



FAS 444 Family Law, Public Policy and Applied Ethics (online)

4 credits

****Mondays—April 14, 2008 through May 19, 2008****

The mission of Concordia University, a university of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, is to prepare students for thoughtful and informed living, for dedicated service to God and humanity, and for enlightened care of God's creation, all within the context of the Christian Gospel.

Instructor

Nancy Gonzalez, M. Ed., CFLE

612-788-0251

nwg1@comcast.net

Hours of Availability: by phone, 4 – 7 pm Central is best. No calls after 7:30 pm please.

Web: www.csp.edu

Technical assistance: WebCT Login and Resource Center, <http://webct.csp.edu/>
Contact WebCT Support for WebCT assistance.

About Concordia University

Concordia University, founded in 1895, is a private, liberal arts university owned and operated by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Concordia University is accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

Communication and Assignment Policy

Email is checked daily—when you write to me, you must use your “csp.edu” account; Assignments graded within a week, usually sooner. Assignments must be uploaded and posted on the WebCT site—I *do not accept them by email*. Assignments are due on Sundays. I permit 3 days’ grace period, leaving the “door” open through Wednesdays. This 3 day-window does not mean that assignments are due Wednesdays; they are always due on Sundays.

The three day window is there to allow for occasional illness, interruptions in internet service, power failures, etc. The “window” closes on Wednesdays, which provides 72 hours to work out computer glitches, etc. After Wednesdays, I do not accept late papers without a doctor’s note, an obituary, a police accident report, or a pre-arranged accommodation with Disability Services.

Although this sounds extreme and possibly unforgiving, it really ensures social justice which is a large part of Public Policy; it provides a level playing field for all students. Allowing late papers to one or two students is not fair to the majority who submit papers

on time. Prompt students are at a disadvantage because they had fewer days to complete an assignment. Ethically, I am required to protect their best interests as well as balance the rare individual cases that are true emergencies.

The Registrar's office will issue final grades that are recorded on students' transcripts and can be viewed online via BEAR Path at <https://bearpath.csp.edu>. Sign into your account, and click on Student Services and Financial Aid, then Student Records. If your grade report has not posted on BEAR Path three weeks after the day of your final chat, call the Registrar's Office.

Students with disabilities who believe they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact Disability Services at 651-641-8272 (V)/651-603-6222 (TTY) as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely manner.

Course Description

This course explores historical development of laws and public policy affecting families. Ethics and ethical implications of social change will be explored. Students will understand the legal definition of family and laws that affect the status of the family. The course will focus on the role of the family life educator as an advocate for the well-being of the family. The formation of social values, respect for the diversity of values, and the social consequences of value choices are discussed within a family life education framework.

Instructor Biography

I have an M.Ed. from the University of Minnesota in Family Life Education. I am also a Certified Family Life Educator and a Minnesota Licensed Parent and Family Educator. In my first career, I was an academic adviser at the University of Minnesota for 15 years. Now I work at the National Council on Family Relations (www.ncfr.org) as their Program Director, Public Affairs, Academic and Media Relations. My family consists of husband George and son Eric, age 19, a Border Collie and two very spoiled cats. I was raised and confirmed Lutheran (back in the day when we had to memorize and recite Luther's Catechism in its entirety for the whole congregation!)

Instructional Philosophy

This course will provide an overview of public policy at the federal, state and local levels and its impact on family well-being. Students will learn how to view existing laws and proposed legislation when viewed "through a family lens." Policies at the macro-level (such as welfare policy, social security, or Medicare, etc) and micro-level (state-level, community-level) will be discussed. Students will learn how to use critical-thinking skills and evidence-based research to help families. Students will also examine their personal values regarding various societal ideologies and public policies in order to be

mindful of how their individual views might affect their family policy work. Students will learn the commonly-accepted ethical standards for practicing family life education.

A public policy and ethics course is especially prone to arouse controversy and to stir-up personal beliefs. This is good! Democracy is messy, but it seems to be the best system available. Dealing with this controversy is not to be avoided; in fact, if you pursue a career in family policy, this will be a good training ground for you.

I expect each student to be an active participant in this course. Evidence of this will be based on Chat Room participation, Bulletin Board postings, and completion of all assignments. You will be graded-on how well you can use research and well-reasoned arguments to examine policy and how well you can articulate these logically and respectfully. Regarding grading, I will not grade “on a bell-shaped curve.” Each student has to potential to earn an “A.”

The pace of this class will be brisk. Four semester credits of work—in a typical on-campus setting—is usually a 16 week experience. In six weeks, the material is compressed. Each week there will be a reaction paper due on the Sunday after that week’s chat. All assignments and due dates are in the course outline. In each chat, typical questions I may ask could be:

- 1) What do you think about some current event or existing family policy?
What was your “Aha” moment or what new concept did you learn during the week?
- 2) What issues still concern you that you’d like to hear your classmates’ opinions about to help you think through your decision-making? (The use of colleagues’ consultation is key to practicing Family Life Education.)
- 3) Then, depending on time, I will toss in “wild card” questions to see how well you understand the material or “think on your feet.”

Required Text

1. Bogenschneider, Karen, “Family Policy Matters: How Policymaking Affects Families and What Professionals Can Do,” Second Edition, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 2006.
2. Tools for Ethical Thinking and Practice in Family Life Education, published by the National Council on Family Relations, www.ncfr.org .
3. NCFR’s checklist for assessing policy impact on families. As of 9/06, this is located at http://www.ncfr.org/pdf/NCFR_Checklist.pdf and will also be posted on course website.

Recommended readings:

The opinion page in a major newspaper

Based on current events, which pop-up with little notice, I may direct the class to readings on the web that address something happening with Family Policy during the class.

The family policy position papers at www.ncfr.org, www.brookings.org, www.rand.org, www.clasp.org, www.childtrends.org, www.newamerica.net, www.heritage.org, www.moveon.org . A couple of these sites are partisan—this is by design. Even non-partisan policy professionals need to be aware of the political landscape and the broad spectrum of ideas throughout America.

Keywords for searches

Ethics, Policy, Morality, Law, Family, Advocacy, Family Life Education, Research

Classroom and Chat Room Passwords

Log into WebCT at <http://webct.csp.edu> using your personal WebCT ID and password, then click on the course title.

Instructional Goals and Objectives

As a result of taking this class, students should:

1. Learn how to use critical-thinking skills and evidence-based research to help families.
2. Learn to examine their personal values regarding various societal ideologies and public policies in order to be mindful of how their individual views might affect their family policy work.
3. Learn the standards for ethical thinking and practice for the family life education profession.
4. Obtain coaching on good writing. Although this is not a composition course, I encourage good writing and will help you develop your skills. Materials you will develop for clients and policymakers are often in written form. Being able to write well enhances your effectiveness as a Family Life Educator instructor. If your papers have spelling, grammar and usage problems, I will note them on your papers. Being able to write persuasively yet factually with good spelling and grammar will enhance your credibility when informing legislators and decision-makers about family well-being.

Student Goals and Objectives

Through class readings, Chat experiences, Bulletin Board discussions, class exercises, and critical reflection, the goals and objectives of this class are to have students:

1. Better understand how family policy affects the family.
2. Learn how to use research to inform policymakers about family well-being.
3. Uncover the “unintended consequences” and the “disparate impact” that any existing or pending legislation has on the family.

4. Examine their own personal beliefs to create self-awareness so as to promote ethical thinking about family policy work or how to implement policy to best support families.
5. To understand the commonly-accepted principles for the ethical practice of family life education and how to apply these standards in your profession.

Chat Room Experience

Chats are **Mondays, 6 – 6:45 pm Central time;**
4/14/08, 4/21/08, 4/28/08, 5/5/08, 5/12/2008, and 5/19/2008

NOTE: I am extremely responsible--If I ever do not show up in the chat room at the appointed time, something happened such as internet interruption or last minute emergency.

Please log in early enough to ensure your on-time arrival in class. Classes meet in the “Weekly Chat Room.” Class will usually start with the instructor asking if everyone is ready to begin. Each student will respond with “*” (asterisk) to indicate readiness. The “*” (asterisk) will continue to be used as a readiness and question transition indicator. Questions or topics for each chat (if not in the syllabus) will be posted or e-mailed to students during the week preceding chat. Optional chit-chat begins a few minutes ahead of chat--- just to “shoot the breeze.” Please see the Help Guide on the WebCT Login page for additional help.

Course Outline

Pre-Chat Activities: Read the syllabus and practice logging into WebCT.

Please make sure you have practiced getting into the chat room and discussion/bulletin board areas before the course begins. If you are new to online classes or unfamiliar with the various WebCT classroom areas, it is highly recommended that you try and practice accessing them well before the first class. Do NOT wait until five minutes before the first chat to ‘test’ out your computer in the chat room. You can go in and ‘test’ the chat room any time before the first chat.

Learning Activities for Week 1 April 14 - 20, 2008

Topic: What is family policy?

Why is society set-up the way it is? Social policy has important historical roots.
 Bogenschneider, Chapters 1 – 5;

Chats begin Monday, April 14 from 6 – 6:45 pm central. No written assignment due this following Sunday, April 20 due to large reading assignment.

Bulletin Board posting: Introduce yourselves—answer the following question:
 What is your favorite TV family and why?

Learning Activities for Week 2 Week of April 21-27, 2008

Topic: Are family issues a private matter or public concern?

Bogenschneider chapters 6 & 7 & 8

BB posting this week will be regarding the Wisconsin Milk Amendment—how would you persuade a skeptical legislator that providing “free” milk to children at schools is a good idea? (this issue is described in Bogenschneider’s book beginning on page 229.)

Please read the following essay from the 1800s—“the Forgotten Man” by William Graham Sumner. (just Google™ it; it’s out there everywhere).

Assignment: Reaction paper—3 pages double spaced. Due Sunday, April 27, 2008. What is your reaction to Sumner’s philosophy?

Learning Activities for Week 3 Week of 4/28- 5/4, 2008

Topic: Which camp are you in?

Bogenschneider Chapters 9 & 10; getting research into the hands of policymakers, bridging controversies, historical perspective of family policy.

BB question this week: Which camp are you in?

Bogenschneider describes three types of “camps” that form around family policy issues—the “concerned,” the “sanguine” and the “impatient.” Prior to the 1970s, divorce was more complicated than it is today. Back then, getting divorced required one spouse to prove “grounds”—they had to give a reason such as cruelty, adultery, desertion or addictions before a judge would grant a divorce.

Using divorce law as an example, the concerned camp feels that marriage is too easy to get-out-of. They feel that people give up too quickly and society is worse for it. The sanguine camp feels that no-fault divorce has been more positive than negative. Domestic violence victims have been able to leave more quickly and no-fault divorce eliminates the need for one partner to accuse the other of wrong-doing. The impatient camp feels that even more social change is necessary. They may feel that marriage is, by definition, oppressive to women. They may wish-for laws that make divorce even easier to get-out-of.

The following research findings have been documented now by many reputable researchers and are generally accepted science in the field.

- 1) That marriage contributes to the well-being of men, women and children (in the absence of abuse or high-conflict) and promotes physical/mental health, financial stability and other positive indicators.
- 2) Children whose parents’ marriages were not high-conflict or abusive but divorce anyway do worse on many fronts—academics, negative teen behaviors, mental health

and more—as compared to children raised by parents in an “intact” marriage. In other words, there is significant evidence to support the fact that in all but the worst cases, there appears to be some merit in the choice to stay together “for the sake of the children.”

3) Children of divorce are more likely to divorce themselves someday and also to have more adjustment and health problems that last well into their adulthood.

4) However, children whose families remain legally “intact” but whose parents’ marriages are ones of high conflict or violence fare even worse overall than children of divorce.

Reaction paper—3 pages double spaced. Due, Sunday, May 4, 2008. Topic: Given what this research has consistently shown; which “camp” do you fall into regarding the divorce issue and why?

Learning Activities for Week 4 Week of 5/5 – 5/11, 2008

Topic: “Unintended consequences” and “disparate impacts.”
Bogenschneider Chapters 12, 13, and 14.

BB postings this week: Discuss the following question—What if Congress was trying to pass legislation that would require adult children to pay for their parents’ nursing home bills once all of the assets of the elder parent were depleted? [note: the average cost of a year in the nursing home is \$70,000. Most of the middle class would exhaust all of their assets in less than 2 years.] As a Family Policy professional, what information would you supply to Congress to let them know about the potential impact of this legislation on families?

Background for this week’s reaction paper: Each policy at the federal, state or local level, however well-intended it is, brings with it one or more “unintended consequences” or a “disparate impact.” For example, at a public library, if excessive fines are charged for overdue books, what might be the fallout? It may result in fewer overdue books—but what if it discourages literacy? “Disparate Impact” refers to the concept of public policy resulting in the unfair repercussions based on race, religion, class, disability, income... etc. Might the overdue fines weigh more heavily on the poor?

Reaction paper—3 pages double spaced, Due Sunday, May 11, 2008. Topic: Choose any federal, state or local law, policy, system or custom. Describe either an unintended consequence of it or a way in which it has a “disparate impact” on a specific population. Then suggest a possible modification that could be enacted or adopted that would make the law/policy/system or custom more fair.

Examples:

1. Grocery stores give price discounts for merchandise purchased in larger quantities... if you buy toilet paper in a 12 pack vs. a 4 pack, the price per roll is lower. How might one’s ability to purchase a 12 pack be affected by the need to take public

transportation? Those with cars can wheel their cart directly to their car and transfer large amounts of groceries with ease. Bus riders often must walk some distance and are limited in the number of bags they can carry on one trip. Possible solution; provide van pools that make trips from low-income housing complexes to grocery stores and back. Or, re-route public bus routes so that they run directly to grocery stores.

2. People who own their own homes usually have a parking space for a car in a garage or a driveway on their property. People who live in apartments (who are more likely to be of lower income) may not have anywhere to park their cars except on the streets. In Minneapolis, after a heavy snowfall, cars may only be parked on one side of the streets for two days to facilitate snow removal, cutting the available spaces in half. Cars left on the snowplow's side of the street are ticketed and towed. Possible solution; offer businesses, churches and shopping centers some kind of incentive if they allow local residents to park in their business lot overnight during a snow emergency

Learning Activities for Week 5 Week of May 12 – 18, 2008

Topic: Finding your ethical compass, Bogenschneider chapter 12, 13 & 14 and NCFR Ethical Guidelines.

Your “internal policies” as a family life educator. In addition to legal mandates to report imminent life-threatening harm to someone, to report suspected abuse of a child or a vulnerable adult, there are also professional ethics that have been established as “best practices” by the consensus of several hundred of your colleagues in the field of family life education. What are they and how can I implement these principles in a Case Study?

Read NCFR's Ethical Guidelines. Reaction paper—3 pages double spaced. Due Sunday, May 18. Pretend you are a practicing FLE facing an ethical dilemma with a client. The client in this case is asking you to provide services that are not within the scope of an educator—the client needs to be referred to a specialist such as a therapist, an attorney, a physician or a clergy person. I would like you to write a script for a short role-play conversation between you and a client in which a client voices such a concern. Demonstrate how you would diplomatically and thoughtfully refer him/her to a specialist. BB posting this week: Briefly discuss an ethical dilemma you have experienced or one you might experience.

Learning Activities for Week 6 Week of May 19, 2008

Topic: Family Policy and the Future.

Bogenschneider—Chapter 11 & 16

BB discussion: “What’s wrong with this country???”

Final exam paper due Sunday, May 25, 2008. Five pages double-spaced. Topic: What would Utopia look like, in your view? Based on what you have learned about family

policy and what it takes for adults, children and families to thrive, identify three or more changes you would like to see in an ideal society that would be the best environment for families. Hint: for great ideas about “Utopia”, Google “Utopia” and “Thomas More.”

Assignments and Basis for Student Grading

Chat Room: Attendance at all chat room sessions is required. Your participation is necessary in order to receive a satisfactory grade in this course.

Discussion/Bulletin Board: This is a place for students to enthusiastically explore the different facets of the class topics. Your full and timely participation on the discussion/bulletin board is an important part of your experience. You are expected not only to answer the discussion/bulletin board questions yourself, but also to comment on and dialogue with your fellow students. The questions are meant to be a starting point—do not be afraid to “jump in and get your feet wet”. Sometimes the discussion may lead to an entirely new and profound understanding. You should be checking in and posting two to three times per week at a minimum. Don’t just say “I agree” with your classmates.... Add your original thoughts.

Assignments: All assignments must be submitted by students on the WebCT class assignment page.

Grading: See the grading rubric at the end of this syllabus. The points available for each activity are as follows: There are 100 points total for the course. (56 + 20 + 12 + 12) Here is the breakdown:

4 reaction papers @ 14 points each (56)

1 “final” reaction paper @ 20 points

6 chats @ 2 points each = (12)

6 BB discussions @ 2 points each (12)

“A” shows use of research and critical thinking—you demonstrate a high level of knowledge. “B’s” reflect work that is clearly above what the general public knows and your assertions are not just personal opinion or personal experience, but an appreciation for family policy across the nation. “C” work means that work is at the level of an ordinary citizen and or one who pays attention primarily to public policies that impact them personally.

Attendance Policy

Concordia offers a unique and accelerated learning environment which require fewer and more intense chats. If a student misses a chat, it is not possible for the student to obtain the information and experiences missed from other sources; thus, missing chats is highly discouraged and may affect the final grade and/or course completion.

Students are required to attend all chats and submit coursework according to assigned deadlines. Any deviations from the attendance or coursework requirements must be

coordinated with the instructor for approval in advance. Instructors are not required to allow missed chat times or to accept late coursework. Failure to meet attendance guidelines or coordinate deviations with the instructor may result in earning a lower grade.

Attendance Guidelines and Requirements

If a student must miss a chat because of an emergency or illness, he/she is required to complete his/her regular assignment(s), and read the chat transcript and send me a one page email summarizing your reaction to the chat. Although computers occasionally fail, you get stuck in traffic, etc. It is extremely statistically unlikely that anyone would miss more than one chat. A missed chat may result in a grade reduction. If a student misses two chats, we need to discuss your ability to complete the course. Two missed chats will result in additional grade reduction.

More than two absences may require retaking the course. The student will not be refunded and a grade will be issued each time the course is taken. Regular attendance is a key factor in determining continuous financial aid support. Instructors understand the uncertainty of military requirements and other contractual obligations, and they will work with the student to meet educational goals. It is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor to make appropriate arrangements.

Missed Chats

In the event of a missed chat, students will need to contact the instructor immediately and complete the following activities in order to make up the missed sessions.

Read the chat transcript, and send me a one page email summarizing your reaction to the chat. This email is due the Sunday following that Monday's chat.

Please note that Concordia instructors have the right to restrict the privilege of the make-up assignment to those that he/she feels are deserving of it. Make-up assignments will only be accepted for verifiable emergencies, illness, and absences arranged ahead of the class time with the instructor's approval. I reserve the right to ask for verifications of emergencies (obituary, police accident, doctor's note, etc.)

Academic Honesty

According to University guidelines, no more than 20% of a paper/project may be quoted or non-original material and any and all of that 20% maximum must be appropriately cited. Here are the guidelines and procedures as taken directly from the Concordia University Student Guide:

101. ACADEMIC HONESTY (FH 6.87)

In order to protect the rights of students, the disciplinary procedure for dealing with cases of academic dishonesty follows the broader guidelines set forth for cases of non-academic misconduct.

For the purpose of enforcement, the following standard definition of plagiarism will be used:

Plagiarism is taking the writings, ideas, or thoughts of others and passing them off as one's own original work. Plagiarism is not restricted to published material: If you submit an old paper written by your roommate, if you buy a paper from a "service," or even if you base a paper on a lecture you heard in a course without acknowledging that lecture, you are still guilty of plagiarism. Plagiarism is not restricted to long quotations; if you quote a sentence or even a memorable phrase without acknowledging it, you are plagiarizing. You can plagiarize without even using the exact words of the original author; if you paraphrase a passage without crediting it, you are plagiarizing. (Millward, Celia. Handbook for Writers, p. 14)

Students found guilty of plagiarism will either receive a zero for the assignment or be required to re-do it, at the instructor's discretion. In either case, the Dean of Students will be informed in any case where a violation is determined. This information, along with any appropriate documentation, will be included in the student's Disciplinary Record. In cases of repeated misconduct, more serious sanctions may be assigned as is consistent with Article IV, Section B of the Student Conduct Code (The Student Guide).

Withdrawing from class

If, at any time, you feel you must withdraw from the class, talk to your academic adviser immediately. There are implications for your academic progress and financial aid and tuition.

Grading rubric

I do not grade "on a curve." Every student has the potential to earn an A. Papers submitted on time, attending and participating in chats and bulletin board, all help you get a good grade. Social sciences are not like math or accounting—where there are numerical answers and formulas, or a "right answer." Nevertheless, even though family science writing is subjective at times, there is real factual research you can cite and you can express yourself in the most effective way possible. Here is the grading rubric I use as a guide to evaluate your performance.

	Knowledge	Thinking/Understanding	Communication Skills
A level Excellent	Uses a breadth or depth of information clearly exceeding knowledge of	Logical and effective order, sophisticated or original ideas, logical scientific thought, conveyed in a compelling well-supported way.	Excellent, engaging writing, with proper grammar and spelling*. (misspellings/typos expected during

	<p>the general public. Consistently draws on research to support opinions, proper sourcing of information, personal views or anecdotes are supported with documentation or research from scientific and non-partisan work.</p>	<p>Excellent critical thinking skills. Can analyze family policies from the family well-being perspective and present them in a scientific, non-partisan way (which is most influential with policymakers).</p>	<p>chats, however) Writings would make a good newspaper editorial. Interpersonal communications respectful, supportive. Asks interesting questions—contributes actively to discussions.</p>
<p>B level Very Good</p>	<p>Sufficient information; clear, concise, accurate. Personal views generally supported by independent sources, more knowledgeable than the general public.</p>	<p>Generally logical order; accurate observations and analysis, good critical-thinking skills, generally good information presented.</p>	<p>Writing is clear and well-organized, generally good grammar and spelling*, respectful of others, frequent contributions to discussions.</p>
<p>C level Satisfactory</p>	<p>Inclusion of some accurate information from outside sources; attempts at clarity, conciseness, accuracy. Knowledge base at the level of the general public</p>	<p>Some observations /analysis; little evidence of critical-thinking skills, relies on partisan or ideological assertions that are not supported by science.</p>	<p>Infrequent or inconsistent chat or bulletin board postings, writing is disorganized with some grammatical or spelling* problems.</p>

	level.		
D level Inadequate	Limited and/or inaccurate and improperly sourced information. Examples used are largely personal experience or anecdotal.	Few observations; limited and/or inaccurate analysis; black-white, right-wrong thinking on most issues—unable to evaluate ideas in an impartial, non-partisan way. Opinions based on personal views backed up by little research.	Little attempt to engage reader or classmates, frequent grammatical or spelling errors*, disrespectful of others' views, rare participation in chats or bulletin boards.
F level Unacceptable	Inaccurate, incomplete, and/or improperly sourced information, no research cited. Views expressed are exclusively personal opinion with no scientific support.	Disorganized, almost no independent observations; clearly inaccurate analyses ; avoidance of presentation of self, inadequate analysis of ethical duties.	No attempt to engage reader or classmates; inadequate organization or participation. Writing not at college level; frequent grammatical or spelling* problems. Missing assignments.

*Note: spelling and typos are OK in the weekly Chat Room. The pace of the class and typing makes accuracy almost impossible—this is fine. My own typing in these fast-paced environments occasionally looks as if there is a chimpanzee at the keyboard! Participation is more important than spelling during the 45 min chat. Bulletin Board postings can be and generally are more informal, as well. Written papers, however, should be of high-quality writing that is grammar and spell-checked. Pretend your written papers will be read by a member of Congress on C-SPAN immediately preceding an important vote that will affect all America's families. I will often write corrections on your papers.... I feel that instructors can offer important mentoring in writing instruction in all courses.

In the future, high quality writing skills will reflect well on you as your author Policy Briefs or Fact Sheets for policymakers. I have seen Family Policy grant proposals, position papers, and other documents with these mistakes and I believe it compromises the writer's credibility. If this isn't your strength, you may ask a friend to proofread it for you. This is not unethical. (Having someone write your paper is!) Professionals in family science will rarely submit an article for publication that hasn't been gone-over by a colleague who can offer comment. Even Ernest Hemingway had an editor!