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Acknowledging the Crisis in Social Liberalism: A Call for a New Approach to Teaching Social Policy

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A graduate social policy course at West Virginia University has been redesigned by a senior faculty member and lead instructor to recognize advances in political philosophy and to confront the decline of the social liberal welfare state and the rise of populist radicalism, through civic engagement by citizen-professionals.

Introduction

First of all, I would like to commend the School of Social Work at the University of South Carolina for playing host to this historic conference. Those of us who teach and practice social policy in schools of social work are accustomed to interacting with our students and our non-policy colleagues and our communities. However, as I look over the past three decades of my teaching and work in this area, one of the things that stands out most is the limited number of opportunities there have been for the kind of collegial exchange which is occurring here.

My overall purpose in this presentation is to follow up on what I see as the implications of certain recent work in political philosophy for the teaching of social policy. Most recent attentions in social work have been focused around the crisis in liberalism as a practical matter. My primary interest in this paper is to treat it as an intellectual and theoretical concern. Political philosophy is a peculiar hybrid – an uneasy mixture of the esoteric concerns of professional philosophers with the pragmatic concerns of the rest of us about the basis of our collective life. After several decades of apparently being completely moribund, something of a renaissance in political philosophy began in the wake of John Rawls' celebrated *Theory of Justice*, first published in 1971 (Rawls, 1971). My particular approach to both philosophy and policy is informed in general by Deweyian pragmatism, and in particular by Benjamin Barber's criticisms of what he calls 'the conquest of politics by philosophy' (Barber, 1988). My approach is also informed by Theodore Lowi's recent suggestion that ours is an age of ideology (Lowi, 1995).

According to Barber (1988), "The historical aim of political theory has been dialectical or dialogical: The creation of a genuine praxis in which theory and practice are sublated and reconciled, and the criteria yielded by common action are permitted to inform and circumscribe philosophy no less

than philosophical criteria are permitted to constrain the understanding of politics and informed political action." Barber, like pragmatists in general, opposes this concern of political philosophy with creating a more authentic public life to the kind of spectator or grandstand views of political and social theory which suggest that the philosopher (or social scientist) is somehow apart from, and in a superior position to political action.

Yet, he says, "in much of what passes for political philosophy in the age of liberalism, reductionism and what William James called 'vicious abstractionism' has too often displaced dialectics and dialogue. The outcome has been neither political philosophy nor political understanding but the conquest of politics by philosophy."

"Pragmatism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics, to name a few, have all assiduously nourished an understanding of the political that does not reflexively assume that the political is to be subsumed under or reconstructed as the philosophical, or that philosophy can thrive by conquering politics and reducing it to a problem in epistemology" (Barber, 1988, 4).

As Barber notes, there is something ironic in a pragmatic stance on politics, since so many of the best known pragmatists, including Pierce, James and Mead have been notably apolitical in their writings. The same might be said of the best-known phenomenologists and hermeneuticists. In fact, among this group, only John Dewey has had much to say about matters political, although more recently, Richard Rorty appears to be attempting to address some of these issues, and a variety of Europeans, including Jurgen Habermas have been influenced by the American pragmatists.

In any event, following Barber, my intent in this paper, as in the classroom, is to harness the insights of political philosophy without losing touch with the fundamentally practical concerns of social policy. To paraphrase Karl Marx's famous dictum: The key reason for striving to understand the world is to enhance our chances of improving it.

The Crisis in Social Liberalism[1]

The crisis in social liberalism referred to in my title is *the* crisis in liberalism – a subject which has been a standard topic of social science and political theory discussions since long before I first became aware of it as a high school student in the late 1950's. As closely as I can define it, the crisis

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[1] In this paper, I mean the terms liberalism, social liberalism and New Deal liberalism interchangeably in their conventional American usages, which differ diametrically from European uses, where the term neo-liberalism has roughly the same meanings as the U.S. terms conservatism, neo-conservatism and, more recently connote populism tinged with authoritarianism (Dean, 1996), nativism, fear of strangers and racism.

refers to our inability to agree upon a stable public philosophy which adequately reconciles the rights and prerogatives of the individual and the public good of the community in some lasting and intellectually satisfactory way.

The implications of the crisis in liberalism for social policy are many and profound. In most general terms, so long as the crisis exists, solutions to social problems will always be tentative and provisional, and subject to unraveling at any time. The recently controversial nature of such seeming sacred policy cows as public education, freedom of speech, and social security – as well as such never-settled matters as mental health, poverty and social services – should be very instructive. In this unstable environment, achieving a social policy solution may be only the minor half of the problem. In the long run, maintaining the institutional legitimacy and efficacy of particular solutions-in-place may require substantially greater time, energy, resources and commitment. Thus, any social worker interested in social change should have more than a little interest in the crisis in liberalism.

What is the nature of the crisis in liberalism? Barber quotes Rousseau (*The Social Contract*, Book 1, Chapter 6, p. 12) as follows: "The problem is to find a form of association which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and remain as free as before." The absence of such an integrated solution can be expected to yield coercion by the state and/or alienation of the individual.

The awareness of the liberal crisis arose during the first years of the 19th century in the European (primarily German) reaction to Adam Smith's political economics and, somewhat more generally utilitarianism. Most of 19th century social science, politics and social movements can be read as a reaction to this crisis: Corporatism, German social liberalism, utopianism, American civic republicanism, social Darwinism and socialism (including such important variants as Marxism, trade unionism, anarcho-syndicalism and Fabianism) to name just a select few. But these also, to date, have proved to be as unsatisfactory as the liberal individualism they challenged. As frequently as not, political philosophies stultify and confuse, while the practice – rather than producing harmony and community – opens new arenas for discord and dissension.

Social work has its own particular history of relating to the crisis of liberalism. The particular set of solutions posed by Jane Addams and the settlement house movement were at least as much about coping with the crisis of liberalism as they were about founding and institutionalizing a particular social service strategy (the neighborhood or community center).

For much of this century it appeared, at least to progressive American eyes, that objective social science offered the intellectual solution to the

liberal crisis and that a gradualist, or incremental, welfare state under the benevolent watchful eyes of a new class of disinterested public professionals (including social workers, public administrators, public health professionals and others) posed the best practical solution. Ideology was allegedly banished. Laissez-faire was consigned to a benighted past. Collectivisms of the more dangerous and threatening type (National socialism, Fascism, Stalinism, Maoism) were either defeated in the second world war or contained within the second world behind an "iron curtain". Politics, if not exactly banished from the modern world, could at least be isolated from the more serious and socially productive activities of civics and administration.

Then, what should have been the moment of triumph which John Kenneth Galbraith once called *The Liberal Hour* (1960) gave way to increasing disillusionment and malaise with government. Incrementally dismantling the welfare state (now relabeled bloated bureaucracy) became a centerpiece for what remains of the public purpose. Just a few short years after Daniel Bell tolled *The End of Ideology* and Sheldon Wolin and Isaiah Berlin proclaimed the death of political philosophy, both ideology and philosophy have returned with a vengeance (Bell, 1962; Berlin, 1997; Wolin, 1960).

As Barber notes, "This is the liberal challenge: to accommodate conflict and ameliorate competition without surrendering individuality, to employ power in the service of liberty, to contain the aggressiveness that issues out of man's individuality without destroying the liberty that is individuality's chief virtue, to accommodate the requirements of order and legality and yet remain as 'free as before'" (Barber, 1988, 27-28).

Politics has been defined as many things – the art of the possible, and so on. Benjamin Barber's approach is, in my view, particularly helpful because he focuses on the epistemological – the nature of political knowledge – without falling victim to the spectator view. He is worth quoting in full on this matter, and I have done so in the footnotes of this paper, even though I will only summarize the full quote here.[2]

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[2] "To speak of the autonomy of the political is in fact to speak of the sovereignty of the political. For by sovereignty is meant not merely the dominion of the state over other forms of association, but the dominion of politically adjudicated knowledge, under conditions of epistemological uncertainty, over other forms of knowledge. To be sure, this sovereignty over knowledge is wholly residual: It comes into play only with the breakdown of ordinary cognitive consensus, and only where such public judgment is required by the need for common action. Where knowledge can prove itself certain, or at least where consensus is for the time being undisputed (as in the case of mainstream science, for example), or where the absence of consensus has no impact on public action (as in matters of private taste, for example), the political domain claims no sovereignty. But where scientists disagree on the public outcomes of experimental technologies (genetic engineering, for example), or where matters of taste are seen to have public consequences (the design of a national flag, for example), or where theoretical inquiry raises issues of common import (the dividing line between a fetus and a legal person, for example), the political realm necessarily becomes sovereign over the contested realms of science and taste and inquiry in which such disputes are ordinarily conducted. For at this point science, taste and theoretical inquiry are reduced to opinion (*doxa*), and it is

The realm of political knowledge, in Barber's sense, boils down to two principle criteria which we might call uncertainty and publicity. Is the matter at issue a question of settled scientific, legal or religious certainty? Or, is it an uncertainty (a matter of opinion)? As an example, members of the Flat Earth society may believe what they wishes without discernable political consequence. The fact that the earth is <u>not</u> flat has been settled to the satisfaction of most of the public by satellite photos and belief that it is not tends primarily to marginalize and trivialize their political position.

In at least some cases, the same result arises from a body of settled law. For example, one factor which must constrain all current abortion debate is the fact that the issue of whether abortions are constitutional has been settled until further notice. Contestants may acknowledge this as political fact, ignore it, or wish that it were not so, but they may not wish it away. It remains one of the certainties of the situation.

The second factor characterizing the realm of the political is *publicity* , (in its original meaning of public-ness and not its current meaning of self-advertisement). Genuinely political matters are matters affecting, or of concern to, us all. Thus, the sordid private details of private lives being played out in Washington in recent years are public in so far as they impact upon the ability of the government to function.

The recent effects of all this on social work – what might be termed its crisis of public posture – have been disenchanting in the extreme: A profession which once prided itself on its public presence has been reduced to one more special pleader in a polity given over entirely to interest group bargaining. And, social policy teaching which had been directed at preserving and extending social citizenship and ways of discovering and attaining the public good has been increasingly directed at how to get – or keep – 'our share' of the public pie. We have, to some degree, become those very seekers after the spoils of government our professional ancestors warned us about!

Not yet well chronicled, but morally dispiriting to anyone of conscience is the rise of special pleading as the principle public posture of the social work profession. Announcements to the effect that "client benefits were lost but third party payments were saved" have become altogether too commonplace. Just this past month, many of us received an email message proclaiming as "A Great Victory" the temporary halting (for two years) of a measure to stop Medicaid payments for social work services in nursing homes. Can anyone

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over opinion that sovereignty, defined by public judgment, necessarily holds sway, albeit only by default." (14-15)

He summarizes thus:

"This lesson about the nature of political sovereignty can be reduced to a single priority rule: Whenever private theorists disagree on matters of public import, then the normal epistemological priority of truth over opinion is over-ridden and reversed in favor of the political priority of public over private." (15)

seriously believe that postponing this initiative for two years was a truly great victory? Do you believe that two years from now, there will not be another (and probably more successful) elimination attempt?

At the present moment the social work profession has no greater special purpose or public role than tobacco farmers, or the liquor lobby and considerably less than arms merchants. The crisis of liberalism has reduced us to just another set of special pleaders. And, only through recovering a workable public philosophy which will serve as a resource in the public arena is it likely that social work can recover an adequate moral and political basis for effective social policy. Those who believe that the current politics of special interest sufficiently serve the needs of our clients and the best interests of the profession will, of course, take issue with me on this.

Social Policy

The other major term in my title is social policy, by which I mean to address several things in this paper. First, given the focus of this conference, I mean to address the subject matter currently taught under that heading in schools of social work. The present social policy paradigm in social work education is a rather peculiar and unstable mixture of vocationalism and liberal learning forged during the 1960's. It arose out of a curious amalgam of English post-war welfare state thinking (e.g., Marshall, Titmuss, Donison), legal scholars (e.g., Charles Schottland), community and urban sociology (e.g., Freeman & Jones, Warren, Moynihan) modernization theory (e.g., Wilensky and LeBeaux), social planning (e.g., Morris, Kahn,) and a patina of pluralist political theory (Dahl) and institutional economics (e.g., Galbraith, Myrdal).

Daniel Patrick Moynihan's noted essay, "The Professionalization of Reform" , provides a fairly complete capsule summary of the assumptions and world view of what might be termed the Policy Profession movement. (Moynihan, 1965) The journal in which Moynihan's essay was first published, *Public Interest*, along with Transaction Press' journal *Society* together served as the publications branch of a loosely-coupled network which also included academic social scientists, upper-level federal bureaucrats and congressional staff members, a few key Congressional patrons and a growing national network of nonprofit and university-based centers and institutes.

Social work was late to join the movement and, it would appear, equally late in letting go. Through the mediation of key centers, in particular the Heller School at Brandeis University, the assumptions and expectations of the policy professional movement gradually came to play a defining role in shifting the social work policy paradigm away from an earlier view represented by the table in Appendix C.

The political fortunes of the policy professional movement have been in decline for some time now. Like other aspects of "the liberal establishment" in

public life, they have given way to the advancing conservative juggernaut. The sections of Patrick Moynihan's book, *Miles to Go: A Personal History of Social Policy* devoted to discussing his "Professionalization. . ." essay and the *Public Interest* read like a eulogy of that movement (Moynihan, 1996). Social work education, however, appears to be having great difficulty in letting go. Denial, it seems, can be as pervasive and difficult to acknowledge in the death of movements as in the death of persons.

The policy professional paradigm in social work education is reinforced by the current CSWE policy standard M6.10 (shown in Appendix A) which was changed only slightly from the earlier standard 7.10 (shown in Appendix B), which in turn replaced an earlier, and much more detailed specification built around the older, but still familiar Needs and Resources model (shown in Appendix C). It is important to note, therefore, that the standard itself is ambiguous in its coverage: allowing both the policy professionals paradigm and alternatives such as the one endorsed in this paper.

Early adherents of the professional policy paradigm forthrightly acknowledged the lack of a sufficient theoretical basis for the American welfare state (e.g., see the papers in Schottland, 1967). More recent sources have generally dispensed with the theoretical caveats and qualifiers, although it is uncertain that any of the underlying theoretical problems of welfare state theory as a particular solution to the liberal crisis have been resolved. We all have come to banter about the American welfare state when it is still not clear what, exactly, a welfare state is and whether in fact in America we have one. There is a gigantic body of opinion on the subject, but the issue itself remains political in that it is anything but a scientific certainty.

The present social policy paradigm in social work education as I understand it appears intended to create informed professionals able to act as bureaucratic (and to a lesser extent, legislative and judicial) change agents within the broad scheme of contemporary interest-group liberalism. That is, professionals capable of engaging in *policy practice* that recognizes and acts upon the complex of legislation, court rulings, administrative law and regulations, policy bulletins and other policy paraphernalia.

A somewhat broader and more diffuse secondary educational objective (which is covered by the liberal arts emphasis in the standards) is compensating for the weaknesses and deficiencies in our student's civic education and awareness, regarding the history, philosophy, sociology and economics of American public life and government. Almost all of my concerns in this paper fall under this second category.

The present social policy paradigm in social work education as I read it also fosters an epistemology much like the philosophical posturing criticized by Barber above, except that it is the "certain truths" of social science, rather

than philosophy (or established religion) for which claim to a privileged epistemological position is made. The formula is a simple one, reaching back to the charity organization society investigations of the last century: Certain knowledge of the causes and etiologies of contemporary social problems should yield both a correct public understanding of the problem and detailed awareness of what to do about solving it. In the liberal progressive state of 20th century America, such certainties should entitle the profession to the privileged status of experts in the policy process. (More will be said on this in a moment.)

My thesis in this paper is that the current priority ordering of the two objectives of social policy teaching – call them the *policy practice objective* and the *civic objective* – need to be reversed, and that new and expanded attention needs to be paid to the civic, or citizenship roles of social work professionals. *We* (that is, various bodies of technical experts in social work) believe that we already know enough to solve most social problems: The problem is *they* (that is, the non-expert rest of the citizenry) either don't know that we know, or don't accept our knowledge! The challenge is translating that knowledge politically into viable policy within the terms of Barber's sense of politics (that is, through dialectic and dialogue with those who do not share the certainty) without violating Rousseau's constraint. If the opposition is simply overwhelmed (which is extremely unlikely at the current moment) the result will be further alienation and the cycle will begin anew. If the opposition is successful, the status quo (which includes unsolved social problems) remains in place.

The crisis of liberalism as it impacts upon social policy making is not tactical; the answer is not merely discovering and employing the right methods. The problem is political in the deepest sense of that term. Thus, the profession of social work needs to rediscover the commitments to real democratic politics – and particularly dialectics and dialogue.

Getting Out in Public

To explore these ideas further, I would like to use as a departure point certain disagreements with a number of particular points raised by Robert Fisher and Howard Karger in their recent book, *Social Work and Community in a Private World: Getting Out in Public* (Fisher & Karger, 1997)

Consistent with my argument, the nature of my disagreement is neither scientific nor professional. My disagreement is a purely political one, over the best course of collective action. As I understand the part of their argument which relates most directly to social policy teaching, social work is (or could be) a progressive "vanguard" profession capable of providing leadership in comprehensive social improvement through public sector reform, and that we as social policy instructors should concentrate on

improving our students tactical understanding, political skills and supplying them with the correct ideology.

My argument as already stated, social work is not currently capable of embracing that vanguard role but I agree that it should be in the future. My principle disagreements are over how to define such a vanguard role for social workers and how to prepare students for it. My argument is not with Fisher and Karger as individuals; I take them to be giving voice to the consensus policy paradigm referred to above.

According to them, "When focused on social change, social work education can be an excellent means for (1) acquiring or further developing a broad and critical understanding of the public sphere that influences almost all aspects of daily life, (2) tying this contextualization to specific skills and work, and (3) developing an ideology steeped in critical analysis, values and theory. Taken together, these factors can turn social workers into social change agents – drum majors for social justice – and turn social work education into education for social change." (xii) I agree, it *could be* an excellent means, but currently is not; students do not presently have the requisite skills, nor suitable ideologies nor the requisite analytical skills.

The conventional liberal dichotomy between private and public social worlds which Fisher and Karger use as their departure point is unnecessarily limiting, as I have argued elsewhere (Lohmann, 1992). There is a large and rapidly growing intermediate world of voluntary association and collective action between private and public which I choose to call the common whose historic role has been to serve as a staging area for creation of precisely the kind of public life Fisher and Karger call for. Yet, the social policy paradigm in social work barely recognizes this third space at all. Social workers once excelled in the common arenas of small groups, community organizations, social movements and voluntary associations. While devolution is bringing these "voluntary sectors" back into the forefront of social action, it is not at all clear that the social work profession will play any role in these developments, much less the kind of vanguard role Fisher and Karger envision.

At the same time, the conventional distinction they make between progressive and conservative public goods is outdated and masks the real distinctions which have been driving U.S., and to an extent first-world politics in general, for several decades now. This difficulty is best illustrated by examining their contrast of progressive public goods with conservative ones. A progressive public good is said to be "inclusive, democratic and equalitarian" while a conservative public good is said to be "exclusive, dominated by hierarchical institutional and corporate oligarchies and vastly unequal." (xiii) It is simply misguided to make such facile generalizations about anything as multi-dimensional as contemporary conservatism.

If this distinction is held, for example, one must ask in the words of the old labor song which side social work is currently on, since a great deal of social policy action by the profession is clearly directed at protecting the exclusive prerogatives of the profession, and at reinforcing hierarchical institutional and corporate oligarchies and inequalities. Indeed, in a world in which social workers strive to hold onto some rudiments of the welfare state and appear to all the world to have no realistic program of proposed changes, while radical fundamentalists have an increasingly clear and pointed program of social change, is not the desire to hold onto the outdated liberal/conservative dichotomy of the past itself evidence of precisely this sort of conservative public good?

It is not my intent, however, to defend the claim that social work is a conservative (or for that matter, a liberal) profession. Rather, I wish to assert that attempts to cast the social politics of the current period in the familiar terms of ideological opposition between New Deal liberals and conservative defenders of the old order, or *status quo ante* are misguided and seriously wide of the mark. At the very least, the problem is one of conflict, as Lowi suggests, between two liberalisms and two conservatisms (Lowi, 1995). In my view, the dichotomy itself should not be sustained, for reasons I will now lay out.

The first reason is that, somewhat paradoxically, what we mean by the term *conservative* has changed dramatically in recent years. For one thing, as the previous example suggests, conserving and protecting the gains of the recent past has placed social work in an entirely different posture than it was in 30 years ago.

Further, the level of conservative discourse has risen considerably from the days when conservative was frequently a synonym for segregationist on the one hand, and "old order know-nothing" on the other. As recently as the 1950's, conservatism was so insignificant in American public life that Lionel Trilling could claim that there were no true conservative ideas in our culture, only "irritable mental gestures which seek to resemble ideas." Recent grouchy, jingoistic screeds like those by Oliver North, Pat Buchanan, and Phyllis Schlafly (to name but three) certainly show that there is more than ample contemporary representation of this same genre, but then the New Left has generated a comparable amount of such flummery.

However, anyone who has seriously encountered conservative writers like Robert Bork knows that while the irritability is still present, the level of conservative discourse has risen considerably in recent decades. Indeed, continuing to equate the arguments of first-rate conservative thinkers like Frederick Hayek, Robert Nozick, Leo Strauss, or Michael Oakeshott with the anti-intellectual 'no-nothing' conservatism Trilling was referring to is an error of the first order (Barber, 1988; Barry, 1979; Nozick, 1974; Cropsey &

Strauss, 1964). Yet it is one that is committed in social work policy classrooms routinely every semester.[3]

Any social policy instructor who believes that a simple distinction between social workers and conservatives will hold up today simply hasn't listened to their students recently! I find that the Vandals have entered the gates, and that for every outspokenly "liberal" student I have today, I have an equally outspoken "conservative" student, and sometimes two. The vast majority of my students, I might add, abhor ideological conflict of any kind and appear to wish to remain resolutely uncommitted at any cost!

The meaning of conservative has changed in other ways as well. For example, many recent actions endorsed by so-called "conservatives" are not "conservative" at all in any meaningful sense of that term. The recent change in family life endorsed by the Baptist convention's advocacy of the subordinate role of wives would constitute one of the most revolutionary shifts in family life since the Bolshevik attempts to eliminate the family during the 1920's. And it is similarly ideologically motivated (in this case, unfortunately, by a rather shallow ideology which labels television family life during the 1950's as "traditional").

On the misguided ideological assumption that "we" (e.g., social workers) are all liberals and progressives and "they" (e.g., conservatives) are all wrong,

My final reason for wishing to get past the liberal-conservative dichotomy bears directly on the teaching of social policy. Opinion polls continue to regularly support the seemingly paradoxical conclusion that while "liberal" political candidates and ideology are unacceptable to the majority of Americans at present, a good many liberal social policies continue to receive high approval ratings (particularly when they are not labeled as liberal).

This leads me to the conclusion that continuing to emphasize "insider strategies" of the professionalization of reform directed at bureaucratic offices and legislative corridors is unlikely to produce much more in the way of positive social policy results than it has in the past 30 years. If present trends continue, at the very most it will protect what we currently have or minimize our losses.

I would, instead advocate social policy courses built on an outsider strategy and recognizing such forces as the adverse ideological shifts in public life and devolution. Such courses would emphasize public education, citizenship, civic involvement and participation and community action.

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[3] Historical note (2019): Arguably, this more intellectual conservatism apparently ran out of steam somewhere in the decade after this paper was first presented. It has been largely replaced by the "unconscionable conservatism" of Donald Trump, Dick Cheney, and Mitch McConnell, et. al., that John Dean (2006) later analyzed.

A New Social Policy Course

For the past three years, I have been experimenting with a restructured masters-level policy course which seeks, in various ways to build upon some of the ideas presented in this paper: Engagement with contemporary currents in political philosophy, a pragmatic political epistemology (ala Barber), and a policy analysis which emphasizes dialectic and dialogue among fellow-citizens rather than merely professional elites.

The recently-reaccredited curriculum at the West Virginia University School of Social Work features a social policy continuum of four courses: two required BSW social policy courses, with one MSW social policy course required only of regular (non-advanced standing) students and one social policy course required of all graduate (regular and advanced standing) students. In our curriculum design, the two undergraduate courses are expected to address the liberal arts perspective, professional foundation (especially cultural heritage, critical thinking, history and philosophy), values and ethics, diversity, social and economic justice, policy and services, oppression/discrimination standards. Social welfare history is the central thrust of the first course, and policy influence and policy formation processes are the organizing framework for the second.

The first graduate course addresses both history and policy processes in a single semester. Which brings us to the second graduate course: For more than two decades, the focus in the second graduate policy course in our curriculum was on policy analysis methodology falling broadly within the parameters of the professional policy paradigm discussed previously.

Despite tremendous progress in the past two decades, West Virginia is still a small rural state with a very limited and traditional state government. In this context, practically no graduates were observed entering policy positions of the type this course allegedly prepared them for in the past 20 years. If you set the bar low enough, of course, this statement can be shown to be demonstrably false. Most of our students do vote, and some write at least occasional letters to Congress. Students interested in entering private practice and micro-practice had genuine difficulty seeing any relevance and saw policy mostly as a necessary hurdle.

All of this, however, was not enough to push me into the revisions of our second policy course which I am about to describe. The thing which finally pushed me over the edge was a push/pull: The pull came from my growing sense of intellectual excitement at the large body of work occurring in the new political philosophy which has grown up in the wake of John Rawls Theory of Justice and my growing sense of frustration at being unable to share this with students. The push came from the incredible rise of incivility a few years ago associated with the birth of the militia movements, and the

efforts by several liberals I know to paint all conservatives as potential abortion doctor-killers and federal building-bombers.

The general outlines of the course are relatively simple to describe: Students are expected to read widely, think deeply, write expansively, talk intelligently and listen closely to others. Above all else, I have sought to plunge students directly into the ideological streams of contemporary political debate and political philosophy bearing on social policy, and to encourage them to confront and seek accommodation and accord with their fellow citizens over what to do about social problems.

Rather than textbooks or other pre-digested approaches to standardized or codified knowledge, students in this course are fed a steady diet of political rhetoric. A reasonable knowledge of social welfare history and policy-processes, as taught in the earlier courses in our curriculum is assumed, pre-requisite knowledge for this course. Step one each semester is to clarify the distinction between knowledge and opinion, along the lines laid out by Barber and discussed previously in this paper.

One semester, when I co-taught the course for a large class of part-time students in our off-campus program, the rhetoric came through the use of dozens and dozens of op-ed editorial columns. This past semester, groups of students explored the internet as a source of political knowledge, gathering on-line newspaper op-eds, position papers by various associations and interest groups, and sampling some of that marvelous inventory of lone-wolf journalism which has given a radical new populist meaning to First Amendment freedoms.

For several semesters, at least one and as many as four current, polemical books serve as designated class texts for discussion and debate. Monographs by Theodore Lowi, (1995), Robert Bork, (1996) and Michael Sandel (1996) a collection of conservative writings edited by David Brooks, (1995) and a really neat history of the Great Society by Irwin Unger (1996). Like the use of similar works by John Kenneth Galbraith, Gunnar Myrdal, Milton Friedman, et. al., in policy courses when the policy professional paradigm was still in formation, my interest is neither in presenting ideology nor forming orthodoxy. I am interested in initiating students into the streams of current discussion and debate. Next spring, I expect to use Moynihan's *Miles to Go. . ._* and at least one other as-yet-undecided work.

This past semester, I had roughly 90 students in two sections of the course – too many, in my view, to make for meaningful class discussion, so I chose a somewhat different path. Prior to the course, I was able to identify approximately 140 mostly recent (i.e., published in the past two years) works that I thought suitable. Each student selected a unique book from the list and prepared a written and oral book reviews. Written book reviews were submitted to a special electronic forum where they were available to be read

by others in the class. They are still available to students over the summer. Students reviewed a recent work on Josiah Royce's idealistic philosophy of community, Rawls' theory of justice and the 1920's debate between John Dewey-Walter Lippman debate over the nature of the public, and a student who had been an undergraduate philosophy major even took on Jurgen Habermas' recent dauntingly complex work.

I wish I could tell you that each and every student came away with an expanded political consciousness and deeper awareness of the current policy milieu, but I cannot. I can tell you that these book reviews provoked enough breakthroughs and moments of enlightenment about the nature and purposes of political dialogue and the inevitably political nature of social policy making to more than justify the effort. And, in one of the most amazing cases of selection bias I've ever witnessed, those students who took on the most difficult books generally did the best reports.

Another element of the course designed to further discussion is a course-specific email discussion list. All students are expected to activate their student email accounts (or use their private or pre-existing accounts) and register for the discussion list (SW333-L). Each student is expected to generate at least one thought-provoking memo for the class.

One of the highlights of the course for several years was what I called policy fairs which were held in conjunction with some larger school event, most typically a semi-annual field instructors meeting. Arrangements are made for a large exhibition space and students are encouraged to work in small groups to prepare exhibits of an educational or advocacy nature on a particular social policy issue or question.

During one particularly successful semester, students in both sections worked together on the common theme of Violence. Through some outstanding student efforts and leadership, this particular half-day policy exposition featured six outside speakers (several of whom agreed to waive their usual speaking fees), original art work for posters and buttons, a demonstration in self-defense, an original one-act play written and directed by one of the students with volunteer actors from the theater department and coverage on the local evening television news. Unfortunately, this session was not done in conjunction with another event, and the students were less successful at attracting an audience than the television coverage, so attendance was limited almost exclusively to students in the class.

Another central feature of the course is the use of what I have called policy salons: Each student is expected to plan, organize and carry out a number of such salons, which can be small discussion groups at home or in a church or community organizational setting, or large, community. As with the books, I am still experimenting with the optimum number of salons to require. One is too few and five is too many.

Since I typically have two sections of this course going at the same time in a particular semester, I have also experimented with cooperation between the two sections, generally asking them to create between them, a public (much like the public arising from the several 18th century London coffee houses which was the subject of a much cited book by Jurgen Habermas.) This effort has had decidedly mixed results. These students turn out to be remarkably reluctant to engage in what they perceive as an extra-curricular activity, and efforts to create more formal coordination mechanisms have been notably unsuccessful. On more than one occasion, students have felt that I am attempting to pit them against one another or play them against one another.

Many of the students do appear to get the point however: Meaningful coordination is very hard work!

On the whole, I have been pleased with the results to date of these efforts and intend to continue to try to elaborate my version of a new social policy paradigm

Appendix A

M6.0 Master's Curriculum Content
Social Welfare Policy and Services

M6.10 The foundation social welfare policy and services content must include the history, mission, and philosophy of the social work profession. Content must be presented about the history and current patterns of provision of social welfare services, the role of social policy in helping or deterring people in the maintenance or attainment of optimal health and well-being, and the effect of policy on social work practice. Students must be taught to analyze current social policy within the context of historical and contemporary factors that shape policy. Content must be presented about the political and organizational processes used to influence policy, the process of policy formation, and the frameworks for analyzing social policies in light of principles of social and economic justice.

Appendix B

Curriculum Policy Statement 7.10 (1991)

The major aims of study in this area are to prepare professionals to function as informed and competent practitioners in providing services and as knowledgeable and committed participants in efforts to achieve change in social policies and programs. Students are expected to develop skills in the use and application of scientific knowledge to the analysis and development of social welfare policy and services. They should know the structure of service programs and the history of the organized profession and other social welfare institutions. Social work students should also gain an understanding of political process and the means to further the achievement of social work goals and purposes.

Appendix C

CONTENT AREAS IN WHICH BEHAVIORS ARE TO BE DEVELOPED BY THE STUDENT	BEHAVIORS TO BE DEVELOPED BY STUDENT					
	Knowledge	Understanding	Assessment Skill	Interpretation Skill	Scientific Viewpoint	Social Viewpoint	Prof. Viewpot

	Knowledge	Understanding	Assessment Skill	Interpretation Skill	Scientific Viewpoint	Social Viewpoint	Prof. Viewpot
A. PROBLEM							
1. as manifest need		X	X				
2. as person-centered		X	X				X
3. as universal, yet singular	X		X		X		
4. as cause and consequence		X	X		X		
5. as institutional lack or dysfunction		X		X			X
6. as challenge and opportunity		X	X				X
7. as requiring a service solution		X	X			X	
8. as requiring social work help		X		X			X
B. POLICY							
9. as social commitment		X		X			X

10. as social movement	X		X			X
11. as planned social change	X	X				X
12. as manifesting the desirable	X		X			X
13. as manifesting the possible	X	X				X
14. as posing social issues	X		X			X
15. as social action	X		X			X
C. PROVISION						
16. as mobilized resources of society	X	X				X
17. as organized in a social agency	X	X				X
18. as client-centered service	X	X				X
19. as teamwork	X		X			X
20. as geared to serving the total community	X	X				X

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