Submitted on September 13, 2016 by Sean Camp, LCSW, ABD, Utah State University

This course is only offered by USU when the Utah Legislature is in session (by design). This affords students the opportunity to deeply engage in the process.

**SW 6300: Legislative Engagement Assignment**

PART ONE - Legislator Contact

During the semester each student will read and monitor social work-related issues being considered by Congress (State, Federal, or International) such as homelessness, child welfare, gay/lesbian issues, discrimination, community violence, etc.  Each student will be responsible for choosing a social policy issue and writing a letter of concern, support, or opposition to their individual state or national representative or senator.  In addition, students will make the effort to actually speak with a relevant Senator or Representative directly (via phone or in-person, see "Extra Credit" below) to discuss their support or opposition to the issue at hand.  NOTE:  *Success* at direct engagement with a Congressperson is not required to receive credit for this assignment; students should simply document their concerted effort to accomplish this.

PART TWO - Legislation Tracking Online Blog

Each student will choose a particular piece of proposed legislation that is currently under consideration at the state, federal, or international level (such as United Nations proclamations, Social Policy legislation of other countries that could impact U.S. policy, etc.).  Throughout the semester each student will follow her/his chosen legislation through periodic entries in an online “legislative diary” (via Canvas Online Learning Management System).  As part of the “diary” the student must identify the legislator(s) who is/are sponsoring the proposed legislation, the committee responsible for examining the legislation and who serves on the committee, and any additional information the student feels is pertinent.

The requirement is that each student will post one entry weekly on his/her chosen piece of legislation, and comment a MINIMUM of twice on other student’s entries.  On weeks where a student’s chosen legislation may have no action, the student can use this opportunity to provide an entry that expands the context, history, or overall understanding of the issue being addressed by the proposed legislation.

This semester the Utah Legislature will be in session from 01-26-15 to 03-12-15.

* [A](http://le.utah.gov/~2012/2012.htm) list of Bills up for consideration in the Utah Legislature can be found at:  <http://le.utah.gov/DynaBill/BillList?session=2015GS>
* In addition, it is possible to create an automatic email alert any time there is formal action on your chosen legislation by tracking your bill.  This can be set up at:  <http://le.utah.gov/asp/billtrack/track.asp>
* There are 149 House Bills, 49 House Joint Resolutions, 99 Senate Bills, and 49 Senate Joint Resolutions being proposed.  Thus, NO STUDENT CAN CHOOSE THE SAME LEGISLATION TO FOLLOW.  This will be first come, first serve – whoever posts their choice on Canvas first will lock in that piece of legislation.  Students will need to check the Canvas posts before moving ahead with a particular choice.

PART THREE - Legislative Tracking Summary and Analysis

For this assignment you will provide a written summary and analysis of the legislation you tracked for the "Legislation Tracking Online Blog”.  This should be a thoughtful and professional analysis of the legislation chosen, and should include the following sections:

1. **Legislation Overview:**The overview should provide a brief summary of the proposed legislation, including the context in which the selected issue occurs.  Where applicable and appropriate, this should include a summary of the problem experienced by the population affected by your choice of legislation.
2. **Brief History and Current Status:**Provide a brief history of your selected legislation and (if applicable) briefly summarize previous efforts that have been made to address the problem.
3. **Current Public Perception:**This section should summarize your analysis of social and cultural norms and values related to the legislation chosen.  You should identify groups that would support/oppose the legislation as proposed.  Present your analysis in as non-judgmental a fashion as possible.
4. **Relationship to Social Work Values:**Discuss any relevant issues in relation to the NASW Code of Ethics or any other relevant ethical norms, including NASW’s “official” position on this issue.  Note any biases/exclusions.
5. **“Pro’s” and “Con’s” of Proposed Legislation:**Briefly summarize and report on any competing ideologies related to your problem, and provide a brief analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of any “sides”.  Again, present your analysis in as non-judgmental a fashion as possible.
6. **Outcome of Legislative Session:**Report on the outcome of the Legislative Session with regard to your chosen piece of legislation.  Did it pass?  Did it fail? and if yes, in what way did it fail?  You should provide a brief analysis of the reason you feel the legislation passed or failed, including issues of public perception and financial considerations.  In addition, where applicable, you should clearly address any intersection of cultural norms and/or societal value systems that you feel may have contributed to the pass/fail of your legislation.
7. **Intent of Legislation/Potential Unintended Consequences:**Begin this section with an analysis of what you believe to be the original intent of the proposed legislation.  If you believe the intent is/was different from the *stated*intent, report on this as well.  If your legislation passed, provide a brief analysis of what you anticipate the consequences of passage will be.  If you legislation did NOT pass, provide a brief analysis of what you anticipate the consequences of the legislation would have been had it passed.  In either case, discuss any potential unintended consequences of the passage (or potential passage) may be.  This final portion is obviously speculation, but should be grounded in your understanding of policy and social systems.

EXTRA CREDIT

Many organizations in Utah offer a "Day on the Hill" participatory opportunity in which an organization that has a vested interest in promoting (or defeating) a proposed piece of legislation gathers supporters to lobby the appropriate Congressperson(people) directly.  Any student who attends one of these events may receive credit toward another class assignment (see syllabus).  In addition, any student who directly engages a Senator or Representative *in person* may receive similar credit.