

SCWK 2641 - American Social Welfare

Fall 2026 Syllabus, Section 02, CRN 43260,

Credit hours: 3

Instructor

Michele Marie Irby

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Public Instructor Information

Instructor Title: Michele Monèt Irby

Instructor Professional Qualifications: LISW

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Course Description

2641. American Social Welfare. Overview of the history and evolution of social welfare programs and services in America. Emphasis on the identification and interrelationships of social values and structures, political factors, and economic conditions on resource allocation, including meeting the needs of special populations. 3 s.h.

Course Theme

Tracing the Past to Transform the Future

Course Motto

Understanding the Past. Informing the Present. Transforming the Future.

Essential Course Question

How has the historical development of American social welfare shaped contemporary social work practice, and what is the responsibility of social workers in creating a more equitable future?

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Course Overview

American Social Welfare examines the historical development of social welfare policies, programs, and services in the United States while exploring their influence on contemporary social work practice. Students will examine the political, economic, social, and cultural forces that have shaped American social welfare and consider the profession's ongoing role in promoting social justice, equity, and systemic change.

Throughout the semester, students will move beyond memorizing historical events to critically analyze how past decisions continue to influence current policies, service delivery systems, and the experiences of individuals, families, and communities. Through readings, discussions, written assignments, and reflective analysis, students will strengthen their ability to connect historical knowledge with professional social work practice.

Course Readings

Group	Title	Author	ISBN
Required	American Social Welfare Policy: A Pluralist Approach, 9th ed.	Karger & Stoesz	978-0-13-747231-4

The course readings are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances, research developments, current events, and/or to ensure better learning.

The course schedule, policies, procedures, and assignments in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances, by mutual agreement, and/or to ensure better learning.