

The Politics of Public Policy in the United States – SGPP 304

*School of Government and Public Policy
University of Arizona*

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Office Hours: By appointment

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Class Hours: Tuesday 12 pm-2pm (Lectures will be uploaded)

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to how politics influences and constrains the public policymaking process. We will examine the nature of the institutions of the government of the United States, the key actors involved in policymaking, and the various stages of the public policymaking process. Although we will touch on tribal, state and local involvement in the process, we will focus mainly on policymaking at the federal level.

Because public policy is all around us, we will spend much of this class applying course concepts to issues and policies that are currently in the national debate. In particular, we will examine why policymaking can be so contentious and prone to gridlock.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to

- Define and articulate the US Government's policymaking process including the key actors involved at each stage
- Compare and contrast how opposing political paradigms affect the different stages of the policymaking process and the implications at each stage
- Solve real world problems based on learned knowledge of the US Policy making process and policies

Learning Objectives

- This course will address topics related to how the US Government initiates, drafts, evaluates, and processes policy making.
- This course will evaluate how US policy actors conflicts/enhances relations in policy-making process.
- This course will address the policymaking nuances for specific special interests, like environmental, foreign relations, immigrations, and others.

Texts and Readings

Michael E. Kraft Scott R. Furlong, Public Policy: Politics, Analysis and Alternatives, 5th Edition.

Other required readings and course material will be uploaded to D2L

Classroom Environment

As an instructor, I am focused on creating a learner-centered environment; helping students make connections between course materials and the real world of public policy and management; and incorporating professional skills development into classroom activities and assignments.

In a learner-centered environment, my role is to facilitate student learning and progress. Rather than handing you answers, I will guide you to think critically about course materials through a variety of classroom exercises. Beyond giving you more responsibility for your learning process, this inclusive and active environment gives you the opportunity to engage in a collaborative learning process that includes diverse perspectives of the instructor and other students.

Because public administration is a professional discipline, I push students to make connections between course materials and the real world of public management. You should understand how class concepts are related to issues you may face in your career.

Beyond connecting course materials to the real world, I incorporate professional skills into class activities and assignments. I structure assignments so you can develop professional skills in addition to substantive knowledge. In the spirit of transparency, I include information about professional skill development in assignments and grading rubrics:

Your participation in the class is instrumental to creating a learner-centered environment. To that end, I have classroom expectations that include:

1. **Be prepared to do upper-division quality work.**
2. **Conversation is key. Do not expect me to spend the entire time lecturing,** please come to class ready to discuss the readings and participate in class activities.
3. **Be respectful in interactions with the instructor and your peers.** This does not mean that anything we say in class should be accepted uncritically; it means that we should hold all ideas up to scrutiny but not their proponents to ridicule.
4. **Remain focused.** Keep your discussion focused on the reading, lecture, or the question that we are discussing. This is a place to hone your professional skills and understanding of public administration, not a place to air your personal opinion.
5. **Although plagiarism is rare, it is never acceptable.** Full enforcement of the University's Code of Academic Integrity will be pursued if evidence warrants it. The code can be viewed at:
<http://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/academic-integrity/students/academic-integrity>.

Be especially careful about using large amounts of material you find on the internet. Use it sparingly and make sure you cite the source.

“Students are encouraged to share intellectual views and discuss freely the principles and applications of course materials. However, graded work/exercises must be the product of independent effort unless otherwise instructed. Students are expected to adhere to the UA Code of Academic Integrity as described in the UA General Catalog.”

The University Libraries have some excellent tips for avoiding plagiarism available at:
<http://www.library.arizona.edu/help/tutorials/plagiarism/index.html>.

Selling class notes and/or other course materials to other students or to a third party for resale is not permitted without the instructor's express written consent. Violations to this and other

course rules are subject to the Code of Academic Integrity and may result in course sanctions. Additionally, students who use D2L or UA email to sell or buy these copyrighted materials are subject to Code of Conduct Violations for misuse of student email addresses. This conduct may also constitute copyright infringement.

Assignments and Grading

Assignment	Percentage of Total Grade
Midterm Exam	25%
Final Exam	25%
Participation	25%
Final Paper	25%

- **Midterm Exam:** This exam will test your mastery of the introductory material covered and discussed in class, as well as your ability to apply concepts developed in class through readings to novel situations.
- **Final:** This exam will test your mastery of material from the second half of the course. It is not a cumulative final.
- **Participation:** Students who fail to show up or consistently fail to engage course material cannot expect to score well on this portion of the overall class grade. Participation is not attendance. Students need to submit one page of reading analysis for five weeks that proves their understanding of course materials. Reading analyses start from the second week and end in the 7th week, and the due is every Friday. One page of reading analysis should include a summary of readings and critiques or opinions. Participating in course and attending lectures and other course events are vital to the learning process. Students who miss class due to illness or emergency are required to bring documentation from their healthcare provider or other relevant, professional third parties. Failure to submit third-party documentation will result in unexcused absences. Absences with a dean's note will not negatively impact your participation grade.
- **Final Paper:** Students are required to write an issue paper (between 10-12 pages, exclusive of tables, figures, and appendices, 12 points) on a specific public policy problem of interest. In this paper, you should: demonstrate your understanding of the policy process, apply this knowledge to a particular policy problem, characterize what is currently being done to address this issue, and suggest new policy alternatives. Papers are due on the last day of class. No late papers will be accepted.

Final Grades:

90 – 100%	A
80 – 89.9%	B
70 – 79.9%	C
60 – 69.9%	D
Below 60%	E

UA General Course Policy information: <https://academicaffairs.arizona.edu/syllabus-policies>

- Absence and Class Participation
- Threatening Behavior
- Accessibility and Accommodations
- Code of Academic Integrity
- Anti-Harassment Policy

Confidentiality of Student Records: <http://www.registrar.arizona.edu/ferpa/default.htm>

How to Write E-mails to your Instructors and TAs

These guidelines will help to ensure that we spend our time preparing a quality class and helping students to work through the material.

1. **Use your college or university e-mail account.** This will guarantee that your instructors and TAs will receive your email, and that your message will not go into a spam folder.
2. **Write a clear and concise message.** Avoid wordiness; get to the point. Follow the following format: A. State your problem by being specific and detailed; B. Include the question relevant to your problem; C. Justify why you need an answer; D. If you need a response, politely ask for one.
3. **Sign with your full name.** After “Regards,” or “Sincerely,” or “Best Regards,” sign your full name and include the course that you are enrolled in.
4. **Allow time for a reply.** Your 2:00am question may need to wait until morning for an answer, as your professor and instructors are having some much-needed rest. On some days, your instructors may be in meetings and other classes for the majority of the day and they may only check email once or twice. 24 hours is a reasonable time to wait for a reply. Please do not send a second email until you have gone at least that long without a response.

Important Tips

- Before you send out an email to your TA or instructor, make sure to check the syllabus and all other material you have been provided with at the beginning of the semester to see if you can answer your own question.
- When you miss class, check the course website or contact one of your classmates before you contact your TA or the instructor.
- Emails are for quick fixes. For more complex questions, please come to office hours, so that we talk more in depth. Quick fixes include: informing TA about a serious illness or other emergency, request an appointment to see your TA, ask a specific question about the course material that is not clear to you.
- When inquiring about the reasons for a grade on a specific assignment, make an appointment to meet in person with your TA. Inform them about the reason for your appointment: “RE: Schedule an appointment to discuss my mid-term grade”; this will give your TA time to prepare for the meeting, thus gathering all the material necessary to explain your grade. Do not expect this kind of question to be answered via email.

Summer Course Schedule¹

Class	Topic	Reading	Assignment
1	<u>Course Introduction</u> •Syllabus •What is public policy? •Key concepts associated with studying public policy •Context of Policies •Policy analysis and policy evaluation	Kraft and Furlong, Ch. 1	
2	<u>Institutions and actors</u> •Governmental and nongovernmental actors and the policy process • Rationales for government intervention • Government institutions, federalism, separation of powers	Kraft and Furlong, Ch. 2 Rabe. (2011). Contested Federalism and American Climate Policy. <i>Publius</i> , 41(3), 494–521. Burstein, & Linton, A. (2002). The Impact of Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Social Movement Organizations on Public Policy: Some Recent Evidence and Theoretical Concerns. <i>Social Forces</i> , 81(2), 380–408.	Reading Analysis Due by 7/15
3	<u>Drivers of Policy</u> •What are some key factors explaining policy outcomes? •Policymaking process and development of public policies. • What roles do governments, interest groups, public opinion, and institutional rules play in the policy process? • Case example: gun control policy	Kraft and Furlong, Ch. 3 Cook, Braga, & Moore. Gun control. In Wilson, Petersilia, & Petersilia, Joan. (2010). <i>Crime and Public Policy</i> . Oxford University Press, USA.	Reading Analysis Due by 7/22

¹ Information contained in the course syllabus, other than the grade and absence policy, may be subject to change with advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.

4	<u>Policy analysis</u> •Nature and purposes of policy analysis •Policy analysis process •How does problem definition affect policy outcomes? • What criteria can be used to select a policy option and evaluate it? • How are policy options formulated, and under what constraints? • Economic policy	Kraft and Furlong, Ch. 4	Midterm exam: 7/22
5	<u>The Policy Cycle in Practice</u> •Define and analyze public problems •Think about possible solutions and find useful information •How has the issue of immigration been framed by different actors? • What relevant agendas have been set? • What policy options have been considered, implemented, and assessed? • Immigration policy	Kraft and Furlong, Ch. 5 Ybarra, Sanchez, L. M., & Sanchez, G. R. (2016). Anti-immigrant Anxieties in State Policy: The Great Recession and Punitive Immigration Policy in the American States, 2005-2012. <i>State Politics & Policy Quarterly</i> , 16(3), 313–339.	Reading Analysis Due by 7/29
6	<u>Assessing policies</u> •Assessing Policy Alternatives •Understanding evaluative criteria •Who will benefit/lose from a policy? •How can we explain ethical, economic, and political considerations when evaluating policies and alternatives? •How can we assess the policy outcomes? • Health care policy	Kraft and Furlong, Ch 6. Wallner. (2008). Legitimacy and Public Policy: Seeing Beyond Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Performance. <i>Policy Studies Journal</i> , 36(3), 421–443	Reading Analysis Due by 8/5
7	<u>Media's impacts on public opinion on policies</u>	Behr, R. L., & Iyengar, S. (1985). Television News, Real-World Cues, and	Reading Analysis Due by 8/12

	•Agenda setting, framing, priming •How do agenda setting and priming influence attitudes toward policies? •How do different frames affect public opinion on public policies? •What types of frames can be used for manipulating an issue?	Changes in the Public Agenda. <i>Public Opinion Quarterly</i>, 49(1), 38–57. IYENGAR, S., & SIMON, A. (1993). News Coverage of the Gulf Crisis and Public Opinion: A Study of Agenda-Setting, Priming, and Framing. <i>Communication Research</i>, 20(3), 365–383. Berinsky, & Kinder, D. R. (2006). Making Sense of Issues Through Media Frames: Understanding the Kosovo Crisis. <i>The Journal of Politics</i>, 68(3), 640–656	Final paper due by 5pm on 8/14
8	Final exam: 8/19		