Course Description and Teaching Style

This course is designed to introduce students to the “who, what, when, where, and why” of public policy. We will look at the policy making process itself including federal, state, and intergovernmental decision making and examine particular policy dilemmas in a variety of areas including health care, community development, and labor.

We will focus on the role of institutions, the actors involved, agenda setting, problem identification and definition, policy options and why they are chosen as well as implementation and evaluation. This course will guide you in finding the answers to many key questions about public policy and the public policy process in the United States. What are the characteristics and forms of public policy? How is policy made? By what actors and institutions? To what extent do private entities influence public policy? What role does the media play in influencing policy? Do Americans control policy through elections? What about the influence of interest groups and the bureaucracy in the policy process? How is policy implemented? Who benefits from public policy? What are the ethical issues that ought to be considered in evaluating public policy and how it is made? How do major theories and concepts in the social sciences help us understand and evaluate public policy in America?

The format for the course will be lecture and facilitated discussion. Case studies, assigned readings and other activities will be used to organize class discussions. Most importantly, we will explore public policy issues in the United States through reading and discussing case studies. The cases provide examples of how professionals have addressed specific policy issues—sometimes well, sometimes poorly. Students can learn from the experiences of others who have grappled with difficult policy problems. I am a firm believer of active learning; thus, I will attempt to use discussion in place of traditional lectures whenever possible and encourage questions and expect class participation.

During the last two weeks of the course, we will listen to and discuss group presentations on public policy issues chosen by you.
Course Objectives

The goal of this course is to provide students with
1) An understanding of the policy making process and the people involved
2) An awareness of how emergent problems and the politics involved shape public policy formation
3) An ability to analyze public policy issues (finding strengths and weaknesses) and to think critically about the ideas and presentations of others
   a. Apply this ability in writing, e.g. how to write a policy memo
   b. Apply this ability in speaking, e.g. how to respond orally to discussion questions and make a professional presentation
4) A desire to further an expertise in a particular area of public policy or an interest in playing a role in the development of public policies

Texts

Required

Optional

Grading

Grades will be based on four activities:
1) Class participation and attendance 20%
   Students are expected to read and digest the readings before class. Discussion will be a major part of the class and its success will depend on the contributions of all members. Both listening and discussion skills are important in this context, and depending on your strengths, the challenge may be to speak up or to monitor your participation; to practice debating or to tone down your argument. Your grade will be based on the delivery (are your comments cogent and comprehensible?), content (are they conceptually substantive and perceptive?), and context (are they sensitive to the group discussion?) of your comments. All three aspects are dependent on your preparation and listening skills. You will also be asked to present one 3 minute public policy commentary. (Please see separate hand-out.) Self-assessment forms will be used to assess your participation.

2) Assignments – letter and policy memo 20% (10% each)
   You will write one letter and one policy memo based on a case discussed in class. Specifics are available on the Sakai site. The writing process will be iterative; you will have the opportunity to revise your assignments. Grades will be based on an average of the grades of all submissions.
3) Midterm 30%

4) Group project 30% (15% for final memo, 10% for presentation, 5% based on peer evaluation)
   Students will be assigned to groups of 4-6 students (depending on class size) to write a 6-8 page (single-spaced) memo on a current policy issue; the memo should have 5 parts: nature of the issue/problem, history of the issue/problem, where it stands now, possible policy alternatives, and your recommendations. Groups will also present the material in class.

A critical component of this assignment and the grade is a formal peer review. Although working in groups has many advantages, the experience can be challenging. One particular problem of group projects is that the effort and contributions made by team members can be very uneven. That is, some participants may work very hard, while others do almost nothing. To help the teams in this class identify and recognize the particular skills and contributions of each member as well as individual weaknesses, 5% of each person’s grade for the course will depend on the results of a peer review process. The peer review process will be confidential—only the instructor will know who provided what feedback.

**Ground Rules**

Collegial and respectful conduct is expected in class. Class members should consider themselves colleagues who will collaborate to help each other develop a solid understanding of materials and concepts.

Prompt attendance at all class sessions is expected. Any missed classes without an excused absence will count against your class participation grade. Class will start and end on time. While I understand emergencies occur, timely arrivals and departures should be the norm.

Please silence or turn off your cell phones and other electronic devices during class.

All assignments must be completed on time. They should be typed in 12-point font and submitted on Sakai. Late work will be penalized. Assignments turned in the following week will be marked down an entire grade. Assignments cannot be submitted any later than one week after the due date; missed assignments will receive a failing grade.

Cheating, plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Such actions will result in a failing grade on the assignment and disciplinary action will be pursued. For further information about academic misconduct and a full explanation of the University’s policies, please see the University’s *Policy on Academic Integrity for Undergraduate and Graduate Students* located on the web at [http://ctaar.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html](http://ctaar.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html).

My office hours are listed on the top of the syllabus. If any questions or concerns arise, please come see me. If you cannot make my office hours, please make an appointment. Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent him or her from fully demonstrating his or her abilities should contact me as soon as possible so we can discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and to facilitate your educational opportunities.
Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1/20  | Introductions  
Overview of policymaking  
Case based learning |                               |                            |                     |
| 1/27  | Governmental actors  
Discussion of group projects | Kingdon, 1 & 2  
Kraft & Furlong, 1 & 2 |                            |                     |
| 2/3   | Actors outside government  
Public policy theories  
Group project assignments | Kingdon, 3  
Kraft & Furlong, 3 | EH: Alabama’s Confederate Flag Controversy |                     |
| 2/10  | Kingdon’s model  
Stream 1: Problems | Kingdon, 4 & 5 | EH: Mandatory Drug Sentencing | Assignmnt 1 |
| 2/17  | Stream 2: Policy proposals  
Intro to policy analysis | Kingdon, 6  
Kraft & Furlong, 4 & 5 | EH: Babcock Place |                     |
| 2/24  | Stream 3: Politics | Kingdon, 7  
Kraft & Furlong, 6 | EH: Legislative Strategies | Assignmnt 1 rewrite |
| 3/3   | Policy Windows | Kingdon, 8 & 9 | EH: Legislative Strategies (cont.) | Assignmnt 2 |
| 3/10  | Implementation and Public Administration | Sakai readings | Modernization of Social Services |                     |
| 3/17  | Spring Break! | | |                     |
| 3/24  | Review for exam  
Meet with groups | Review | | Draft group outline |
| 3/31  | Exam | | |                     |
| 4/7   | Issues and controversies I  
Topic TBA | TBA | TBA | Assignmnt 2 rewrite |
| 4/14  | Issues and controversies II  
Environmental policy | Kraft & Furlong, 11 | The Great Falls of Paterson NJ | Draft group presentation |
| 4/21  | Presentations | | |                     |
| 4/28  | Presentations  
Wrap-up of semester | | | Final memos and peer evaluations |

Note: EH = Electronic Hallway (University of Washington Case Teaching Resources)