

SWK401

Critical Social Policy Analysis

School: School of Law and Society

2026 | Trimester 1

UniSC Sunshine Coast
UniSC Moreton Bay

BLENDED
LEARNING

Most of your course is on campus but you may be able to do some components of this course online.

Please go to usc.edu.au for up to date information on the teaching sessions and campuses where this course is usually offered.

1. What is this course about?

1.1. Description

Social work is shaped by social policy as it impacts the welfare of a nation's citizens. Comprising mechanisms for distributing society's resources, social policy is underpinned by values, driven by political objectives and maintained by discursive practices. This course will provide a critical theoretical framework for evaluating historical and recent trends in social policy and its impact on people. You will be asked to critically analyse at least one specific social policy within its historical, political and welfare context and apply it to professional practice.

1.2. How will this course be delivered?

ACTIVITY	HOURS	BEGINNING WEEK	FREQUENCY
BLENDED LEARNING			
Learning materials – One hour on-line weekly tutorial preparation tasks	1hr	Week 1	12 times
Tutorial/Workshop 1 – On campus tutorials	2hrs	Week 1	11 times
Seminar – On-line seminar with industry experts	1hr	Week 2	Once Only

1.3. Course Topics

Note: Subject to change at Course Coordinator's discretion

Introduction to Critical Social Policy Analysis

Exploring Carol Bacchi's framework

What is Discourse

What is Ideology

Exploring What is Silenced and the Effect of That Silencing on Vulnerable Population Groups

How to Transcend Policy Constraints

Writing Recommendations for Policy Advocacy Submissions

How to Advocate to Policy Makers in Person

2. What level is this course?

400 Level (Graduate)

Demonstrating coherence and breadth or depth of knowledge and skills. Independent application of knowledge and skills in unfamiliar contexts. Meeting professional requirements and AQF descriptors for the degree. May require pre-requisites where discipline specific introductory or developing knowledge or skills is necessary. Normally undertaken in the third or fourth full-time study year of an undergraduate program.

3. What is the unit value of this course?

12 units

4. How does this course contribute to my learning?

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES	GRADUATE QUALITIES MAPPING	PROFESSIONAL STANDARD MAPPING *
On successful completion of this course, you should be able to...	Completing these tasks successfully will contribute to you becoming...	Australian Association of Social Workers
1 Be an active learner, open to new knowledge, and actively engages with peers in classroom learning opportunities.	Empowered Ethical Engaged Communication Collaboration	9
2 Exercise critical thinking in practice by identifying central issues in social policy development and advocating for ethical change.	Ethical Engaged Communication	1, 5, 6, 7
3 Work to achieve fair and equitable access to resources from a social policy advocacy process to advance the well-being of citizens.	Knowledgeable Ethical Communication Problem solving	3, 5
4 Exercise professional judgement and communicate research through written and verbal modes.	Creative and critical thinker Empowered Ethical Communication Problem solving Applying technologies	5, 6, 7
5 Apply an intersectionality lens in your approach to complexities in social policy development around culture and diversity.	Problem solving	2, 4, 5
6 Identify and address how social policy can perpetuate discriminatory practices and how best to engage in professional dialogue with a diverse range of key stakeholders.	Engaged Communication	2, 4, 5

* Competencies by Professional Body

CODE	COMPETENCY
AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS	
1	Practice Standard 1: AASW Code of Ethics
2	Practice Standard 2: Working alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples
3	Practice Standard 3: Human rights and social justice
4	Practice Standard 4: Culture, identity and intersectionality

CODE	COMPETENCY
5	Practice Standard 5: Critical thinking in practice
6	Practice Standard 6: Exercising professional judgement
7	Practice Standard 7: Professional identity
9	Practice Standard 9: Professional growth

5. Am I eligible to enrol in this course?

Refer to the [UniSC Glossary of terms](#) for definitions of “pre-requisites, co-requisites and anti-requisites”.

5.1. Pre-requisites

(SCS235 and (SWK300 or SWK301)) OR (SWK300 or SWK301 and enrolled in AR363)

5.2. Co-requisites

Not applicable

5.3. Anti-requisites

Not applicable

5.4. Specific assumed prior knowledge and skills (where applicable)

Not applicable

6. How am I going to be assessed?

6.1. Grading Scale

Limited Grading (PNP)

Pass (PU), Fail (UF). All assessment tasks are required to be passed for successful completion of the course.

6.2. Details of early feedback on progress

Students will receive early feedback prior to the first written assessment submission date.

6.3. Assessment tasks

DELIVERY MODE	TASK NO.	ASSESSMENT PRODUCT	INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP	WHAT IS THE DURATION / LENGTH?	WHEN SHOULD I SUBMIT?	WHERE SHOULD I SUBMIT IT?
All	1	Activity Participation	Individual	Course duration	Throughout teaching period (refer to Format)	In Class
All	2	Written Piece	Individual	Up to 1500 words	Week 7	Online Assignment Submission with plagiarism check
All	3	Oral	Group	10-15 minutes per student	Week 11	In Class

All - Assessment Task 1: Tutorial Attendance and Participation

GOAL:	AASW external accreditation requires mandatory attendance for skills based tutorials. Students must attend weekly tutorials and actively participate in all tutorial activities.	
PRODUCT:	Activity Participation	
FORMAT:	Tutorial attendance will be recorded to meet external AASW accreditation requirements. Student participation and engagement in tutorial activities assessed based upon attendance and participation all tutorials/workshops.	
CRITERIA:	<p>No.</p> <p>1 Attendance and engagement in activities.</p>	Learning Outcome assessed 1
GENERIC SKILLS:	Communication, Collaboration, Problem solving	

All - Assessment Task 2: Powerpoint Slides and Script for Simulated Social Policy Advocacy Presentation

GOAL:	To develop written skills for a policy advocacy presentation.	
PRODUCT:	Written Piece	
FORMAT:	A fundamental part of the social work role is to analyse and clearly articulate the effects of social policies on various populations with whom social workers practice. Social workers take part in the development of, and advocating for, changes to social policy, utilising their critical analysis skills and an understanding of the direct links between personal experience and structural impediments on the life chances of those populations. Draw on class activities and distil relevant information for a presentation (that will occur for Task 3). Submit PowerPoint slides with notes based on the script you will use for Task 3. Feedback will be provided to scaffold to the Task 3 assessment.	
CRITERIA:	<p>No.</p> <p>1 Application of a critical approach to social policy analysis, by analysing a relevant social policy document as it impacts on service users and on your work practices.</p> <p>2 Use relevant evidence, make coherent and persuasive arguments about how the social policy should be reformed.</p> <p>3 Communication with clarity (expression, correct grammar, spelling and punctuation), logically structured, coherently argued analysis, and appropriately supported by relevant published literature.</p>	Learning Outcome assessed 1 2 5 6 3 4
GENERIC SKILLS:	Communication, Problem solving, Organisation, Applying technologies	

All - Assessment Task 3: Simulated Social Policy Advocacy Tutorial Presentation

GOAL:	To develop policy advocacy presentation skills.
PRODUCT:	Oral
FORMAT:	Use feedback from individual Task 2 and work with class colleagues in a group to undertake a simulated policy advocacy presentation in class.
CRITERIA:	<p>No.</p> <p>1 Demonstration of compassion and empathy for, and an ability to work professionally with your chosen population group. 3 4 5 6</p> <p>2 Application of a structural analysis of the policy initiative discussing its impact on service users. 2 3</p> <p>3 Application of a critical framework to advocate for a social policy that aligns with social work ethics. 3 6</p> <p>4 Demonstrate groupwork collaboration and high quality oral presentation skills, engaging the audience with compelling non-scripted information and respond effectively to questions from the audience. 1 2 4 5</p>
GENERIC SKILLS:	Communication, Problem solving, Applying technologies, Information literacy

6.4. Assessment to competency mapping

PROGRAMME DELIVERY MODE	ASSESSMENT TYPE	TITLE	COMPETENCY	TEACHING METHODS
AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION AND ACCREDITATION STANDARDS (ASWEAS)				
All delivery modes	Activity Participation	Tutorial Attendance and Participation	5	Taught, Practiced, Assessed
			7	Taught, Practiced, Assessed
			9	Taught, Practiced, Assessed
	Oral	Simulated Social Policy Advocacy Tutorial Presentation	3	Taught, Practiced, Assessed
			5	Taught, Practiced, Assessed
			6	Taught, Practiced, Assessed
	Written Piece	Powerpoint Slides and Script for Simulated Social Policy Advocacy Presentation	3	Taught, Practiced, Assessed
			5	Taught, Practiced, Assessed
			6	Taught, Practiced, Assessed
			9	Taught, Practiced, Assessed

7. Directed study hours

A 12-unit course will have total of 150 learning hours which will include directed study hours (including online if required), self-directed learning and completion of assessable tasks. Student workload is calculated at 12.5 learning hours per one unit.

8. What resources do I need to undertake this course?

Please note: Course information, including specific information of recommended readings, learning activities, resources, weekly readings, etc. are available on the course Canvas site— Please log in as soon as possible.

8.1. Prescribed text(s) or course reader

There are no required/recommended resources for this course.

8.2. Specific requirements

Nil

9. How are risks managed in this course?

Health and safety risks for this course have been assessed as low. It is your responsibility to review course material, search online, discuss with lecturers and peers and understand the health and safety risks associated with your specific course of study and to familiarise yourself with the University's general health and safety principles by reviewing the [online induction training for students](#), and following the instructions of the University staff.

10. What administrative information is relevant to this course?

10.1. Assessment: Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is the ethical standard of university participation. It ensures that students graduate as a result of proving they are competent in their discipline. This is integral in maintaining the value of academic qualifications. Each industry has expectations and standards of the skills and knowledge within that discipline and these are reflected in assessment.

Academic integrity means that you do not engage in any activity that is considered to be academic fraud; including plagiarism, collusion or outsourcing any part of any assessment item to any other person. You are expected to be honest and ethical by completing all work yourself and indicating in your work which ideas and information were developed by you and which were taken from others. You cannot provide your assessment work to others. You are also expected to provide evidence of wide and critical reading, usually by using appropriate academic references.

In order to minimise incidents of academic fraud, this course may require that some of its assessment tasks, when submitted to Canvas, are electronically checked through Turnitin. This software allows for text comparisons to be made between your submitted assessment item and all other work to which Turnitin has access.

10.2. Assessment: Additional Requirements

This course will be graded as Pass in a Limited Grade Course (PU) or Fail in a Limited Grade Course (UF) as per clause 5.1.1.3 and 5.1.1.4 of the Grades and Grade Point Average (GPA) - Academic Policy.

In a course eligible to use Limited Grades, all assessment items in that course are marked on a Pass/Fail basis and all assessment tasks are required to be passed for a student to successfully complete the course. Supplementary assessment is not available in courses using Limited Grades.

10.3. Assessment: Submission penalties

You must contact your Course Coordinator and provide the required documentation if you require an extension or alternate assessment.

Refer to the Assessment: Courses and Coursework Programs – Procedures.

10.4. SafeUniSC

UniSC is committed to a culture of respect and providing a safe and supportive environment for all members of our community. For immediate assistance on campus contact SafeUniSC by phone: [07 5430 1168](#) or using the [SafeZone](#) app. For general enquires contact the SafeUniSC team by phone [07 5456 3864](#) or email safe@usc.edu.au.

The SafeUniSC Specialist Service is a Student Wellbeing service that provides free and confidential support to students who may have experienced or observed behaviour that could cause fear, offence or trauma. To contact the service call [07 5430 1226](#) or email studentwellbeing@usc.edu.au.

10.5. Study help

For help with course-specific advice, for example what information to include in your assessment, you should first contact your tutor, then your course coordinator, if needed.

If you require additional assistance, the Learning Advisers are trained professionals who are ready to help you develop a wide range of academic skills. Visit the [Learning Advisers](#) web page for more information, or contact Student Central for further assistance: +61 7 5430 2890 or studentcentral@usc.edu.au.

10.6. Wellbeing Services

Student Wellbeing provide free and confidential counselling on a wide range of personal, academic, social and psychological matters, to foster positive mental health and wellbeing for your academic success.

To book a confidential appointment go to [Student Hub](#), email studentwellbeing@usc.edu.au or call 07 5430 1226.

10.7. AccessAbility Services

Ability Advisers ensure equal access to all aspects of university life. If your studies are affected by a disability, learning disorder mental health issue, injury or illness, or you are a primary carer for someone with a disability or who is considered frail and aged, [AccessAbility Services](#) can provide access to appropriate reasonable adjustments and practical advice about the support and facilities available to you throughout the University.

To book a confidential appointment go to [Student Hub](#), email AccessAbility@usc.edu.au or call 07 5430 2890.

10.8. Links to relevant University policy and procedures

For more information on Academic Learning & Teaching categories including:

- Assessment: Courses and Coursework Programs
- Review of Assessment and Final Grades
- Supplementary Assessment
- Central Examinations
- Deferred Examinations
- Student Conduct
- Students with a Disability

For more information, visit <https://www.usc.edu.au/explore/policies-and-procedures#academic-learning-and-teaching>

10.9. Student Charter

UniSC is committed to excellence in teaching, research and engagement in an environment that is inclusive, inspiring, safe and respectful. The [Student Charter](#) sets out what students can expect from the University, and what in turn is expected of students, to achieve these outcomes.

10.10. General Enquiries

In person:

- **UniSC Sunshine Coast** - Student Central, Ground Floor, Building C, 90 Sippy Downs Drive, Sippy Downs
- **UniSC Moreton Bay** - Service Centre, Ground Floor, Foundation Building, Gympie Road, Petrie
- **UniSC SouthBank** - Student Central, Building A4 (SW1), 52 Merivale Street, South Brisbane
- **UniSC Gympie** - Student Central, 71 Cartwright Road, Gympie
- **UniSC Fraser Coast** - Student Central, Student Central, Building A, 161 Old Maryborough Rd, Hervey Bay
- **UniSC Caboolture** - Student Central, Level 1 Building J, Cnr Manley and Tallon Street, Caboolture

Tel: +61 7 5430 2890

Email: studentcentral@usc.edu.au