Office Hours:
Monday, Wednesday and Friday 11:30 to 12:30 am Contact Office or by appointment. 442-5285 or rn382@csc.albany.edu

Course Description:
This is a course in the policy process. It is organized along the conventionally accepted sequence that begins with agenda setting and moves through policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. While a simplification of how the world works, this sequence offers a convenient and useful way of dividing issues and problems into manageable bits for analysis and instruction.

There are two distinct perspectives found in the policy process literature. The first is one from political science and stresses the primacy of politics in raising issues for consideration, in shaping preferences, and determining which choices are made. This view seeks to explain why things happen the way they do. The other is a more rationalistic and prescriptive view drawn from economics and is more concerned with making efficient choices and improving outcomes. Both perspectives will be incorporated into the course because they both influence the way we think about and seek to influence the policy process.

We will begin with the question of where political problems come from or how issues get on the public agenda. A variety of models will be discussed at this point including: incrementalist, garbage can, market and government failure perspectives. In the policy formulation section which is about how policy decisions get made, we will cover topics ranging from the rudiments of policy and risk analysis, available policy tools, and major generic arguments typically found in policy debates. We will conclude with a review of the elements and issues encountered during policy implementation and evaluation.

Required Readings:


In addition, there are readings on ERSERVE under this course number.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Exams (40%). 2 in class exams at the times indicated under Weekly Assignments. These exams will cover both the readings and lectures. They are intended to test your knowledge of the materials and not your general intelligence or background. If you don’t do the reading and understand the lectures, you won’t pass the exams.

2. Term paper (40%). This paper will require you to choose a policy and answer the following questions about it explicitly using and citing the course materials. (1) How did the policy get on the elite agenda? (2) What was the process for deciding on it (passing a law? Making an administrative decision? What?) and (3) how did the process shape the outcome in implementation and evaluation? Papers that merely talk about the policy and do not make use of the course materials will not receive a passing grade. You must choose a topic and be prepared to discuss the topic and likely sources with me during my office hours on the dates indicated.

3. Discussion questions via e mail (15%). 4 sets. You are expected to submit three discussion questions based on the readings by midnight on the dates indicated in the weekly assignments. These assignments will be graded high pass, pass, lo pass, fail.

4. Class participation (includes attendance) (5%). This is not intended to be simply a lecture class. You are expected to participate in a knowledgeable fashion during class discussions. The participation component will make a difference of a half a grade (up or down).

Honesty Policy

The usual standards of conduct prohibiting cheating will apply. Papers are expected to cite the source materials and expected to be more than mere cutting and pasting of those materials. You are required to submit the papers in electronic form so that they can be checked for originality.
Weekly Assignments
Policy Process

INTRODUCTION TO THE POLICY PROCESS
Week 1
Introduction. Monday, August 31
No assignment

Stages of the Policy Process. Wednesday, September 2
Thomas Birkland, An Introduction To The Policy Process
1. The Study and Practice of Public Policy
2. The Historical and Structural Context of Public Policy Making

Week 2
Stages of the Process continued….Monday, Sept. 7  NO CLASS (Labor Day)
Nakamura, The Textbook Policy Process ERESERVE

FIRST DISCUSSION QUESTIONS COVERING READINGS FOR SEPT. 7 AND 9 DUE BY MIDNIGHT TUESDAY, SEPT. 8.

Actors, Roles and Motivations in the Policy Process. Wed., Sept. 9
Thomas Birkland, An Introduction To The Policy Process
Birkland, Chapter 3. Official Actors and Their Roles in Public Policy
Birkland, Chapter 4. Unofficial Actors and Their Roles in Public Policy

AGENDA SETTING: Agenda Setting: Political and Rationalistic Models

Week 3
Introduction to Agenda Setting. Mon., Sept. 14
Birkland, Chapter 5. Agenda Setting, Power, and Interest Groups
Lindblom, The Science of Muddling Through ERESERVE

SECOND SET OF DISCUSSION QUESTIONS DUE COVERING READINGS THROUGH SEPT. 16 BY MIDNIGHT, TUESDAY, SEPT. 15.

John Kingdon, Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies (first half)

Week 4
The Political Model continued. Mon., Sept. 21 Defining Problems in a Synoptic Model
Kingdon, Agendas…. (second half)
Rationalistic Models of Agenda Setting:  Starting with Market Failure, Wed., Sept. 23
Weimer and Vining, Market Failure ERESERVE

Week 5
A Rationalistic Model Starting with Government Failure.  Mon., Sept. 28
Weimer and Vining, Government Failure ERESERVE

Taking Stock, Wed., Sept. 30
No assignment

Week 6
FIRST HOUR EXAM. Monday, Oct. 5

MAKING CHOICES: POLICY FORMULATION AND POLICY TOOLS

Birkland, 6. Policies and Policy Types

Week 7 ANALYSIS OF RISK
John Graham, selection from Risk vs. Risk, ERESERVE

THIRD SET OF DISCUSSION QUESTIONS DUE COVERING READINGS THROUGH OCT. 14, BY MIDNIGHT OCT. 13.

POLICY TOOLS
Elmore and McDonnell ERESERVE
Birkland, 7. Policy Design and Policy Tools

Week 8 POLICY SHAPES POLITICS

Policy Types and Politics. Mon., Oct. 19
Lowi ERESERVE
Nakamura and Church, section on Regulatory policy tools ERESERVE

Taking Stock. Wed., Oct. 21
No assignment

POLICY ANALYSIS AND THE POLICY DEBATE

Policy Analysis Week 9

Policy Preferences and Rent Seeking Behavior. Mon., Oct. 26
George Stigler, Theory of Economic Regulation ERESERVE
POLITICAL STAKES IN POLICY MAKING
George Stigler, Theory of Economic Regulation (ERESERVE)

Week 10

FOURTH SET OF DISCUSSION QUESTIONS DUE COVERING READINGS FROM NOV. 2 TO NOV. 4. QUESTIONS DUE BY MIDNIGHT, NOV. 1

Generic Rationales in the Policy Debate. Mon., Nov. 2
Start Hirschman, The Rhetoric of Reaction

Policy Debate, Wed., Nov. 4
Finish Hirschman, The Rhetoric of Reaction

Week 11
Making the Decision: Policy Formulation. Mon. Nov. 9
Nakamura Policy Formulation
Birkland, Chapter 8. Policy Implementation and Policy Failure
Birckland, Chapter 9. Putting It All Together: Models of the Policy Process

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

Policy choices and implementation issues, Wed., Nov. 11
Salamon, selection.
Nakamura and Smallwood, Environment of Implementation ERESERVE

Week 12
Implementation and Evaluation, Mon., Nov. 16
Nakamura and Smallwood, Policy Evaluation

SECOND HOUR EXAM. Wed., Nov. 18

MANDATORY APPOINTMENTS TO DISCUSS TERM PAPER Friday, Nov. 19.

Week 13
Taking Stock. Mon., Nov. 23
MANDATORY APPOINTMENTS TO DISCUSS TERM PAPER

Wed., Nov. 25 NO CLASS

Week 14
Mon., Nov. 30
Wed., Dec. 2
Week 15
Final paper due (in both hard copy and electronic form). Mon., Dec. 5