

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.

Education Policy: Federal College Loans

- Before there was federal financial aid for college – before 1965 – who went to college, and how did they pay for it? What were the consequences for inequality?
- When federal aid began, to whom was it directed? (usually specific groups as with GI Bill)
- When was the first generally available federal aid, and what was the rationale? (defense/ Cold War)
- Why was there such large growth in federal college aid from the late 1960s through early 1970s?
- Why does the emphasis change from the poor to the middle class during the 1970s?
- Why was there a shift from grants to loans, and what were the consequences?
- Then during 1990s, shift to tax favored education savings plans and tuition tax credits. Why did that become the mode of federal education aid, and what are the consequences in terms of access across income groups, etc.?
- What are the consequences of many colleges and universities giving merit rather than need-based aid?
- Are state schools the solution when privates become too expensive? What happens with state school tuitions over time?
- What are the consequences of indebtedness of college grads? Does it affect people's education plans or career choices? How could we design a study to measure that?