Overview of the Class
In 2016, Denmark was the happiest country in the world according to a United Nations happiness report. Denmark, along with Sweden and Finland have shared 20 years of relative prosperity and now are among the wealthiest countries in the world in terms of GDP per capita. They are also “welfare states” with very high levels of taxation and redistribution—policies at odds with traditional views on the power of incentives to encourage prosperity. The influence of this model is evident is policy discussion in the US on issues ranging from educational subsidies to family-friendly workplaces. What can policy makers in other countries learn from the successes and failures of the Welfare State? This class has three goals: 1. to familiarize you with Welfare State taxes and subsidies, 2. to help you understand why these policies are successful (or appear to be successful), and 3. to give you the tools to critically evaluate suggestions for similar policy implementation in the US.

Text
There is no required text. Instead, we will be sampling from a host of books and articles that will be made available on the University’s Library Course Reserves. A list of readings and associated dates is attached to the end of this syllabus. I must the material marked with a ** the day before class so that you can participate in the discussion.

Logistics
This class meets on Wednesdays from 3:30-6:20 in Keller 0010. I will hold office hours on Mondays from 1:30-3PM in room XX. A Chalk website for the class has been set up. I will post readings and handouts there, make announcements, etc.

Formal Requirements
Formal requirements for this class 2 policy briefs, one short presentation, and one longer final project/presentation, as well as class participation. You will be given points based on the style and level of professionalism in your slides, as well as the content. Part of the goal of these projects is to get you practice in public speaking and writing, as well as presenting information effectively. To this end, I will make templates available and spend some time discussing expectations. Your final grade will be given by the following weights:

- Midterm presentation: 20%
- Policy briefs (2): 30%
- Final project: 25%
- Participation: 25%

Midterm Presentation
You will each be assigned a paper on the topic of family leave policy. You will be asked to present this paper for the class in 15-20 minutes. You will be graded both on the content of your presentation and on the quality of your slides. Making good slides will be important almost regardless of what career you choose
and graduate school is a good time to invest in this skill.

**Policy Brief**
You will write 2 short policy briefs. After we have discussed employment protection and universal child care, you will be asked to present a clear, concise, and thoughtful summary of the evidence on the effectiveness of a proposed initiative in the US. Your brief should be no more than 2 pages long and you will be graded on your ability to interpret the evidence and apply lessons from another setting to this policy. I will provide you with feedback on the clarity of your writing and your arguments which I hope will be useful to you in your careers.

**Final Project**
Your final project will include a written summary due 9th week and a presentation during the last day of class. You will be able to choose from any topic which we did not discuss at length in class. When you decide on a topic, send me an email and I will tell you if this topic is feasible and available (no 2 people should be working on the same topic). You should aim to have something chosen by 4th week. If you are having trouble thinking of something, please email me. Some possible examples include:

- Retirement
- Paternity leave
- Shortened workday (France, Sweden)
- Education (the Finnish model, for example)
- Guaranteed sick leave (Sweden)
- State Educational Support Grants—SU (Denmark)
- Mandatory vacation time

Your written summary should begin with a 3-4 page description of the policy you are studying as it currently stands, as well as its history and a discussion of recent changes to the policy. You should spend an additional 2-3 pages discussing interest in applying a related policy in the US or another country of your choice (if any), how much this would cost, and whether it would be a good policy in that country, suggesting any modifications to make it so. I will give feedback on your written draft and expect that you incorporate the feedback into your presentations the following week. You will also be asked to present your findings and recommendations in class. Presentations will be 20-30 minutes long.

**Participation**
You will be asked to come up with discussion questions ahead of each class after the first class. You must read the papers marked with **. Generally there will be one or two such papers per class. I will occasionally do a short lecture where I summarize additional material. In addition to making discussion questions, we may do class activities such as debates on an issue, small group discussion, etc. Your participation and effort in these activities counts toward your grade. You will lose substantial participation points for missing class. Since this is a discussion class and there are only 10 meetings, absence is problematic.
Tentative Outline and Reading List

Wednesday 1/9: Introduction: a brief history, globalization, and can we all be Nordic?


- Audio discussion of the Autor, Dorn, and Hanson paper: http://www.econtalk.org/archives/2016/03/david_autor_on_1.html

Wednesday 1/16: Taxes and Transfers


Wednesday 1/23: Unemployment and Welfare Services

- Course Notes


• Homework 1 due Wednesday 1/30: Collective bargaining


Wednesday 2/6: Job market flexibility/policies towards firms


• Midterm presentations 1

Wednesday 2/13: Family leave policies


• Employment protection policy brief due

• Midterm presentations 2

Wednesday 2/20: Universal child care


• **Kottelenberg, M. J. and Lehrer, S. F. (0). Targeted or universal coverage? assessing heterogeneity in the effects of universal child care. Journal of Labor Economics, 0(0):000-000
Wednesday 2/27: The gender equality paradox


- Universal childcare policy brief due

Wednesday 3/6: Immigration

- Written draft of final project due


Wednesday 3/13: Final Project presentations