

Discussion Questions for 17.317, U.S. Social Policy

Part IV: Policy in Practice

- This part of the course examines a number of policies in practice. We will both employ what we've learned so far to examine new policy areas as well as learn about new concepts like implementation and the political implications of program design.

Public-Private Relations

- We've talked about fact US is unusual in that so much of our welfare state is run through the tax system. Also (and another aspect of that) is that so much of the welfare state in the US is not public but private.
- So what do we mean by the private welfare state? Who provides it?
- What kinds of risks are protected? For whom?
- How and why did we get this hybrid private-public system?
 - What was the role of the weak party and labor traditions in the US?
 - The role of the federal structure?
 - Why did companies begin offering such benefits?
 - What was the role of government in encouraging private provision?
- What are the ramifications of protecting workers through employers rather than all citizens through the government?
 - What are the effects on coverage, inequality
 - What are the political effects?
 - On citizen political participation
 - On the likelihood of future public provision
- What are some advantages of market/private provision?
- There are still many risks still largely outside either the public or private realm
 - Child care
 - Elder care
 - What are prospects for these being addressed more widely?