrity policy prohibits students from presenting another's work as their own. Generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, attempt to do the work of writing—and even thinking—for their users. Therefore, **students should NOT substitute AI-generated text or ideas for original academic work.** Doing so is a violation of Westmont's academic integrity policy. Additionally, if you are considering using an AI tool for editing or another assignment-related task, please consult with me first—as this can also cross the line regarding the requirement that you produce your own original work (and is sometimes flagged by AI detection tools as being plagiarism).

Any student who incorporates *any* use of AI-generated text or ideas will receive a zero on the assignment; a second offense will result in failing the course. In the event that a student violates any other provisions of Westmont's policy on academic integrity, as spelled out in the student handbook, I reserve the right to assign whatever grade for the course that I deem appropriate, including a grade of F, without regard to the student's accumulated points. Violations of academic integrity will be handled in accordance with the College's policies. It is the student's responsibility to be familiar with the policies of the College regarding academic integrity and to avoid violating these policies. You will likely find this website helpful:

<https://www.westmont.edu/office-provost/academic-program/academic-integrity-policy>). It is also the student's responsibility to educate herself/himself regarding how to correctly quote, paraphrase, and cite the ideas of others (including parenthetical citations and bibliographic entries). If you have *any* questions about academic integrity, plagiarism, or how to appropriately use, cite, and/or reference sources, please do not hesitate to ask me!

Accessibility and Accommodations

Westmont is committed to ensuring equal access to academic courses and college programs. In keeping with this commitment under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008, individuals with diagnoses that impact major life activities are protected from discrimination and are entitled to reasonable accommodations. Students who choose to disclose a disability are encouraged to contact the Accessibility Resource Office (ARO) as early as possible in the semester to discuss potential accommodations for this course. Accommodations are designed to ensure equal access to programs for all students who have a disability that impacts their participation in college activities. Email aro@westmont.edu or see westmont.edu/accessibility-services for more information.

Moreover, if you have any special circumstances (e.g., participation in an intercollegiate athletic team, an internship or work schedule, etc.) that may impact your participation or performance in this class,

please notify me within the **first week** of the semester so that an appropriate plan of action can be implemented.

Office Hours

Please remember to take advantage of my office hours and to ask me questions. I am here as a resource for you and am happy to discuss the material, questions you may have about pursuing a career in this field, and all things sociological! If your class, work, or sports schedule makes it difficult for you to attend my regularly-scheduled office hours, please email me to set-up an appointment.

Email

If you want to reach me by email, please allow at least 24 hours for a response (and longer during academic breaks), although I may respond sooner. I do not typically check or respond to email during the weekend. Please keep in mind that email is not the best forum for lengthy discussions of course material. If you need to discuss something from lecture or the readings, it is much better for both of us if you come to my office hours or schedule an appointment with me. **Please include the course number (i.e., SOC 180) in the subject line of all emails!**

Common Classroom Courtesy

Out of respect for both me and your fellow classmates, students are not allowed to engage in phone calls, text messaging, reading for another class, surfing the web, checking social media, emailing, or any other form of discourteous disengagement during our class time. Any and all of these activities will detract from your participation grade.

Two important skills that you will develop throughout your college career (and beyond) are your abilities to think critically and to engage in respectful dialogue with individuals whose perspectives differ from your own. *Be advised that some topics covered in this course may be controversial.* Some topics may surprise, shock, or offend you, while being seemingly mundane to others in the class. The point of sociological inquiry into the various topics covered in this course is critical analysis and understanding. Please feel free to disagree with me, the authors of our readings, or other students in the class, but do so respectfully. If you do not feel prepared to participate in open, frank, and sometimes explicit discussions (of the types of topics listed in this syllabus) in a reflexive, thoughtful, and respectful manner, please consider withdrawing from this course. My hope is that we will have lively discussions that everyone feels comfortable participating in!

Laptops and Cell Phones

From experience, I have found that students who bring laptops to class to aid their note-taking usually end up engaging in the discourteous behaviors described above, being amongst the most distracted students in the class, and, subsequently, having the lowest participation grades. However, I recognize that some of you will sometimes need to bring your laptop to class in order to refer to the readings. If you choose to bring a laptop to class, please do not abuse this privilege! If you engage in the discourteous behaviors described above, you will lose participation points and I may ask you to leave the class that day (so that you do not distract those seated around you). I also reserve the right to ban “repeat offenders” from using laptops in this class.

With regard to cell phones, please either turn them off or set them on “silent” mode—**out of sight**—during class. If your cell phone goes off in the classroom, you will be responsible for bringing

the entire class treats (e.g., pastries, fruit, cookies, chips, candy, etc.) for the next class. I, too, have a cell phone, and this policy includes me as well; if my phone goes off during class, I will bring the treats to the next class. Deal?

Changes to the Syllabus

Topics in lecture may vary a bit from the schedule, below, depending upon the pacing of lectures and the interests of the class. However, students should keep up with the posted reading schedule unless I instruct you otherwise. I also reserve the right to modify this syllabus as conditions warrant. ***You are responsible for schedule or assignment changes whether or not you are in class when they are announced.*** All schedule, assignment, or other syllabus-related changes will be posted on our Canvas site.

Note: Here are the abbreviations used in the reading schedule, below. ***SWE*** = *The Social Work Experience*. ***WHH*** = *When Helping Hurts*. ***Cadillac*** = “*So You Think I Drive a Cadillac?*”: *Welfare Recipients’ Perspectives on the System and Its Reform* (excerpts posted on Canvas). Readings preceded by an asterisk (*) are posted on Canvas.

Course Outline, Reading Schedule, and Assignment Due Dates

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Readings</u>
PART I: WHAT ARE THE HUMAN SERVICES, SOCIAL WORK, AND SOCIOLOGICAL PRACTICE? HOW DO SOCIOLOGISTS APPROACH THE HELPING PROFESSIONS?		
Week 1		
M 9/1	Introductions, Course Overview	Syllabus
W 9/3	Careers in Social Work & Sociological Practice	*“Careers in Clinical Sociology,” pp. 1-4 & 8-25; <i>SWE</i> Ch. 1 (1 st half)
	Reading Response #1 Due	
F 9/5	The Social Work Profession & The Field of Clinical Sociology	<i>SWE</i> Ch. 1 (2 nd half); *Bruhn & Rebach (1996), pp. 1-8
Week 2		
M 9/8	Theoretical Perspectives	*Suppes & Wells (2018), pp. 34-51
W 9/10	The Clinical Sociological Approach	*Rebach (2001), pp. 15-24
F 9/12	The Clinical Sociological Approach	*Bruhn & Rebach (1996), pp. 8-24
Week 3		
M 9/15	Applying the Biopsychosocial Model	* <i>Cadillac</i> Ch. 1
	Reading Response #2 Due	

PART II: SOCIAL WELFARE: HISTORY, PUBLIC ASSISTANCE, AND CHRIST-CENTERED PERSPECTIVES

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W 9/17	The History of Social Welfare in the U.S.	<i>*Cadillac</i> Ch. 2
F 9/19	The History of Social Welfare in the U.S.	<i>SWE</i> Ch. 3 (1 st half)

Week 4

M 9/22	The History of Social Welfare in the U.S.	<i>SWE</i> Ch. 3 (2 nd half)
W 9/24	Poverty & Public Welfare Assistance	<i>*Cadillac</i> Ch. 4
F 9/26	Poverty & Public Welfare Assistance	<i>*Cadillac</i> Ch. 9

Week 5

M 9/29	God’s Plan for Social Welfare in the Old Testament Reading Response #3 Due	Leviticus 25; Deut. 24:19-22; Ruth 2; Isaiah 58; commentary on these passages
W 10/1	Christ-Centered Responses to Poverty	<i>WHH</i> Preface, Introduction, & Ch. 1
F 10/3	Christ-Centered Responses to Poverty	<i>WHH</i> Chs. 2 & 4

Week 6

M 10/6	Christ-Centered Responses to Poverty	<i>WHH</i> pp. 73-79, Ch. 5, pp. 133-136, & pp. 143-148
W 10/8	Christ-Centered Responses to Poverty	<i>WHH</i> Chs. 7-8
F 10/10	Social Justice & Populations At Risk Reading Response #4 Due	<i>SWE</i> Ch. 2 (1 st half)

[No Classes Oct. 13th - 14th – Happy Fall Break! ☺]

Week 7

W 10/15	Social Justice & Populations At Risk	<i>SWE</i> Ch. 2 (2 nd half)
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PART III: SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE ACROSS CONTEXTS

F 10/17	Family and Children’s Services Analytical Paper Due	<i>SWE</i> Ch. 4 (1 st half)
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Week 8

M 10/20	Family and Children’s Services	<i>SWE</i> Ch. 4 (2 nd half)
W 10/22	Family and Children’s Services + Exam Review	
F 10/24	Midterm Exam	

Week 9

M 10/27	Social Work in Mental Health	<i>SWE</i> Ch. 5 (1 st half)
W 10/29	Social Work in Mental Health	<i>SWE</i> Ch. 5 (2 nd half)
F 10/31	Social Work in Health Care	<i>SWE</i> Ch. 6 (1 st half)

Week 10

M 11/3	Social Work in Health Care	<i>SWE</i> Ch. 6 (2 nd half)
W 11/5	Social Work and Criminal Justice	<i>SWE</i> Ch. 10 (1 st half)
F 11/7	Social Work and Criminal Justice	<i>SWE</i> Ch. 10 (2 nd half)

Week 11

M 11/10	Social Work and Criminal Justice	
	Reading Response #5 Due	
W 11/12	Social Work with Older Adults	<i>SWE</i> Ch. 9 (1 st half)
F 11/14	Social Work with Older Adults	<i>SWE</i> Ch. 9 (2 nd half)
	Group Project Draft Due	

Week 12

M 11/17	Social Work with Individuals with Disabilities	<i>SWE</i> Ch. 11
W 11/19	Social Work with Individuals with Disabilities	*Podcast (1 hr.) <i>Throughline</i> “ADA Now!”
	Reading Response #6 Due	

PART IV: PROFESSIONAL ETHICS, RESPONSIBILITIES, & COMMON CHALLENGES

F 11/21	Vicarious Trauma, Burnout, Self-Care, & Vicarious Posttraumatic Growth	*Jirek (2015)
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Week 13

M 11/24	Vicarious Trauma, Burnout, Self-Care, & Vicarious Posttraumatic Growth	*Wicks (2008), pp. 42-79
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[No Classes Nov. 26th - 28th – Happy Thanksgiving! ☺]

Week 14

M 12/1	Professional Ethics and Responsibilities	*Corey & Corey (2011), pp. 219-229; *Bruhn & Rebach (1996), pp. 24-27; *NASW Code of Ethics
W 12/3	The Future of the Human Services	<i>SWE</i> Ch. 12 (1 st half)
F 12/5	The Future of the Human Services	<i>SWE</i> Ch. 12 (2 nd half)

PART V: SPECIAL TOPICS IN SOCIAL POLICY

Week 15

M 12/8	Social Policy Special Topics	
	Group Project Workshop / Presentation	
W 12/10	Social Policy Special Topics	
	Group Project Workshop / Presentation	
F 12/12	Wrap-Up / Exam Review	*Wicks (2008), pp. 166-174

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Week 16

TH 12/18 **Final Exam (12 – 2 p.m.)**