

ISSUES MANAGEMENT
PMGT 230

OVERVIEW

This course examines how public policy is determined in our society, and how individuals as well as public and private institutions affect that process. It has two objectives: to understand how choices are made between competing public policies options and how individuals and organizations attempt to influence those choices.

The course -- which will be conducted as a seminar emphasizing in-depth class participation and discussion -- will explore several different public policy issues in an attempt to understand the many different forces at work in issue advocacy. These include the role of interest groups, the media, and other institutions in shaping issues; how coalitions are built and maintained to support issues; how the public arrives at a judgment about issues; how grassroots support is mobilized; the arenas and vehicles for gaining policy outcomes; and the way information and lobbying are used to influence the outcome of issues. It will also explore the way different participants in issue campaigns -- such as businesses, labor unions, and public interest groups -- bring various perspectives and resources to issue management. In so doing, it will examine not only the procedures and participants in the policy making process but, more importantly, the dynamics -- the "why" as well as the "how" these decisions get made. The goal is to give students more than just an understanding of public policy making and issues advocacy. It is to provide them with tools for effective and meaningful participation in issues politics.

The course readings, lectures, and classroom discussions will combine: (1) political and social scientific analyses of how the public understands issues and how issues are advanced on the public policy agenda, with (2) examples of issue campaigns, both real and hypothetical, and (3) practical techniques for successful issue management.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

As noted above, this course will be conducted as a seminar emphasizing class participation and discussion. Through examination of recent case studies and the use of simulation exercises, it will delve into both the theoretical and practical aspects of issues management. In order to help make this course as "real world" as possible, each student will be required to develop a detailed issue management plan around a specific public policy matter. To accomplish this, each student will be responsible for examining a public policy goal and the issue advocacy of a particular organization concerned with or affected by that issue. Basic information about the entity -- how it is organized; its approach to advocacy; its policy interests at the federal, state, and/or local levels, etc. -- should be collected as soon as possible. This information will also be utilized to comment on a variety of discussion topics throughout the semester.

Students will also participate in one group research, analysis and presentation project relating to one of six identified issues campaigns.

It should be noted that this course puts a heavy emphasis on participation in the weekly lectures and class discussion. Students' grades in the course will be determined in part on the extent (and quality) of their class participation. Obviously, attendance in class is required to participate.

Course grades will be determined as follows:

1. Class participation. Twenty-five percent (25%) of the grade will be based on active and thoughtful participation in class discussions.
2. Issues Management Project. The term project will constitute 50% of the final grade.
3. Group project. The group presentation will constitute 25% of the final grade.

COURSE MATERIALS

The books listed below form the basic **required** readings for this course. They are available in the GW bookstore. Other reading material may be assigned throughout the semester.

- David M. Anderson (editor), *The Civic Web: Online Politics and Democratic Values*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2003
- Jeffrey M. Berry and Clyde Wilcox, *The Interest Group Society*, Fourth Edition, Longman Classics Edition, 2007
- Carol Chetkovich and Frances Kunreuther, *From the Ground Up: Grassroots Organizations Making Social Change*, ILR Press, 2007
- Alan Rosenthal, *The Third House: Lobbyists and Lobbying in the States*, Second Edition, Congressional Quarterly Press, 2001
- Barry R. Rubin, *A Citizen's Guide to Politics in America*, Expanded Second Edition, M.E. Sharpe, 2000
- Randy Shaw, *The Activist's Handbook*, Second Edition, University of California Press, 2001
- Lee Staples, *Roots to Power: A Manual for Grassroots Organizing*, Second Edition, Praeger, 2004
- Daniel Yankelovich, *Coming to Public Judgment*, Syracuse University Press, 1991

Students are also expected to read the *Washington Post* and/or *New York Times* each day.

OFFICE HOURS

Professor Edwards maintains offices near the George Washington University campus and will gladly make himself available for consultations with students during the week. Students can make arrangements for individual consultations by contacting him at his office at 202-822-7564. They may also contact him by e-mail at edwardsm@gwu.edu or medwards@nea.org or via fax at 202-822-7117.

ISSUES MANAGEMENT

Fall 2008

Weekly Class Schedule

1. **September 2:** Introduction to Issue Advocacy

An introduction to issues management and advocacy. Examination of the increasing role of direct citizen participation in issue politics. Overview of material to be covered. Discussion of the required readings, assignments, and course projects.

2. **September 9:** Anatomy of an Issue Campaign

The life cycle and structure of issue campaigns: how public policy issues arise, gather momentum, and are resolved. Examination of the characteristics, dynamics and stages of the policy-making process. How issues are addressed at different levels of government and in different arenas. Exploration of the role of litigation, legislation, administrative action. Assessing targets of opportunity.

Rubin, *A Citizen's Guide to Politics in America*

3. **September 16:** Issues and Interest Groups

How and why citizens make their voices heard in issue campaigns. The growth and concomitant changes within interest group politics. Examination of the roles, structures, strategies and tactics of organized interest groups.

Berry & Wilcox, *The Interest Group Society*

4. **September 23:** Understanding and Influencing Public Opinion

How public judgments about issues are formed and how they can be influenced. Exploration of the use public opinion to frame issue campaigns, including the role of information, polling, and opinion leaders in issue advocacy. Discussion of the role of the media; gaining access to and influencing the media in issue advocacy.

Yankelovich, *Coming to Public Judgment*

5. **September 30:** Lobbying

Overview of legislative theory and behavior; accessing and persuading public decision makers. Exploration of the strategies, tools and techniques of effective lobbying. Discussion of the interaction among lobbyists, executive branch officials, and legislators in the policy making process. How national policy and local interests intersect and the resulting interchange between national policy and community needs and concerns.

Rosenthal, *The Third House: Lobbying & Lobbyists in the States*

6. October 7: Electoral Connection

Exploration of the relationship between issues campaigns and electoral politics. Examination of initiatives, referenda and other ballot processes and procedures.

7. October 14: Grassroots Mobilization

Discussion of organizing and mobilizing public support for an issue. Examination of grassroots organizations, coalition building and citizen engagement. Organizing models and methods. Tools and techniques for effective grassroots organizing.

Chetkovich & Kunreuther, *From the Ground Up – Grassroots Organizations Making Social Change*
Staples, *Roots to Power – A Manual for Grassroots Organizing*

8. October 21: Presentation of Issues Management Projects (1)

9. October 28: Presentation of Issues Management Projects (2)

10. November 18: Issue Advocacy and the 2008 Elections

A review and analysis of issues advocacy during the 2008 election cycle.

11. November 25: Civic Web

How technology and the interactivity of the Web are transforming public discourse in America. The impact of the Internet on public policy, decision-making, citizen involvement, and issue advocacy. The tools and techniques of cyber-advocacy.

Anderson & Cornfield, *The Civic Web*

12. December 2: Sustaining Issues and Shifting Public Opinion for the Long Term

Exploration of how to identify issues and advocacy techniques for the future. Putting it all together: a comprehensive approach to issues management and advocacy.

Shaw, *The Activist's Handbook*

