

GENERIC SYLLABUS

PS 571—Public Policy Theory [4 credits]

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A. INTRODUCTION

This course examines approaches to the study of public policy rather than the content of public policy. Although there will be discussion of the content of policy, that content will be incidental to the discussion of public policy theory. Some policy courses examine public policy content, for example environmental or economic policy. Among other policy courses there are two basic approaches: One, not used here, is policy analysis, in which the intent is to provide tools to prepare students to formulate, implement, evaluate, or in other ways to be active participants in developing and conducting policy. The other, the focus of this course, examines public policy as an intellectual exercise, to study why and how policy is developed, applied, evaluated, and generally conducted as it is and how policies develop over time. The intent of this approach is to prepare students to be careful and creative observers of policy rather than participants in policy development, though it helps prepare students to participate.

Among the topics to be considered in this course are approaches to the study of the policy process; theoretical orientations toward such policy elements as policy tools (regulation and others, for example) and policy typologies; normative (value) and empirical issues of public policy; the role of information and values in the policy process; and others. As noted, this is not a course in policy analysis; that is, it does not teach such methods as cost-benefit analysis, though it does examine the role of such methods in the policy process.

This is a “hybrid” course with lecture, group projects, virtual discussion, and applied in-class exercises and participation.

PS 571 is a required core course for students in the Master of Public Policy

(MPP) and Water Resources Management and Policy (WRMP) programs.

B. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The course seeks to develop in students...

- A sense of alternative approaches to the examination of public policy and of their respective strengths and limits.
- Awareness of the role of interests, ideas, knowledge, uncertainties, and other factors in oneself and in others in relation to the development and consideration of public policy.
- Awareness of factors that affect whether and how topics become “problems” and get on the agendas of government for consideration
- A sense of approaches toward and tools of policy formulation and policy enactment, including the importance of language and other political elements that affect public and elite perceptions and actions.
- Recognition of the importance of policy application (implementation, and its sub-component, budgeting) and awareness of factors that affect the relative success of implementation of policy decisions.
- Awareness of the complexity of policy evaluation in terms of mixes of values, interests, competing orientations, and other factors, and of the ubiquity and effect of the evaluation of policies.
- A sense of overall trends in development of policy in advanced industrial nations, primarily the United States.
- Conceptual clarity in evaluating overall policy development, drawing on various approaches that attempt to account for those developments.
- The ability to synthesize all these to a specific area of public policy development.
- Enhanced ability to explore policy issues and to present the results of those explorations clearly, concisely, and in compelling form in written and oral communication.

C. REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Five Response Papers (20 points each), a policy theory paper (300 points), class participation (50 points), nine weekly Blackboard discussion topics (10 points each), and group presentations (50 points) are required. The grade distribution will be as follows:

- A [95-100%]
- A- [90-94%]
- B+ [87-89%]
- B [83-86%]
- B- [80-82%]

C+ [77-79%]
C [73-76%]
C- [70-72%]
D+ [67-69%]
D [63-66%]
D- [60-62%]
F [0-59%]

D. COURSE READING

All books are available through the OSU Book Store or on-line at the course Blackboard site. You also can purchase books from Amazon or Barnes & Noble, via the web (see below). Most of the course books are available in the OSU or public libraries.

Books:

- Birkland, *An Introduction to the Policy Process*, 2nd ed. (M. E. Sharpe, 2005); ISBN 0-7656-1489-8
- Domhoff, *Who Rules America?*, 6th ed. (McGraw-Hill, 2010).
- Sabatier, *Theories of the Policy Process*, 2nd ed. (Westview, 2007); ISBN 0-8133-4359-3
- Stone, *Policy Paradox: The Art of Policy Decisions Making*, rev. 3rd ed. (Norton, 2002); ISBN 0-393-97625-4

Web Readings and External Links:

- There are numerous required articles, chapters and external web links required. All readings are located under “Web Readings” and “External Links” located at the course Blackboard site.

E. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

- On all graded assignments, do not write your name. Instead, in the upper right corner of the first page indicate your ID number, the assignment name, and the date you are submitting it.
- I prefer that you type single-spaced, with a line between paragraphs, with 1-inch margins on all sides.
- Do not use a cover (plastic or similar) on any written assignment.
- Guidelines for paper length are indicated below for response papers and policy theory paper. These are approximate and are estimates of what might be required to respond adequately to the elements of the

assignment. Concise responses are graded more highly than longer, less clearly written responses.

- Each paper should be carefully written and proof read. I suggest that you use a spell and grammar checker.
- Citations to course readings should use simply the author and page number(s), in parentheses after using that material (quotation, paraphrase, or any other use). Use APA style whenever possible.
- Citations of non-course material should be complete: Author, Title, edition if 2nd or later (City: Publisher, year) or complete address from web sites used, either using footnotes or parenthetical references and citations at end.
- Number the pages on all assignments, for ease in my commenting and to be sure pages are in correct order.

F. COURSE POLICY

- Late assignments will be penalized 5 points each day late. This policy will be strictly enforced. By definition, "late" means any assignment submitted after the scheduled class period.
- Extra credit will not be allowed in this course.
- All OSU academic regulations will be followed in this course. This includes the university policy concerning incompletes: "When a requirement of a course has not been completed for reasons acceptable to the instructor and the rest of the academic work is passing, a report of I may be made and additional time granted. The I is only granted at the discretion of the instructor."
- You are expected to do all required reading and participate in all course requirements.
- Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated in this course. Engaging in such behaviors will result in a failing course grade. You are to do ALL of your own work. Plagiarism is defined as representing (and using) another person's ideas, writings, and work as one's own. Appropriate citation must be used for all materials incorporated into your work.
- Proper spelling, grammar, and citation should be used in all assignments.

G. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The following criteria will be used for evaluating written assignments. There is also a separate evaluation rubric for the final policy theory paper (see course Blackboard site):

- COMMITMENT-did you cover all relevant materials/questions?
- AMBITION-did you take each issue to task?
- ENGAGEMENT-did you make connections between issues?
- CLARITY-was the work readable and well organized?
- READINGS/COURSE MATERIALS-did you use appropriate reading and other course materials in your work?
- COMPARISON-in general, how did your work compare to the rest of the class?
- DIRECTIONS-a "no brainer" here. Did you follow directions?

H. ASSIGNMENTS

All assignments and instructions are located at the "Assignments" link on the left-side menu.

- Response Papers (#5 x 20 points each) 100 points possible
- Policy Theory Paper 300 points possible
- Group Presentation 50 points possible
- Class Participation 20 points possible
- Weekly Blackboard Discussion (#8 x 10 points each) 80 points possible

I. TOPICS AND READING SCHEDULE

This lists reading assignments and summarizes due dates for the various course requirements. The course books have different perspectives therefore different uses in the course:

- Birkland, *An Introduction to the Policy Process*: This provides a useful introductory discussion of main elements of the course, including the various "stages" of policy.
- Domhoff, *Who Rules America*: Provides a sociological macro-framework for analyzing the policy process and power relationships in the U.S. context from a class perspective (although much of this framework could be applied to other countries as well).

- Sabatier, *Theories of the Policy Process*: This book provides an excellent overview of the mostly mid-level policy theories including but not limited to institutional rational choice, social construction, punctuated equilibrium and the advocacy coalition framework. It also provides an overview of comparative policy theory.

- Stone, *Policy Paradox*: She develops some core topics, especially policy goals and tools, in more detail and with more illustrative material than other course books. Read for basic concepts, not details. She includes one or two tables in most chapters as excellent summaries after you have read the chapter.

WEEKS 1 and 2: January 5 and 12

Introduction

- Introductions
- Syllabus
- Overview of Theories and Frameworks
- Handout, Policy Introduction (Blackboard)
- Gabriel Almond, Discipline Divided Handout (Blackboard)
- Handout, Political Continuum (Blackboard)
- Handout on Macro Theory, Models of the State (Blackboard)
- Winters and Page, "Oligarchy in the United States?" (Blackboard)
- Macro Policy Theory links (Blackboard: "External Links")
- Steel, "Dynamic Social, Economic and Political Context of Policy Change" (PPT; Blackboard)

Discussion leader: Prof. Steel

WEEK 3: January 19

Issues and Approaches to the Study of Public Policy

- Sabatier, *Theories of the Policy Process*, ch 1
- Stone, *Policy Paradox*, Preface, Introduction and ch 1
- Birkland, *Introduction to the Policy Process*, Preface and ch 1
- Anderson, *Public Policymaking*, ch 1 (Blackboard)
- Gerston, *Public Policymaking in a Democratic Society*, ch 1 (Blackboard)

Due: First RP due for all students

Discussion leaders:

WEEK 4: January 26

The Context and Participants in the Public Policy Process

- Stone, Policy Paradox, Part II
- Birkland, Introduction to the Policy Process, chs 2, 3, 4 and Appendix and skim Glossary and References
- Domhoff, Who Rules America? chs 1, 2 & 3
- Steel et al., Interest Group and Industry Tactics in Federal Forestry Policy (Blackboard)
- Steel et al., "NGOs and the Development of Civil Society in Bulgaria and the U.S.: A Comparative Analysis" (Blackboard)

Due: Initial Policy Theory Paper statement due

Discussion leaders:

WEEK 5: February 2

Political Power and Agenda Setting

- Stone, Policy Paradox, Part III
- Birkland, Introduction to the Policy Process, chs 5 and 6
- Domhoff, Who Rules America?, chs 4, 5 & 6

Discussion leaders:

WEEK 6: February 9

Policy Development: Participants, Goals, Solutions, Tools

- Stone, Policy Paradox, Part IV and Conclusion
- Birkland, Introduction to the Policy Process, ch 7
- Domhoff, Who Rules America?, ch 7

Due: Week 7 RP due for all students

Discussion leaders:

WEEK 7: February 16

Public Policy Theory: Institutional Rational Choice; Multiple Streams and Social Construction

- Sabatier, Theories of the Policy Process, chs 2, 3 & 4
- Ostrom, Public Choice Theory and Institutional Analysis (Blackboard)
- Schneider and Ingram, Social Construction of Target Populations

(Blackboard)

- Czech et al., Social Construction, Political Power and the Allocation of Benefits to Endangered Species (Blackboard)

Discussion leaders:

WEEK 8: February 23 [This will be a virtual class via Blackboard]

Public Policy Theory: Policy Networks and Subsystems; Symbolic Politics

- Sabatier, Theories of the Policy Process, chs 5, 6 & 7
- Weibel and Sabatier, Comparing Policy Networks (Blackboard)
- Ellison, The Advocacy Coalition Framework and Implementation of the ESA (Blackboard)
- Steel, Saving Wild Salmon: Moving from Symbolic Politics to Effective Policy (Blackboard)

Discussion leaders:

WEEK 9: March 2

Comparative Public Policy Theory

- Sabatier, Theories of the Policy Process, chs 8 & 9
- Dolowitz and Marsh, Who Learns from Whom (Blackboard)
- Skocpol, Bringing the State Back In (Blackboard)

Discussion leaders:

WEEK 10: March 9

Examining and Explaining Long-Term Policy Trends and Reconsideration of Policy Models and Approaches

- Birkland, Introduction to the Policy Process, ch 9
- Sabatier, Theories of the Policy Process, chs 10 & 11
- Domhoff, Who Rules America?, ch 8 & 9

Discussion leaders:

Science, Scientists and Public Policy

- Steel et al., Science, Scientists and Environmental Politics and Policy (introductory chapter; Blackboard).
- Scott et al., The Science-Policy Interface (Blackboard)
- Steel et al., Ideology and Scientific Credibility (Blackboard)

- Davis and Howden-Chapman, Translating Research Findings into Health Policy (Blackboard)

Discussion leader: Prof Steel

Due: Policy Theory Paper

J. POLICY-RELATED WEB SITES

In doing policy theory paper and for general monitoring of public policy issues and developments, I encourage students to use the World Wide Web to supplement print media. Useful starting points for using the Web to locate policy-related materials, each containing links to other relevant sites, are:

- Links to public policy and political science programs:
<http://www.movingideas.org/links/pollinks.html> (this is part of an excellent set of links: <http://www.movingideas.org/links/>)
- Probably the best starting point for general searches:
<http://www.yahoo.com>, especially government subdirectory; see also the excellent links to many web sites by the NY Times, <http://www.nytimes.com/navigator>
- Two extremely useful reference (data of many kinds and other useful materials) are <http://www.refdesk.com/> and <http://www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/stats.html>, which provides a huge number of links to a wide variety of reference sources.
- An excellent policy web site is Public Agenda Online, which is available at <http://www.publicagenda.org/index.htm>; I strongly recommend that you visit this site when doing your research.
- Excellent starting points about current political developments:
<http://www.washingtonpost.com> and also <http://www.nytimes.com> (the NYT site may not be accessible from all computers because of “registration” requirement [no charge]); also see also <http://www.politicaljunkie.com> and <http://politicalwire.com/>; the New York Times also has an excellent political web site link section, http://www.nytimes.com/ref/politics/POLI_NAVI.html
- A very good policy issue starting point:
<http://www.library.vanderbilt.edu/romans/pubpol.html>

- An excellent media starting point is: <http://www.newslink.org>, with links to newspapers, magazines, radio-TV
- An excellent starting point for a broad range of views on current news is: <http://fullcoverage.yahoo.com/fc>
- Some specific media sites are: <http://www.cnn.com>; <http://www.abcnews.com>; <http://www.cbs.com>; and <http://www.msnbc.com/news>
- Some ideological (conservative-liberal) policy-related sites are: <http://www.movingideas.org> (with numerous links to other organizations, not only liberal ones); the most influential conservative think tanks: <http://www.aei.org> and <http://www.heritage.org>; also conservative: <http://www.nationalcenter.org>.
- Excellent starting point for many kinds of data: <http://www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/stats.html>. Some specific sub-sections are listed below; this site is absolutely indispensable as a data starting point! Also a very good data starting point is <http://dpls.dacc.wisc.edu/newcrossroads/index.asp>
- Useful starting points for seeking US government data: <http://www.firstgov.gov>; <http://www.fedstats.gov>; and <http://www.infoctr.edu/fwl>
- Other useful data sources are: Statistical Abstract: <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/statistical-abstract-02.html>; guide to government data bases: Green Book (very important source about welfare and related topics): <http://www.utdallas.edu/~jargo/green2000/contents.html>; nearly all items from the 2003 Green Book are available at this web site: <http://waysandmeans.house.gov/Documents.asp?section=813>; other data sources are available at this site: <http://www.execpc.com/~helberg/statistics.html>; and <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/libraries/indiv/dsc/stats/us.html>
- Economics data: current: <http://www.bls.gov/bls/other.htm>; other data: <http://www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/stecon.html>; <http://www.dismal.com/store/default.asp>; <http://netec.wustl.edu/>; <http://economics.about.com/library/weekly/bl-a-to-z.htm>; <http://epinet.org/datazone/dznational.html>; economic indicators (published

monthly, with the most recent economic data):

<http://www.access.gpo.gov/congress/eibrowse/broecind.html>; Economic Report of the President (available for years 1995 to current), <http://w3.access.gpo.gov/eop/>; other historical economic data are available at the Economic History web site, <http://www.eh.net/>; concerning taxes see <http://www.taxpolicycenter.org/>

- Budget data are available from the Congressional Budget Office, <http://www.cbo.gov/> and from the Office of Management and Budget (President), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/fy2005/>
- Some useful “think tanks:” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities: <http://www.cbpp.org>; Brookings Institution: www.brook.edu; Joint Center for Poverty Research: <http://www.jcpr.org/index.html>; Citizens for Tax Justice www.ctj.org vs. Americans for Tax Reform <http://www.atr.org>; Cato Institute (libertarian): <http://www.cato.org>; Urban Institute: <http://www.urban.org> (some sites listed under economics data links above show other “think tanks”)
- Several sets of links to think tanks: <http://www.nira.go.jp/linke/tt-link>; <http://www.csuchico.edu/~kcfount/thinktanks.html>; a University of Michigan site: <http://www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/psthink.html>; a listing by types of policy concerns (advocacy): <http://reinert.creighton.edu/advocacy>; see also the Washington Post “ideas industry” web site, which contains interesting discussions: <http://washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/politics/fedpage/columns/ideasindustry/index.html>; the Yahoo links to think tanks are http://dir.yahoo.com/Social_Science/Political_Science/Public_Policy/Institutes/ and http://dir.yahoo.com/Social_Science/Political_Science/Public_Policy/Organizations/
- The official Paul Krugman web site is <http://www.wws.princeton.edu/~pkrugman/>; another site with links to Krugman materials is www.pkarchive.org/; a conservative anti-Krugman web site is http://www.nationalreview.com/nrof_luskin/luskin-archive.asp; see also (by the same author, Donald Luskin) <http://www.poorandstupid.com/chronicle.asp>
- A very good source of recent opinion data is Polling Report: <http://www.pollingreport.com>; also see Gallup Organization polls: <http://www.gallup.com/> (parts require subscription, so are not accessible; if you need data, I have a subscription); Pew Center has excellent data

about many public issues: Pew Research Center for the People and the Press: <http://www.people-press.org>

- The Washington Post not only maintains its own polling web site—<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/polls/vault/vault.htm>—but also includes links to numerous other poll web sites: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/polls/datadir.htm>. Also, its media analyst, Howard Kurtz, is useful to show “conventional wisdom,” at <http://washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/politics/onlineextra/medianotes>
- Probably the best starting point for public opinion information is: <http://members.bellatlantic.net/~abelson/>; also <http://www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/stpolisc/html/#opinion>, excellent on a range of topics.
- Project Vote Smart (formerly headquartered in Corvallis; excellent on domestic politics): <http://www.vote-smart.org>
- Two web book companies, both of which have information and reviews of books relevant to this course: Amazon <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/subst/home/home.html>—and Barnes and Noble <http://www.barnesandnoble.com>
- I encourage you to sample magazines of opinion, from several ideological perspectives. Among many openly ideological sites are: *Conservative:* Washington Times <http://www.washtimes.com>; National Review <http://www.nationalreview.com> and American Spectator <http://amspec.org>; *Liberal:* Mother Jones <http://www.motherjones.com>; The Nation <http://www.thenation.com>; Salon (sometimes liberal but contains a mix of views): <http://www.salonmagazine.com>; *Hard to classify though generally left:* <http://www.consortiumnews.com> and <http://www.wsws.org/sections/category/news/govt-us.shtml>.
- The Wall Street Journal editorial page is very conservative, though its news pages do not usually reflect this. The WSJ has a subscription web site but those who do not subscribe can access some items through the “Political Wire” page, <http://politicalwire.com/>. The Newslink web site listed above provides lists of other relevant publications.

Note: Students with documented disabilities who may need accommodations, who have any emergency medical information the instructor should know, or who need special arrangements in the event of

evacuation, should make an appointment with the instructor as early as possible (use email for this class), no later than the first week of the term. In order to arrange alternative testing the student should make the request at least one week in advance of the test. Students seeking accommodations should be registered with the Office of Services for Students with disabilities.