



# PPOL-517-2: PUBLIC POLICY PROCESS

**Professor Jason J. Fichtner**  
**Fall 2008**

## **GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION:**

Room: Car Barn 302A  
Day and Time: Mondays, 6:15 pm – 8:45 p.m.  
Instructor's Phone: 202-358-6053  
Instructor's Email: [jjfichtner@cavtel.net](mailto:jjfichtner@cavtel.net) / [jjf8@georgetown.edu](mailto:jjf8@georgetown.edu)  
Office Hours: After class, or by appointment

This course introduces us to 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 by writing and presenting strategic policy briefs to policymakers.

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. Additionally, students will gain valuable experience working in teams and presenting group projects, which will help students become better skilled in providing policy briefs and presentations in real-world settings.

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. Guest speakers will occasionally visit the class 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, journal entries and 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 see me if you have any questions, concerns, comments, etc.

## READINGS

The following textbooks will be used in the class:

Thomas A. Birkland, *An Introduction to the Policy Process: Theories, Concepts, and Models of Public Policy Making*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2005 - Paperback). [Amazon \$30 / Barnes & Noble \$30]

Samuel Kernell & Gary Jacobsen, *The Logic of American Politics*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2005 – Paperback). [Amazon \$70 / Barnes & Noble \$73]

John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, (Longman Classics Edition, 2001). [Amazon \$48 / Barnes & Noble \$53]

Deborah Stone, *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001). [Amazon \$42 / Barnes & Noble \$44]

Steven Waldman, *The Bill: How Legislation Really Becomes Law in a Case Study of the National Service Bill*, (New York: Penguin Group, 1996). ISBN: 0140233040

NOTE: *The Bill: How Legislation Really Becomes Law – A Case Study of the National Service Bill*, by Steven Waldman (New York: Penguin Books 1995). This book does not appear on the daily schedule, but you must read it on your own before the end of the class. This book will serve as the basis for your team's end of the semester briefing.

The texts are available at the GU bookstore and also can be purchased on-line from stores such as Amazon.com, Border.com, Barnesandnobles.com or CQ Press Online. Make sure to shop around for the best price. I will also pass out some additional reading material to supplement the core texts.

\* Some of the assignments and readings in this syllabus have been adopted from a previous course taught by Dr. Mark Rom, Associate Professor of Government & Public Policy at Georgetown University. Thanks, Mark!

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

### **Journal on Course Readings – Due Sunday before Class**

You will keep an on-going journal of your reflections of the readings. Come to class with 1 to 2 single-spaced typed pages (in Memorandum style) discussing your thoughts on the reading, including general themes, disagreements, and any insights you glean from the reading that can be applied to current public policy process events. I'm not looking for an outline or bullet points of the reading. These reflections will not be graded per se, but they will count towards your participation grade. **Journal entries are to be e-mailed to the professor by 8:00 pm the Sunday before class.** Please send a Microsoft Word Document with a file format **Lastname\_date.doc** to [jjfichtner@cavtel.net](mailto:jjfichtner@cavtel.net).

### **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 (10 to 20 minutes) discussion session. This will be considered part of your overall class participation grade.

### **Policy Teams**

Each student will be assigned to a policy team. These teams will work together during the semester to develop a strategic brief. I encourage you to meet weekly to discuss the readings, practice presentations, plan your briefing report, and get to know each other.

Teams can work by dividing up tasks (specializing) or by working together (collaborating). I recommend more of the latter than the former – you should use your team to make each member stronger in all aspects of the project rather than a specialist on just one aspect. Your teams will also be more enjoyable and pay longer-term benefits if you use them to build rather than just to divide.

### **Strategic Policy Briefing**

At the end of the semester, each policy team will identify a policy proposal from the platform of either the Republican or Democratic Presidential nominee and offer a strategic plan for putting the proposal into action. Your remedy might include legislative, administrative, regulatory and legal changes. The brief will contain a strategy for obtaining these changes: what would you do to change the laws, obtain administrative reform, achieve different regulations, or gain favorable court rulings? Your brief should *not* focus primarily on the technical aspects of the policy (e.g., whether a particular regulatory reform is theoretically optimal), though you will need to conduct background research on this proposal (*especially* on how the policy process affects the prospects for adoption), and prepare an oral briefing to present the proposal to the class.

For example, one plank of the party platform might state that:

*Promoting Small Businesses.* Small businesses and entrepreneurs are the lifeblood of our economy. We will encourage small business growth with a plan to make it easier for small businesses to secure capital and loans. We support tax credits and energy investments that slash overall operating costs for small businesses and encourage them to grow and expand here in America. For America's 350,000 small manufacturers, which account for over half the total value of U.S. industrial production and employ 11 million people in high-skill, high-wage jobs, we will double funding to use technology to grow.

Based on this plank, you could recommend a specific policy for increasing access to capital, providing new tax credits, or expanding funding for technology. Remember: your strategic brief is not to determine which policy option is best, but to provide a strategy for obtaining the policy change you seek.

### **Graded Assignments**

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

#### ***Paper #1 – Issue Memo.***

Each group will write a memo of **no longer** than 5 single-spaced typed pages identifying the policy proposal that you will examine. This memo should also state the problem that is to be solved and where matters stand at the present (regarding both problems and policy). You should begin to lay out a couple of the possible policy options. **The Issue Memo is due on September 29<sup>th</sup>.**

#### ***Paper #2 – Issue Background Memo.***

Each group will write a second paper of **no longer** than 10 single-spaced typed pages that expands on the first Issue Memo. Where the first Issue Memo merely identified and briefly discussed the policy proposal, the Background History Memo needs to explore the origins of the problem that your policy is designed to address, the origins of the policy proposal itself and the political journey that the policy has taken thus far. This Issue Background Memo is **due October 27<sup>th</sup>.**

#### ***Paper #3 – Strategic Memos.***

Each group member will write a strategic memo to be used as building blocks your group strategic brief. Additionally, each student will also give an oral presentation of their memo. Each group can decide which individuals will write which memos. The memo topics are:

**Ideas:** What are the key ideas (or values) that you will use to promote your proposal? What ideas will be used by opponents of your proposal? How will you respond to the ideas of your critics?

**Individuals:** Who are the key individuals (both for and against) that hold power to make decisions to adopt or reject your policy proposal? How will you gain their support? Overcome their opposition?

**Institutions:** What are the key institutions relevant to your proposal? How will you obtain their support? Overcome their opposition?

**Interests:** What are the key interests affected by your proposal? How will you obtain their support? Overcome their opposition?

**Each memo can be no longer than 5 single-spaced typed pages and is due November 17<sup>th</sup>.** As a group, each student will make an oral presentation of their memo to the class. Your presentation should last **no longer** than 5 minutes. After the members of each group have presented their memos, the class will then ask questions for 5-10 minutes. Depending on time, the oral presentations might be spread over two class sessions.

#### ***Strategic Policy Briefing.***

The policy teams will prepare and present an oral briefing giving their strategic proposal. These briefings will occur in class on **December 1<sup>st</sup>** and last 20 minutes, with another 15-20 minutes for Q&A.

## GRADES

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

Paper #1	20 percent
Paper #2	20 percent
Paper #3	25 percent
Group PowerPoint Team Presentation	15 percent
Participation (attendance, in-class & journal)	20 percent

Grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

95-100	= A
90-94.9	= 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 – Issue Memo	September 29 <sup>th</sup>
Paper #2 – Issue Background Memo	October 27 <sup>th</sup>
Paper #3 – Strategic Memo & Oral Presentation	November 17 <sup>th</sup>
Group Presentations – Strategic Policy Briefing	December 1 <sup>st</sup>
Guest Speakers:	
Mike Astrue	October 6 <sup>th</sup>
Chuck Blahous	October 20 <sup>th</sup>
Dan Miller	October 27 <sup>th</sup>
Donald Marron	November 17 <sup>th</sup>

## **Course Schedule, Topics, Readings, and Activities**

Notes: (1) The first class of the semester will be on Wednesday, August 27<sup>th</sup> – all other classes will be on Monday night starting with the 2<sup>nd</sup> class on September 8<sup>th</sup>. (2) Students are expected to complete the readings and journal assignment prior to class and come prepared to discuss.

August 27	<b>WEDNESDAY CLASS - CLASS INTRODUCTION &amp; OVERVIEW</b> <b><u>Activity: Instructor &amp; Student Introductions / Discussion of Class Norms</u></b>
September 1	NO CLASS – LABOR DAY HOLIDAY
September 8	INTRODUCTION TO THE AMERICAN POLICY PROCESS Read: The Constitution of the United States. Available at: <a href="http://www.archives.gov/national-archives-experience/charters/constitution.html">http://www.archives.gov/national-archives-experience/charters/constitution.html</a> Kernell and Jacobson (Chapters 1 - 3); Kingdon (Prefaces, & Chapter 1); Birkland (Preface & Chapter 1); Theodoulou, <i>The Contemporary Language of Public Policy: A Starting Point</i> (to be handed out by Instructor)
September 15	IDEAS & IDEOLOGY & NUMBERS – PART 1 Read: Stone (Chapters 1 - 5)
September 22	IDEAS & IDEOLOGY & NUMBERS – PART 2 Read: Stone (Chapters 6 - 15)
September 29	PUBLIC OPINION, POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, INTEREST GROUPS & THE MEDIA <b>Note:</b> No Journal Entry For This Class Read: Kernell and Jacobson (Chapters 10, 13 & 14); Kingdon (Chapter 3); Birkland (Chapter 4); Iyengar & Kinder, <i>News That Matters</i> , (to be handed out by Instructor) <b><u>Activity: Paper #1 – Issue Memo Due</u></b>
October 6	INSTITUTIONS: HOW THE BUREAUCRACY AND THE JUDICIARY MAKE POLICY Read: Kernell and Jacobson (Chapters 8 & 9); Wilson, <i>Bureaucracy</i> , (Chapter 15, to be handed out by Instructor) <b>Guest Speaker: Mike Astrue, Commissioner of Social Security</b>
October 13	NO CLASS – COLUMBUS DAY HOLIDAY
October 20	INSTITUTIONS: HOW THE PRESIDENT MAKES POLICY Read: Kernell and Jacobson (Chapter 7); Kingdon (Chapter 2, pages 21 -34); Wilson, <i>Bureaucracy</i> , (Chapter 14, to be handed out by Instructor) <b>Guest Speaker: Chuck Blahous, Ph.D., Deputy Assistant to the President for Economic Policy and Deputy Director of the White House National Economic Council</b>

- October 27                    INSTITUTIONS: HOW CONGRESS MAKES POLICY  
**Note:** No Journal Entry For This Class  
Read: Kernell and Jacobson (Chapter 6); Kingdon (Chapter 2, pages 34 – 44); Birkland (Chapter 3); Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, (Chapter 13, to be handed out by Instructor)  
**Activity: Paper #2 – Background Issue Memo Due**  
*Guest Speaker: Former Congressman Dan Miller, Ph.D. (R-FL)*
- November 3                    MODELS OF THE POLICY PROCESS – PART 1  
Read: Kingdon (Chapters 4 - 6); Birkland (Chapters 2, 5 & 6); Lowi, *Distribution, Regulation, Redistribution: The Functions of Government* (to be handed out by Instructor)
- November 10                    MODELS OF THE POLICY PROCESS – PART 2  
Read: Kingdon (Chapters 7 - 9); Birkland (Chapters 7 - 9)
- November 17                    FEDERAL BUDGET POLICY PROCESS  
**Note:** No Journal Entry For This Class  
Instructor PowerPoint Presentation on Federal Budget Policy  
**Activity: Paper #3 – Strategic Memo Due & Oral Presentation**  
*Guest Speaker: Donald Marron, Ph.D., Member of the President’s Council of Economic Advisors and former Deputy Director of the Congressional Budget Office.*
- November 24                    FEDERAL TAX POLICY PROCESS  
**Note:** No Journal Entry For This Class  
Instructor PowerPoint Presentation on Federal Tax Policy
- December 1                    GROUP PRESENTATIONS, SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS  
**Activity: Course Evaluation**  
**Activity: Group Presentations**  
**Activity: End of Course Celebration**