SYLLABUS
Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Study and Human Development
Seminar on Government Policy and the Family
Spring, 2019
CSHD 188

Thursdays, Room 163, 9:00-11:30

Virginia (Jenny) G. Weisz, J.D.
Phone: 617-557-1018 (work); cell 617-417-8183
Email: jennyweisz@comcast.net; virginia.weisz@jud.state.ma.us

Objectives: The Seminar in Government Policy and the Family is an interdisciplinary exploration of public policy supporting the well-being of children and their families, especially those living in poverty or in state care. Material drawn from legal sources will be presented with readings from public health, social welfare, mental health, medical, education and juvenile justice arenas. Emphasis will be placed on the legal rights of children and parents, child advocacy, mental health, education, public assistance, child abuse and neglect, foster care, adoption, guardianship and juvenile delinquency. A primary focus of discussion will be learning to develop policy innovations by studying the diverse ways public policy in Massachusetts is shaped by the economy, federal funding, state legislature, courts, and state administrative agencies. The course assumes a basic knowledge of both child development and the public policy process.

Course Requirements: The readings in this course include several U.S. Supreme Court opinions as well as selections from many other disciplines. Students will choose some of the readings in addition to those listed in this syllabus. The seminar format requires students to be well-prepared to discuss each reading in class. Active participation in each session is expected. Each of the bulleted points will count for one-third of the final grade.

- Each week actively participate in class discussions based on reading all work assigned. To prepare for the discussions, provide brief comments and questions to me by email from each of the readings before 10 pm the night before the class (no more than two pages double spaced).
- At least a week prior to the class presentation you will lead, after consultation with me, select and disseminate readings for your class presentation topic. Creatively lead part of the seminar discussion on the topic you select.
- Choose an in-depth interdisciplinary policy innovation final policy project from possibilities that interest you and I approve for presentation at final class meeting on April 25th for input and discussion from class. The written report is due by email no later than midnight, May 6th. Address the issue in a succinct creative way that considers presentation to several disciplines which may include such diverse groups as: legislators, judges, parents, youth in care, educators, social workers, attorneys, mental health and health professionals, foster parents and/kin.

Seminar meets on Thursdays, 9:00-11:30 a.m, ELPB 157
Office hours are Thursdays 8:30 – 9:00; 11:30-12:30.
Jan. 17: Introduction
Legal Rights of the Child, Parent and the State
How protected are the constitutional rights to procreate or to choose not to? What if the parent has serious criminal behavior or is a minor or a person with mental disabilities? If parental right to custody is threatened, should counsel be provided to parents who are indigent? What if prenatal care is not available throughout the state?


Buck v. Bell, 274 U.S. 200 (1927)

Skinner v. Oklahoma, 316 U.S. 535 (1942)

Adoption of Meaghan, 461 Mass. 1006 (2012)

Jan. 24: Economics for low-income families
Poverty and disabilities can be major factors in caring for a child. How can outcomes for children improve in families affected by poverty and/or disability? What role does the government have?

Currie, Janet (Sept 22, 2016) Welfare Reform 20 Years On: The Kids Are All Right(?)

Babcock, Elizabeth D., (June 2018). Harnessing the Power of High Expectations:


Jerry Milner, D.S.W., Poverty and Child Welfare Systems:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLyMaXiXVsEW3O3rFS1yNmPpVmPiVuwPB7&v=tJmRY5QQgxP


https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/98725/kids_share_2018_0.pdf


**January 31: Mental Health Services**  
*Guest Speaker: Prof. John R. Weisz*

What mental health interventions are effective? Should the public be protected from mental health services that are not evidence-based? What are new promising mental health interventions?


**February 7: Education**

Does the federal government have a role in educating children? How can courts be used to change state education policy? Can public schools be separated for different racial groups? Is education a fundamental right? Can a state's public education finance system violate the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment? Do children with disabilities have a right to a certain level of education? How can families advocate for improved education?  
*Special Guests: Brian and Julie Heffernan to speak on advocating for special students.*


February 14: Child abuse and neglect

Every state has its own child abuse reporting statutes, all guided by federal funding statutes that require certain common definitions. Should emotional abuse and neglect be included in these definitions? Can services be provided to keep children safely in the home? What are the long-term consequences of abuse or neglect? Should we fund more for in-home services or for removing the child and placement in foster care? What about criminal actions against parents?


Feb. 21: No Class. Attend Monday class instead.

Feb. 28: Health (Ben and Yue)

Do children have the right to health care? How should health care policy in Massachusetts and in the United States be improved for children and families?


March 7: Foster Care or Guardianship

Special class presentation by Guest Speakers, Julie Wisnia and Abraham Polayes

If children cannot remain in the home safely, what happens to them in foster care? What role does the relative play in formal and informal care? What are the benefits of keeping the child out of state custody? What are the benefits/disadvantages of placing the child in custody of a non-relative?

Massachusetts Department of Children and Families Quarterly Report (Fiscal Year 2018; 3rd Quarter)

The hand-written statement of a child who was abused and placed in foster care in Oklahoma


March 14th  Services to keep families together  (Delilah)
How effective are services to families where the children have been abused or neglected? Should in-home services receive increased support or should funding for foster care continue to outstrip funding for in-home services? What service are reasonable to be provided to a parent with disabilities? Should age be a factor in determining placement?

**Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018. Regulations to implement:**  AGENCY PLAN FOR TITLE IV-E OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTION ASSISTANCE STATE/TRIBE  [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/pi1809.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/pi1809.pdf)

**Big Mama**  Academy award winning documentary to be viewed by class.


Delilah will add additional readings.

**March 21: NO CLASS (Spring Break)**

**March 29: Termination of Parental Rights, and Adoption**
*View from the Bench on Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice. Guest Speaker: Hon. Sally Padden (ret.)* Essex County Juvenile Court; Supreme Judicial Court, Court Improvement Program.

What methods work best to improve the policy affecting children in care? Do the legal time frame and legal standard for termination of parental rights and adoption help or harm emotional stability of children? Should age of the child matter? What legal processes prevent or improve positive outcomes for delinquent youth or children and youth involved in child welfare? What prevents children in child welfare cases from crossing into delinquency?


**Stanley v. Illinois**, 405 U.S. 645 (1972)

**The Answer Book**, 2018. Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts Court Improvement Program.

**April 4: Delinquency**
The U.S. Supreme Court guarantees certain protections to children charged with delinquency. Compare the protection from capital punishment to the right to privacy for teens under **Roe v. Wade**. Note the reliance on mental health professionals in the capital punishment cases. Everyone will read the Steinberg article, the Tuell et al article, and In re Gault. The class will be divided so that you will only be responsible for reading one of the US Supreme Court cases listed after In re Gault.


In re Gault, 387 U.S. 1 (1967)


Roper v. Simmons, 543 U.S. 551 (2005)


April 11 Maternal Health Policy (Katherine) and Homelessness in America (Hannah):
Readings to be assigned by Katherine and Hannah.

April 18: Immigration (Kayla)
With over 5.1 million children of undocumented parents, how should we deal with their day to
day developmental needs and well-being? What about undocumented children? Do they have an
equal right to education as citizen children? What about children and families seeking asylum?
Should they be separated or refused entry to the US before their case is heard?


Adoption of Yadira (and two companion cases) Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court (SJC-

Cooper, Cristina Ritchie. “A Guide for State Court Judges and Lawyers on Special Immigrant

Additional readings assigned by Kayla.

April 25: Final class project presentations by each student

May 6: Final paper/special project due by midnight.