This course provides a comprehensive overview of social institutions and social policy in the world today. Employing a comparative cultural approach, both differences and similarities in social institutional and policy substance, practice, and context are considered to develop an understanding of policy decisions and structures relative to various contemporary social institutions and problems. Special attention is given to social policy theories used to frame and explore a wide range of social concerns and issue areas, such as education, employment, crime, health, family, aging, and poverty, among others. Relevant issues are examined as questions of societal wellbeing and community at different levels of analysis and application. With the goal of providing both analytical insights and practical skills, the course offers an exploration of social institutions over time and a critical assessment of approaches to resolving social problems and dilemmas.

The objectives of the course include understanding and learning to
- identify institutional and cultural enablers and barriers in social policy development, program design, and implementation;
- recognize and understand the cultural, political, and economic factors that determine and affect social institutions and policy issues;
- analyze and evaluate the impact of different social policies on target groups and populations; and
- develop a multi-level and critical awareness of policy antecedents, responses, and consequences relative to selected social institutions and problems.

Course Requirements
All students are expected to come to class prepared, having completed the required readings for each week, and to participate in class discussions. In addition, students are each required to make one class presentation and to prepare two brief analytical essays and a more comprehensive research paper on a selected topic. Grades are determined by class participation (15%), the presentation (25%), the essays (15% each, 30% total), and the research paper (30%).**

Required Books

Recommended Books
**Disabled Student Accommodation**

If you are a student with a disability for which you need academic accommodation, please inform the professor and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be recognized and arranged through the DRC.

**Schar School Policy on Plagiarism**

The professional scholarship and intellectual life of a university as well as the field of public policy inquiry depend fundamentally on a foundation of trust. Thus, any act of plagiarism strikes at the heart of the meaning of the university and the purpose of the Schar School of Policy and Government. It constitutes a serious breach of professional ethics and it is unacceptable.

Plagiarism is the use of another’s words or ideas presented as one’s own. It includes, among other things, the use of specific words, ideas, or frameworks that are the product of another’s work. Honesty and thoroughness in citing sources is essential to professional accountability and personal responsibility. Appropriate citation is necessary so that arguments, evidence, and claims can be critically examined.

Plagiarism is wrong because of the injustice it does to the person whose ideas are stolen. It is also wrong because it constitutes lying to one’s professional colleagues. From a prudential perspective, it is shortsighted and self-defeating, and it can ruin a professional career.

The Schar School faculty takes plagiarism seriously and has adopted a zero tolerance policy. Any plagiarized assignment will receive an automatic grade of “F.” This may lead to failure for the course, resulting in dismissal from the University. This dismissal will be noted on the student’s transcript. For foreign students who are on a university-sponsored visa (e.g., F-1, J-1, or J-2), dismissal also results in the revocation of their visa.

To help enforce the Schar School policy on plagiarism, all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit student’s work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. The Schar School policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace it or substitute for it. [http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/handbook/aD.html]