

PSC 2223: Making Public Policy

T/R 3-4:15
0311 AH
The University of Oklahoma
Fall 2015

Instructor: Dr. Jamie Smith
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Office Hours:

Catalog Course Description

Prerequisite: 1113. Explores government actions to address social problems such as crime, poverty, health care, education, welfare reform, and the environment. Focuses on how to craft policy responses to conflict situations; resolve competing political demands for more services yet lower taxes; and achieve important societal goals of efficiency, equity, fairness, and freedom.

Learning Outcomes

After completing this course, students should be able to

1. Explain the policy making process
2. Compare and contrast theories of policy contestation
3. Identify key actors in the policy-making process
4. Apply concepts learned to examples of American public policy

Required Text

Thomas A. Birkland. 2011. Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice, 3rd Edition. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

Researcher, C. Q. (2014). Issues for Debate in Social Policy: Selections From CQ Researcher (Second Edition edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Accommodation Policy

The University of Oklahoma is committed to providing reasonable accommodation for all students with disabilities. Students with disabilities who require accommodations in this course are requested to speak with the professor as early in the semester as possible. Students with disabilities must be registered with the Office of Disability Services prior to receiving accommodations in this course. The Office of Disability Services is located in Goddard Health Center, Suite 166, 325-3852.

On Campus Academic Resources

There are a variety of resources available to students to offer academic help, guidance, and information. Two of the resources that may be most helpful for this course are the OU Writing Center and the OU Libraries. You can find links to these resources on the course homepage.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity means honesty and responsibility in scholarship. Professors have to obey rules of honest scholarship, and so do students. For more information about academic integrity, including a statement of what constitutes academic misconduct and plagiarism, see OU's "A Student's Guide to Academic Integrity" at <http://www.ou.edu/provost/integrity/>.

Any work not resulting from the student's own efforts will result in a grade of 0 and be turned in to the property authorities. This includes plagiarized papers, copied assignments, cheating on exams, or any other dishonest activity.

Religious Observance Policy

It is the policy of the University of Oklahoma to excuse absences of students that result from religious observances and to provide without penalty for the rescheduling of examinations and additional required class work that may fall on religious holidays.

Internet Information

This course will make heavy use of D2L. Internet access and access to this platform are required for success in the course. Slides, revisions to the syllabus, readings, announcements, changes to this syllabus, etc. can all be found in the appropriate folder on the D2L page for this course.

The primary means of communication for this course will be email. Be sure to check your OU-issued email regularly.

Due Dates and Late Assignments

All assignments are due in the D2L dropbox by midnight (11:59 pm) OU local time. Late assignments will be accepted for four days after the due date with a late penalty assessed for each day, class or otherwise, that it is late. Illness, schedule conflicts, family problems, computer issues are not valid reasons for late assignments—plan and work ahead.

Make-up exams will be given only in extraordinary circumstances. Students are permitted to take a make-up exam only in the case of documented illness, death in the family, and approved university activity. Notification of missed exams must be received prior to the exam day.

Graded Items

Attendance, Participation, and Policy Briefing—20%

Students are expected to attend class meetings, participate in class discussions, and turn in assignments on time. In addition, beginning with the class on **September 24** I will randomly select a few students each class period to give a 5-7 minute briefing on the topic of their policy paper (described in greater detail below). These briefings should consist of a brief description of the topic, identification of the relevant actors and their views on the issue, and a brief summary of the current status or stage of the issue. You may have to answer a few questions after the briefing. Presentations will be graded on accuracy, style, and students' ability to relate their topic to the concepts covered in class.

The policy briefing is intended to simulate a scenario routinely faced in professional settings. When working on a major long-term project, workers are often called upon to provide an oral status report of

the project with little notice. It is important to be able to provide such a report in a clear, concise manner and answer questions about the topic.

Midterm Exam—25%

This exam will assess students' mastery of the concepts and theories relevant to the policymaking process that have been covered in class prior to the exam date.

Final Exam—30%

This exam will assess students' mastery of all the concepts and theories relevant to the policymaking process that we covered in the course. The exam will also assess students' ability to apply the theories and concepts to specific policy areas.

Policy Paper and Related Assignments—25%

By the third class meeting of the semester (**September 1**), everyone will have selected the topic of the policy paper that you will work on throughout the semester and will have sent that topic to me via D2L dropbox for approval. The topic must be submitted in the form of a question that can be answered Yes or No (e.g. Should a teacher's pay be affected by the test scores of his or her students?). Students should select a topic in a policy area in which they are interested. The topic can be at the federal, state, or local level, but topics are constrained to issues within the United States.

The final paper will end up being 12-15 pages in length, but three major components of the paper will be submitted as separate assignments throughout the semester. Each of these separate assignments will be worth 5% of the total course grade and the final paper will be worth an additional 10%. Together, the assignments related to the policy paper are worth the 25% of the total course grade listed above.

ASSIGNMENT 1—POLICY INTRODUCTION

Due in the D2L dropbox before the start of class and as a hard copy in class on **September 17**, this 2-3 page assignment will provide an introduction to the policy topic you have selected. The assignment should provide a clear statement of the issue being examined and a description of why the issue is important. The description of the issue's importance can take a variety of forms, but it should include a description of societal problem(s) to which the policy may be relevant.

ASSIGNMENT 2—POLICY BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Due in the D2L dropbox before the start of class and as a hard copy in class on **October 8**, this 3-5 page assignment will provide background and context on the policy issue. Specifically, it should provide a brief history of the policy topic, identify important groups and actors in the policy debate, and describe the policy positions of these groups and actors. Completion of this assignment will require the citation of academic and professional sources. These citations should be in APA style. Visit the OU Writing Center or look online if you need to learn the format of APA style citations. There is no formal rule on the number of sources you must cite, but you should consult enough sources to ensure that the assignment is well done. Practically, at a very minimum this means you should probably consult at least 5 sources.

ASSIGNMENT 3—ANALYSIS OF POLICY ISSUE

Due in the D2L dropbox before the start of class and as a hard copy in class on **November 5**, this 5-7 page assignment will provide an analysis of your policy issue. This assignment will describe each side of the policy issue and provide an analysis of that issue; it should present the arguments in support of and in opposition to that issue. This assignment is not designed as a forum for you to present your opinions on the topic. Rather, it is designed as an exercise that allows you to demonstrate your analytical and research skills.

FINAL PAPER

Due in the D2L dropbox before the start of class and as a hard copy in class on **November 24**, the final paper should introduce the policy topic, provide background and context on that topic, and provide an analysis of that topic. That is, it should consist of the components of the three assignments that have been turned in previously. However, the paper should not simply consist of the three assignments copied and pasted together. Rather, as you assemble the paper, you should revise the assignments in response to my comments on them. In addition, you need to make sure that the paper smoothly transitions from one section to another and that it contains a proper introduction and conclusion. In short, the paper needs to have all the components of a high-quality research paper.

STYLE AND FORMATTING GUIDELINES

All assignments should:

- Be typed with double-spacing;
- Have one-inch margins on all sides;
- Contain page numbers on each page; and
- Use reasonable fonts and font sizes.

Course Schedule

DATE	TOPIC	READING	ASSIGNMENTS
8/25	What is Public Policy?	Chapter 1	
8/27	The Policy Making Process	Chapter 2	
9/1	Inputs and Outputs of the Policy Process	Chapter 2	Paper Topic Due by Start of Class
9/3	Constitutional Structure and Evolution	Chapter 3	
9/8	American Policy Stability	Chapter 3	
9/10	Official Actors	Chapter 4	
9/15	Unofficial Actors	Chapter 5	
9/17	Agenda Setting	Chapter 6	Paper Assignment 1
9/22	Strategies for Change	Chapter 6	

9/24	Lowi's Policy Typology	Chapter 7	
9/29	Other Policy Typologies	Chapter 7	
10/1	Policy Design	Chapter 8	
10/6	Policy Tools and Decisions	Chapter 8	
10/8	Policy Implementation	Chapter 9	Paper Assignment 2
10/13	Failure and Learning	Chapter 9	
10/15	MIDTERM EXAM		
10/20	Government Surveillance	D2L	
10/22	Government Surveillance	D2L	
10/27	Government Spending	Chapter 10 (SP)	
10/29	Government Spending	Chapter 10 (SP)	
11/3	Minimum Wage	Chapter 11 (SP)	
11/5	Minimum Wage	Chapter 11 (SP)	Paper Assignment 3
11/10	Racial Profiling	D2L	
11/12	Racial Profiling	D2L	
11/17	Home Schooling	Chapter 4 (SP)	
11/19	Home Schooling	Chapter 4 (SP)	
11/24	Women and Work	Chapter 1 (SP)	Final Paper Due
11/26	NO CLASS		
12/1	Children in Poverty	Chapter 3 (SP)	
12/3	Children in Poverty	Chapter 3 (SP)	
12/8	Assessing the New Healthcare Law	Chapter 12 (SP)	
12/10	Assessing the New Healthcare Law	Chapter 12 (SP)	
Wednesday 12/16 4:30-6:30 PM	FINAL EXAM		