

Coordinate major gives students depth of study

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Tulane students who major in political science, economics or sociology may choose a coordinate major in social policy and practice, which addresses issues like poverty and immigration and the policies that focus on them. (Thinkstock image)

Tulane University students can turn a passion for social policy into a framework for in-depth study and research, thanks to the social policy and practice (SPP) coordinate major. The coordinate major requires 30 hours of study, including three required courses and seven electives, and is complementary to a primary major of political science, economics or sociology.

Through coursework, SPP students address problems, theories and methods in the social policy and welfare field. Since it's a multidisciplinary coordinate major, electives can include classes that address poverty and inequality, immigration, and criminology, for example; the major can serve budding careers in social work, education, law, public health and other fields.

"How can the social sciences help inform policy, and how do existing policies help explain social trends?" says [Stephen Ostertag, assistant professor of sociology](#) and the director of the social policy and practice coordinate major. "The idea is really to make that connection between using social sciences and policy stronger."

It's still a small program, but its numbers stay steady. Ostertag says about 20 students participate in the SPP coordinate major, and about six graduated in 2016.

Allie Blum, a rising senior, says she chose SPP "because I wanted to go deeper into learning about contemporary social problems, how they are addressed, and who is addressing them.

"Every SPP major is passionate about something. It's cool to be in classes with peers who care about what they're learning because it sets the tone for the classroom environment," she adds.

Blum, a sociology major, says she hopes to attend graduate school in social work and pursue more than one career throughout her life. SPP fits in with those plans.

Moreover, she enjoyed shaping the major to fit her strengths. "In SPP I have a say in the classes I take. We have to take three required classes and seven electives. I have more of a say in what I learn, which is a pretty empowering thing."

Students interested in the SPP coordinate major can find more information [at the website](#).

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