

PSc 229.LH (CRN 92315)
Politics and Public Policy
Wednesdays 6-8 p.m.
Hall of the States

Spring 2008

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Course Description:

What is *public policy*, and what is the role of politics (party and positional) in setting the government's policy agenda? How does the political situation in Washington affect the issues our government acts on, and the policy choices our government makes? This course focuses on these questions, with a particular interest in policymaking over the past fifteen years. Throughout the twentieth century, and today, policy choices are POLITICAL decisions. What that means, and how it affects policy outcomes, is our subject.

The course consists of four sections. **Section One** introduces the key building block of everything that occurs in Washington: the art of political argument. **Section Two** offers four perspectives on how institutions – not only organizations, but also their rules and procedures – influence policy outcomes. **Section Three** examines the roles of the major players in the policy process: how do the Congress, the President, the courts, the bureaucracy, interests groups and the media shape policymaking? What can each do to achieve their goals, place their issues on the agenda, and/or thwart the policy aspirations of the other players in the policy game? How do outsiders like the media participate in the process? You will note that we will not consider Congress directly: in each lesson in this section, though, we will ask a final question: how does this actor work with, or against, Congress in making policy decisions?

Section Four brings our examination of the nexus of politics and policy to the present and sets the stage for the future of policymaking in Washington.

Graded Requirements

The grade for this course is based on four elements. First, **five** percent of the grade is based on a written exercise in political argument that we will conduct after Lesson 2. Second, **thirty** percent of the grade comes from the weekly **one-page** assessment of the week's reading for Lessons 3-13 (the lessons marked with an asterisk [*]; you need to submit any FIVE from among the ten possible dates). In this one-pager, you should answer three questions. First VERY briefly summarize the main argument of the week's material. Second, offer your analysis of the readings – do they make sense? Is the argument supported? Third, how do they mesh with the course, and what do they mean for us? Should we read them, or is there something else that would be better? E-mail the one-pagers to me the day of class. Third, **fifteen** percent of the grade is derived from a ten-minute presentation you will deliver on a chapter or an article in one of the lessons 4-13; public speaking is a vital part of your life in Washington, so you will get a chance to do some in this class.

The remaining **fifty** percent of the grade comes from two 10 page (single-spaced) policy papers you will write. You are free to select any policy issue that interests you, and both papers will address the same topic. The first paper (25%) is due the week of Lesson 8, and in it you are to use the course texts in Section Two to assess the politics of your policy issue. The second paper (25%) is due the week of Lesson 12, and in it you will analyze the roles of the players we study in Section Three. For all papers in this course, I will give them back to you edited, and if your grade is a B or below, you will have the opportunity to rewrite and resubmit it. If you cannot communicate clearly, you will fail in Washington, so we will be working on that!

"Incomplete" Policy

I will not offer "incomplete" grades to any student who fails to turn in the one-pagers or the policy papers by the end of the term. Late submission of your papers will be subject to automatic grade reduction at the rate of one letter grade per week. **Any paper submitted after the last day of the course will be issued an automatic failing grade.** *Start working early and complete the paper on time.*

Required Texts:

- Birkland, Thomas. 2005. *An introduction to the policy process: Theories, concepts, and models of public policy making*. Second Edition. ME Sharpe. ISBN: 9780765614896.
- Cook, Timothy. 1998. *Governing with the news: The news media as a political institution*. University of Chicago Press. ISBN: 0226115003.
- Eilperin, Juliet. 2006. *Fight Club politics: How partisanship is poisoning the House of Representatives*. Rowman and Littlefield. ISBN: 9780742551190.
- Judis, John. 2001. *The paradox of American democracy: Elites, special interests, and the betrayal of public trust*. Routledge. ISBN: 041593026X.
- Kingdon, John. 2002. *Agendas, alternatives, and public policies*. 2nd Edition. Longman. ISBN: 0321121856.
- Light, Paul C. 1999. *The president's agenda*. 3rd Edition. Johns Hopkins Press. ISBN: 0801860660.
- Price, David. 2004. *The Congressional experience*. Third Edition. Westview Press. ISBN: 0813342627.
- Stone, Deborah. 2001. *Policy paradox: The art of political decision making*. Revised Edition. W.W. Norton & Company. ISBN: 0393976254.
- Wilson, James Q. 1989. *Bureaucracy*. Basic Books. ISBN: 0465007856.

<i>Schedule</i>	
<i>Date:</i>	<i>Topic and readings:</i>
<i>I. Public policy and political argument</i>	
16 Jan	1: Introduction/Overview: Public policy is a political argument! <i>Reading: None</i>
23 Jan	2: Analyzing political arguments <i>Reading: handouts</i> Blackboard exercise: countering an argument
<i>II. What is "Public Policy"? Four views of the process</i>	
30 Jan	3: The Basics: Classic views of the process* <i>Reading: (All available on JSTOR)</i> Charles Lindblom, "The Science of Muddling Through," <i>Public Administration Review</i> 19 (1959): 79-88. Paul Schulman, "Non-Incremental Policy Making: Notes Toward an Alternative Paradigm," <i>American Political Science Review</i> 69 (December 1975): 1354-1370. Michael Parenti, "Power and Pluralism: A View from the Bottom," <i>Journal of Politics</i> 32 (August 1970): 501-530. James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, "The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life," <i>American Political Science Review</i> 78 (1984): 734-749. Paul A. Sabatier, "Toward Better Theories of the Policy Process," <i>P.S.: Political Science and Politics</i> 24 (2) (June 1991): 147-156.

6 Feb	4: Structure, rules, and outcomes: Understanding the public policy process* <i>Reading:</i> Birkland
13 Feb	5: Problems, solutions, and agenda setting: An alternative analysis* <i>Reading:</i> Kingdon
20 Feb	6: Decision making in a political setting* <i>Reading:</i> Stone <i>Policy Paper 1 Due by Friday, 22 February</i>
<i>III. Institutions and the Policy Process</i>	
27 Feb	7: Decision making in a political setting* <i>Reading:</i> Eilperin
5 Mar	8: Congress: The crucible of Washington policy making* <i>Reading:</i> Price
12 Mar	9: The President: Setting the policy agenda* <i>Reading:</i> Light
26 Mar	10: The Bureaucracy: Programs, alternatives, and policies* <i>Reading:</i> Wilson
2 Apr	11: The Judiciary and policymaking: The road more traveled?*
	<i>Reading:</i> Supreme Court of the United States. <i>Lawrence et al. vs. Texas</i> . Docket 102-02. 26 June 2003. (http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/26jun20031200/www.supremecourtus.gov/opinions/02pdf/02-102.pdf) <i>Frontline</i> interview with Bill Cook, "Justice for sale," 1999. (http://cgi.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/justice/interviews/cook.html) <i>Frontline</i> series: <i>Drug Wars</i> , "The drug warriors," "The \$400 billion business," and "A national symposium," 2000. (http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/drugs/)
9 Apr	12: Outside Government: Interest Groups* <i>Reading:</i> Judis
16 Apr	13: Outside Government: The media* <i>Reading:</i> Cook <i>Policy Paper 2 Due by COB Friday, 18 April</i>
<i>IV. Public policy and politics in the real world</i>	
23 Apr	14: Congress and the future of public policy <i>Reading:</i> Paul C. Light, 2001, <i>Government's Greatest Priorities of the Next Half Century</i> , Brookings Institution. Available on Blackboard site.