



PPOL-517-2: PUBLIC POLICY PROCESS

Professor Jason J. Fichtner

Fall 2009

GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION:

Room: Car Barn 306
Day and Time: Mondays, 6:15 pm – 8:45 p.m.
Instructor's Phone: 202-358-6053
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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.

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 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 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 1/3rd 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:

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

Samuel Kernell & Gary Jacobsen, *The Logic of American Politics*, 3rd 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*, 3rd 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

The texts are available at the GU bookstore and also can be purchased on-line from stores such as Amazon.com, Border.com, Barnesandnoble.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.

Selected Background Readings on Social Security Reform:

“The 2009 Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance and Federal Disability Insurance Trust Fund.” (2009 Trustees Report)

<http://www.ssa.gov/OACT/TR/2009/index.html>

Social Security Advisory Board, *Social Security: The Unfolding of a Predictable Surprise*, March 2005, <http://ssab.gov/documents/RetirementSecurity.pdf>

Daniel Shapiro, “The Moral Case for Social Security Privatization,” Cato Institute, 1999.

http://www.cato.org/pub_display.php?pub_id=1624

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, “What the 2009 Trustees Report Shows About Social Security,” <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=2819>

Michael Tanner, “The 6.2 Percent Solution: A Plan for Reforming Social Security,” CATO Institute, 2004, <http://www.socialsecurity.org/pubs/ssps/ssp32.pdf>

Peter A. Diamond and Peter R. Orszag, “Saving Social Security: The Diamond-Orszag Plan,” *The Economists’ Voice*, 2005, pp. 1-8,

<http://www.brookings.edu/views/papers/orszag/200504security.pdf>

Social Security Administration, Office of the Chief Actuary, Long-Range Solvency Proposals,

<http://www.ssa.gov/OACT/solvency/index.html>

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@gmail.com.

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 Game – Commission to Reform Social Security

President Obama has appointed a commission to address the future of the Social Security program. Its charge is to make recommendations to the President on actions needed to 1) assure that Social Security continues to provide income security for older and disabled Americans; and 2) address Social Security’s projected impact on the federal deficit and restore long-term fiscal adequacy to Social Security’s financing.

You will be assigned a role as a member of the Commission to Reform Social Security. Your job will be to research the perspective of the member you portray and to participate in the meetings accordingly: presenting your view of the problem, offering your assessment of particular reform options, and promoting/negotiating/voting for recommendations that reflect the position you represent. At all times, stay in role advocating for the positions and values of the person you are role playing.

Commission Members and Responsibilities

Chair: Joe Biden, Vice President of the United States
Co-Chair: Peter Orszag, Director, Office of Management and Budget
Co-Chair: Timothy Geithner, Secretary, Department of the Treasury

These three members are responsible for organizing and running the meetings. That means preparing an agenda, assuring and airing competing points of view, and shepherding the process from development through negotiation of recommendations.

Experts:

Michael Tanner, CATO
David Walker, Peterson Foundation and former Comptroller General
Andrew Biggs, AEI
Robert Reischauer, Urban Institute
Alicia H. Munnell, Boston College
Olivia Mitchell, Wharton School / University of Pennsylvania
William Gale, Brookings Institute / Retirement Security Project
David John, Heritage Foundation / Retirement Security Project
Maya MacGuineas, New America Foundation

Experts are expected to present an overview of the issues at the Commission's first meeting, providing the basis for future discussion. They are also expected to assist the interest groups in preparing options and the members of Congress in preparing recommendations.

Interest Groups:

AARP
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
Business Roundtable
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
National Federation of Independent Business
AFL-CIO

Interest groups are expected to develop options for discussion at the Commission's second meeting, with assistance from the experts, focusing on the interests of their group. They are also expected to assist the members of Congress in preparing recommendations.

Members of Congress:

Rep. Charlie Rangel, Chairman, House Committee on Ways and Means
Rep. Dave Camp, Ranking Member, House Committee on Ways and Means
Senator Max Baucus, Chairman, Senate Finance Committee
Senator Charles Grassley, Ranking Member, Senate Finance Committee

Members of Congress are expected to develop recommendations for discussion, debate and negotiation with input from interest groups and experts. At the Commission's final meeting a vote on the recommendations will take place.

Graded Assignments

Along with Participation & the Policy Game, 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 there should be legislative action to provide for a cost of living adjustment to Social Security benefits next year. Currently, it does not appear that there will be an automatic COLA next year due to a recent period of deflation. **The written op-ed is due on October 5.** This assignment will be graded according to the quality of your written argument and understanding of the issue.

Paper #2 – Review and Analysis of “The Bill”

At this point in the course, students have been exposed to a comprehensive view of public policy process, including actors, institutions, ideology and models that explain the policy process. Steven Waldman, in “*The Bill*,” provides a case study of one of President Bill Clinton's legislative proposals from a campaign idea to law. Waldman describes the various roles and competing interests of groups, the media, Congress and the Administration as the National Public Service initiative moves along the policy process. For this assignment, you will write a paper of **no longer** than 10 single-spaced typed pages advocating a policy model that best fits Waldman's case study. Be sure to draw examples from the reading to support your position. This Review and Analysis of “*The Bill*” is **due November 16th**.

Paper #3 – Position Paper

For the final paper, you will write a position paper on Social Security reform based on the “role” you played in the policy game. From your perspective role, the paper will analyze the problem, assess options and make recommendations. Where appropriate, reference the concepts of the course readings. **Each position paper is to be no longer than 15 single-spaced typed pages and is due December 7th.**

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
Policy Game	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 – Op-Ed	October 5 th
Paper #2 – Review and Analysis of “The Bill”	November 16 th
Paper #3 – Position Paper	December 7 th
Policy Game – Commission to Reform Social Security	November 23 rd , 30 th & December 1 st

Course Schedule, Topics, Readings, and Activities

Notes: (1) The first class of the semester will be on Wednesday, September 2nd – all other classes will be on Monday night starting with the 2nd class on September 7th. (2) Students are expected to complete the readings and journal assignment prior to class and come prepared to discuss.

September 2	<i>WEDNESDAY CLASS</i> - CLASS INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW <u>Activity: Instructor & Student Introductions / Discussion of Class Norms</u>
September 7	NO CLASS – LABOR DAY HOLIDAY
September 14	INTRODUCTION TO THE AMERICAN POLICY PROCESS Read: The Constitution of the United States. Available at: http://www.archives.gov/national-archives-experience/charters/constitution.html 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 21	IDEAS & IDEOLOGY & NUMBERS – PART 1 Read: Stone (Chapters 1 - 5)
September 28	IDEAS & IDEOLOGY & NUMBERS – PART 2 Read: Stone (Chapters 6 - 15)
October 5	PUBLIC OPINION, POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, INTEREST GROUPS & THE MEDIA <u>Note:</u> 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) <u>Paper #1 – Op-Ed Due</u>
October 12	NO CLASS – COLUMBUS DAY HOLIDAY
October 19	INSTITUTIONS: HOW CONGRESS MAKES POLICY Read: Kernell and Jacobson (Chapter 6); Kingdon (Chapter 2, pages 34 – 44); Birkland (Chapter 3); Wilson, <i>Bureaucracy</i> , (Chapter 13, to be handed out by Instructor)
October 26	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)

- November 2 INSTITUTIONS: HOW THE BUREAUCRACY AND THE JUDICIARY
MAKE POLICY
Read: Kernell and Jacobson (Chapters 8 & 9); Wilson, *Bureaucracy*,
(Chapter 15, to be handed out by Instructor)
- November 9 MODELS OF THE POLICY PROCESS – PART 1 & PART 2
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)
Part 2 - Read: Kingdon (Chapters 7 - 9); Birkland (Chapters 7 - 9)
- November 16 FEDERAL BUDGET & TAX POLICY PROCESS
Note: No Journal Entry for This Class
Instructor PowerPoint Presentation on Federal Budget & Tax Policy
Paper #2 – Review and Analysis of “The Bill” Due
- November 23 POLICY GAME – COMMISSION TO REFORM SOCIAL SECURITY
(EXPERT PRESENTATIONS & OVERVIEW OF ISSUE)
Note: No Journal Entry For This Class
- November 30 POLICY GAME – COMMISSION TO REFORM SOCIAL SECURITY
(INTEREST GROUP PRESENTATIONS & POLICY OPTIONS)
Note: No Journal Entry For This Class
- December 7 POLICY GAME – COMMISSION TO REFORM SOCIAL SECURITY
(CONGRESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS, COMMISSION
RECOMMENDATION & VOTE)
WRAP-UP
Paper #3 – Position Paper Due
Course Summary, Conclusions & Evaluation
End of Course Celebration