Siena University Social Work Program

SWRK 440: Social Welfare Policy
Spring 2026
Section 03 (9:10-10:10 am, Monday, Wednesday, Friday), Rosetti Hall, Room 104

Instructor: Qiang Chen, MSW, PhD
Office: Rosetti Hall, Room 211
Office hours: Mondays & Wednesday, 3:00-4:00 pm; Tuesdays, 9:30 am -12:30 pm; or by appointment
Contact: qchen@siena.edu

Siena University, School of Liberal Arts and Social Work Program Mission and Learning Goals

Siena University: Siena Mission and Learning Goals
School of Liberal Arts: Mission Statements and Learning Goals
Social Work Program: Mission Statement and Learning Goals

Course Description

This course provides a systematic analysis of a range of social welfare policies and programs and their impact on individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities. Through the use of analytical and experiential learning, emphasis is placed on developing policy practice skills to promote social, environmental and economic justice, equality, equity and human rights within the context of political, legislative and community processes.

Credit Allocation: 3 credits
Level: Undergraduate

Course Attributes: ARTS, ATTR
Requirement in Social Work major
Course Prerequisites: ECON 101 or ECON 102

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, the learner will be able to:
1. Demonstrate an understanding of social welfare policy and programs as a major component of Generalist Social Work Practice and the interrelationship between such policy and programs and the Social Work profession.

2. Utilize conceptual frameworks to analyze the historical, political, economic and social contexts within which social welfare policy and programs are constructed.
3. Incorporate Social Work values into social welfare policy analysis and practice, with particular emphasis on respect and appreciation for diversity as well as the promotion of social and economic justice and work to reconcile personal and professional value conflicts within policy development and advocacy.
4. Identify and examine the role of social welfare policy and programs in relation to the local, national and global connectedness concerning human rights, aspects of diversity, and discrimination and oppression.
5. Demonstrate utilization of (local, state, national or international) some of the political, organizational, and community processes to effectively influence social welfare policy and programs in ways that support human rights and the values of the social work profession.

CSWE Competencies

The Social Work Program at Siena is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), the national professional organization that regulates the content and conduct of professional Social Work education. Completion of the required social work courses at Siena will help students to demonstrate competence as defined by CSWE within the 2022 Educational Policy and Accreditation standards (EPAS). EPAS recognizes that competence is informed by knowledge, values, skills, and cognitive and affective processes that include a social worker's critical thinking, affective reactions, and exercise of judgment in regard to unique practice situations. The following competencies apply to this course:

Competency 1: Demonstrate ethical and professional behavior
Competency 2: Advance human rights and social, racial, economic, and environmental justice
Competency 3: Engage anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion (ADEI) in practice
Competency 5: Engage in policy practice

Readings

Myers-Lipton, S. (2023). CHANGE! A Student Guide to Social Action (2nd ed.). ISBN-13 978 1032418025 (New or Used copies are available from Amazon or Abebooks)

Additional readings:
Additional required readings and links to online material will be posted on the Canvas course site.

SIENA

Performance Evaluation

Assignment	Points	Due Date
Portfolio Assignments	300	Please refer to Canvas for due dates. Additional details and instructions will be discussed in class.
Advocacy Skills Assignments (for the Mental Health Matters Day Event)	300	
Campaign Assignments	300	
Class Attendance & Participation	100	Throughout
Total	1,000	

Portfolio (300 points, 30% of total grade)

Consider the portfolio as a weekly worksheet. You will integrate the course readings with your experiences (especially your social action campaign experiences) throughout the portfolio. You may discuss the questions with your classmates, but each student must complete and submit their own portfolio assignments.

Advocacy Skills Assignments (300 points, 30% of total grade)

Consider the advocacy skills assignments as preparation for participating in the Mental Health Matters Day event. Participation in the Event on March 11th and the debriefing on March 15th is required.

Campaign Assignments (300 points, 30% of total grade)

Students will engage in policy advocacy through a social action campaign. Campaign assignments include issue identification, testing the issue and demands, developing an organizational rap, launching the campaign, creating a campaign binder, and delivering a final presentation.

Extra Credit (3% of total grade)

The virtual Spring '26 Summit on College Student Social Action will take place on Thursday, May 7th, 3:00-5:00 pm. This event provides a great opportunity for you to connect with students across the country who are working on social action campaigns and to learn from one another. Students may earn up to 3% extra credit for participating in this event.

Class Attendance and Participation (100 points)

All due dates and assignment details are posted on the Canvas course site.

Total Points: 1,000

Attendance (required) 10% of final grade

This course requires attendance because it is an essential element in the learning process. **Medical leaves sanctioned by Health Services are the only excused absences.** Based on the number of times a week a course meets, students are allowed a certain number of absences without a grade penalty. Additional absences, up to the total allowed before department review, will result in a deduction of the attendance grade (which is 10% of the total course grade). Department review will be initiated when any student meets the total allowed number of absences, considering the reasons for absences and student's overall course performance. Exceeding the total number of allowed absences may result in additional grade penalties or failing the course. Students who wish to have excused absences due to bereavement must follow the Siena University Bereavement Policy. In order for a bereavement absence to be excused an email must come from the VPAA's office. The Bereavement Policy is discussed further in the syllabus.

Students are responsible for monitoring their attendance. It is expected that students communicate with the instructor in advance of an absence. This models professional behavior, and workplace expectations.

Table 1: Deductions Related to Absences

Frequency of meetings per week	Allowed number of absences	% (percent) penalty for each additional absence	Total allowed before Department Review is initiated
3 times a week	3	2% (5 absences)	8

Projected Schedule/Course Outline

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Please note that the instructor reserves the right to change the *Course Schedule and Readings* as necessary. Students will be notified about any changes during class.

Week 1 January 20th

Topics:
- Course Introduction and Key Concepts
- Engaging in Policy Practice
- Issue Development

Readings:
- Brouilette R. (3/31/2016). Why Therapists Should Talk Politics - The New York Times
- SML (2023) [SML = Scott Myers-Lipton (2023) *CHANGE! A Student Guide to Social Action*]. Student Victories, Preface, A Message to Teachers, Ch. 1 Issue Development (pp. 1-5)
- 198 Methods of Nonviolent Action - https://www.aeinstein.org/198-methods-of-nonviolent-action

Assignment due:
- Mental Health Matters (MHM) Day 2026 Registration
- Portfolio 1 (The instructor has selected or revised the questions for the portfolio assignments. Please review the instructions and questions on the Canvas course site)

Week 2 January 26th

Topics:
- Issue Development
- Setting the Tone
- Friday: Guest Speaker - John Richter, Director of Public Policy

Readings:
- *SML (2023)* Ch. 1 Issue Development (pp. 7-19)
- *SML (2023)* Ch. 2 Setting the Tone (pp. 20-27)
- The NYS Legislative Process and You: legislative_process.pdf
- NYS Legislative Calendar @ https://nyassembly.gov/leg/calendar/
- Legislative Glossary: Legislative Glossary.docx
- Mental Health Matters Day - Mental Health Association in NYS, Inc.

Assignments due:
- Portfolio 2
- Advocacy skills assignment: Researching Your State Legislators assignment

Week 3 February 2nd

Topics:
- Identify the issue for your social action campaign

- Change Theory
- Lobbying Decisionmakers (Guest Speaker: Dr. Daniel Lewis – TBA)

Readings:
- *SML (2023)* Ch. 3 Change Theory (pp. 28-42)
- [Community Toolbox Chapter 33 Section 7. Lobbying Decisionmakers](#)
- Who is spending the most on lobbying in the US https://www.opensecrets.org/federal-lobbying/industries
- NYS Lobbying Overview - [NYS Lobbying Overview](#)

Assignments due:
- Portfolio 3
- Campaign Assignments – Issue Identification

Week 4 February 9th

Topics:
- Building Power
- Legislative Meeting Testimony
- Social Justice Tour

Readings:
- *SML (2023)* Ch. 4 Building Power (pp. 43-59)
- [10 Tips for Crafting and Delivering Effective Legislative Testimony - Maine Association of Nonprofits](#)

Assignments due:
- Portfolio 4
- Campaign Assignments – Testing the Issue and Demands
- Get started on Advocacy skills Assignment: Legislative Meeting Testimony

Week 5 February 16th

Topics:
- Refine your Issue and Demands
- Research
- Policy Briefs

Readings:
- *SML (2023)* Ch. 5 Research (pp. 60-71)
- International Centre for Policy Advocacy (2017) An Essential Guide to Writing Policy Briefs (pp. 9-16)
- [Achieve equal opportunity and justice | Grand Challenges for Social Work](#)
- [Universal Declaration of Human Rights | United Nations](#)

Assignments due:
- Advocacy skills Assignment: Legislative Meeting Testimony
- Campaign Assignments – Organizational Rap
- Get started on Portfolio 5
- Get started on Advocacy skills assignment: Policy brief

Week 6 February 23rd

Topics:
- Group Dynamics
- Strategy and Tactics
- Legislative Visits & Preparation for the MHM Advocacy

Readings:
- *SML (2023)* Ch. 6 Group Dynamics (pp. 72-80)
- *SML (2023)* Ch. 7 Strategy and Tactics (pp. 81-88)
- [8 Ways to Have a Successful Legislative Visit: Making the Most of Your Interaction - Michigan Collaborative to End Mass Incarceration](#)

Assignments due:
- Advocacy skills assignment: Policy brief
- Portfolio 6

Week 7 March 2nd   No Class Spring Break

Week 8 March 9th

Practicing Macro Policy Advocacy
- Monday: Preparation for the MHM Advocacy
- Wednesday: Mental Health Matters Day, March 11th, 2026, from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm
- Friday: Review and Process what was learned & Discuss Next Best Steps

Week 9 March 16th

Topics:
- Strategy and Tactics
- Campaign Kickoff
- Using Social Media for Digital Advocacy

Reading:
- *SML (2023)* Ch. 7 Strategy and Tactics (pp. 89-98)
- *SML (2023)* Ch. 8 Campaign Kickoff (pp. 99-113)
- [Community Toolbox Chapter 33 Section 19. Using Social Media for Digital Advocacy](#)

Assignments due:
- Send a thank-you note (email or letter or card) to your legislator or staff you met with by 11:59pm on Tuesday, March 17th
- Portfolio 5
- Portfolio 7

WEEK 10 March 23rd

Topics:
- Plan your Campaign Lauch

Readings
- None

Assignments due:
- Portfolio 8
- Weeks 10-13: prepare and launch your campaign.

Week 11 March 30th

Topics:
- Teamwork (your Campaign Action)
- Campaign Plan & Campaign Frame
- No Class on April 3/Friday

Readings:
- *SML (2023)* Ch. 9 Campaign Plan (pp. 114-121)

Assignments due:
- Portfolio 9
- Weeks 10-13: prepare and launch your campaign.

Week 12 April 6th

Topics:
- Social Movement
- Case Study: Black Lives Matter (2013 – Present)
- We will watch in class – Ted Talks: Fighting with Nonviolence: Scilla Elworthy: Fighting with nonviolence | TED Talk (15 minutes)

Readings:
- Lowery (2017), "Black Lives Matter: Birth of a Movement"
- Belton (2015), "Leaderless or Leader-ful?"

Assignment due:
- Launch your campaign.

Week 13 April 13th

Catch-up Week: Launch your campaign. There are no other assignments.

Week 14 April 20th

Topics:
- Campaign evaluation
- The Hero's Shero's Journey
- Social Work and Social Reform

Reading:
- *SML (2023)* Ch. 10 Campaign Evaluation (pp. 122-124)
- *SML (2023)* Ch. 11 Hero's and Shero's Journey (pp. 125-129)
- *Abramovitz, M. (1998), Social Work and Social Reform: An Arena of Struggle*, due by Sunday, 11:59 pm

Assignment due:

- Portfolio 10
- Campaign Assignments - Campaign Presentation Slides/Materials

Week 15 April 27th

Topic:
- Campaign Presentation

Reading: None
Assignment due: None

Week 16 May 4th

Topic:
- Campaign Binder, due May 4th, 11:59 pm
- Extrad Credit: Students strongly encouraged to participate in the virtual Spring '26 Summit on College Student Social Action on May 7th, 3:00 pm

Reading: None
Assignment:
- Campaign Assignments - Campaign Binder

Class Policies

Social Work Department Policy on Graded Assignments

1. All major assignments must be submitted in order to pass the course, regardless of the grade earned on the assignment.
2. Assignments are expected on the due date
3. If the assignment is going to be late, you are expected to contact the professor via email to negotiate any extension before the due date - this models professional behavior

Your Professor's Policy on Graded Assignments
1. Even if an extension is approved, assignments that are not turned in on the due date will receive a deduction of 10% of the overall grade (an assignment worth 100 points will now only be graded for a maximum of 90 points)
2. Students who do not request an extension prior to the due date will receive an additional 10% deduction off the overall grade (an assignment worth 100 points will now only be graded for a maximum of 80 points)
3. Without a negotiated extension, a final submission date will be set by the instructor. If the assignment is not submitted by that date, a '0' grade will be assigned. Regardless of grade earned, all major assignments must still be submitted to and accepted by the professor in order to pass the class.

Table 2: Grading Scale

Score	Grade	GPA
930 and above	A	4.0
900 - 929	A-	3.7
870 - 899	B+	3.3
840 - 869	B	3.0
800 - 839	B-	2.7
770 - 799	C+	2.3
740 - 769	C	2.0
670 - 699	D+	1.3
640 - 669	D	1.0
600 - 639	D-	0.7
599 or less	F	0.0

Electronic Communication / Use of Communication Devices

Please see Siena University Policy prohibiting cell phone use during class and exam times unless expressly permitted by the Professor. Siena Cell Phone Policy.

Students should demonstrate good judgment when deciding what mode of communication might be best to use with the instructor, particularly in relation to attendance and the completion of assignments. (Please see the Grading Criteria and the Attendance Policy for more information.)

Student use of a cell phone or other electronic device during class time (unless granted prior approval from the instructor) **will be counted as a class absence** and will be incorporated into a student's attendance record.   Laptop use in the classroom is at the discretion of the professor.

Academic Integrity Policy

The concept of academic integrity lies at the very heart of Siena University. Students are expected to complete their own work and be in compliance with the University's policy on academic integrity (see Siena Life). Students who engage in plagiarism, cheating or other forms of academic dishonesty may be subject to sanctions, which include failure of the course, suspension from the University, or permanent dismissal.

It is the student's responsibility to be familiar with the student guidelines on academic honesty, which can be found on this web site: "Academic Integrity and the Siena Student."

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Use of generative artificial intelligence (AI), such as ChatGPT and other platforms that generate text, code, artwork, etc., in academic work must adhere to the Siena University Academic Integrity Policy and avoid Academic Integrity Violations. Presenting AI-generated content as one's own original work is a violation of academic integrity and will result in disciplinary action as severe as dismissal from the University. According to Siena University's Academic Integrity Policy, appropriate and inappropriate use of AI is determined by the instructor of each class and students are responsible for understanding and complying with each instructor's policies and expectations. In social work courses, no uses of generative AI are acceptable.

Accessibility Policy

The Social Work Department is committed to teaching social work courses, providing internship and field education experiences, and conducting program-sponsored activities and events in locations and environments that are accessible. Students who have requests pertaining to the accessibility of a specific social work classroom or internship/field education setting must first register with the Office of Accessibility. Upon receipt, in writing, of a request related to accessibility, the respective faculty member and/or Coordinator will determine, in collaboration with the Office for Accessibility, the University or the specific agency involved, the reasonableness of addressing the request. Every effort will be made to address accessibility matters that are determined to be reasonable to the full extent possible.

Students who have an accessibility request pertaining to any other Social Work Program-sponsored activities and events should communicate these requests in writing and direct them to the Social Work Department Chair. Every effort will be made to address this request to the fullest extent possible.

Accommodations Policy

The Social Work Department is committed to ensuring that students with documented disabilities and student Veterans are provided with the resources and support necessary to effectively address their individual educational needs by following Siena's Accommodations Policy. Students must be registered with the Office of Accessibility. To register, contact Lindsay Green, Director of the Office of Accessibility, Foy Hall Room 109, 518-783-4239 or email Lindsay Green If a student has any concerns about accommodations, please discuss these concerns first with your professor and Lindsay Green.

Complaints about services provided or not provided may be brought to the attention of Public Safety at (518) 783-2376 or Student Life at (518) 783-2328.

Inclusive Classroom

In our Franciscan community, diversity is an invitation to celebrate the uniqueness of each individual, as well as the cultural differences that enrich us all. In this course, I will do my best to ensure that students from all backgrounds and perspectives will be served equitably. The diversity that students bring to this class will be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful and inclusive of the many identities of students in terms of gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, culture, perspective, and other background characteristics. Your suggestions about how to improve the value of diversity and inclusiveness in this course are encouraged and appreciated.

Pronouns

Students are asked to indicate their pronouns by updating their profile in Canvas. The use of pronouns is important to show respect for students' gender identities. Please use pronouns that other students display in oral and written communication.

Mental Health and Counseling Resources

For any number of reasons, you may become overwhelmed during your time at Siena. It is very common to experience symptoms of anxiety, depression or other mental health conditions.

Fortunately, the Counseling Center, located in Foy Hall Room 110, is a resource to help overcome those potential challenges. You can make an appointment by stopping by, calling 518-783-2342, or requesting one online on the Siena Counseling Center webpage.

Human Rights: Sexual Misconduct and Discrimination Harassment Policy

The Social Work Department is committed to maintaining an effective educational and work environment that is free from discrimination, discriminatory-based harassment, sexual harassment and violence of any type, including domestic violence and stalking. It is an expectation that faculty, students and other individuals who are involved with the Social Work Department will conduct themselves in a manner that demonstrates regard for every individual and is in accordance with Department, University, State and Federal laws and policies. The Social Work Department Handbook/ Department Procedures and the University's policies about sexual misconduct and discrimination/ harassment provide an overview of possible options (within and outside of the Department) for addressing incidents. A student who may wish to seek support, guidance and advice about how to proceed with a department-specific situation that may relate to a possible human rights violation may request a meeting with the Department Chair and/or with any of the Designated Resource Persons identified in the **Sexual Misconduct Policy** or the **Discrimination and Harassment Policy** documents.

Reporting a Bias Incident or Sexual Misconduct

In any case of possible bias or sexual misconduct, either in the classroom or anywhere on campus, you are encouraged to file a report online (Search: Siena University Bias Report). You may also contact Samantha Faiella, Associate Dean of Students and Seniors Title IX/VII coordinator via her email or by phone at (518) 783-2328. Any Siena community member, who experiences or observes an incident of bias or misconduct, including faculty, staff and students, can file a report through this system. More information and resources around procedures dealing with sexual misconduct and discrimination and harassment are available online.

Please note, faculty members are considered "responsible employees" at Siena University. As such they are required to report all known relevant details about a complaint of sexual misconduct to the University's Title IX Coordinator, including the names of anyone involved or present, date, time, and location.

Emergency Preparedness

Take your text and a copy of the syllabus home with you in the event of a University closure. Continue with readings and assignments according to the course schedule. If possible, online office hours will be established. Social Work courses will be delivered in accordance with the plans outlined by Siena University (see **Emergency Info**) and in compliance with CSWE

Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards. Information regarding the status of the University's status and reopening schedule may be monitored on the Siena website, www.siena.edu.

In addition, special instructions will be made available by the Social Work Department to students who are enrolled in SWRK 301, 410, 420, 620, or 650 in an effort to complete internship and field education hours and requirements within the standards set forth by CSWE and in partnership with internship and field site organizations policies and procedures.

Students will be electronically notified (if internet is available) by the Department Chair as to the status of upcoming non-classroom Social Work Program activities which may be scheduled during the period of University closure (e.g. NYSSWEA conference, field visits, lobby day, etc.).

Bereavement Policy

Students or parents reporting a death in a student's family should be referred to the VPAA's Office which will notify the student's faculty of the dates of the absence(s). The bereavement policy may be found at the link which follows. (Bereavement Policy.) The VPAA Office will also copy Community Living, Academic Success Center and SKIPS. Only emails that are from the office of the VPAA will be used for excused absences due to bereavement.

Religious Accommodation

New York State law requires campuses to excuse, without penalty, individual students absences due to religious beliefs. Students must contact their instructor directly and with sufficient time to request and arrange the accommodation.   The university's policy can be found at the following link Religious accommodation