RPOS 513: Public Policy Field Seminar

Fall Semester 2009
Tuesdays, 5.45-8.35pm in DR0105
Instructor: Dr Holly Jarman
Email: hjarman@albany.edu
Office Hours: 304 Milne Hall, Tue 4.30-5.30, please email for appointments at other times.

Course Summary

This course introduces students to public policy and the policy process in the United States and other selected countries. In it, we focus on important theories of how policymaking works: from pressures on legislators to make policy, adapt policy, implement it, and the effect it has on citizens’ individual lives. We take a broad overview of the classics as well as look at new directions in contemporary policy research. This course is recommended for students who are interested in understanding how the policy process works in the US and elsewhere, and public policy students looking for theoretical background.

The course focuses on you as trainee policy analysts and academics. By the end of the course you should have an overall understanding of where the study of public policy came from, where it is heading, and how articles and books on public policy are constructed, as well as a greater understanding of public policy in your specific area of interest.

Learning Objectives of Social Science Courses

1. Social science courses enable students to demonstrate an understanding that human conduct and behavior more generally are subject to scientific inquiry.
2. Social science courses enable students to demonstrate an understanding of the difference between rigorous and systematic thinking and uncritical thinking about social phenomena.
3. Social science courses enable students to demonstrate an understanding of the kinds of questions social scientists ask and the ways they go about answering these questions.
4. Social science courses enable students to demonstrate knowledge of the major concepts, models, and issues of at least one discipline in the social sciences.
5. Social science courses enable students to demonstrate an understanding of the methods social scientists use to explore social phenomena, such as observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, employment of mathematical analysis, employment of interpretive analysis.
Required Texts

The books listed below are available for purchase at Mary Jane Books. Other readings and articles assigned will be available via Blackboard.


Course Requirements

Please come prepared. Complete the readings and come to class ready to discuss, debate and disagree with the arguments they contain, with your fellow classmates, and me! I have combined classic literature with new studies – I would encourage you to explore these and buy the ones that you enjoy most. This reading list is a flexible one – if you come across contemporary public policy books or articles that particularly interest you, I am happy to discuss spending some class time on them, provided that enough people in the group are keen to do so.

There are no prerequisites for this course. The course is graded A-E. Formal requirements, in addition to full participation in class discussion on the basis of the assigned readings, are:

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<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>4 Article/Book Reviews</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Plan</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<td>Participation (performance as Presenter, performance as Discussant)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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**4 Article/Book Reviews:** During the semester you must write four short reviews, no more than 3 pages each. Choose one or more books or articles from the course and provide your own evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses. For inspiration, read book and article reviews in good political science journals. You can choose any weeks of the course that you like, but reviews are due **at the beginning of class for that week, and should be posted on Blackboard.** Marking criteria for the reviews will be posted on Blackboard and we can discuss them in class as necessary.

**Research Plan:** As a final assessment you are required to submit a short research plan for any public policy topic of your choice. Although you obviously won’t be carrying out the research, the project described should be of a scale appropriate for a single researcher with limited resources (e.g. a PhD or Masters student). Detailed information about what the plan should contain will be made available on Blackboard and we can discuss any questions you have in class. You will start by creating a series of short answers to research questions and flesh out the plan as the semester progresses. You will have two opportunities to get feedback on your plan by
handed a draft to me in class, which will be returned with comments. The final plan is then due at the end of term.

First feedback deadline: September 22nd
Second feedback deadline: October 27th
Deadline for final paper: December 1st

Class Participation: In our first meeting, we will assign two people to lead the discussion in each week. The first presenter will comment on the themes and argument from the readings. The second presenter will pick one of the readings and analyze its structure: how was the research done, how is the evidence presented, what are the strengths and weaknesses of this approach, etc. The number of presentations you make will depend on the final class size, but you should be prepared to make at least one presentation of each kind. Presentations should be about 15 minutes long. PowerPoint is not necessary, but presenters should provide a short handout for the rest of the class to follow.

Both presenters are required to submit two or three possible discussion questions to Blackboard by midnight on the Monday before our Tuesday class. The questions should be interesting and engaging questions that you would feel comfortable leading in class discussion.

Class Schedule

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Deadlines</th>
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<tr>
<td>September 1st</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 8th</td>
<td>What is public policy?</td>
<td>First Deadline for Feedback</td>
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<td>September 15th</td>
<td>Approaches: Stages &amp; Cycles</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 22nd</td>
<td>Approaches: Issues &amp; Networks</td>
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<td>September 29th</td>
<td>Agenda Setting</td>
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<td>October 6th</td>
<td>Policy Formation</td>
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<td>October 13th</td>
<td>Decision-making</td>
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<td>October 20th</td>
<td>Explaining Policy Stasis</td>
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<td>October 27th</td>
<td>Explaining Policy Change</td>
<td>Second Deadline for Feedback</td>
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<td>November 3rd</td>
<td>Implementation</td>
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<td>November 10th</td>
<td>Citizenship and Democracy</td>
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<td>November 17th</td>
<td>Ethical Dilemmas</td>
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<td>November 24th</td>
<td>Policymaking Across Borders</td>
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<td>December 1st</td>
<td>Technology &amp; the Future of Policy</td>
<td>Final Paper Deadline</td>
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September 8th: What is Public Policy and Why Do We Study It?


PA Sabatier, Theories of the Policy Process, Chapter 1.

**September 15th:** Approaches to Public Policy I: Stages & Cycles


**September 22nd:** Approaches to Public Policy II: Issues & Networks

H Heclo, “Issue Networks and the Executive Establishment”, excerpt on Blackboard.

**September 29th:** Agenda Setting


**October 6th:** Policy Formation


**October 13th:** Decision-making

**October 20th: The Effects of Policy: Explaining Policy Stasis**


**October 27th: The Effects of Policy: Explaining Policy Change**


**November 3rd: Implementation**


**November 10th: We the People: Citizenship and Democracy**


November 17th: Navigating Ethical Dilemmas


November 24th: Policymaking Across Borders


December 1st: Technology & the Future of Policy