RPOS 513: Public Policy Field Seminar

Fall Semester 2008  
Tuesdays, 5.45-8.30pm in DR105  
Instructor: Holly Jarman  
Email: hjarman@albany.edu  
Office Hours:  
Contact Office, B16 Humanities, Mon & Wed 9.30-10.30  
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. In it, we focus on important theories of how policymaking works in the United States 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 American politics broadly or policy students looking for theoretical background.

The course focuses on you as trainee 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.

Required Texts

The books listed below are available for purchase at online retailers such as Amazon.com and the university bookstore. In addition, 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:

4 Article/Book Reviews  40%
Research Plan          40%
Participation (performance as Presenter, performance as Discussant) 20%

4 Article/Book Reviews: During the semester you must write four short reviews, no more than 4
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. 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 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 handing 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 23rd
Second feedback deadline: November 4th
Deadline for final paper: December 2nd

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. We do not have a computer in the classroom, so 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 by email possible discussion questions to me 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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<th>Date</th>
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<th>Deadlines</th>
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<td><strong>August 26th</strong></td>
<td>What is public policy?</td>
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<td>September 2nd</td>
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<td>September 9th</td>
<td>Approaches: Stages &amp; Cycles</td>
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<td>September 16th</td>
<td>Approaches: Issues &amp; Networks</td>
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<td>September 23rd</td>
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<td>October 7th</td>
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<td>October 14th</td>
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<td>November 4th</td>
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<td>November 11th</td>
<td>Citizenship and Democracy</td>
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<td>November 25th</td>
<td>Policymaking Between Governments</td>
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<td>December 2nd</td>
<td>Favorite Articles</td>
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### August 26th: What is Public Policy and Why Do We Study It?


***SEPT 2ND NO CLASS***

### September 9th: Approaches to Public Policy I: Stages & Cycles


### September 16th: Approaches to Public Policy II: Issues & Networks


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

September 23rd: Agenda Setting


***SEPT 30TH NO CLASS***

October 7th: Policy Formulation


October 14th: Decisionmaking


October 21st: The Effects of Policy: Explaining Policy Stasis


October 28th: The Effects of Policy: Explaining Policy Change


**November 4th: Implementation**


Robert Nakamura and Thomas Church, *Cleaning Up the Mess*, Brookings Institution Press.


**November 11th: We the People: Citizenship and Democracy**


**November 18th: Navigating Ethical Dilemmas**


**November 25th: Policymaking Across Borders**


**December 2nd: Conclusions, Favorite Articles**

Today we will discuss your favorite articles.