

## Teaching Report

I received an OYCF-Junhe Teaching Fellowship in September 2004, which helps me realize my teaching activity at the Department of Social Work of Nan Kai University in Tianjin. The course is titled as “Social Welfare System and Social Work Development in Current U.S. Society”. It was taught as scheduled in December of 2004.

### Course Content

This course is designed to provide students a fresh and update perspective on understanding social welfare policies and programs which have been extensively applied in current U.S. society. Students are taught to have a clear idea of how and why social welfare policies and programs in America are developed, implemented, and changed, as well as the social, economic and political forces that shape American social policies. Meanwhile, students are particularly provided plenty of information on current social work education and practice development in the U.S. Therefore, students are supposed to be informed a broader perspective on social work approach, as well as able to make substantial comparison between that of China and U.S.

The course is based on two textbooks written by American scholars: DiNitto, Diana. *Social Welfare: Politics and Public Policy*, fifth edition. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2000; and Karger, H.J. and J. Midgley, editors. *Controversial Issues In Social Policy*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1994. These two books are commonly used textbooks for graduate social work students in American universities. The first book gives a great overview of social welfare policies applied in the American society as well as its relevance to social work practice. The second one picks out several main themes in macro social work practice to develop in-depth discussion and analysis. The combination of the two is appropriate for this course. Meanwhile, I have brought a copy of an online course in *The Protection of Human Research Subjects*, which is required for all social and behavioral research investigators and staff in order to conduct any research activity in the United States. The research ethnics issue is very important in America and strictly regulated. By introducing

this to the students, they have had clear understanding of conducting social work research in the United States.

This course was originally designed for undergraduate students majored in social work. But after the discussion with the host department, they thought it more appropriate to teach this for the graduate students, although senior undergraduate students were also welcomed. Based on this change, I incorporated more in-class questions and discussions in the syllabus. Some general introductions were eliminated from the original syllabus.

I did not prepare too much on the comparison between US and China. But it turned out to be an interesting topic throughout the course. Students cared about this issue very much. They always raised questions or discussion topics related to the comparative perspective, for instance, the infrastructure for social work development in both countries, supporting agencies, practice ethics, and research procedures, etc., which impressed me most. Even if the in-class time was not enough for this discussion, some students were actively discussing with me after class. Apparently, they have substantial knowledge about the development of social work in current China society. At the same time, they can identify both pros and cons of the current system.

### **Teaching Activity**

Students sitting in this class are mainly graduate leveled students including all master students and some of doctoral students. There are also some non-social work majored graduate students in the classroom, who are in the related social science majors.

Altogether, there are 43 students in the course. Generally, the teaching activity is composed of lecturing, in-class discussion and after-class assignments. I encourage students to take full advantage of in-class activities. The after-class assignments are not too heavy in order to avoid too much burden on the students.

Generally speaking, there are two main parts of this course—social welfare policy and social work education and development. For the first part, students may have already had

some knowledge through their previous study. They have some introductory courses on social welfare policy in western countries in their curriculum. In my particular course, I notice this point and try to avoid duplication of what they have already been taught. Instead of providing another introduction, I choose a particular aspect to elaborate social welfare policy in the United States, integrating policy making process and role of social workers in the process to develop discussion. Obviously, this perspective is relatively new to them. Meanwhile, I am using the presidential election as a vivid example in my explanation. Students appear to be interested in it very much.

As for the second part of the course—social work education and development in America, it is a comparatively new theme to students. Beside a brief and general introduction to the system, I make efforts to lead the students' attention on how to do the appropriate social work research in the United States. Since all the students are doing their pieces of research on social work, I introduce the research methodology, research ethics and other important issues to be considered to them. The purpose is to make sure to them that social work research is not a subject activity. Instead, it is a serious and scientific process. Scholars must follow the appropriate procedure to conduct it. According to my own experience and understanding, this issue is always emphasized in the academia in America. It is also an important element that contributes to the science of social work subject.

Most students performed well in this course. Although the class was scheduled early in the morning, we have got a good attendance. Their preparation and participation were satisfactory.

### **Response and Reflection**

During the course period, students show great interest in the course topics. They have been provided a refresh vision on the practice and development of social work in the United States. A lot of students make substantial comparisons between USA and China in terms of a lot of key issues in social work. By doing this, their understanding of social

work, social policy, and social issues has been largely improved. At the same time, I am trying to introduce the teaching style extensively applied in America to the students during my teaching. I try my best to create a democratic, free, encouraging and empowering atmosphere in the classroom. In this situation, the students can sense more about the education in social work in America besides the teaching materials. And this trial proves to be successful.

Meanwhile, this is a great opportunity for me to practice my scholastic expertise. I have built a good relationship with the faculty members in the host department through this activity and they express will for further possible collaboration, which is another achievement for me. When I was teaching the course, the responses from the students also provided me a good chance to learn as well. In particular, I have learned more about social work practice and education in China through my students. This would become a good source for my own research in the future.

In a word, I appreciate very much this teaching opportunity, kindly supported by the OYCF. Both my students and I benefit a lot from this great activity.

(The author is a doctoral student at the Ohio State University.)