Course Description
This is a first semester doctoral course exploring selected events in the history of social work and social welfare in America. The events have been chosen because each represents an important step in the professionalization of social work, or in the way we think about and try to help vulnerable populations. Where available, primary sources have been used to supplement contemporary writings on the subject. This course is required for all doctoral students because we believe that in order to become a sophisticated practitioner in this field, it is necessary to understand the social factors that brought about the changes in the way we reason and practice. Or, in the words of David McCullough, “History is who we are and why we are the way we are.”

Learning Objectives
Students who have taken this course...
1. Will understand the social forces that have come to define 21st century social work.
2. Will better understand how the public’s attitude toward vulnerable populations, and particularly their attitude about the poor, has changed over the past century.
3. Will be able to explain their interventions, and agency missions not only in empirical terms, but also as the sequelae of 19th and 20th century social movements and popular ideologies and philosophies.
4. Will know how to write a persuasive and informative article, supporting their arguments with the analysis of one or more historical events.

Required texts

Recommended


**Course Assignments**
The assignments for this course include, participation in on-line prompts and responses, a midterm paper and a final paper.

Course Assignments will be added.

**Grading:**
Midterm 30% of grade  
Final Paper 35% of grade  
On-Line participation 35% of grade

**E-RESERVES**
To access E-Reserves from Canvas:

*Electronic reserve lists are now automatically added to all Canvas course pages. Students can directly access the list without a password by clicking the "Library and Research Services" link on the Canvas page.*

To access E-Reserves from the library website (2 ways):

- The E-Reserves platform URL: [https://library.yu.edu/er.php](https://library.yu.edu/er.php) (Direct link)
- Go to [https://library.yu.edu/home](https://library.yu.edu/home) (Homepage)
  - Click on “E-Reserves” under the “Resources” drop-down menu.
- Search for & select your course by beginning to type course number, course name, or instructor name.
- Enter your course password when prompted (**FAL8425**).

If you have questions or concerns about reserves or E-reserves, please contact:

- Stephanie Gross, Librarian, gross@yu.edu

Have a good semester.

**Session 1 – Elizabethan Poor Laws (Caring for the poor vs. controlling the poor)**
The British Poor Laws, established during the reign of Queen Elizabeth (1601), are often identified as the legal basis for our current attitudes about charity and poverty. What were the Poor Laws and why were they passed?
Required Reading:

Recommended:


Sessions 2 – The 3rd Great Awakening (Darwinism versus the Social Gospel)
Religious “awakenings” are periods of revitalization that occur in times of cultural stress and result in drastic social reform. The climate that gave birth to social work was the result of a wave of evangelicalism that swept post civil war America, and the belief in a “Social Gospel.”

Required Reading:

Trattner: Chapter 3, The Era of the American Revolution


Session 3 – Friendly Visitors (Autonomy vs. Patriarchy)
While most of the friendly visitors were blue bloods, Mary Richmond was born of “common stock.” She educated herself and rose through the ranks to become the director of the Russell Sage Foundation.

Required Reading

Katz: Chapter 3 – The Theory and Practice of Scientific Charity

Trattner: Chapter 5: The Civil War and After—Scientific Charity

Recommended

Session 4 – Social Diagnosis
Mary Richmond’s book, Social Diagnosis, has perhaps had a greater influence on 20th century social work than any other single work.

**Session 5 – The Settlement House movement (Treating the Community vs. Treating the Individual)**

The Settlement House movement began in London, the brainchild of an Oxford economist named Arnold Toynbee, the same man who gave a name to the industrial revolution. Jane Addams transplanted the idea to American soil.

**Required Reading**


Trattner: Chapter 8, The Settlement House Movement


**Recommended Reading**


**Session 6 – Creation of the Profession Part I (Profession vs. Pasttime)**

By 1907 there were social workers in the schools, in the hospitals, in child welfare, and in the nascent mental hygiene movement.

**Required Reading:**

Trattner: Chapter 11 – The Quest for Professionalization


**Session 7 – Creation of the Profession Part II (Profession vs. Passtime)**

But was social work a profession? Abraham Flexner, a world-renowned educator, was asked to speak on the subject at the 1915 meeting of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections.

**Required Reading**


**Session 8 – Feminism & Social Work (Feminism vs. Patriarchy)**

Social work is a profession created by women and dominated by much of what is best in feminist thinking and theory. Yet over the years compromises have been made to remain competitive with professions dominated by men and masculine ideology.


**Session 9 – The Great Depression (Welfare State vs. private charities)**

When FDR crafted the Social Security Act of 1935, he had two social workers at his side: Harry Hopkins and Frances Perkins. The federal government took over many of the concrete services of private charities, leaving social workers free to address problems of personality in their clients.

**Required Reading:**

Trattner: Chapter 13 – Depression and a New Deal


Session 10 – The Emergence of clinical social work Part I (Functional vs. Diagnostic School)

In the 1930s and '40s, Jessie Taft and her colleagues at University of Pennsylvania developed the Functional school of social work, based on the work of Otto Rank. For a number of years this stood in opposition to the Diagnostic School, which was based on Freudian theory. This debate had important ramifications for the future of social work.

Required Reading:
Trattner: Chapter 9 – The Mental Health Movement.


Session 11 – Clinical Social Work Part II

More on the great debate between private practice and agency work.

Required Reading:

Session 12 – McCarthyism & Groupwork (Repressive vs. Progressive Politics)

Beginning in the 1930s, a group of social work activists known as “The Rank and File” began to espouse radical ideas about unionizing, called for the replacement of capitalism with a collective economy, and presented the USSR as a model for the US to emulate. Some of the rank and File were members of the Communist Party. It should be no surprise that during the 1950s, group workers and community organizers became the one of the foci of the McCarthy witch hunt.

Required Reading:


Sessions 13 – Social Work and the Great Society

The presidencies of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson provided an opportunity to enact a variety of social welfare programs including ESEA, Head Start, Medicare, Medicaid, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Had Camelot arrived as promised?

Required Reading
Session 14 – Reagonomics, Clinton’s Middle of the Road Approach, and then we have Obama

David Stockman, the disenchanted director of Reagon’s Office of Management and Budget, told journalists that the administration’s policies were a “Trojan horse full of benefits for the rich” and that supply-side economics were really trickle-down economics in disguise. Dark days for social welfare! Clinton then surprises everyone with the middle of the road approach. The second President Bush pushes back followed by the Obama sprint. And now President Trump.

Required Reading:
Trattner: Chapter 16 - War on the Welfare State
Katz: Chapter 10 – The War on Welfare

Readings to be Added:

Bibliography


Part II National Conference of Charities and Corrections: Part II: Progress 1874-1893 - Social Welfare


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