This course is intended as a seminar cum workshop in which we will examine the interplay between politics and policy in a variety of domestic policy areas. It’s axiomatic in a democracy that policy-making and politics are intimately related. In order to implement policy changes effectively, decision makers have to develop program constituencies and legislative coalitions, secure stable sources of funding, and get a variety of governmental and nongovernmental organizations to change the way they deliver services or manage their own activities. This is particularly difficult in the American federal system, where power and revenue sources are divided in complex and changing ways between federal, state, and local governments, as well as between legislatures, courts and executives.

In keeping with its location in a public administration department, the course will focus less on theories of these processes and more on particular concrete cases. This focus is intended to provide you, as an aspiring decision maker, with the skills necessary to use politics effectively to realize your policy goals and to understand how policy changes are frequently used to serve political ends.

Class Format

Rather than the usual readings/exams format, the major activities in this class will take place by a set of interrelated analyses performed over the course of the semester by student groups around a set of current, on-going policy and political debates in New York. While New York has its limitations as a source of case material, its politics and policy making processes are broadly representative of those in other large, industrialized states and are significantly better documented than most others. It should also be remembered that New York has been labelled as the most dysfunctional political system in the country and as one of the most corrupt states in the country according to multiple studies. It should also be remembered that most major policy areas have a distinctly intergovernmental dimension to them which you should incorporate into your analysis. There will be reading/lectures/discussions in class that will be of broad interest to all the involved groups, but there will be no separate examination on this material unless it’s apparent that it’s being blown off in which case separate exams will be instituted.
The “deliverables” for this course are three medium-length (8-10 pages) analyses of the following topics in your selected area:

1. Organizational/stakeholder analysis (25%)—This deliverable will describe the public service/other organizations active in your area, analyze what kinds of services/activities are being performed by each, whose money is getting spent by whom and where, and describe the major constituencies for activities—providers, advocacy groups, unions, etc—the positions they usually favor, and their degree of relative influence.
2. Policy debates (25%)—This deliverable will analyze the major on-going policy debates in your area and assess their substantive merits and demerits.
3. Outlook (40%)—This deliverable will have two parts, one written and one class presentation to your colleagues which will assess the political and substantive outlook for the changes proposed or underway in your area. Are the proposed changes politically do-able, who’s likely to support or oppose them, and how likely are they to achieve their substantive goals?

The remainder of your grade will be an evaluation of your individual performance in contributing to the group’s endeavors from your colleagues and me.

There are several major policy areas that might be chosen:

1. K-12 Education—This area is year in and year out one of the most contentious in every legislative session. Recent on-going debates have been about charter schools and the Common Core standards and the “opt-out” movement that’s become widespread recently. Membership on the Board of Regents has recently changed considerably, and the state Education Commissioner has been replaced. This comes after the legislature has imposed a property tax growth cap and slowed up the rate of growth in state support for local school districts.
2. Medicaid Redesign — Medicaid is the largest single item in the state budget and a source of funding for a wide range of state human service activities. The state has been engaged in a long term effort to move clients who are mentally ill or developmentally disabled out of large state operated institutions and into home and community based programs. The state has also attempted to close up state institutions and move all Medicaid patients into some form of managed care.
3. Upstate Economic Development—Just about every state has some sort of effort underway to use universities into “economic drivers” that will stimulate the creation of new jobs around some form of science or technology that grows out of university research. New York’s version of this effort has involved new facilities and very large subsidies for companies that set up shop around universities. Another upstate economic development initiative has been the authorization of multiple casino licenses in both upstate and downstate areas.
4. Disaster Recovery and Climate Change—The process of rebuilding after Hurricane Sandy has been framed, both locally and nationally, as part of the process of responding to climate change. Climate change has been controversial as an issue and the appropriate response is a matter of some considerable debate, with rather large stakes.
5. **Cybersecurity**—One policy area that’s currently in flux in both Washington and most state capitals is who’s in charge of what in this area, which is getting more play than it once did. This is a major growth area, and a lot of different agencies want a piece of this turf.

6. **Infrastructure Financing**—New York’s roads, bridges, and public transportation systems are generally agreed to be in poor condition, but financing to fix them has been scarce. Gas tax revenue hasn’t been growing and the federal highway transit trust fund is slated to run out of money shortly. This has forced states to resort to creative financing for such projects as the Tappan Zee bridge.

Other areas are possible if there is a critical mass of student interest.

The outline for the semester is roughly as follows: We’ll spend the first several class periods talking about the political, economic, and budgetary context in New York and getting you started on your projects. Once you are oriented in your area and have a clear direction for your group, we’ll shift focus in class and talk about more general issues, with you contributing from your perspective as appropriate. The last class period will be set aside for presentation of your final product.

**September 1—Introduction and Housekeeping**

**September 8—Stakeholder Analysis**


Harriet Bulkeley “Discourse Coalitions and the Australian Climate Change Policy Network”

**Note:** Those of you who are PADP students have seen this stuff before, either in 500, David Andersen’s version of 504, or Erika Martin’s policy analysis class. If you have these readings/class notes, etc please share them with your teammates from other programs.
**September 15—Economic and Budget Basics—The setting for policy making**

Center for Urban Future, “The Impact of the Global Economy on New York State and City” (2011)—

Michael DeLa Merced “Eastman Kodak Files for Bankruptcy” New York Times (January 19, 2012)

Office of the State Comptroller, “The Securities Industry in New York City” (October, 2011)—on line at
http://www.osc.state.ny.us/osdc/rpt12-2012.pdf

State Budget Crisis Task Force New York Report On line report at:

**September 22—Political Basics**


Rockefeller Institute of Government. “Giving and Getting: Regional Distribution of Revenue and Spending in the New York State Budget, Fiscal Year 2009-2010”

(http://www.rockinst.org/observations/wardr/2012-04-local_crisis.aspx)

The schedule for the balance of the semester is open for discussion. I have found that in classes like this, time to meet in class is often very helpful and allows me to keep tabs on how groups are doing, particularly in the early stages. We will schedule the deliverables later in the semester.