

School of Government

**PUBL 403**  
**CONTEMPORARY POLICY ISSUES**  
**15 POINTS**

Trimester Two 2009

**COURSE OUTLINE**

---

**Names and Contact Details**

**Course Coordinator:** Associate Professor Bob Stephens  
**Room:** Rutherford House Level 8, Room 825, Pipitea Campus  
**Phone:** 04 463 5449  
**Email:** Bob.Stephens@vuw.ac.nz

In e-mails, please place the Course Code PUBL 403 in the Subject Line, to avoid the possibility of e-mails being deleted as SPAM.

NOTE: This course is jointly taught with MAPP 555.

**Administrator:** Mara Robertson  
**Room:** Rutherford House Level 8, Room 821, Pipitea Campus  
**Phone:** 04 463 6599  
**Email:** Mara.Robertson@vuw.ac.nz

**Trimester Dates**

**Teaching Period:** Monday 13 July to Friday 16 October 2009

**There is no final exam.** The course is internally assessed.

**Class Times and Room Numbers**

Wednesdays            9.30am - 11.20am            RWW 129

**NOTE: This course is run on a *WEEKLY* basis**

**Withdrawal dates:** Information available via  
<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/admisenrol/payments/withdrawalsrefunds.aspx>

## **Course Content**

The course will look at theoretical developments in social policy as well as issues of policy development and implementation within the New Zealand context. Particular attention will be given to the analysis of social security, the level of assistance to families with dependent children, the evaluation of welfare-to-work and case management schemes in the context of labour market operations, policies for dependent children at risk, poverty, education and income dynamics, accident compensation and policy for superannuation. The emphasis will be on integrated, long-term and strategic social policy across all the social spheres and the relevant economic policy issues.

Reference to changes in New Zealand's demographic structure, including ethnic mix, and how that impinges on the welfare state will be made. Attention will be placed on the theory underlying social policy / the welfare state, both in general and for each area of social policy, and the appropriate role for government, private and voluntary provision. Policy instruments to achieve objectives will be analysed, as will the appropriate method of financing social policy and institutional structures for implementing social policy. The frameworks of economics, sociology, law, politics, demography, gender and ethnicity will be used. While evaluation will be made of specific pieces of social legislation and policy issues, the discussion will often concentrate on broader conceptual, philosophical and methodological issues.

## **Course Learning Objectives**

By completion of the course, students should be able to analyse and evaluate:

- Justifications for the role of government in social policy and the appropriate balance between government (central and local), private market, family and voluntary sector in terms of funding, decision and provision
- The need for strategic social policy to ensure that long-term and inter-sectoral issues and policies are analysed and developed
- The development of children's scholastic achievement
- The value of the social development / social investment approach, enabling people to achieve their objectives, with positive labour market activation rather than work enforcement
- The change in the form of the welfare state from direct provision and input financing to contracting and accountability for outputs
- The importance of demographic trends for the analysis of social policy
- How differing cultural, philosophical, historical, and political backgrounds produce different welfare systems
- The uneasy relationship between insurance-based ACC and tax-funded social security.
- Attempts to improve the efficiency and equity of social policy
- The role of evaluation in social policy, especially the Working for Families package
- The interrelationships between economic and social policy
- The strengths and weakness of different policy instruments to achieve goals, and ways to measure outcomes
- The use, advantages and limitations of comparative analysis in social policy
- The role of service delivery compared to financial assistance for families with dependent children.

## Course Delivery

This course is delivered in a weekly format, and is jointly taught with MAPP 555.

## Expected Workload

The expected work load for this 15-point course is 150 hours, spread evenly throughout the trimester.

## Group Work

Students will form groups to prepare for the joint seminar presentation in September. This presentation is part of the mandatory requirement for the course. However, students will write an **individual** essay based on the joint presentation, and the essay will be marked as a separate piece of work.

## Readings

There is no set text for the class. There is a set of Course Notes. A more detailed bibliography will be given out in the first week of classes.

The Library has copies of:

Lunt, N., O'Brien, M. and Stephens, R. (eds.) (2008) *New Zealand, new welfare*, Melbourne, Cengage Learning.

Starke, P. (2008) *Radical Welfare State Retrenchment: a Comparative Analysis*, Palgrave Macmillan.

There are several books that are worth consulting for some sessions:

Barr, N. (1999) *Economics of the Welfare State*, various editions.

Boston, J., Dalziel, P. and St. John, S. (eds.) (1999) *Redesigning the Welfare State in New Zealand*.

Cheyne, C., O'Brien, M. and Belgrave, M. (2000) *Social Policy in Aotearoa/New Zealand* 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.

## Materials and Equipment

Apart from the Course Notes, no additional materials or equipment are required for this course.

## Course Content

The following gives a broad indication of the scope and sequencing of topics. Guest lecturers will hopefully be arranged to teach aspects of the course. Due to the possible changes in availability of visiting lecturers, the order and even course content may change if emerging policy issues develop.

**NOTE: This course is run on a weekly basis in RWW (Railway) 129.**

1. **Wednesday July 15**      **9.30am – 11.20am**      **Associate Professor Bob Stephens**  
**The Nature of the Welfare State**
  - Historical evolution of the welfare state, internationally and in New Zealand
  - Justifying the welfare state, using the lens of economics, demography, law, psychology, politics, sociology and gender analysis
  - Types and models of welfare states
  
2. **Wednesday July 22**      **9.30am – 11.20am**      **Dr Paul Callister (IPS)**  
**Ethnic and Demographic Effects**
  - The role and importance of demographic trends in social policy analysis
  - The role of ethnicity in Social Policy
  - The impact of ethnic trends
  - Population ageing, baby blips and baby boomers
  - Immigration
  
3. **Wednesday July 29**      **9.30am – 11.20am**      **Associate Professor Bob Stephens**  
**Income Maintenance, Single Core Benefit**
  - Social insurance or social assistance
  - Justifying the state's involvement in social assistance provision
  - New Zealand's system of social security
  - Adequacy of payment levels
  - EMTRs, incentive effects, case management
  - Replacing the Categorical approach in Tier 1
  
4. **Wednesday August 5**      **9.30am – 11.20am**      **Associate Professor Bob Stephens**  
**Assistance to Families with Children**
  - Rationale for alleviating, solving child poverty
  - Universal or targeted assistance
  - In-work benefits
  - Comparative approaches to family assistance
  - Evaluation of Working for Families
  
5. **Wednesday August 12**      **9.30am – 11.20am**      **Associate Professor Bob Stephens**  
**Welfare to Work**
  - Operation of the Labour Market
  - Types of welfare-to-work schemes
  - Criteria for evaluation
  - Working New Zealand, Jobs Jolt and DPB Evaluation
  - Role of case management
  
6. **Wednesday August 19**      **9.30am – 11.20am**      **Dr. David Rae (IPS)**  
**An Overview of Government Spending and Taxation**
  - The Budget Process
  - Budget Priorities and Social Spending
  - A Case Study of the Budget Process

**<< Mid-Trimester Break: No Lectures, August 24 – September 6 >>**

**7. Wednesday September 9      9.30am – 11.20am Associate Professor Bob Stephens  
Poverty in New Zealand**

- Measuring poverty, social exclusion and deprivation, living standards
- Efficiency of social security in alleviating poverty
- Short-term alleviates and long-term solutions
- Duration and dynamics of poverty

**8. Wednesday September 16      9.30am – 11.20am Dr. Cathy Wylie (NZCER)  
Competent Children**

- Longitudinal Study on Children's Competencies
- Impact of Family Background
- Risks and Resilience
- Policy Implications

**9. Wednesday September 23      9.30am – 11.20am Associate Professor Bob Stephens  
Student Presentations (1)**

Reporting back from the groups

**10. Wednesday September 30      9.30am – 11.20am Associate Professor Bob Stephens  
Student Presentations (2)**

Reporting back from the groups

**11. Wednesday October 7      9.30am – 11.20am Associate Professor Bob Stephens  
Accident Compensation and Disability Policy [Topic may be altered]**

- Funding and incentives in ACC
- Structure of benefit payments in ACC
- Causes of growth in numbers on disability benefits
- Disability, rehabilitation and work
- Privatisation/competition in ACC

**12. Wednesday October 14      9.30am – 11.20am Associate Professor Bob Stephens  
Superannuation Policy**

- The impact of an ageing of the population
- New Zealand superannuation, its level, funding, the surcharge?
- Private superannuation, taxation changes, relationship to public, coverage
- The arguments concerning pre-funding and investing the fund
- Implications of the Kiwi Saver scheme

## Assessment Requirements

Assignment	Due Date	Length	Weight
Essay ONE	Wednesday August 5	2000 words	30%
Briefing Paper	Friday August 21	1000 words	20%
Essay TWO	Friday October 23	4000 words	50%

Assignments are to be deposited in the secure box at School of Government reception (8<sup>th</sup> floor Rutherford House) during the office hours, which are 8.30am – 5.00pm. Students should keep a hard copy themselves, and be able to email it to Associate Professor Bob Stephens on request if required (partly so that he can use Turnitin if the need arises).

### ESSAY ONE

#### Either

- (a) “Between 2000 and 2008, the New Zealand welfare state was based on a social development framework, using a social investment model combined with the guiding principles of ‘Opportunities for All’.”

Analyse whether the National-led government post 2008 has implicitly changed from this social development approach, and whether their possible return to ‘welfare’ is appropriate. Evaluate whether the social development approach adequately addressed the issue of ‘social inheritance’. Did the social development approach change the ‘liberal welfare state’ tag that most external commentators place upon New Zealand’s welfare state. Discuss the implications for the typology of welfare states from the National-led government’s possible return to ‘welfare’.

#### OR

- (b) The Labour-led government between 2005 and 2008 planned to move to a single core benefit. The incoming National-led government explicitly rejected this move with a preference for the existing categorical approach to income maintenance.

Evaluate whether the move to a single core benefit would have been an effective policy instrument to achieve high benefit take-up rates, facilitate entry into the workforce, provide poverty relief and allow early childhood development.

NOTE: For any student who has been involved in the development of a single core benefit, answering Question A or C would be preferable.

#### OR

- (c) What form of income maintenance would be appropriate for a developing country?

NOTE: For International Students, they can use their own country for a case study.

This topic would cover issues such as: the objectives of such a scheme; what the coverage should be (old, or families etc); how would it be funded; the level of the benefit (if any), how the benefit would be accessed; what would be the appropriate

instruments for targeting (if any) of benefit receipt; what allowance would be made for the differences in access to home production for urban and rural populations; and what administrative arrangements would need to be developed to set up an income maintenance system.

## **BRIEFING PAPER**

The Briefing Paper may differ between students, depending upon their background and interests. However, issues that the student is directly working on at work or for other courses should be excluded.

The Briefing Paper will be a guide for a Minister (in the appropriate department) about an upcoming policy issue or as part of the policy development process. The purpose of the Briefing Paper is to either provide the Minister with background information about the policy so that Minister can advise Cabinet about the issue, or to indicate to the Minister that a new policy initiative will be required in this area (due possibly to a changing external environment, or new information being available).

The issue will be specific, e.g. Accommodation Supplement or Welfare to Work, rather than a Department's full briefing paper.

*Topics: See separate list, to be placed on Blackboard as well as being distributed in class.*

## **ESSAY TWO**

Whilst this is an essay topic, it starts as a group project. The class will be divided into groups of about 5 students. The group will organise themselves in order to analyse the issues for presentation to the class in sessions 9 and 10. The presentation will be roughly 30 minutes long (depending upon number of groups), with time for questions.

Each student will write an individual essay, which can draw on the communal work but also needs to extend the communal work into a full policy-based essay.

*Topics: To be announced (will be placed on Blackboard and distributed in class)*

**NOTE: Attendance at Group class presentations by own and other groups on both September 23 and September 30 is part of the Mandatory Course Requirements.**

*Note: Your assessed work may also be used for quality assurance purposes, such as to assess the level of achievement of learning objectives as required for accreditation and audit purposes. The findings may be used to inform changes aimed at improving the quality of FCA programmes. All material used for such processes will be treated as confidential, and the outcome will not affect your grade for the course.*

## **Examinations**

No Final Exam.

## **Penalties**

Penalties will be incurred for late submission of work, or for work submitted that is excessively long. Late assignments will have their mark reduced by 0.5 marks for each day it is overdue unless there is a very good reason why it was late. If there are out of town students, then two days is allowed for postage. Assignments will not be accepted that are over a week late, unless an extension has been granted. Assignments excessively exceeding the word limit will have 3 marks deducted or will be returned to the student for pruning.

## **Mandatory Course Requirements**

1. Completion of the three assignments;
2. Attending at least 75% of the lectures;
3. Involvement in the Group class presentation; and
4. Attending group class presentations by own and other groups on both September 23 and September 30.

Students who fail to satisfy the mandatory requirements for passing this course, other than the requirement to obtain a C grade overall, will not receive a graded result, and their records will show a “K” (fail due to not satisfying mandatory course requirements, even though the student’s course requirements reached the level specified for a pass).

## **Communication of Additional Information**

Additional information will be provided on Blackboard, by email to students, or through lectures.

## **Other Information**

For the following important information follow the links provided:

### **Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx>

### **General University Policies and Statutes**

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy/academic.aspx>

### **Faculty of Commerce and Administration Offices**

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/fca/studenthelp/Contactus.aspx>

### **Manaaki Pihipihinga Programme**

[http://www.victoria.ac.nz/st\\_services/mentoring/](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/mentoring/)