



# **PPOL-851: THE U.S. POLICY PROCESS**

## **Master of Policy Management Program**

**Professor Jason J. Fichtner**

**October 8 – 12, 2012**

### **GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION:**

Room: Georgetown Clarendon Campus  
Day and Time: 9:00 am – 4:00 pm / Monday, October 8<sup>th</sup> class starts at 1:00 pm  
Instructor's Phone: 703-993-4938  
Instructor's Email: [jjfichtner@gmail.com](mailto:jjfichtner@gmail.com) / [jjf8@georgetown.edu](mailto:jjf8@georgetown.edu)  
Office Hours: After class, or by appointment

This course introduces us to the U.S. public policy process: actors performing roles in the influence and pursuit of public purposes. To influence policy you need to understand how policy is developed. This course helps improve your understanding. The course begins by studying the components of the American policy process: ideas, ideology, interests and, especially, institutions. The course then surveys several models of the policy process by leading policy scholars. Next, consideration of how these models might be applied to various policy domains. Finally, students will demonstrate their knowledge of the policy components and models studied in class.

A primary objective of this course is for students to become skilled interpreters of the American public policy process. Students should be able to understand the role of ideas, individuals, interests and institutions, as well as how these influences can vary across the stages of the policy process and among the various policy domains.

Students should also develop more specific skills that will allow them to be more effective participants in the policy process. Students should exit this course better writers and better public speakers.

Another objective of this course is to provide students with a purposeful mix of practice and theory. Public Policy students have to keep one foot in the world of practice and the other in the world of academic theory. You must become “pracademics.” Hence, class readings and discussions will revolve around concepts, tools and skills of policy process. If available, guest speakers will occasionally visit to provide a practitioner’s viewpoint on how things work “in the real world.”

## **EXPECTATIONS**

- You are expected to act with the highest professional ethics and skill.
- You are expected to complete all of the readings in advance of each class, and to be prepared to discuss them as well as your own experiences and insights regarding public policy process.
- You are expected to adhere to the Georgetown University Honor Code. For all written course assignments please provide citations for all outside sources for the ideas in your assignments. Copying, cheating or plagiarism will not be tolerated.
- Students are expected to attend all class meetings and participate in class discussions. If you have an important reason to miss a class or delay an assignment, and you let me know in advance, I will work to accommodate your situation. Important reasons involve major unexpected family or personal challenges and events (e.g. death in the family, severe illness, etc.).
- Even if you miss class, assignments are still due on time.
- Late assignments will be marked down at least 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of a letter grade.
- I have an open-door policy. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions, concerns, comments, etc.

## **READINGS**

The following textbooks will be used in the class:

### **Required Texts:**

Thomas A. Birkland, *An Introduction to the Policy Process: Theories, Concepts, and Models of Public Policy Making*, 3rd Edition (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2010 - Paperback).

John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, (Longman Classics Edition, 2001 or 2002).

Deborah Stone, *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001).

### **Optional / Background Reference Texts:**

Samuel Kernell & Gary Jacobsen, *The Logic of American Politics*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, (Washington, DC: CQ Press, – Paperback 2011).

Stella Z. Theodoulou, *Public Policy: The Essential Readings* (Paperback), Prentice Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (2012).

The texts are available at the GU bookstore and also can be purchased on-line. Make sure to shop around for the best price. I will also pass out some additional reading material to supplement the core texts.

While this is a short course, the volume and sophistication of the readings are in line for a graduate course. Therefore, the only practical way you will be able to read and absorb the material is to get a good head start prior to the week of class. All readings should be done before the day in which they are listed, including the first day.

## ASSIGNMENTS

### **Issue of the Day**

Please read the major newspapers and come to class ready to bring up interesting and relevant topics. Every day in the newspapers, particularly in the national and metro sections, there are lots of stories that pertain to public policy process. You are also encouraged to read the op-ed pages, as often they touch upon public policy process issues. At the beginning of each class, I will solicit topics from the class and we will hold a brief (20 to 30 minutes) discussion session. This will be considered part of your overall class participation grade.

### **Graded Assignments**

Along with Participation & your course grade will be based on your performance in the following assignments:

#### ***Paper #1 - Op-Ed***

Those involved in the policy process must often make arguments to a variety of audiences – congressional committees, association/interest groups, officials from other agencies, and the general public. A key objective is to present a persuasive case for a particular policy or course of action. For this assignment, you are asked to write an op-ed piece **no longer** than 1,000 words on whether or not the Congress should take concrete measures to address the upcoming so-called “Fiscal Cliff” during the lame duck session of Congress, which is between the election and the start of the new Congress in January 2013. Consideration should be given to politics and process. There are numerous current news articles on this topic available on the Internet for background and there will surely be many more during the time we are in class. **The written op-ed is due on October 12<sup>th</sup>**. This assignment will be graded according to the quality of your written argument and understanding of the issue.

#### ***Paper #2 – Take Home Essay Exam***

There will be a take-home exam at the conclusion of the class. Further instruction will be given during the week of class. **The Take Home Essay Exam is to be approximately 5 pages, but no longer than 10 single-spaced typed pages and is due October 22<sup>nd</sup>**.

## GRADES

Grades will be based on a variety of individual contributions, described below:

Paper #1	20 percent
Paper #2	30 percent
Participation	50 percent

Grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

93-100	= A
90-92.9	= A-
87-89.9	= B+
83-86.9	= B
80-82.9	= B-
77-79.9	= C+
70-76.9	= C
< 70.0	= F

All students are expected to perform at B level or above.

## Summary of Course Assignments, Activities and Due Dates:

<u>Item</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
Paper #1 – Op-Ed	October 12 <sup>th</sup>
Paper #2 – Take Home Essay Exam	October 22 <sup>nd</sup>

## Course Schedule, Topics, Readings, and Activities

October 8	<p><b><u>(Class starts at 1:00 pm)</u></b> CLASS INTRODUCTION &amp; OVERVIEW INTRODUCTION TO THE AMERICAN POLICY PROCESS Read: The Constitution of the United States. Available at: <a href="http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution.html">http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution.html</a> Kernell and Jacobson (Chapters 1 - 3); Kingdon (Prefaces, &amp; Chapter 1); Birkland (Preface &amp; Chapters 1 - 3); Theodoulou, <i>The Contemporary Language of Public Policy: A Starting Point</i> (Available on Blackboard)</p>
October 9	<p>IDEAS &amp; IDEOLOGY &amp; NUMBERS – PART 1 (Morning Session) Read: Stone (Chapters 1 - 5)</p> <p>IDEAS &amp; IDEOLOGY &amp; NUMBERS – PART 2 (Afternoon Session) Read: Stone (Chapters 6 - 15)</p>

- October 10 PUBLIC OPINION, POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, INTEREST GROUPS & THE MEDIA (Morning Session)  
Read: Kernell and Jacobson (Chapters 10, 13 & 14); Kingdon (Chapter 3); Birkland (Chapter 5 & 6); Iyengar & Kinder, *News That Matters*, (Available on Blackboard)
- INSTITUTIONS: HOW CONGRESS MAKES POLICY (Afternoon Session)  
Read: Kernell and Jacobson (Chapter 6); Kingdon (Chapter 2, pages dealing with Congress / Capitol Hill); Birkland (Chapter 4); Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, (Chapter 13, Available on Blackboard)
- October 11 INSTITUTIONS: HOW THE PRESIDENT MAKES POLICY (Morning Session)  
Read: Kernell and Jacobson (Chapter 7); Kingdon (Chapter 2, pages dealing with the President and the Administration); Birkland (Chapter 4); Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, (Chapter 14, Available on Blackboard)
- INSTITUTIONS: HOW THE BUREAUCRACY AND THE JUDICIARY MAKE POLICY (Afternoon Session)  
Read: Kernell and Jacobson (Chapters 8 & 9); Kingdon (Chapter 2, pages dealing with the Bureaucracy); Birkland (Chapter 4); Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, (Chapter 15, Available on Blackboard)
- October 12 MODELS OF THE POLICY PROCESS – PART 1 & PART 2 (Morning Session)  
**Part 1** - Read: Kingdon (Chapters 4 - 6); Birkland (Chapters 7 & 8); Lowi, *Distribution, Regulation, Redistribution: The Functions of Government* (Available on Blackboard)  
**Part 2** - Read: Kingdon (Chapters 7 - 9); Birkland (Chapters 9 & 10)
- FEDERAL BUDGET & TAX POLICY PROCESS (Afternoon Session)  
Instructor PowerPoint Presentation on Federal Budget & Tax Policy