

Higher Education

Using HBO's The Wire to teach urban issues.

Friday 11:00 am; Panel 2

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Abstract: Social welfare portrayals in the media have largely been negative and demoralizing. All too often social work and social welfare are seen as part of society's problems rather than solutions. In an economic and social environment of intolerance, economic bifurcation, and redacting of the social safety net, it is imperative that citizens have an awareness of the complexity of social problems and therefore the need for nuanced social welfare policy responses. While many citizens are seeking a silver bullet solution to problems of central cities, they simply do not exist. Because most citizens are not and cannot be exposed to the complexity of social problems in an intimate way, the HBO miniseries *The Wire* is used as the "fishbowl" in which students can get this exposure. Because citizens must have an awareness of problems to find reasonable solutions, this course is designed to provide a space for reasoned discussion and debate regarding social policy problems, policies, and programs. Issues of power, cultural competency, diversity, ethical practice, social justice, and critical thinking are considered within the context of *The Wire*. This project examines the impact of this pedagogical method in Social Work and Public Administration Classrooms.