

Public Policy Formation

POLITICAL SCIENCE 320
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Summer 2006

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Class Meets: Online

Introduction: This course provides an introduction to the study of public policy formation by providing a survey of basic public policy concepts and processes. We will look not only at the mechanics of the public policy process, but also at the various actors - those who influence or seek to influence policy. We will also focus on how the field might contribute to central theoretical issues in political science, such as democracy, representation and responsiveness as well as effectiveness and efficiency. These issues often revolve around questions of who has power and what are the relationships among institutions, rules, and norms in the allocation of the advantages and disadvantages in the policy process. This course has several objectives. Students should be able to define public policy and recognize government action/inaction on behalf of citizens; identify and compare competing explanatory models of policy formation; identify and place major political actors and institutional features of the policymaking process; critically assess policy initiatives and evaluate public policy, and finally, improve students' critical thinking regarding the policy process.

Texts:

- Kenneth Bickers and John T. Williams, *Public Policy Analysis*, 2001. Houghton Mifflin Co.
- Thomas Dye. *Top Down Policy Making*, 2001. New York: Chatham House.
- Elaine Sharp, *The Sometime Connection: Public Opinion and Social Policy*, 1999. SUNY Press
- Other Readings (available on WebCampus as PDF files):
 - 1) Cochran, Clarke E., Lawrence C. Mayer, TR Carr, and N. Joseph Cayer. 2003. American Public Policy: Chapter 4 – Economic Issues: Taxing, Spending, and Budgeting
 - 2) Stella Z. Theodoulou and Chris Kofins. 2004. Defense Policy in *The Art of the Game: Understanding American Public Policy Making*

Copies of the texts are available at the UNLV bookstore. A copy of each book has been placed on 2 hour reserve at the Lied Library

Participation: 5% of your grade will be based on your participation in the discussion board. The online discussion forum in WebCT allows students and the instructor to post messages at any time for everyone in the class to read and respond to. It will be your responsibility to check the discussion board on a regular basis and respond to the question posed by the instructor. Most of the lecture modules will have discussion board questions that will require your input.

Exams: There will be a midterm and a final exam. They will be based on the assigned readings and lectures. Late exams are not accepted except for emergency situations and the reason must be documented (police report for an accident, doctor’s letter for a serious illness on official letterhead). In regard to the observance of a religious holiday, University policy states that students must notify the instructor about anticipated absences by the last day of late registration to be assured the opportunity to make up missed work. Late exams will be marked down a full grade for every day (24 hour period) late.

Quizzes: 5 quizzes will be given during the course which will count for 20% of your overall course grade. The Quiz will usually be posted on a Friday morning at 10 am and will cover the week's readings. The quiz will need to be completed by the following Monday morning by 10am. The quiz can be started any time during that 72 hour period but you will only have 2 hours to complete the quiz once you open it. NOTE: The last quiz will be posted on Wednesday, August 9th at 10 am. It is your responsibility to continually log into WebCT to check for quizzes and announcements.

Opinion Article: Students will be required to write an op-ed piece to be submitted to a media outlet of their choice. The op-ed should be around 800 words give or take 50. It should discuss a policy issue that is timely and relevant. If you do not know what an op-ed is I recommend typing "publishing an op-ed" or "writing an op-ed" in google.com for good examples. Unlike traditional op-eds, I will require that the op-ed contain at least 4 citations to *academic sources* as evidence/validation of your point of view. See the link "Tools & Resources" on the course page for a definition of an academic source and an example of what I am looking for.

Disability Policy: The UNLV Disability Resource Center (DRC) houses the resources for students with disabilities. If you have a documented disability that may require accommodations, you will need to contact the DRC for the coordination of services. The DRC is located in the Student Services Complex (SSC), Room 137. Their numbers are: (702-895-0866/Voice; 702-895-0652/TDD). For additional information please visit <http://www.unlv.edu/studentlife/drc>.

Grading Policy: The value of each course component is as follows:

COMPONENT	DUE DATE	COURSE VALUE
Midterm	Wednesday, July 26/Due July 27- 10am	30%
Participation	N/A	5%
Five (5) Quizzes	TBA	20%
Opinion Paper	Monday. August 7 by 10am	15%
Final Exam	Friday. August 11-10am; Due 10am August 12	30%

The assignment of letter grades is as follows:

92 <= A	80-81 = B-	67-69 = D+
90-91 = A-	77-79 = C+	62-66 = D
87-89 = B+	72-76 = C	60-61 = D-
82-86 = B	70-71 = C-	> 59 = F

* Rounding at .5

COURSE CALENDAR:

DATE	LECTURE # AND TOPIC	READINGS
<i>WEEK 1</i>		
July 10, Monday	1. Introduction to Public Policy	Dye ch. 1
July 12, Wednesday	2. The Political Economy Approach to Policy	Bickers & Williams (B&W) ch. 1 & 2
July 14, Friday	3. Democracy, Political Institutions and Public Policy QUIZ 1	Dye ch. 2, 3 & B&W ch. 3
<i>WEEK 2</i>		
July 17, Monday	4. Societal Problems: Causes and Solutions	B&W ch. 4, 5
July 19, Wednesday	5. Societal Problems: Markets as Solutions	B&W ch. 6, 7
July 21, Friday	7. Policy Actors: Public Officials & Elections <i>Note: We skip lecture 6</i> QUIZ 2	Dye ch. 4
<i>WEEK 3</i>		
July 24, Monday	8. Policy Actors in a Federalist System	B&W ch. 8 & 10
July 26, Wednesday	9. Policy Actors: Interest Groups MIDTERM Available 10 am / 10 am July 27th	B&W ch. 9 & Dye Ch. 5
July 28, Friday	10. Policy Actors: The Media QUIZ 3	Dye ch. 6
<i>WEEK 4</i>		Dye Ch. 7; Sharp Ch. 1

July 31, Monday	11. Public Opinion and Policy: the Sometime Connection	
August 2, Wednesday	12. Morality Policy: Criminal Justice; Pornography; Abortion	Sharp Ch. 2, 4, 5
August 4, Friday	13. Economic Policy: Taxing and Spending – Welfare and Social Security QUIZ 4	Sharp Ch. 3, 6, 7; Cochran, et al
<i>WEEK 5</i> August 7, Monday	14. Policy Analysis Opinion Paper Due 10 am	B&W Ch. 11; Theodoulou & Kofins
August 9, Wednesday	15. Policy Implementation and Evaluation LAST QUIZ	Dye Ch. 8 & 9; B & W Ch. 12
August 11, Friday	Final Exam posted 10am - Due 8/12/06 10am	