

POLICY STUDIES 500

PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS & THE POLICY PROCESS

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REQUIRED TEXTS

B. Guy Peters, *American Public Policy: Promise and Performance*, 7th edition (Congressional Quarterly Press, 2007).

Charles E. Lindblom and Edward J. Woodhouse, *The Policy-Making Process*, 3rd edition (Prentice-Hall, 1993)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides an in-depth examination of public policymaking in the United States, including the definition and instruments of public policy. The course will use a standard model that reviews the various stages of the policymaking process including activities of agenda setting, policy formulation, policy legitimation, policy implementation, and policy evaluation. It examines the role of formal actors in the policy process, such as elected officials, the bureaucracy, regulatory agencies, and the courts, as well as informal actors, such as interest groups, citizen activists, and the media. The course will analyze the structure of policymaking and policy restraint in American government, particularly the impact of political structure, political economy, and political culture.

The main goal of the course is for students to utilize the key concepts and theories of the policy studies discipline to acquire a fuller understanding of public policy as a general process. Students will also develop a basic substantive knowledge of government decision making in two key policy areas - health care and energy and environmental policy - and the major actors (formal and informal) and their roles in the policy making process. In the context of reviewing the policy process, the course will also introduce students to the major sub-fields of public policy, such as policy process, policy analysis, policy management and implementation, and program evaluation. It will feature guest lectures by local policy makers and policy experts (depending on availability), who will present an inside view of the policy making process, while

allowing students to ask questions and explore the occupational avenues open to policy experts in the public and private sectors.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course is designed to develop and document skills in three areas: (a) to demonstrate a substantive understanding of the major concepts and process model used to analyze public policy-making in the United States, (b) to develop a knowledge of the major actors (formal and informal) and their roles in the policy-making process, and (c) to develop a basic substantive knowledge of key policy areas, such as health care and energy and environmental policy.

COURSE SCHEDULE

TOPIC 1 WHAT IS PUBLIC POLICY?

(Weeks 1 & 2) Definitions of public policy and policy science. Why study public policy and why is it important? The development of policy studies from its origins in the Progressive Era to the migration of scholars into government during the Great Depression; the success of operations analysis and evaluation in World War II to Harold Lasswell's statement on the new 'policy orientation' in the social sciences. The emergence of public policy as an academic discipline in the 1970s and its expansion into policy analysis and program evaluation in the 1980s and 1990s. Its current status as a field of study and obstacles to its further development in the United States.

Required Readings: Peters, Chaps. 1-2.
Lindblom and Woodhouse, Chap. 1
Lasswell, "The Evolution of the Policy Sciences," in *A Preview of Policy Sciences*.
Laswell, "The Policy Orientation," in *The Policy Sciences*.

TOPIC 2 AGENDA SETTING & POLICY FORMULATION

(Weeks 3 & 4) The policy process model. The process of defining social problems and translating those problems into political issues as institutional and systemic agendas. Policy tools as the instruments and mechanisms of public policy. The multiple contexts of public policy making, including the 'policy restraints' of political culture, political economy, and political structure in the United States.

Required Readings: Peters, Chap. 3.

TOPIC 4 WHO MAKES PUBLIC POLICY?

(Weeks 5 & 6) The role of formal and informal actors in the policy process, including elected and appointed functionaries, career bureaucrats, interest groups, business, and the

the media. The limits of electoral democracy as a guide to policy formation and the privileged position of business as a structural restraint on policy.

Required Readings: Birkland, Chaps. 3, 4 (October 2).
Lindblom and Woodhouse, Chap. 4, 5, 6 (October 9).
Lindblom and Woodhouse, Chaps. 7, 8, 9 (October 16).

EXAMINATION 1

Oct. 9

TOPIC 5 POLICY LEGITIMATION

(Week 7)

The process of adopting and legitimating public policies. Majoritarian legislative processes such as coalition building, logrolling, and porkbarrel. Nonmajoritarian processes such as administrative and judicial legitimation. Compares federal and state policymaking, especially the role of initiatives and referenda.

Required Readings: Peters, Chap. 4
Birkland, Chaps. 6-7
Gosling, Chap. 4

TOPIC 6 POLICY IMPLEMENTATION, EVALUATION & POLICY FAILURE

(Weeks 8 & 9)

Policy design, policy implementation, and organizational capacity. The different types of governmental organizations and the rationale for these organizations. The complexity of the organizational setting and obstacles to effective policy implementation. General criteria for determining whether a policy succeeds or fails. The causes of policy failure.

Required Readings: Peters, Chaps. 5 & 7
Lindblom and Woodhouse, Chap. 12

TOPIC 7 ECONOMIC POLICY

(Weeks 10 & 11)

TOPIC 8 ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

(Weeks 12, 13 & 14)

Energy problems and policies; energy sources; the politics of pollution; environmental laws; toxic waste remediation; endangered species; global warming; and other topics.

Required Readings: Peters, Chap. 13

EXAMINATION 2

Nov. 20

NO CLASS – NOV. 27TH (THANKSGIVING BREAK)

POLICY PAPER/JOURNAL
December 11

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

***THE BELOW REQUIREMENTS MAY BE SUBJECT TO MINOR CHANGES BEFORE THE SEMESTER COMMENCES:**

I. Grades

Students will be evaluated and graded on the results of the following assignments:

1. Examinations (50%): A majority of the final grade will consist of two examinations (worth 25% each) that review topics covered in the texts and lectures. The examinations will probably consist of multiple choice, true-false, short answer, and short essay questions.
2. Writing Assignment (35%): Students must choose one of two writing assignments listed below. The assignment is due on December 11th. Refer to the course schedule.

Journal: This assignment requires you to keep a journal that tracks a public policy or public management issue of global, federal, state, or local significance (e.g., civil unions, welfare dependence, global warming, windmill farms, homelessness, etc.). To the extent possible, journals should incorporate information from the following sources:

- newspaper and magazine clippings,
- existing or proposed legislation,
- federal register,
- codes of state and federal regulations,
- government documents or reports,
- government data or data from other sources,
- reports by think tanks,
- policy documents from unofficial actors,
- other pertinent sources of information.

The purpose of the journal is to track the *process* of issue definition, formation, conflict, decision-making, and evaluation so far as possible during the semester. The journal should also include the student's own observations and analysis about the policy process. The journal will be judged on the basis of three criteria: (a) consistency - is the journal maintained consistently throughout the duration of the course, (b) thematization - your ability to recognize and identify major theories and concepts in press coverage of the issue and to identify stages of the policy process, and (c) critical thinking - is there evidence of critical or creative development of the ideas being studied?

The student's journal entries should identify and define the issue, official and unofficial actors in the policy debate, the various positions taken by different actors, and an analysis of the actual or likely outcome of the policy process. It should also identify how different media outlets cover (or do not cover) the same issue and whether certain outlets provide more coverage, or indicate an ideological slant, etc.

Policy Paper: A paper that analyzes the policy implications of a public policy or public management issue is worth 30% of the final course grade. Papers should be approximately 10 to 12 double-spaced, typed pages not including the title page and references. In your paper, you should carefully explore the relevance of the issue and its major policy implications at the local, state, and/or global levels. You are expected to utilize multiple sources including class readings and well-documented external sources (books, web sites, journal articles, etc...). Please note that papers without references and papers that appear to only use Internet-based sources will be marked down by *at least* one letter grade.

3. Class Participation (15%). Class participation is worth 15% of the course grade. I expect regular student participation in class discussions. This includes thoughtful online student discussion of the class readings, as well as grades received on periodic informal in-class assignments I may assign during the semester.

Since this is a small class, your active participation in class discussions is important. In order to achieve an 'A' for a participation grade, students must participate regularly and thoughtfully in online class discussions, and show that they have read the class materials.

II. Other Course Policies

1. Late Examinations and Make-Ups. Under normal circumstances, assignments that are handed in late will be penalized one grade level for each class day they are late. For example, an "A" examination that is taken one class late would be reduced to an "A-". Two classes late would reduce it to a "B+", etc. It is possible on exceptional occasions to take a late examination or to make-up a missed examination without penalty *if* there is a legitimate excuse such as documented illness, death in the family, extracurricular university activities, professional obligations, etc. When possible, you should make every effort to discuss this in advance with the professor.

2. Drops and Incompletes. You may drop any course within the guidelines established by the University. You will not be penalized simply for dropping a course. However, please note the following:

- a. a student's financial aid status may be affected by the number of courses taken during a semester,
- b. it is the student's responsibility to drop a course. Anyone who merely stops attending class or fails to turn in course work, but remains enrolled in the class will receive an "F," which can only be removed from a transcript by taking the entire course over again at another time. There is no other university provision for removing a failing grade from a transcript.
- c. University policy prohibits professors from awarding an Incomplete to any student who fails to complete their course work, *unless* the student specifically requests an Incomplete before the last week of classes. The instructor is receptive to awarding Incompletes under exceptional circumstances (such as late papers and make-ups above). However, these must be arranged prior to the end of the semester.

3. Plagiarism. Cheating or plagiarizing on any assignment in this course will lead to an "F". If in doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism, please review the University's policy on Academic Dishonesty at:

SUPPLEMENTAL READINGS: ON LIBRARY RESERVE

Bardach, Eugene. *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis*, 2nd edition (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2005).

Gosling, James J. *Understanding, Informing, and Appraising Public Policy* (New York: Pearson Education, Inc., 2004).

Lasswell, Harold D., "The Policy Orientation," in Daniel Lerner and Harold D. Lasswell, eds., *The Policy Sciences: Recent Developments in Scope and Method* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1951), pp. 3-15.

Lasswell, Harold D., "The Evolution of the Policy Sciences," in *A Preview of Policy Sciences* (New York: American Elsevier Publishing Co., 1971), pp. 1-13.

Majchrzak, Ann. *Methods for Policy Research* (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1984).