

**Politics 317:
THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE WELFARE STATE**

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Class: King 335, Wednesday 7.30-9.30pm

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Introduction

The contemporary welfare state is undergoing a fundamental transformation. Between the last quarter of the 19th century and the middle of the 1970s, industrialized societies throughout Western Europe and North America created a panoply of social programs which became known as welfare states. The generosity, scope and coverage of these programs varied from one country to another, but by the 1960s, across the advanced capitalist world, the state had taken responsibility for a wide range of activities that had previously been provided either by the market or by unpaid labor within the family (usually performed by women). These elements of the welfare state tended to include income support, family benefits, healthcare, pensions, childcare, and so on.

Beginning in the 1970s, welfare states everywhere found themselves threatened by ideological criticism from both the Right and the Left, and a raft of economic and social challenges, including the aging of the population, globalization, feminization of the labor force, and deindustrialization. The question of the compatibility of welfare states and market capitalism was again raised for the first time since the 1930s. Initially, the response of governments tended to be to curtail the generosity of welfare programs and generally ratchet down the scope and scale of social spending. But in the last decade or so, a more fundamental transformation has begun to become apparent. Welfare spending has shrunk in some areas, while expanding in others, tax-credits have replaced state programs, and the balance of state, market and family provision of welfare has changed in important ways. This course investigates this process of transformation. It looks at the scholarly debates which seek to explain the causes and trajectory of change, and evaluates arguments about the extent of divergence of welfare states across advanced capitalist societies. The impact of gender and race upon the fate of the welfare state will be examined, and particular attention will be paid to changes to welfare and healthcare programs.

Engaging in a significant research project is a major aim of this research seminar. Part of the semester will be taken up with discussion of student research papers, as students present their papers, and other students and the instructor offer comments and constructive criticism.

Requirements

This is a seminar and so the primary requirement is that students do the assigned reading (which is about 200-250 pages a week) on time and be prepared to discuss it in class. Each student must write comments (anywhere from a paragraph or two to a page or two) on the readings each week. The purpose of the comments is to identify the main issues, questions and criticisms so that we can incorporate them into class discussion. The comments are due either in the box outside my office or in my email Inbox by 8.00am of each Wednesday morning that there is a class. If you email me the comments, please put **Weekly Comments** in the subject line. A description of what I expect from these comments is available on the *Blackboard* web site for this class and at the end of this syllabus. These comments, plus class participation, will be worth one third of the grade. Students will frequently make oral presentations of the readings in class.

The other two thirds of the grade will come from a long (roughly 20-25 page) research paper on a topic chosen by the student, due at the end of the semester. In addition, each student must hand in a prospectus for their research paper (the topic plus a preliminary bibliography) by Tuesday March 21st. The March 22nd class period will be devoted to a discussion of those proposals. For the last three weeks of the semester, class periods will be devoted to discussion of draft research papers with students acting as discussants.

Finally, there will inevitably be some changes to the course as the semester progresses – changes in the readings, additional details of assignments, questions for the weekly comments, and so on – which are not included on this syllabus. I will provide weekly updates in the “announcements” section of the *Blackboard* web site for this course: <http://bb.oberlin.edu/> along with a syllabus and other materials. We will also use *Blackboard* for posting drafts of research papers and proposals. Check the *Blackboard* site at least once a week. In the unlikely event that you miss a class, you should always check the web site in case I have announced something of importance. Instructions for the use of *Blackboard* are provided at this URL: http://www.oberlin.edu/OCTET/Bb/FAQ_Students.htm.

You may need to self-enroll in Blackboard. The password to do so is: **truthiness**.

Course readings

There are no books to buy for this course. All the readings will be available electronically, and can be found at the “Course Documents” tab on Blackboard. You can then read and print this material. When looking for a particular reading from the syllabus look for the author’s name which is highlighted in **bold** on the syllabus. Check page numbers carefully, so that you read the correct section of each reading at the correct time. In many cases I have had some sections of a book scanned in that you do not need to read, or that you read at different points in the semester, so do be aware of page numbers.

Class Schedule:

February 8th

Introduction

No reading

February 15th & 22nd

Theorizing

Friedrich **von Hayek**, “The Meaning of the Welfare State,” in Pierson and Castles, eds., *The Welfare State Reader* (pages 90-95).

T.H. **Marshall**, “Citizenship and Social Class,” in Pierson and Castles, eds., *The Welfare State Reader* (pages 32-41).

Richard **Titmuss**, “Universalism versus Selection,” in Pierson and Castles, eds., *The Welfare State Reader* (pages 42-49).

Karl **Polanyi**, *The Great Transformation*, chapters 11 and 12 (pages 130-150).

Claus **Offe**, *Contradictions of the Welfare State*, chapter 6 (pages 147-161).

Frances Fox **Piven** and Richard Cloward, *Regulating The Poor*, chapter 1 (pages 3-42).

David **Goodhart**, “The Discomfort of Strangers” (9 pages) in *The Guardian* [February 24, 2004].

February 22nd

Gendering and Categorizing

Mary **McIntosh**, “Feminism and Social Policy,” in Pierson and Castles, eds., *The Welfare State Reader* (pages 119-132).

Carole **Pateman**, “The Patriarchal Welfare State,” in Pierson and Castles, eds., *The Welfare State Reader* (pages 133-150).

Gosta **Esping-Andersen**, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, chapters 1 & 2 (pages 9-54).

Gosta **Esping-Andersen**, *The Social Foundations of Postindustrial Economies*, chapters 3 and 4 (pages 32-72).

Spring Break

April 5th Poverty and Race

William Julius **Wilson**, *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*, chapters 1,2 & 6-8 (pages 3-50 and 149-238).

Essays by **Brown**, **Abromovitz & Withorn**, **Steinberg**, and **Smith** in Adolph Reed, ed., *Without Justice for All* (pages 93-122, 151-173, 215-233, and 257-289).

April 12th Welfare Reform

Charles **Murray**, *Losing Ground: American Social Policy, 1950-1980*, prologue, chapters 11-12 & 14-17 (pages 3-9, 147-166 and 178-236).

Joel **Handler**, “US Welfare Reform,” in Zeitlin and Trubek, eds., *Governing Work and Welfare in the New Economy* (pages 215-239).

Jamie **Peck**, *Workfare States*, chapter 7 (pages 261-340).

April 19th Healthcare Reform

Robert **Kuttner**, *Everything for Sale*, chapter 4 (pages 110-158).

Essay by **Gaiimo** (pages 334-367) in Paul Pierson, ed., *The New Politics of the Welfare State* [chapter 11].

Richard **Freeman** and Michael **Moran**, “Reforming Healthcare in Europe” (pages 35-58) *West European Politics* [April 2000].

Michael **Reagan**, *The Accidental System: Health Care Policy in America*, chapters 1-7 (pages 3-125).

April 26th, May 3rd & 10th Discussion of Paper Drafts

Discussion of research paper drafts. To be circulated to class participants by 8.00am on Tuesday before class.

How To Do The Weekly Reading Comments Assignment

This assignment is not complicated, but it is easy to misunderstand. The purpose of these sets of comments is threefold. First, I want to know that you have read the assigned material ahead of class so that I can structure the class on the assumption that we have a shared starting point, and so that we can set about discussing the reading rather than having me simply lecture on it. This class is reading-driven because I am trying to expose you to a wide range of different viewpoints and approaches to the topic, and that requires that I do everything I can to encourage you to do the reading. Second, I need to know ahead of time if some part of the reading was consistently misunderstood so that I can concentrate on going over that material in class. It is often the case that one author or piece of reading is open to multiple interpretations, and if several students interpret it differently for me, we will need to discuss that. I may be expecting you to get something from the reading when you in fact take away something quite different. There may also be language and concepts that you don't understand, so the written comments are an opportunity to let me know what you would like me to explain in class. Third, your reaction to the reading plays a central role in helping me decide how to organize class discussion. I am particularly interested in which readings resonated with you, and why, and which readings you found weak, irritating, ignorant, or whatever, and why. The critiques of the readings are the best place to start a class discussion – and it means I can call on you to explain your reaction.

What does this mean for the comments you write? It means that, at a minimum, I want the comments to demonstrate that you did the reading. That means a brief summary of the main themes and arguments presented in the reading. You can do this by writing a paragraph on each reading, or by drawing out some themes and using your comments to illustrate how each reading addressed those themes. You do not need to summarize/discuss every reading if you do not want to. I want a sense that you have done all the reading, but if you found some of the reading particularly insightful or heinous, then, by all means, focus on them in your comments. Beyond your summaries, I would like you to identify terms, concepts or words that you did not understand (even after using a dictionary!), or would like me to go over in class. Finally, along with your summary and questions, please offer comments, critiques and reactions to the readings. Again, you might do this for every reading, or just for a few; you might organize your comments around a generalized critique of the readings for that week, or point to surprising similarities or differences among the readings.

The “product” should be written comments ranging from a couple of paragraphs to a couple of pages. These can be e-mailed to me or placed in the box outside my door. Here is how I grade the comments. **I DO NOT** make comments on them and hand them back to you, unless you request them ahead of an exam or something similar. If you hand in comments that demonstrate that you have done the reading, or the great bulk of it, regardless of the quality of those comments, you get a tick. If I receive no written comments, or your comments appear to be about reading for another class, you do not get a tick. On rare occasions your comments may be so insightful that I give you a double tick. In the past this has been true for only 3 or 4 students each week, and it only happens for comments that go beyond summary and questioning to offer reaction and critique. So, in grading terms, not handing in written comments is not a good idea because the main determinant of the grade is handing them in regularly rather than their quality.