Comparative Social Policy
George Mason University
Summer 2017
Instructor: Adriana Kocornik-Mina

Virtual seminar, EXCEPT for two in-person sessions on Saturday, 15th July 10:00-15:00 and Saturday, 22nd July 10:00-15:00

Scope and Purpose:

Social policy, taken to mean societal responses to social risks -- poverty, inequality, crime, violence, age, and disability -- is among the most assailed policy areas throughout the world. For some, social policy is often a leading obstacle to the pursuit of inclusive and sustainable development, through unintended consequences like welfare fraud, fiscal deficits, fragmentation, and resistance of groups threatened by the policy. For others, social policy is the means to ensure the welfare of citizens from cradle to grave. The course focuses mainly on social policy in response to traditional (above-mentioned) and new social risks (cyber bullying, ecological sustainability and climate change). We consider challenges with respect to concepts, theories, data, and policy approaches, and compare across regimes. Our orienting questions are: What explanations are given for contemporary social policies in response to different forms of social risks and the unintended consequences of social policies? What processes are in place to transform or innovate social policies? What are effects of new social risks, e.g., climate change, on social policy? What types of government and civil society responses appear effective in addressing traditional and new social risks, as well as unintended consequences? What responses worsen them?

Requirements and Grades:

Students are required to read the assigned materials and to actively participate in online discussions. Depth and quality of contributions are more important than quantity. Thirty-five percent (35%) of your final grade will be based on this. Participation in online discussion is mandatory. I will post weekly questions that each working group (I will randomly integrate these groups) will need to address.
Online discussions will not be limited to answering my questions. Very importantly, your own questions must also be addressed online.

My lectures will review the assigned readings, provide additional information and theoretical perspectives, and address questions raised in online discussions. The lectures will become available online after all members of a working group have participated in the online discussion and demonstrated thoughtful consideration of assigned readings. **Ten percent** (10%) of your final grade will be based on a 3-4 pp. reaction to one of my lectures. You will need to substantiate your feedback. You can rely solely on course readings or may refer to new material. Please make sure to include a full citation.

One goal of the course is to relate the contemporary situation of particular countries to the concepts and theories that we are studying, and to evaluate those concepts and theories in light of those empirical experiences. Each of you will “adopt” a country and become the resident expert. You may select a country – it cannot be the United States – or I may assign you one. In choosing your country, please keep in mind that it needs to offer a suitable case of contemporary social policy. During the first of our two in-person sessions (15th July), you will be asked to articulate one social risk, associated social policy responses and current transformations in your adopted country. You will apply concepts and theories and identify lessons that can help the country improve the welfare of its citizens. A short reflection paper (8-10 pp.) in which you articulate your country-specific assessment and recommendations will also be submitted on this date. Together, your presentation and reflection paper will account for **thirty-five percent** (35%) of your grade. Examples of suitable countries include: Ethiopia, Colombia, United Kingdom, Mexico, and India.

The remaining **twenty percent** (20%) of your grade will be based on your participation in our second and final in-person meeting on 22nd July, as well as a 4-5 pp. summary of lessons learned during the session. More information will be provided at the beginning of the course. Anticipate scenario development exercises and games for interactive learning and skill development.

**General readings:**
* Mandatory

Sessions:

WEEK 1
Orientation and administration; scope and purpose of course; key concepts and principles in social policy.


WEEK 2
Key ideological positions and debates.


**WEEK 3**

Key issues in social policy: unintended consequences of social policy; reconciling competing perspectives; policy innovations.


*ODI. “Cash transfers: what does the evidence say? A rigorous review of impacts and the role of design and implementation features” | Overseas Development Institute (ODI).


WEEK 4
Comparative social policy: Esping-Andersen’s welfare regime typology.


WEEK 5
Policy delivery: state, private and voluntary sectors.


WEEK 6
Shifts in welfare provision.


http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9515.2011.00810.x


http://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2012.682348

http://doi.org/10.1177/0958928710380483


WEEK 7
Supranational challenges to national welfare systems.


**WEEK 8**

Natural disasters and social policy; climate change; migrants, refugees and human trafficking; international development assistance.


