

SOCIAL WELFARE: A WELFARE VIEW

Reading Assignment 1 Social Work: A Human Rights Profession

Reading: Chapter 1, Social Work: A Human Rights Profession

Introduction to Social Welfare and Social Work provides a basic understanding of how societies meet the personal and social needs of their members. The evolution of social welfare ideas and systems in the United States is presented in an international and intercultural context. The cross-cultural and historical perspective reveals the possibilities — often circumscribed by a culture's values — in addressing the needs of people.

A basic premise of this social welfare book is that the dual realities of the global economy and the changing demographics of the welfare state create an imperative for a focus that transcends national borders. Enhanced knowledge of other countries' social welfare innovations helps us shape solutions to our mutual social problems in an increasingly interdependent world.

The challenge facing social planners in today's world is how to include the value of sustainability — preserving what we have for ourselves and for our children — along with the values of materialism and competition and progress. This challenge, the need to sustain our resources, a major theme of the volume, is the link among the introductory chapters on values, the middle sections on justice and oppression, and sustainable development, and the final sections on social work issues across the life span, health care, and mental health care.

One of the most vexing — and possibly the most profound — problems facing humans today is how to maintain economic growth while seeing that people's basic needs are met (ensuring access to food, shelter, sanitation, clear water, education, and health). Reliance on the kindness of transnational corporations and the fairness of the "free market" to provide for the common social welfare is a policy fraught with obvious limitations. A well-orchestrated assault on once popular government programs has a momentum due to unprecedented corporate influence on politics (and politicians) and the media.

As we know from social welfare history, social progress comes in waves, pendulum swings, as it were, between harsh competition — individualism — and a more humanitarian focus. In recognizing the interplay of social policy, provision of services to the needy, and macroeconomic issues, we are better prepared to have realistic expectations for the prospects of effective social change. In supporting candidates for political office and in influencing their endorsement or opposition to certain policies — of gun control for example — we can play an active role in supporting legislative reform. The social work profession is the most politically active of the helping and mental health professions.

In this book, every chapter draws on human rights language, expectation, and conventions. The concept of human rights evolved over many decades in the 20th century, especially as a result of the terrible human carnage of the World Wars and a questioning of what makes us human. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is our reference point and theme that unites the individual chapters. Note the quotes that introduce each social welfare topic.

Chapter 1 introduces the reader to this human rights framework as well as to the historical and contemporary uniqueness of social work and to its empowerment perspective. In introducing key theoretical perspective and definitions, this chapter lays the foundation for the remainder of the book and for the chapter assignments. A focus on critical thinking begins here from the perspective of cultural competence/humility and global awareness. We begin our understanding of the mission and ethics of social work here as well within the context of social and economic globalization. In this way, the stage is set for our later analysis of specific social policies and the political forces that constrain or promote them. I am referring to policies shaping the criminal justice system, for example, as well as child welfare services and health care.

Keep in mind, therefore, the foundational and theoretical nature of this chapter, reading that may seem a little dry, containing as it does, definitions and terminology pertinent to the social welfare system and to the social work profession.

What is power? What are human rights and where do they come from? What is globalization, and is this interconnectedness of nations a force for good or is it destructive for individual growth and development? These are among the issues that will be tackled in the pages of chapter 1. The need to develop our social work imaginations through critical thinking or vice versa – developing our critical thinking through our imaginations – is a major theme.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Students who complete this assignment should expect to be able to:

1. Describe the holistic, biopsychosocial framework used in this text for the study of social welfare as a social institution.
2. Use a global/human rights lens to view the U.S. social welfare system.
3. Define the basic theoretical concepts presented in this overview of concepts and models to be used throughout the book.
4. Explain the ecosystems, interactionist conceptualization of the social work profession and to prepare the student to expand the person/environment conceptualization. Describe the profession of social work as a policy-based profession.
5. Describe the basic human rights concepts as derived from the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
6. Explain the notion that social welfare programs such as child welfare and

health care are basic human rights.

7. Discuss attributes of the social work imagination.

KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS:

NASW
Code of ethics
CSWE
Human rights
International social work
Theories of human need
Hierarchy of human needs
Structural functionalism
Regulating the poor
Ecosystems theory
Empowerment approach
Strengths perspective
Social welfare
Terms such as Third World
Global North and South
Globalization
Power
Blaming the victim

Our social work imagination
Critical thinking
Cultural humility
Ethnocentrism
Environmental justice

People
Abraham Maslow
Piven and Cloward
Karl Marx

KEY PEOPLE

Piven and Cloward
Dennis Saleebey
Margaret Mead
Paulo Friere
Gordon Allport
bell hooks
Erving Goffman

ESSAY QUESTIONS:

Type this assignment using Microsoft Word and save as a file to your computer. Submit your assignment by clicking on the Assignment 1 Submission link and uploading your assignment.

When submitting assignments, you should not use the browser Safari. Use Chrome or Firefox.

Please provide written responses to five of the following questions (Suggested length: one long paragraph or two short paragraphs). Know all of them in preparation for the Midterm Exam.

Before you begin, write something about yourself, stage in life, career plans, why you chose the course, etc.

1. What is Piven and Cloward's conceptualization of the social welfare system? How does this view differ from the traditional view?
2. Define power and relate it to the achievement of needs. How do power elites manage the flow of information concerning matters of relevance to social welfare?
3. Compare social work to other disciplines or professions, such as law or

- psychology. Why is social work considered unique?
4. Discuss globalization as an economic concept.
 5. Discuss globalization in terms of social work roles.
 6. Using an ecosystems approach, see if you can relate critical thinking within this framework to Box 1.2 "Study Abroad."
 7. See if you can find several of the news articles listed in the text to show global interconnectedness or an updated headline and article on a similar topic and discuss the global implications.
 8. Summarize box 1.1 on studying abroad. What would you like to learn from such an experience?

CREATIVE QUESTIONS: Write a one-half page response to one of the following questions:

1. Identify the basic needs of people, ranked in order of importance. Which of these needs should be and should not be guaranteed by the government? Why or why not? Relate to human rights.
2. To become familiar with the notion of functionalism, consider the functions of various social customs and/or institutions such as marriage, funerals, social welfare systems, and even social problems such as crime. Then discuss the dysfunctions of these practices. Latent and manifest functions may be discussed in this manner also, as for example with warfare or even economic inequality.
3. If you have lived or visited abroad discuss relevant themes of this chapter, such as how humans get their needs met or the importance of an attitude of cultural humility as opposed to arrogance.