The Social Policy concentration explores how policies function as the guiding principles on which social programs are based. Students interested in public service, public policy, public health, and law typically choose to follow the requirements of the social policy concentration.

Courses analyze how social policies and social institutions influence the course of human lives and how people can influence social policies. Students develop a strong interdisciplinary foundation in the social sciences and gain an understanding of current social policy issues, drawing on research in anthropology, communication studies, economics, ethnic studies, gender studies, history, philosophy, political science, public health, and sociology. Examples of interdisciplinary specializations include education policy and reform, urban issues and policy, health care issues and policy, legal issues, and environmental issues and policy.

Students are encouraged to use elective credits to build specialties in such areas as juvenile justice, advocacy programs, and policy analysis and to develop the oral and written communication skills important to success in law school and public policy positions.

Program of Study
- Social Policy Major (https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/education-social-policy/social-policy/social-policy-major/)

SOC_POL 304-0 Social Policy & the Human Services (1 Unit)
Development of social policy for human services in the United States. Human service policies for education, mental health, physical health, prisons, income, and aging.

SOC_POL 305-0 Law and Social Policy (1 Unit)
Use and influence of the legal system in and on social institutions and policy.

SOC_POL 307-0 Educational Policy (1 Unit)
Conflict between societal imperatives to select and prepare young people for future careers and to offer youths opportunity; how society and schools address this conflict; various approaches to policy reform.

SOC_POL 311-0 Social Policy and the United States Health Care System (1 Unit)
Examines the health care delivery system in the United States through a review of US health policy issues.

SOC_POL 312-0 Social Policymaking and Implementation (1 Unit)
Examines the process by which social policies are made, the process and realities of their implementation, and the attendant politics.

SOC_POL 313-0 Race, Inequality, and the Political Analysis of Public Policy (1 Unit)
The purpose of this course is to make you a better political analyst. This course will familiarize you with substantive research on politics that has concrete insights for reformers, political advocates, and other public policy stakeholders. The class will cover substantive issues in politics along with how they intersect with class, race, gender and partisanship. While the main focus of the course is to discuss critical issues, there will also be an emphasis on public policy and political science writing formats, styles and standards. It cannot be emphasized enough how important research, analytic and writing skills are to virtually all careers; nothing is more quickly discrediting of good ideas than bad writing. The first half of class is mainly lecture and discussion. The second half of class has been designed to promote your learning as a writer and thinker in public policy. It will provide students with a designated forum for developing and “work shopping” their written work and discussing issues covered in class. The TA will offer feedback on questions as students write, edit, and revise their papers. We will also frequently practice skills in responding critically to colleagues’ texts. One or more quizzes may be administered as well.

SOC_POL 315-0 Global Human Trafficking (1 Unit)
We will examine the context of modern slavery against a backdrop of colonialism and slavery to understand key features of modern slavery, both as the crime is perpetuated and variations in legal definitions.

SOC_POL 330-0 Economics of Social Policy (1 Unit)
Economic concepts and empirical tools to analyze the design and effects of social policies. Topics include the social safety net, health insurance, minimum wage, and taxation. Pre-Requisites are Econ 281 and Econ 310-1 or SESP 310 for SESP students. SOC_POL 330-0 and ECON 333-0 are taught together, may not receive credit for both. SESP students must register for SOC_POL 330-0.

SOC_POL 331-0 Economics of Inequality and Discrimination (1 Unit)
Economic concepts and empirical tools to analyze the causes and consequences of inequality and discrimination. Topics include housing policy, crime, earnings inequality, and the role of education. Prerequisites: ECON 202-0 and SESP 210-0 or equivalent.

SOC_POL 332-0 Economics of Education Policy (1 Unit)
Economic concepts and empirical tools to analyze the design and effects of education policies, including school choice, accountability, education finance, class size policy, and teacher compensation and retention. Prerequisites: ECON 202-0 and SESP 210-0 or equivalent.

SOC_POL 333-0 Economics of Health, Human Capital, and Happiness (1 Unit)
Understanding causal relationships is a central goal in social science and science in general. Correlations help to predict outcomes, but if we want to influence outcomes we need to understand causal pathways. It is not sufficient to observe what is happening, we need to know why it is happening. In this course students will learn the toolbox of causal inference econometrics with applications to the economics of health, human capital, and subjective wellbeing. The empirical methods we will cover include multivariate regressions, panel data, difference-indifference designs, instrumental variables, randomized control trials, and regression discontinuities. We will also discuss causal evidence derived from theoretical models and machine learning. Health, human capital, and subjective wellbeing (“happiness”) are core dimensions of social welfare and inequality in our society. They matter as an outcome for people’s lives and they matter as an input into economic and social productivity. Moreover, health, human capital, and happiness are impacted by behaviors and by social and environmental conditions – factors that can be impacted via social policies. To develop effective social policies, however, it is crucial to understand the causal mechanisms driving these factors. We will discuss fetal origins, the impact of air pollution on health, causes and consequences of mental illness in childhood and youth, the impact of income on health, trends in mortality, the economic drivers of fertility, happiness across countries and over time, and the roots of midlife crisis. Prerequisites: ECON 202-0 (Intro to Microeconomics) and a 200-level statistics class (SESP 210-0, STAT 202-0, STAT 210-0 and PSYCH 201-0 are all suitable).

SOC_POL 334-0 Quantitative Tools for Policy Analysis (1 Unit)
Hands on analysis of the real time challenges facing a range of policy areas and industries across federal and state governments and the private sector. Formal Studies Distro Area

SOC_POL 335-0 Women and American Political Leadership (1 Unit)
With women comprising 51% of the American population, yet having
significantly lower political representation, we will explore the evolution of women's political leadership in our nation.

SOC_POL 351-0 Special Topics in Social Policy (1 Unit) Advanced work on special topics.

SESP 114-0 Summer Internship (0 Unit)

SESP 115-0 Internship (0 Unit)

SESP 195-0 Community Engagement (1 Unit) Critical reflection on community service experiences in relation to broader societal issues. Conceptual frameworks for understanding the meaning and nature of community. For Civic Engagement Certificate students only.

SESP 200-0 Understanding Knowledge (1 Unit) What does it mean to know something? What are the different types of knowledge and what distinguishes them from one another? What counts as fact vs. opinion vs. belief and so on; who gets to decide and under what conditions? How is knowledge produced and how does it gain traction? How does the source and type of knowledge interact with socio-political-cultural constructs and systems of power and, in turn, how can "knowledge" be used to produce and/or perpetuate power and privilege or to empower those who are marginalized? Finally, how does what we do in SESP and at Northwestern as both consumers and producers of knowledge fit within the landscape of these questions? In this course students will explore these and other questions to gain insight into the social production, distribution, consumption, interpretation, and operationalization of "knowledge." Using primarily seminar-style discussion, the first portion of the course focuses on building and analyzing theoretical frameworks and applied texts in order to generate a working understanding of "knowledge" in its myriad forms. Among our goals for the first portion of the course is to tie theoretical, academic, and "folk" knowledges to everyday experiences and the world around us writ large. The second portion of the class will involve a series of applied of cases studies, including welcoming members of the SESP faculty community to present on their research, which we will work to bring into conversation with our generated frameworks regarding the sources, types, and implications of knowledge.

SESP 201-0 Human Development: Childhood and Adolescence (1 Unit) Personal, social, and cognitive development from birth through adolescence. Interplay of biological and experiential factors on linguistic and conceptual development, ego, and personality.

SESP 203-0 Human Development: Adulthood and Aging (1 Unit) Psychological, sociological, and biological factors influencing socialization and development from young and middle adulthood through old age. Influences of family, school, and work on the individual.

SESP 204-0 Designing for Social Change (1 Unit) A key goal of this course is to acquire an intellectual and applied understanding of the principles of program design and development, which include a sustained consideration of issues affecting the quality of program implementation. This course is best suited for FIRST AND SECOND YEAR students.

SESP 210-0 Introduction to Statistics and Research Methodology (1 Unit) Definitions and classifications of terms used in quantitative methods; measures of typical and maximum performance, reliability, and validity checks; reporting and displaying data; interpreting results.

SESP 218-0 Leaders Lab (1 Unit) N/A.

SESP 251-0 Special Topics (1 Unit) N/A.

SESP 272-0 Field Research Methods (1 Unit) Guided practice in systematic and participant observation. Observer bias, field notes, unobtrusive measures.

SESP 291-1 Peer-Led Learning: Theory and Practice (0.25 Unit) SESP 291 is the training program for students working as first-time mentors in the Peer Leaders program. It is taken over two academic quarters, with each quarter offering .25 credit (a total of .5 credit). You will receive a "K" grade for fall quarter, which means you are continuing in the course. After winter quarter, you will receive a letter grade which will be retroactively applied to fall quarter.

SESP 291-2 Peer-Led Learning: Theory and Practice (0.25 Unit)

SESP 295-0 Theory and Practice of Community Consulting (1 Unit) Course on the importance of community capacity building and the community-consulting process; start of preliminary work for the Certificate in Civic Engagement capstone project.

SESP 298-0 Student Organized Seminar (1 Unit) Courses proposed by students and supervised by faculty sponsors on special topics approved by the SESP undergraduate education director. May be taken only once per quarter; pass/no credit only. Consultation with the SESP student affairs assistant dean advised.

SESP 299-1 Civic Engagement Capstone Research (1 Unit) Independent study courses leading to completion of the Certificate in Civic Engagement capstone project.

SESP 299-2 Certificate in Civic Engagement- Capstone Project (1 Unit) Independent study courses leading to completion of the Certificate in Civic Engagement capstone project.

SESP 310-0 Causal Methods for Evaluating Policy (1 Unit) This course will provide students with a framework for understanding causal inference and a toolkit for making causal claims using quantitative data. Prerequisites: Students need to have taken SESP 210-0 or any 200-level STATS course.

SESP 317-0 Gender and the Life Course (1 Unit) How gender influences major life stages. Focus on the psychosocial effects of gender on children; young, midlife, and old adults; societal institutions; and selected social policy issues.

SESP 320-0 Race and Education (1 Unit) Conceptual underpinnings of the construct of race and how conceptions of race have influenced the course of education in the United States.

SESP 322-0 Crafting Child Policy (1 Unit) N/A.

SESP 323-0 Trauma and Atrocity. Holocaust Memory, Memorial and Museums (1 Unit) What is Holocaust memory? How has Holocaust memory changed over time, and how does the Holocaust continue to affect our understanding of trauma, atrocity, and human rights today? This seminar addresses individual memory, including survivor and witness testimony, memory and trauma, and the impact of the Holocaust on survivors’ families and communities.

SESP 324-0 Pedagogies for History and Injustice: Holocaust Education Design (1 Unit) N/A.

SESP 325-0 Race, Adolescence, and School Discipline (1 Unit) In recent years, racial disparities in school discipline have attracted the attention of educators, policymakers, parents, and the general public. Why is it so hard for legal, political, and educational institutions to improve school discipline? How do intersections of race, gender, and social class matter for students’ experiences of school discipline? Are there schools that are getting discipline right? What does that look like, and to what extent can other schools learn from their successes? In this course, we will learn about evidence-based policy improvements and imagine how to create schools where race does not predict discipline.

SESP 351-0 Special Topics (1 Unit) Advanced work on special topics.
SESP 351-SA Special Topics (1 Unit)  Advanced work on special topics. This course is limited to students approved to study abroad through the Global Learning Office (GLO).

SESP 384-0 Practicum in Human Development - Washington, D.C. (4 Units)  See description for SESP 382-0. Offered during Summer Session only. Prerequisites: SESP 272-0; consent of SESP practicum director 3 quarters before registration. For participants in the Washington, DC, field studies program only.

SESP 389-0 Practicum in Human Development - San Francisco (4 Units)  See description and prerequisites for SESP 382-0. Offered during Summer Session only. For participants in the San Francisco field studies program only.

SESP 390-0 Research Apprenticeship (1 Unit)  Opportunity to participate in faculty research projects. Prerequisites: consent of the faculty member and the SESP assistant dean for student affairs; submission of completed Request for Independent Study/Special Courses Form at registration.

SESP 391-0 Advanced Research Design (1 Unit)  Overview of research methods that may be used to design and implement the honors thesis. Prerequisites: SESP 210-0 and SESP 272-0 recommended.

SESP 392-0 Experiential Learning: Practicum (4 Units)

SESP 398-0 Senior Thesis Seminar (1-3 Units)  Students develop, design, implement, and evaluate a research project under a faculty advisor's guidance. Prerequisites: senior status, cumulative GPA by the end winter quarter of the junior year, recommendation for the honors program from SESP 391-0 instructor(s); consent of program director.

SESP 399-0 Independent Study (1 Unit)  Faculty-supervised study of special topics of the student's own choosing and not covered in regular courses. Prerequisites: consent of the supervising faculty member(s) and the SESP assistant dean for student affairs; submission of completed Request for Independent Study/Special Courses Form at registration.