POLS 290A: Introduction to Public Policy
DePauw University
Spring 2013

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Office: 206 Harrison Hall
Office Hours: Mon (1-2), Wed (12-2), and by appointment.

Course Meetings: TuTh, 2:20-3:50, JSC 152

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course provides a broad overview of the policy process. While our primary focus will be on national policy, the concepts and analytical tools introduced in this course can be applied at a variety of levels; we will touch on local and international policy-making.

There a two broad approaches to the study of public policy. One approach takes as given a specific set of values, and proceeds (usually using economic methods) to determine what type and degree of policy intervention will be optimal.

This is not the approach that we will take. In this course, we will approach public policy as a problem-driven contest of values. Indeed, the question whether a given state of affairs constitutes a problem is, itself, a reflection of values. Understanding the role of values in problem definition, agenda-setting, and policy-choice is essential for understanding why certain policies are enacted over others – and why some issues reach formal governmental agendas while others do not.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Each student’s final grade will be calculated using the following criteria:

Midterm Exam & Essay (20%)
Midterm Exam & Essay (20%) non-cumulative
Final Exam & Essay (35%) cumulative

Participation (5%)
Quizzes (20%)

**QUIZZES**

Quizzes will consist of 4-5 very short questions, drawn directly from the assigned readings for the day. Note that I will drop your lowest grade when calculating your quiz average.

Students who complete the semester with an “A” quiz average will have the option to skip the final exam. Of course, you have the option to take the final exam even if you have an “A” quiz average.

If you are eligible to skip the final exam, and choose to do so, your grade will be calculated as follows:

Midterm #1 (31%)
 Midterm #2 (31%) non-cumulative
 Quizzes (33%) cumulative
 Participation (5%)

**EXAMS & ESSAYS**

Midterm and Final exams consist of two roughly equal parts. Each exam will have an “in-class” portion, consisting of a number of identification questions and “short answer” questions. In addition to the in-class portion of each exam, you will complete a short (800-1000 word) essay “at home.”

Essay prompts will be provided one week before each exam; essays are due in class at the beginning of each exam.

**PARTICIPATION**

Course participation means, primarily, contributing to course discussions, demonstrating critical engagement with readings. Posting questions to Moodle discussion boards, and responding to questions posed by others is another form of course participation. Students who feel less comfortable with being vocal during course meetings will want to take advantage of this opportunity.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

Birkland, Thomas A. 2011. An Introduction to the Policy Process, 3e*.* Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe

Stone, Deborah. 2012. Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decisionmaking, 3e. New York: W.W.Norton

Theodoulou, Stella Z. and Matthew A. Cahn (eds). 2013. Public Policy: The Essential Readings. Boston: Pearson.

\*Manna, Paul. 2006. School’s In: Federalism and the National Education Agenda. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press

**\***You do not need to purchase the Manna text; you have electronic access to it (see Moodle).

**Additional readings may be posted directly to Moodle.**

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**JANUARY**

Wk 1 Tu 29 **Introduction to Course**

Th 31 **What is Public Policy?**
 *Read: Birkland, Ch. 1
 Stone, Ch. 1*

**FEBRUARY**

 Tu 5 no meeting, PEIO

Th 7 no meeting, PEIO

Wk 2 Tu 12 **Goals, Values, and Public Policy**
 *Read:* Stone, Chs. 2-6
 (yes, 5 chapters, but you have from Jan 31 to Feb 12).

Th 14 **The Policy Process**
 *Read: Readings, Chs.20-22
 Birkland, Ch. 2*

Wk 3 Tu 19 **The Policy Process: Agenda Setting**
 *Read: Readings, Chs. 24-26 & 46-47
 Birkland, Ch. 6*

Th 21 **Problem Interpretation** *Read: Stone, Chs. 7-8*

Wk 4 Tu 26 **Problem Interpretation (cont’d)**
 *Read: Stone, Chs. 9-10*

Th 28 **Midterm #1**

**MARCH**

Wk 5 Tu 5 **Official Actors in the Policy Process: Overview & Congress**
 *Read: Birkland, Ch. 4
 Readings, Ch. 30-32*

 Th 7 **Official Actors: Executive Branch**
 *Read: Readings, Chs. 33-36*

Wk 6 Tu 12 **Official Actors: Judicial Branch & Constitutional Politics**
 *Read: Readings, Chs. 37-38
 Birkland, Ch. 3*

 Th 14 **Unofficial Actors in the Policy Process**
 *Read: Birkland, Ch. 5*

Wk 7 Tu 19 **Unofficial Actors in the Policy Process (cont’d)**
 *Read: Readings, Chs. 9 & 39-43*

 Th 21 **Rationality and Incrementalism: Policy as Decision Making**
 *Read: Readings, Chs. 4-5
 Stone, Ch. 11*

**\*\* SPRING BREAK \*\***

**APRIL**

Wk 8 Tu 2 **Policy Types**
 *Read: Birkland, Ch. 7
 Stone, Ch. 12*

 Th 4 **Policy Design**
 *Read: Birkland, Ch. 8
 Stone, Ch. 13*

Wk 9 Tu 9 **Case 1: International Climate Policy** Guest Lecture: Anthony Leiserowitz

 Th 11 **Policy Solutions** *Read: Stone, Chs. 14-16*

Wk 10 Tu 16 **Flex Date / Midterm Review**

 Th 18 **Midterm 2** *Essay due in class*

Wk 11 Th 25 **Implementation and Evaluation**
 *Read: Birkland, Ch. 9
 Readings, Chs. 49-51*

For the next couple weeks, we're going to read and discuss "School's In," by Paul Manna (Georgetown UP 2006). While that book is too dated to cover education reform in the Obama administration, it covers so many themes that we've read over the course of the semester – it’s a perfect match.

Note: you have electronic access to this text. See Moodle for details.

Wk 12 Tu 30 **Case 2: Education Policy in the United States**
 *Read: Manna, Chs. 1-3*

**MAY**

Th 2 **Case 2 (cont’d)**
 *Read: Manna, Chs. 4-5*

Wk 13 Tu 7 **Case 2 (cont’d)**
 *Read: Manna, Chs. 6-8*

 Th 9 **Wrap-up / Final Exam Review(?)** *Read: Birkland, Ch. 10
 Stone, Conclusion*