Class Activities for **Chapter 2: The History of Social Work**

**Class activity #1**

Break the class into groups. Tell them that each group has been given a vacant island on which to establish a new independent country, and it is up to them to establish what they consider to be appropriate social welfare policies. They are not under the constraints of U.S. law—creativity is encouraged! For the purposes of this activity, have them assume that the island will house about 5,000 residents and will experience a poverty rate of about 10%.

What programs would they put in place to help the poor of their nation? How would those programs be funded? Would they take a more conservative or liberal approach? How would the success of these programs be measured or determined? Have the groups share their approaches with the class.

**Class activity #2**

Have the class stand up and scatter around the room. Label one side of the room “agree” (write on the chalkboard/whiteboard or put up a sign on one wall) and label the other side of the room “disagree.” Tell the students you will be reading a series of statements and you would like them to move to a place in the room that reflects how they feel about the statement. If they strongly agree, they should move far to the “agree” side of the room. If they somewhat agree, they may move halfway between the middle of the room and the “disagree” wall. After everyone has decided where to stand, ask for volunteers to explain why they are standing where they are.

Statements

1. People have a good understanding of what social workers do.
2. Poor people who receive welfare benefits are generally too lazy to work.
3. The Affordable Care Act is a positive thing for our society.
4. I expect Social Security to be available to me when I retire.
5. Families who are on welfare should not get more benefits if more children are born into the family while they are on welfare.
6. Social welfare may hurt its recipients as much as it endeavors to help them, by preventing them from pulling themselves out of poverty.

Feel free to add your own based on class discussions or comments you may have received from students.

**Class activity #3**

Have the class split up into discussion groups. Ask them to discuss the positive and negative aspects of these different social welfare plans. What would the potential consequences of the policies be?

1. The government establishes a poverty line. Everyone who falls below that line gets paid however much it takes to get them to that line. That is, if one family falls $2,000 short of the poverty line for a family their size one year, the government pays them $2,000 at the end of the year. If a family falls $10,000 short, the government pays them $10,000 at the end of the year.
2. The government eliminates income tax for people whose income falls below the poverty line, allowing them to keep their entire paycheck. However, once they begin making enough that they are no longer in poverty, they must pay income tax at the appropriate rate.
3. The government pays for people who are unemployed over one year to get free tuition to a job training program or vocational school of their choice in an effort to make them more employable.
4. People who pay into Social Security for at least five years before losing their jobs are allowed to take money out of their future Social Security benefits once their unemployment checks run out. For each month of benefits they take now, they would have to delay their retirement one month once they reach retirement age. They would be allowed to do this for up to two years.