

## **Affordable Learning Implementation Assessment for PS 339: Social Welfare Policy**

In Spring 2026, I taught a revised version of PS 339: Social Welfare Policy, in which I replaced a textbook (*Social Welfare: Politics & Public Policy*), with a variety of freely available resources, including documentaries, video clips, long- and short-form news articles, peer-reviewed journal articles, and book chapters. Students in the course saved between \$89 and \$226 depending on the type of textbook purchase (according to current Amazon prices).

To assess the effectiveness of the freely available resources, I asked students to complete a short, anonymous survey via Microsoft Forms. Students were told that the survey was optional, and they were given time in class to take it. 10 out of 13 possible students completed the survey. I do not have a baseline comparison for these survey responses, as I did not give students a survey in the previous iteration of the course. Therefore, the results of the survey are only exploratory in nature. That said, between candid conversations with students and the results of the survey, I believe that the replacement of the textbook with freely available resources lowered costs for students, helped students to understand the subject matter from a more diverse range of perspectives, and helped students to engage with the materials more readily.

When asked if the use of open-access materials in the course reduced their overall financial burden compared to other courses, 100% students responded that they strongly agreed. 80% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the course materials reflected a diverse range of perspectives, backgrounds, and voices. And, 100% of students either agreed or strongly agreed that the readings and materials used in the course were high quality (clear, credible, and well-organized). 100% of students also agreed or strongly agreed that they were more likely to complete and engage with the assigned materials because they were freely accessible and varied in length, style, etc.

In qualitative responses, students mentioned that they particularly enjoyed the use of documentaries and video clips, which they felt allowed them to connect with individual voices and perspectives most effectively. Other students enjoyed reading the news articles, stating that they were relevant to the current policy context. Some students did not enjoy reading the isolated book chapters (some of which came from the textbook I used previously). This sentiment further encourages me that the replacement resources may be more effective.

Given the results of these changes, I plan to continue to revise and develop this course's materials to include only freely available resources. I look forward to updating the course in the future to continue to pursue this goal.