

POLITICAL SCIENCE 3321 (3 CREDITS)

ISSUES IN AMERICAN PUBLIC POLICY

Monday/Wednesday 4:00-5:15 PM

Fall 2012 (9/5/11-12/12/11)

Blegen Hall, Room 150

Professor: Robin Phinney
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The United States faces many problems: a \$16 trillion dollar national debt; rising health care costs; and a poverty rate of nearly 15 percent. Most Americans believe that the government ought to do something to solve such problems. Yet debates over the nature and extent of the government's involvement abound. This course will analyze the politics of policymaking on these and other issues in the United States. During the first half of the semester, we will consider how and why political actors decide to address some problems but not others, how policies are created and implemented, and how politicians and scholars evaluate their effectiveness. We will explore theories of the policy process, contrasting two models for understanding policy. We will examine how issues emerge on the political agenda, analyze how political institutions and actors shape policy, and explore how scholars evaluate the success or failure of those policies. In the second half of the semester, we will integrate theories about politics and policymaking with a focused look at problems and policies in three policy domains. For each of these policy domains, we will analyze how problems are defined, discuss current policies, and evaluate proposals for moving forward.

Prerequisites: Political Science 1001 or equivalent

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the semester, students should:

- **Understand** how policies are developed, enacted, implemented, and analyzed, and be able to **identify** how political actors, institutions, and processes impact policymaking, implementation, and analysis.
- Gain skills in **thinking critically and analytically** about how the concepts learned in the class apply to contemporary public policy issues, including the three we will cover in depth in class.
- Gain skills in **communicating** your views on policy both verbally and in writing. We will pay particular attention to communicating in policy arenas.

REQUIRED COURSE READINGS

The course readings are from two books, available from the University book store, and a collection of online readings, marked with * on the schedule. Readings marked with * are available on the electronic reserve website listed below. The password for the electronic reserves is:

Suzanne Mettler. 2011. *The Submerged State: How Invisible Government Policies Undermine American Democracy*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Deborah Stone. 2012. *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making, 3rd Edition*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company.

Electronic reserve site: <http://eres.lib.umn.edu/eres/courseindex.aspx?&page=search>

The reading list is relatively short, and purposefully so. The readings are designed to introduce you to a selection of concepts and puzzles in American politics and policy, which we will then apply to contemporary problems facing the United States. Because materials covered in the readings will serve as a springboard for class discussions, I expect you to have read and thought about the readings *before* class. In-class, pop quizzes on the readings are possible to ensure that readings are completed prior to class.

GRADING

Success in this class requires a combination of reading, discussion, and writing. Grades will be based on the following components, discussed in greater detail below (200 points total).

1. Reading, Attendance, and Participation	30 points	15% of overall grade
2. Midterm Exam	50 points	25% of overall grade
3. Policy Memo	50 points	25% of overall grade
4. Final exam	70 points	35% of overall grade
<i>Total</i>	200 points	100%

1. Reading, attendance and participation (30 points): Your regular attendance and active engagement are essential to make this course a success. While I will spend some time lecturing via power point, we will devote a fair amount of class time to discussing and evaluating readings, and applying concepts from the readings to contemporary issues in American politics. **Power point slides will not be distributed to students.** Your reading, attendance, and participation grade will be based on your presence and engagement in class, your preparation and contributions to discussion, and your courtesy and respect for others. **Please come to class on time and stay for the entire session.** If you must arrive late, leave early, or if you anticipate missing a class, please notify me ahead of time. In addition, there will be 4-6 class activities over the course of the semester. These will not be announced in advance. More than one unexcused absence for these activities will lower your participation grade by 4 points. If you do not attend class and miss all of the class activities, you will receive 0 of the 30 points.
2. Short Paper (50 points): There will be one short paper (3-5 pages), due November 19th in class. The paper is an opportunity to apply insights learned from the course to a public policy issue. The assignment is not to write a traditional political science paper, but rather to write a memo in which you try to persuade the next President to pursue a particular policy approach. I will provide more details on the paper in class on October 22nd.

3. One midterm (50 points): There will be one midterm, held on October 17th. The midterm will consist of multiple choice, matching, and short answer questions.
4. Final Exam (70 points): The final exam, held on December 17th from 4-6pm, will consist of multiple choice, matching, short answer questions, and one essay. The final will cover material presented over the entire semester. I do not anticipate creating a review sheet.

Should you have any questions related to a grade received on an assignment or exam, I encourage you to come speak to your professor or teaching assistant in office hours. If you wish to contest a grade, you must do so in writing, and must include a specific rationale for why your answer or paper deserves a higher grade.

The relationship between points and grade is as follows:

A	(187-200 points, or 94-100 percent)	C	(147-152 points, or 74-76 percent)
A-	(179-186 points, or 90-93 percent)	C-	(139-146 points, or 70-73 percent)
B+	(173-178 points, or 87-89 percent)	D+	(133-138 points, or 67-69 percent)
B	(167-172 points, or 84-86 percent)	D	(127-132 points, or 64-66 percent)
B-	(159-166 points, or 80-83 percent)	S	139 or more points, or 70 percent +
C+	(153-158 points, or 77-79 percent)		

With respect to grade point average, the University utilizes plus and minus grading on a 4.000 cumulative grade point scale in accordance w/the scale listed at the following address:

<http://policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/GRADINGTRANSCRIPTS.html>

TECHNOLOGY

Laptops and other electronic devices (cell phones, tablets, etc.) are not permitted in this class.

LATE POLICY

Please keep in mind the following dates/deadlines. Completing assignments by each due date is your responsibility.

- ❖ October 17th: Midterm Exam
- ❖ November 19th: Policy Memo Due
- ❖ December 17th: Final Exam

Late papers ***will not be accepted except under extraordinary circumstances***, and then only ***with prior permission*** from the instructor.

Make-up exams are only permitted in the case of unavoidable or University-approved circumstances. Such circumstances include verified illness, participation in intercollegiate athletic events, subpoenas, jury duty, military service, bereavement, and religious observances. For complete information, please see: <http://policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/MAKEUPWORK.html>.

OFFICE HOURS AND EMAIL

Office hours are a great chance to ask questions or raise concerns you have about lectures, assignments, readings, or political science or public policy in general. My scheduled office hours are on Wednesday from 10:00-12:00 in Social Sciences Building Room 1325. If you can't make office hours, I am happy to set up an appointment for another time on Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday. Michelle's office hours are 2:10-4:00 on Wednesdays, in Social Sciences Building Room 748 and by appointment.

If you need to contact me outside of class, the best way to reach me is via email (rphinney@umn.edu). You may email me with questions or concerns, and I will do my best to respond to you within 24 hours if your email is received Sunday-Thursday. Messages received Friday or Saturday may have to wait until Monday. In addition, I will conduct course-related business via email, and I expect you to make sure you regularly check your official UMN email.

Please remember that email is a *professional* communication and should be treated as such. This means that your emails should contain a greeting, and should be polite and formal in tone. Please make your emails clear and concise; even a brief email exchange takes time. Neither Michelle nor I will summarize lectures, discussions, readings, or missed classes via email.

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READING LIST

	TOPIC	READING
Sept. 5 th	Overview of the course	POL 3321 Syllabus
Sept. 10 th	Thinking about Policy	Stone, Introduction and Chapter 1 (“The Market and the Polis”) (pp. 1-36) * Excerpts from Michael E. Kraft and Scott R. Furlong. 2010. <i>Public Policy: Politics, Analysis, and Alternatives, Third Edition</i> . Washington DC: CQ Press. (pp. 72-87)
Sept. 12 th	Why Government?	Stone, Chapter 3 (“Efficiency”) (pp. 63-84) * Review the issue positions of presidential candidates Barack Obama and Mitt Romney on jobs and the economy . Available at (http://www.barackobama.com/record/economy) and (http://www.mittromney.com/jobs). Come to class ready to discuss these positions.
Sept. 17 th	Problem Definition	* John W. Kingdon. 1995. <i>Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies (2nd Edition)</i> . New York: HarperCollins College Publishers. Excerpt from Chapter 5: “Problems” (pp. 109-113) * Stone, Chapters 7 (“Symbols”) and 9 (“Causes”) (pp. 157-182; 206-228)
Sept. 19 th	Agenda Setting	* John W. Kingdon. 1995. <i>Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies (2nd Edition)</i> . New York: HarperCollins College Publishers. Chapter 8 (“The Policy Window and Joining the Streams”) (pp. 165-190)
Sept. 24 th	Political Institutions and Actors	* Michael E. Kraft and Scott R. Furlong. 2010. <i>Public Policy: Politics, Analysis, and Alternatives, Third Edition</i> . Washington DC: CQ Press. Chapter 2 (“Government Institutions and Policy Actors”) (pp. 30-63)
Sept. 26 th	Policy Instruments	Stone, Chapters 12 (“Incentives”), 13 (“Rules”), and 14 (“Facts”) (pp. 271-330)
Oct. 1 st	An Informed Public?	Mettler, Chapters 1- 3 (pp.1-68)
Oct. 3 rd	The Submerged State	Mettler, Chapters 4-6 (pp. 69-123)

Oct. 8 th	Policy Analysis	* Weimer, D. and Vining, A., <i>Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practices, 3rd Edition</i> . Prentice Hall, 1998. Chapter 1 (pp. TBA) Stone, Chapters 8 (“Numbers”) (pp.183-205)
Oct. 10 th	Evaluating Government Programs	* Gary Burtless. 1995. “The Case for Randomized Field Trials in Economic and Policy Research.” <i>The Journal of Economic Perspectives</i> , 9 (2): 63-84
Oct. 15 th	Midterm Review	No readings
Oct. 17 th	In-Class Midterm	No readings
Oct. 22 nd	Policy Memo Discussion	No readings
Oct. 24 th	Policy Goals	Stone, Chapter 2 (“Equity”) and Chapter 5 (“Liberty) (pp. 39-62 and 107-128)
<i>Policy Module #1: Fiscal Policy</i>		
Oct. 29 th	Taxing and Spending	* Center for Budget and Policy Priorities. April 15, 2011. “Where do our Federal Tax Dollars Go?” (pp. 1-4) * Editors. 2002. “The non-taxpaying class.” <i>Wall Street Journal</i> , 20 November. * Marr, Chuck, and Chye-Ching Huang. 2012. “Misconceptions and realities about who pays taxes.” Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. * Leonhardt, David. 2007. “Plain truth about taxes and cuts.” <i>New York Times</i> , 31 October.
Oct. 31 st	On Debts and Deficits	* National Research Council and National Academy of Public Administration. 2010. <i>Choosing the Nation's Fiscal Future</i> . Washington, DC: National Academies Press. Summary, Chapter 1: “The Long-Term Challenge”, and Chapter 2: “Framing the Choices (pp. 1-47)
Nov. 5 th	Constraints	* Kohut, Andrew. 2012. “Debt and deficit: A public opinion dilemma.” Pew Research Center.
Nov. 7 th	Solutions	* Congressional Budget Office. 2011. “Reducing the deficit: Spending and Revenue options.” Read the 1-page overview (Overview and full report available at: http://www.cbo.gov/publication/22043)

<i>Policy Module #2: Health Care Policy</i>		
Nov. 12 th	Background	<p>* DeNavas-Walt, Carmen, Bernadette D. Proctor, and Jessica C. Smith, U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P60-238 <i>Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2009</i>, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC. 2010. (pp. 22-28)</p> <p>* Reid, T. R. "Frontline: Sick around the world." PBS. View the 60 min. documentary online at: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/sickaroundtheworld/view/</p>
Nov. 14 th	The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010	<p>* Jacobs, Lawrence R. 2010 "What Health Reform Teaches Us about American Politics," <i>PS: Political Science and Politics</i>, 43 (4): 619-623.</p> <p>* Haveman, Roberts and Barbara Wolfe. 2011. "US Health Care Reform: A Primer and an Assessment." <i>La Follette Policy Report</i> 20 (2), Spring. (pp. 1-5)</p> <p>* New York Times. 2012. "Health Care Reform (Times Topics)." <i>New York Times</i>.</p>
Nov. 19 th	Current context	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>POLICY MEMO DUE TODAY</i></p> <p>* Gawande, Atul. 2012. "Something wicked this way comes." <i>New Yorker</i> 28, June.</p>
Nov. 21 st	No class – Enjoy your Thanksgiving holiday!	
Nov. 26 th	Moving Forward on Health Care Reform	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Note: Some of the readings for today may change based on the outcome of the 2012 election</u></p> <p>* Gawande, Atul. 2012. "Something wicked this way comes." <i>New Yorker</i> 28, June.</p> <p>* Angeles, January. 2012. "How Health Reform's Medicaid Expansion Will Impact State Budgets." <i>The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities</i> 25, July</p> <p>* Lizza, Ryan. 2012. "Why Romney Won't Repeal Obamacare." <i>New Yorker</i> 28, June.</p> <p>* Owcharenko, Nina. 2010. "Repealing Obamacare and Getting Health Care Right." <i>The Heritage Foundation</i> 9, November.</p>

Policy Module #3: Social Welfare Policy

Nov. 28 th	The Problem of Poverty	<p>* Blank and Greenberg. 2008. "Improving the Measurement of Poverty," Brookings Institution, Hamilton Project.</p> <p>* DeNavas-Walt, Carmen, Bernadette D. Proctor, and Jessica C. Smith, U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P60-238, <i>Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2009</i>, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC. 2009. (pp. 4-21)</p>
Dec. 3 rd	Causes	<p>*Freeman, Richard. "Chapter 3: The Rising Tide Lifts...?" In <i>Understanding Poverty</i>. (pp. 97-126)</p> <p>* Wilson, William Julius. 2009. <i>More than Just Race: Being Black and Poor in the Inner City</i>. New York, NY: W.W Norton and Company, Inc. Chapter 2 ("The Forces Shaping Concentrated Poverty") (pp. 25-61).</p>
Dec. 5 th	Constraints	<p>* Ellwood, David. 1989. <i>Poor Support: Poverty in the American Family</i>. New York: Basic Books. Chapter 2: "Values and Helping Conundrums (pp. 14-44)</p> <p>* Stone, Chapter 4 ("Welfare") (pp. 85-106)</p>
Dec. 10 th	Solutions	<p>* Blank, Rebecca. 1997. <i>It Takes a Nation: A New Agenda for Fighting Poverty</i>. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 1997. Chapter 5: "Who Should Help the Poor?" (pp. 191-219)</p>
Dec. 12 th	Wrapping Up	No readings
Dec. 17 th	Final Exam, 4-6pm	