MASTER OF SCIENCE IN SOCIAL POLICY (MSSP)

MSSP 601 The Power of Partnerships between Government, Non-profits, and the Private Sector
Everything from the Affordable Care Act to the Mayor’s Rebuild Initiative here in Philadelphia could not be implemented by government without strong and vital partnerships with non-profits and the private sector. These collaborations provide an opportunity to help people, impact and change policy, improve outcomes, and multiply the impact that non-profit and private sector organizations can have. The course will help graduate (and advanced undergraduate) students not only understand the theory, policy, and practice of these collaborations but also learn how they actually happen. Students will also learn the characteristics of these three sectors, their roles and contributions, and competitive forces that are often at work in the collaborative process. Topics for discussion will include attitudes and expectations in the public sector, the ingredients of effective partnerships, and effective communication strategies with elected and appointed officials. The course will be conducted on a seminar basis. Graduate students are expected to take an active part in shaping the discussion. Students will be expected to rotate leadership for the class discussions and to supplement course materials with independent study of relevant magazine and newspaper articles. Course grades are assigned as follows: 20 percent for class participation, 15 percent for an in-class written exam, 30 percent for a group presentation and write up of a case study, and 35 percent for a final project. High quality written work and accurate citations is an expectation in all assignments.
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

MSSP 606 Data for Equitable Justice Lab
Data for Equitable Justice Lab is a non-credit research group that gives SP2 Masters students an opportunity to analyze some of today’s most important social issues through data and, with faculty support, create a product for audiences well beyond our classrooms and campus. With guidance from the lab faculty, students develop a project - either individually or as part of a team - to examine a contemporary social policy or political issue through or on data or digital technology. Through these projects students will produce an op-ed, blog post, podcast, academic article, short film, or other product of their choosing that creates or contributes to contemporary discourse.
Course usually offered in spring term
Activity: Laboratory
0.0 Course Units

MSSP 607 Practical Programming for Data Science
This course familiarizes students with no prior programming experience with the core concepts of programming and the practice of software development for data-intensive applications in industry and government. After this course, students will be comfortable (1) writing code to save and load from files and spreadsheets into basic data structures like strings, lists, and maps; (2) manipulating data with code to perform tasks like generating aggregate statistics and filtering data into subsets; (3) effectively communicating findings from interactive, exploratory programming with others; and (4) working with technical teams, using best practices of software development when building line-of-business applications.
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

MSSP 608 Practical Machine Learning Methods
This course prepares students with no background in machine learning or data science to use tools from those fields effectively in applied contexts. Using GUI-based software - or optionally, by programming with libraries - students will build skills including (1) feature representations of spreadsheet-based or text datasets; (2) training classification and regression models for prediction tasks; (3) evaluation of machine learning model accuracy and error analysis; and (4) reasoning about predictive models and making tradeoffs like bias vs. variance, granularity and annotation complexity in labeled training data, and the ethical application of predictive modeling to human-centered data.
Course usually offered in spring term
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

MSSP 628 Policy: Analysis of Issues, Strategy and Process
Policy analysis requires an understanding of social problems/social issues and the processes by which policy is developed and implemented. Critical skills in many policy frameworks include: problem definition and analysis, review of relevant research, identification of possible actions, implementation and evaluation, and fiscal analysis. Competency in written and oral communication is also essential. To develop these and related skills, this course utilizes as a base a dynamic social problem analysis framework that addresses issues of equity, equality and adequacy. It also examines multiple theoretical and analytical perspectives. Through the review of contemporary and historical social policy debates and provisions, selected case examples and policy briefs, this course provides students with an understanding of the policy roles of the legislative and executive branches of government, including goal setting, policy rulemaking and enactment, allocation of resources, financing, regulation, and implementation. The policy process at state and local levels of government will also be addressed. The primary focus is on U.S. policy although global policies will be discussed when relevant.
Course usually offered in fall term
Prerequisite: Enrolled in MSSP program or permission of instructor
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

MSSP 629 Research and Evaluation Design
Research and Evaluation Design introduces social research methods in the context of social policy and program evaluation. The course provides a conceptual and practical understanding in the design of experimental, quasi-experimental and non-experimental research and in the application of quantitative and qualitative methods. Students learn about the application of the research process and skills in all phases of assessing a social policy and developing a social program, including needs assessment, implementation analysis, and evaluation of policy or program effectiveness. Students learn to be critical and informed consumers of research and to apply guidelines of research ethics in social policy settings.
Taught by: Summerville
One-term course offered either term
Prerequisite: Enrolled in MSSP program or permission of instructor
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit
MSSP 630 Quantitative Reasoning/Social Statistics
The primary goals of this course are (1) to provide students with a solid understanding of the logic of social science research as well as (2) to provide students with an introduction to a broad range of statistical methods commonly used in social science research. The first portion of the semester concentrates on defining research problems, research design (including sampling, measurement, and causal inference), and assessing research quality. The latter portion of the semester focuses upon data analysis including descriptive statistics, measures of association for categorical and continuous variables, introduction to t-tests, ANOVA and regression, and the language of data analysis. Students will learn how to choose and apply statistical tools to data sources, how to interpret quantitative studies, and will gain experience using SPSS - a statistical software package.
Course usually offered in fall term
Prerequisite: Enrolled in MSSP program or permission of instructor
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

MSSP 631 Law and Social Policy
This course introduces students to the basics of the American legal system, focusing on the interplay between litigation and social policy. Students will learn how law, and particularly case law, is made, how to read case law and evaluate precedent, legal reasoning and argument. This course will utilize various teaching methods including introduction to the "Socratic" lecturing method which is frequently utilized in the study of law. Students will also study the structure of court systems at both state and federal levels as well as the litigation process and the role of law and courts in shaping and addressing social policy issues. Students will also learn the basics of several areas of substantive law, with an eye toward consideration of how that law has been, and can be, used to effect social change.
Course usually offered in spring term
Prerequisite: Enrolled in MSSP program or permission of instructor
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

MSSP 632 Capstone Seminar I: Policy Communications
The focus of the Capstone Seminar is three-fold: 1) to enhance student integration of the theory and practice of social policy analysis; 2) to enhance the student’s competencies in the written and oral communication processes and procedures necessary for the policy world; and 3) to ensure basic knowledge about federal budget processes, stakeholder roles, and inter-organizational collaboration.
Course usually offered in spring term
Prerequisites: Enrolled in MSSP program.
Activity: Seminar
0.5 Course Units

MSSP 633 Capstone Seminar II: Policy Internship
Capstone II consists of an intensive, multi-week policy internship that is selected through a consultative process involving the student, MSSP advisors, internship coordinator/advisor, and mentors/supervisors at potential sites. The internship provides an opportunity for the student to expand horizons beyond the academic. It serves as a medium to integrate classroom learning with experiences in policy making activity.
Course usually offered summer term only
Prerequisite: Enrolled in MSSP program
Activity: Seminar
0.5 Course Units

MSSP 634 MSSP/DA Capstone I: Telling Stories with Data
The volume and complexity of data continues to increase in the world around us, including science, business, medicine, social media and everyday human activity. This course aims to expose students to visual representation methods and techniques that increase the understanding of complex data. Good visualizations not only present a visual interpretation of data, but do so by improving comprehension, communication, and decision making. In this course, students will learn about the fundamentals of perception, the theory of visualization, and good design practices for visualization. The course will also provide hands-on experience on the process of data communication, from initial data analysis, to identifying appropriate visualization techniques, to crafting informative visualizations.
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Seminar
0.5 Course Units

MSSP 635 Capstone II: Policy Internship in Data Analytics
Capstone II consists of an intensive, multi-week internship that is selected through a consultative process involving the student, MSSP advisors, internship coordinator/advisor, and mentors/supervisors at potential sites. The internship provides an opportunity for the student to expand horizons beyond the academic. It serves as a medium to integrate classroom learning with experiences in policy making activity.
Prerequisite: Enrolled in Social Policy/Data Analytics program
Activity: Seminar
0.5 Course Units

MSSP 668 Economics for Social Policy
This course provides students with theory and tools from the field of economics that are useful for the field of social policy, such as: 1) critical macroeconomic and microeconomic concepts for social policy formation and analysis; 2) information about the Congressional budget process and federal budget, U.S. and global monetary policy, economic measurement indices, and tax policy in relation to social policy values of equity, equality and adequacy; 3) how to apply cost-benefit analysis and/or cost-effectiveness analysis to policy proposals; and 4) the role of nonprofit organizations in the provision of social services and programs that are mandated by federal legislation.
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit
MSSP 710 Democratizing Data: Analytics for Social Change
With the advent of digital technologies and the increasing power of computational analytics, the proliferation and ubiquity of data production has increased at exponential rates enabling new possibilities for social analysis. This course will examine the emergence of democratizing data – the movement to make government and other data more widely or publicly available and its potential enabling for democratic possibilities. The types of data being made available, through various analytic systems, and the ways in which their accessibility and inaccessibility is contributing to reconfigured power relations, will be described. The paradigmatic tensions and shifts that have emerged in the debates on "Big Data," such as deductive versus inductive reasoning and the challenges posed to statistical sampling theory, will be interrogated. The appropriation of machine learning and predictive analytic algorithms for social analysis will be critically explored. Issues related to the ethical and legal use of administrative data, particularly data related to patient, client, student, and taxpayer information will be considered, as well as from internet-based sources including social media. Potential solutions to data security challenges will be additionally considered. Methods for web-scraping of data, analysis of web traffic data, and the use of social networking data in the modeling of social phenomena and public opinion will be examined. Students will learn how to make results accessible to non-technical audiences via data visualization tools, such as web-based data dashboards and web-based maps. These topics will be discussed for the analysis of health, education, and social policy as well as their implications for questions pertaining to race, gender, class, sexuality, dis/abilities, age and youth culture. This course will develop students' knowledge of computational and data analytics and its applications for social policy analysis.
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

MSSP 741 Gender & Social Policy
Gender and Social Policy develops an advanced understanding of social policies through a focus on social issues and conditions through the lens of gender, economic and critical theory. The specialized focus on gender and social policy provides students with the opportunity to develop more specialized knowledge about how market dynamics and government policies respond to the needs and risks faced by women. Specific emphasis is placed on utilizing theoretical frameworks to evaluate the intersection between social policy, history and social science in relationship to gender issues. Students are also expected to conduct a policy analysis that includes an evaluation of how current and former social movements surrounding gender issues shaped their policy of interest.
Taught by: Baker
Course usually offered in spring term
Also Offered As: SWRK 741
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

MSSP 755 International Social Policy & Practice: Perspectives from the Global South
This interdisciplinary course will introduce students to social policy and practice perspectives from outside the U.S. and especially from communities in the Global South. The course will familiarize them with global professions and help prepare them for overseas/cross-cultural practice. Through the course students will identify numerous strategies and skills professionals have used to collaboratively build interventions within human rights, social policy, social welfare, education, healthcare and sustainable development arenas.
Taught by: Anastasia Shown
Course usually offered in fall term
Also Offered As: SWRK 755
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

MSSP 768 Soc Policy Thru Literatur
Also Offered As: SWRK 768
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

MSSP 780 Policy and "Difference" in Postmodernity
Social constructions of "difference" permeate the institutions, spaces, and assumptions of our society. These social constructions include but are not limited to the racialized, gendered, sexed, classed, and dis/abled constructions of the body. By leaning on postmodern thinkers such as Iris Marion Young, Pierre Bourdieu, Judith Butler, Jacques Derrida, Ernesto Laclau, and Michel Foucault, this seminar course will begin by engaging the questions of what is "difference" and how is "difference" discursively constructed and reproduced in society. Using a postmodern lens, the remainder of the course will engage various social science texts that deal with the varieties of "difference" (i.e. race, gender, class, sexuality) and the explicit and/or implicit policy implications of these works. Thus, we will critically engage policies such as welfare, affirmative action, economic policies of taxation, and same-gender marriage, among others. The underlying questions through the course will be to what extent does social policy enable the possibilities of freedom, justice, and democracy for the "Other", the deviant, the abject, the marginalized, those of assumed "difference"? And, to what extent does policy constrain those possibilities at the same time? This course does assume familiarity with social theory and is an introduction to postmodern thought on the law, the political, and policy.
Taught by: Dixon-Roman
Course usually offered in spring term
Also Offered As: SWRK 780
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit
MSSP 796 Family Economic Mobility: Problems and Policies
The experiences and voices of mothers, fathers, children, employers, children's teachers, human service workers, job training providers, policymakers and others in cities across America graphically show us the "real life" challenges to economic mobility facing today's families and organizations. These voices particularly illustrate how economic, social, and cultural policies, practices, and beliefs intersect to perpetuate economic inequality for low-income and many middle-income working families alike. The labor market, welfare and workforce programs, public schools and government are some of the institutions implicated in this intersection. In the course we deconstruct concepts such as the "work ethic," "family-friendly workplace," and "good jobs" in terms of economic, racial and cultural inequalities and, more broadly, in terms of their meaning, aims and rhetoric. At base, this course examines occupational mobility in America within the broad framework of capitalism, democracy, race, ethnicity and gender. Students from GSE, SAS, City Planning, and Communications often join SP2 students to read and critique classic and contemporary literature from multiple disciplines and explore generative roles for "meso-oriented" social change professionals.
Taught by: Roberta Iversen
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: SWRK 796
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit
Notes: In SP2, SWRK-796/MSSP-796 is an approved MSSP Elective and an approved Clinical and Macro practice elective.

MSSP 797 Social Policy in Revolutionary Cuba (1959-2017)
Cuba represents one of the world's long-standing institutionalized revolutions whose narrative and policies have changed from a strong nationalism yearning for independence, to an alignment with communism's ideology and modus operandi, to a nostalgic, post-Soviet Union "socialism" ruled by a binary, state-controlled capitalism. In addition to the myriad of social and political changes affecting the island, the transition of leadership from Fidel Castro to his brother, Raul, and the death of the former in 2016, has put into question the theoretical pillars of the Revolution, thus undermining its initial legitimacy. This course is designed to provide students with the critical and analytical tools to dissect Cuban revolutionary politics, policies, and identity mutations within the island's historical trajectory. We will begin by critically reviewing key points of diplomatic and historical relationships between the U.S and Cuba, followed by an analysis of the notion of independence - upon which Castro relied to gather massive support - in the context of the 60's debates on decolonization and underdevelopment. In addition, we will delve into the theoretical foundations of the Revolution focusing, among other texts, on the literature by Cuba's "founding father" Jose Marti, who deeply influenced the Spanish-American war (1898)'s outcomes as well as Fidel Castro's vision for Cuba. Throughout the course, students will also have the opportunity to critically read and discuss main Cuban social policies such as its famous Literacy Campaign, and other Education, Housing, Cultural, Health, and Immigration policies, as well as the island's complex relationship with technological development and communications. Finally, we will study identity and race dynamics, which are inextricably embedded in Cuba's political landscape. This course will begin with six introductory sessions at the University of Pennsylvania, followed by six class meetings during a two-week stay in Havana, Cuba. Once on the island, students will visit key historical and cultural sites such as El Mueso de la Revolucion (The Museum of the Revolution), El Museo de la Alfabetizacion (The Literacy Museum), and La Escuela de Artes Plasticas (National Art School). Parallel to these endeavors, students will also engage in conversations with distinguished Cuban scholars and cultural critics. Lastly, students are required to develop a research project on a particular Cuban social policy and produce a final paper or writing/multimedia project.
Course usually offered in spring term
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit
Notes: Application available at: www.sp2.upenn.edu/global/courses

MSSP 799 Independent Study
Independent studies provide a flexible opportunity for standing faculty and students to work together in pursuing a topic of special interest that is not sufficiently covered by other courses in the curriculum. The content of independent studies is highly specialized and, as such, requires a plan of study developed jointly by the student(s) and the supervising standing faculty member. Part-time faculty members are not eligible to offer independent studies. Independent studies require the academic advisor's approval.
Activity: Independent Study
1.0 Course Unit
MSSP 897 Applied Linear Modeling
This course deals with the underlying assumptions and applications of the general linear model with social science, education, and social policy related questions/data. The first half of the course begins by covering simple linear regression and the assumptions of the general linear model, assumption diagnostics, consequences of violation, and how to correct for violated assumptions. This will also include methods of incomplete case analysis (i.e. missing data analysis). Then various aspects of regression analysis with multiple independent variables will be covered including categorical explanatory variables (e.g. to estimate group differences), interaction effects, mediating effects (e.g. to estimate the indirect effect of social processes), and non-linear effects. The course will then cover some of the applications of the general(ized) linear model including logistic regression, some elements of path modeling (structural equation modeling), multilevel analysis (hierarchical linear modeling), and longitudinal modeling (growth modeling). The course will be taught using SAS, but students are welcome to use any statistical package of comfort.

Pre-requisite: Introductory Graduate Statistics.
Course usually offered in spring term
Prerequisite: Introductory Graduate Statistics
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit