RPOS/RPAD 140: INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC POLICY
FALL 2015

Class Meetings:
T/Th: 1:15pm-2:35pm (ES 241)

Discussion Sections:
Fridays: (12:35-1:30pm); (1:40-2:35pm); (2:45-3:40pm). Rooms TBA.

Instructor:
Ashley M Fox, PhD, MA
afox3@albany.edu

Office hours:
Directly after class or by appointment

Teaching Assistants:
Sora Park
spark22@albany.edu
Meets by appointment
Students w/ last names A-M

Andre Kiesel
akiesel@albany.edu
Meets by appointment
Students with last names N-Z

I. Course Summary & Goals for the Course

Ever wonder why…
- The US was unable to pass gun control legislation that would have expanded background checks on gun purchases in spite of over 90% of the public being in favor?
- The US is among the few countries internationally that does not guarantee paid sick leave or paid maternity leave?
- The government had to shut down in 2013 costing the US economy $24 billion due to a partisan stalemate in Congress over health reform?

Then this course is for you! This course introduces students to the process of public policy making in the US and internationally. As a student in this course, you will gain a greater appreciation for the complexity of policymaking, the vast number of actors involved in policy making, and the factors that make policies more or less successful. Through the course, we will ask questions such as: Where do ideas for policies come from in the first place? Why do some ideas get attention while other problems are ignored? What does it take to get a policy formulated, enacted, and successfully implemented? What are the roles of the executive, legislature, courts, interest groups, business, the news media, and other actors in the policy process? Why do some policies, even after extensive research and analysis, seem so irrational and haphazard?

There are no prerequisites for this course. The course is a requirement for students in Rockefeller College’s Public Policy program, and is also considered a Social Science course under the General Education requirements.
II. Required Text


The books will be available at the campus book store or can be bought or rented on the internet (e.g., Amazon.com, etc.). I know these books are expensive, but you MUST find a way to secure a copy as you will have weekly quizzes on the readings (see below).

Additional Readings

A course site on Blackboard Learning System (https://blackboard.albany.edu/) will contain supplementary readings and other materials, like written assignments required for the course. Additional reading assignments will be posted on Blackboard. Be sure to check Blackboard regularly for additional readings.

III. Class Policies

- **TA’s and Discussion Sections**
  The TA’s should be your first recourse for questions related to the course. Please contact them first before contacting the instructor (it is nothing personal, but with 80+ students, it is better to let the TAs act as a filter for questions related to the course). Students with last names A-M are assigned to Sora Park as their principle TA, and students with last names N-Z to Andre Kiesel. The TAs will rotate weeks that they will lead discussion sections and in this way you will get to know each of them, but this way each TA is principally responsible for a sub-set of students.

  Attendance at discussion sections is MANDATORY and attendance will be taken weekly. Discussion sections are a time to engage in an additional set of activities designed to reinforce concepts covered in class and as a time to answer questions about course material that may be unclear, including appealing quiz questions that students believe to be unfair. TAs will explain the appeals process in the first discussion section.

- **Group Work versus Individual Work**
  A significant portion of work in this course will involve work in permanent groups that you will be randomly assigned to on the first day of class. A key philosophy of this course is that students learn by doing and you will be asked in your groups to apply concepts from the readings and course materials to real world examples. While group work has its challenges, it also has the advantages of providing you with a source of feedback and interaction. You should always be respectful of your group members, including thinking about the implications of coming unprepared to class for
your fellow group members. In order to discourage freeriding, part of your participation grade will also come from a peer evaluation of your group members, making you accountable to your peers. See grade structure below.

- **Alternative class arrangements**
  Contact the instructor at the start of the course if you require alternative assessment arrangements, e.g. extra time to finish assignments. If you are new to the university, you may wish to visit the UAlbany Disability Resource Center webpage: [http://www.albany.edu/disability/index.shtml](http://www.albany.edu/disability/index.shtml). “Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning and psychiatric disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please notify the Director of Disabled Student Services (Campus Center 137, 442-5490). That office will provide the course instructor with verification of your disability, and will recommend appropriate accommodations ([http://www.albany.edu/studentlife/dss/Accommodation.html](http://www.albany.edu/studentlife/dss/Accommodation.html)).”

- **Academic Integrity & Plagiarism Policy**
The university’s policy on academic integrity is available at: [http://www.albany.edu/reading/academic_integrity.php](http://www.albany.edu/reading/academic_integrity.php). Using someone else’s argument without citing their work, quoting an article, book, web site or other source without giving the source, and claiming as your work a paper written by someone else are all examples of plagiarism. Plagiarism is considered to be a serious matter, even if it was not intentional.

More importantly, bear in mind that in the policy world, citing evidence that comes from credible sources only increases the persuasiveness of your argument. Throughout the semester we will be discussing different types of sources of policy information. How to correctly use and cite sources is an important part of the learning process and an important part of policy analysis. If you have questions as you are working on an assignment on how to use a source, you should ask for clarification from your TA.

Plagiarism can result in any of the following, depending on the seriousness of the case: requirement to rewrite the affected assignment, lowering the assignment or the course grade by a full grade or more, failing the assignment or the course, or withholding permission to withdraw from the course.

If you are not sure if something violates standards – ask. If you are not sure whether to cite or not to cite – cite. Every Student is expected to go through the following tutorial [http://library.albany.edu/usered/plagiarism/index.html](http://library.albany.edu/usered/plagiarism/index.html). All papers will be judged with the knowledge that you have taken the online tutorial. Any paper suspected of plagiarism will be submitted to SafeAssign to detect plagiarized language (Note: description of plagiarism policy adapted from standard language used in Victor Asal’s syllabi).

- **Meet with the instructor or TA if you have any questions, problems, or concerns**
If you cannot come during office hours due to a conflict with another class or a work commitment, email the instructor or TA to arrange an alternative meeting time. Be aware that you might have to wait a bit longer for an appointment and meetings outside of office hours may need to occur on the UAlbany Downtown Campus.

- **If you believe your grade is wrong for whatever reason, talk to the instructor**
  Visit the instructor during office hours to talk about the problem. You must take the assignment home, read the comments, and contact us. However, do so within two weeks of receiving the grade. Appeals about assignments that are more than two weeks old will not be considered unless there are mitigating circumstances. Making an appeal is no guarantee that your grade will be raised: it may go up, down or stay the same depending on the results of the review.

- **Mitigating circumstances**
  From time to time, unforeseen circumstances mean that students will have to miss classes or assignments. In such circumstances, please let the instructor know the situation as soon as it is practical, so that alternative arrangements can be made.

  *Important note:* Any absence not excused by the Dean's office will be considered an unexcused absence. If you have to miss a class, provide the Dean with the documentation (e.g., doctor's note) immediately following the day(s) you missed. If the Dean's office approves the documentation, they will send a letter excusing your absence to the instructor. I believe Jeanette Altarriba (jaltarriba@albany.edu) is your first point of contact in such circumstances.

**IV. How to succeed in this class**

- **Be on time**
  Group quizzes will be given weekly at the beginning of class. You will have 10 minutes to complete the quiz individually. It is imperative that you arrive on time in order to be able to complete the quiz. There will be no way to make up the quiz if you miss it due to unexcused tardiness.

- **Be prepared**
  Read all the required readings for each class before you come to class. YOU AND YOUR GROUP WILL BE QUIZZED WEEKLY ON THE READINGS. Bear in mind that you being unprepared may cause your group grade to suffer.

- **Be respectful of other people’s opinions and be prepared to back up your opinions with factual evidence and reasoned argument.**
  One of the goals of this class is to train you to think and reason like a policy wonk. This means no UNSUBSTANTIATED opinions. Instead, you will be trained to look for evidence to build a substantive case in favor of your preferred position on a topic. Where underlying values and ideology do come into play, you will be trained to think critically about those assumptions and make these an explicit rather than implicit part of your argument.
Submit all assignments before the deadline
Assignments should be submitted on the day of the deadline. You may receive a 0 for late assignments or reductions of up to a letter grade, unless there are mitigating circumstances (see above). Please let the TAs and/or instructor know in advance if you foresee having a problem meeting a deadline and we may consider some flexibility depending on the circumstance, but only if we are asked in advance of the deadline (no post hoc justifications for circumstances that do not have a supporting letter from the Dean’s office).

Silence your cell phone before the beginning of the class
Laptops or other devices are allowed for use in class provided they are being put toward academic purposes (e.g., fact checking to contribute to a group exercise; going on blackboard; note taking). We reserve the right to ask you to put away any devices if they become a distraction.

V. Assignments & Grading Philosophy
The course is graded A-E. Formal requirements of the course are:
1. Weekly Individual and Group Quizzes on readings (15%)
2. (3) Policy Worksheets (15%)
3. Mid-term Exam (15%)
4. Policy Memo (20%)
5. Final Case Study take-home Exam (15%)
6. Discussion Section/Class Participation (including i-Clicker and group assessment) (20%)

Weekly Quizzes (15% total; 10% individual, 5% group)
Quizzes consisting of 2-4 questions will be given weekly on Tuesday mornings. Quiz questions will be based directly on material from the assigned readings for the week. Questions will first be answered individually and logged using the i-Clicker technology. You will record your answers and then answer the questions as a group. Your individual responses will be worth 10% and group responses worth 5%. The grades for each quiz will be posted on Blackboard by Friday, but you will also know the same day how you did since we will be using the i-Clickers and going over the responses in class in real time.

There will be no opportunities to make up quizzes that you have missed unless there are mitigating circumstances. Approximately twelve (12) quizzes will be given throughout the semester. The lowest four grades will be dropped including zeros for quizzes that you miss due to an unexcused absence. Bear in mind that if you miss 4 quizzes entirely, ALL of your quiz grades will count.

Appeals process for quiz questions. Much of the material we will cover is quite nuanced and many of the quiz questions will ask for the “best” answer. While there will always be an answer that the instructors deem to be the “best” or “correct” answer, sometimes students may feel strongly that the question was worded unclearly or deceptive in some way and that in fact another answer is the “better” answer. In these cases, groups can nominate questions to be struck from the quiz grades. However, the questions will only be struck if the group can
must a 2/3 majority vote from the rest of the students in the course. The vote will occur using the i-Clickers.

**Policy Worksheets (15%)**
At the beginning of the semester you will choose a policy issue you are interested in. This will be the issue you will have to address in your policy memo. Before your Policy Memo you will hand in three (3) policy worksheets (worth 5% each)- the first on a clearly written statement of the problem you are trying to address, the second on policy alternatives to address the problem and the third presenting a policy recommendation. These are designed to help you understand the context of your topic, its structure and how can this issue be seen from a policy analyst perspective. They are meant to help you develop an argument incrementally.

You will receive peer-to-peer feedback from your groups on these as well. The weeks that worksheets are due, we will spend time in lecture or discussion section talking about them in groups. Please be prepared to contribute. Worksheets are required. You will receive a check-minus (fair, but needs improvement), check (good, but room for improvement), or check-plus (excellent, on the right track). The worksheets will help build your first written assignment (Policy Memo). Worksheets will be posted on the Blackboard site one week before they are due and we will go over expectations for the assignment in the class before it is due.

Policy worksheets will be graded on a check, check plus, check minus basis

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Check plus (✔+)</td>
<td>Policy worksheet is completed. All questions are answered. Answers show that the student deeply understands the issue and the context in which it takes place. Class theoretical material is effectively integrated. A check plus is approximately equivalent to an A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check (✔)</td>
<td>Policy worksheet is completed. All questions are answered. Answers show that the student is familiar with the issue and its main nuances. There is a reference to class material. This is approximately equivalent to a B.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check (✔ −)</td>
<td>Policy worksheet is incomplete and shows no background research. Class material is not integrated. This is approximately equivalent to a C.</td>
</tr>
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**Policy Memo (20%)**
Policy memos are an important way of conveying complex information about different public policies to various audiences in a brief and convincing manner. The goal should be to boil down a lot of information into succinct, digestible summary. They should be *factual*, but that does not mean they need to be impartial. A good policy memo persuades through the presentation of facts and evidence.

**MY OWN VIEWS ON AN ISSUE WILL NOT COLOR MY GRADING OF YOUR**
MEMO. You will be graded based on how persuasively you provide information in support of your preferred policy alternative. I strongly encourage you to consider taking a position on that is the opposite of what you actually believe, as this can help you to distance yourself from the subject matter and force you to rely more on fact than personal belief. For better or worse, there may come a time when you have to defend (or at least present) ideas that may be counter to what you actually believe is the best course of action.

Potential audiences for your policy memos may be policymakers, the public at large, key stakeholder groups constituents. For instance, you may imagine that you are an aid to one of the candidates running for the Democratic or Republican nomination and you have been asked to brief him/her on a policy topic. Or perhaps you are an aid to a local state representative. Alternatively, you may be a researcher for a think tank and your role is to educate the public about a policy issue that is going up for vote. Examples of well-written policy memos will be posted on Blackboard and specific requirements will be discussed in class and circulated.

**Midterm Exam (15%)**
The exam is scheduled for October 15. Keep in mind that the date is subject to change so please follow the instructor’s announcements. The midterm will consist primarily of close-ended and short answer questions.

**Final Take-Home Case Study Exam (15%)**
The instructions for the final will be distributed one week in advance and posted on Blackboard.

**In-class Performance (20% total, 10% individual, 10% peer evaluation)**
Half of your participation grade will be based on individual contributions to the class, and half will be based on an assessment of your group members about how well you contributed to group processes. Peer evaluation is done to motivate you to participate meaningfully in your group work and not be a distraction. We encourage you to talk to the TAs and/or instructor if significant issues arise in your groups, but please note that groups are permanent throughout the semester and you will need to find a way to work together.

Both the lecture and the discussion section require you to be an active participant. Although we will not formally be taking attendance, the i-Clicker system has the capacity to tell us whether you were present or not. Although quizzes will typically occur on Tuesdays, you will also be held accountable for being present on Thursdays through the i-Clicker system.

Each lecture will incorporate 1-2 Participation Clicker Questions (PCQ) questions in addition to the weekly reading quizzes that you will log using the i-Clicker. PCQ do not have a right or wrong answer; they are designed to trigger discussion and engage you in class. These could be either questions from the assigned readings for that week or opinion polls. To get a full participation grade you need to answer 90% of the PCQ. This means that if you are unable to attend the lecture or you forget your i-Clicker you have space to compensate. You are responsible for registering it online at i-Clicker and using it.
I-Clicker. You will need to purchase and register an I-Clicker. Registration of Remote I-Clicker Keypad ID. In order for you to get class credit for answers submitted via you I-Clicker you must register your Remote Keypad 10 on line. Do not put off doing this! Registration process involves the following steps which YOU must complete:
1. Log into Blackboard Learn and select PAD/POS 140 Introduction to Public Policy
2. Go to Course Content
3. Click the link i>clicker Student Registration
4. Enter your i>clicker remote ID

Teaching/Grading Philosophy

My goal for this course is to have you start thinking (and writing) like a policy analyst (with an understanding that you are still students and have time to grow). This means moving away from asserting unsubstantiated personal thoughts/opinions on subjects, to building a case for an issue/policy alternative that is based on factual evidence and solid reasoning. The policy worksheets/memo, final exam and open-ended portions of the midterm are designed to get you thinking in this way. These will all be assessed on a check-plus, check, check-minus basis (see description of grade equivalents above).

There are also some basic concepts and vocabulary that I want you to gain from this course. These are assessed through close-ended questions in your weekly quizzes and midterm. Myself and the TAs have less discretion over how to assign grades for these types of questions and they may require some rote memorization on your part.

I do not grade on a curve. In this course, you are not students. You are junior policy analysts. If everyone rises to the occasion and writes in a professional tone, everyone can get an A. If nobody writes in a professional sounding manner, nobody gets an A. I have purposefully designed the assignments for this class such that small, cumulative assignments actually count more than the “big” assignments- midterm and final. This can be a double-edged sword- it means that the midterm and final will not solely determine your grade, but it also means you need to keep up with smaller assignments, INCLUDING COMING TO CLASS REGULARLY to receive a good grade.
VI. Schedule

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATES</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>ASSIGNMENTS DUE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 27th &amp; 28th</td>
<td>Introduction to the Course and overview of public policy and politics</td>
<td>Anderson, ch. 1</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 1st, 3rd, 4th</td>
<td>Public policy: definitions, contexts, players</td>
<td>Anderson, ch. 2</td>
<td>Quiz on Readings (Tuesday)</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 8th, 10th, 11th</td>
<td>Agenda Setting and Problem Definition</td>
<td>Anderson, ch. 3, p. 87-114</td>
<td>Quiz on Readings (Tuesday)</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 15th, 17th, 18th</td>
<td>Policy Formulation/Design &amp; Introduction to Policy Analysis</td>
<td>Anderson, ch. 3, p. 114-132</td>
<td>Quiz on Readings (Tuesday)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 22nd, 24th, 25th</td>
<td>Policy Adoption/Legitimation and the Political Process</td>
<td>Anderson, chapter 4</td>
<td>Quiz on Readings (Tuesday)</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 29th, Oct 1st, 2nd</td>
<td>Policy Implementation and Evaluation</td>
<td>Anderson, chapters 6 &amp; 7</td>
<td>Quiz on Readings (Tuesday)</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 6th, 8th, 9th</td>
<td>Assessing policy alternatives: Ethics, values and evidence</td>
<td>Cochran et al. ch. 10&amp; 13</td>
<td>Quiz on Readings (Tuesday)</td>
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<td>October 13th</td>
<td>Midterm Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 15th</td>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 17th</td>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>Discussion section- midterm debrief/midterm course evaluation</td>
<td>Quiz on Readings (Tuesday)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 20th, 22nd, 24th</td>
<td>Welfare, social security and economic policy</td>
<td>Cochran et al. ch. 4, 7; News article</td>
<td>Quiz on Readings (Tuesday)</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 27th, 29th, 30th</td>
<td>Criminal Justice Tuesday Guest Speaker: Shawn Bushway</td>
<td>Cochran et al., ch. 6</td>
<td>Quiz on Readings (Tuesday)</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 3rd, 5th, 6th</td>
<td>Education policy</td>
<td>Cochran, et al, ch. 9</td>
<td>Quiz on Readings (Tuesday)</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 10th, 12th, 13th</td>
<td>Health care policy</td>
<td>Cochran, et al, ch 8</td>
<td>Quiz on Readings (Tuesday)</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 17th, 20th, 21st</td>
<td>Environmental and energy policy</td>
<td>Cochran, et al, ch 5</td>
<td>Quiz on Readings (Tuesday)</td>
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<td>November 24th</td>
<td>Special Topic: Guest Lecturer</td>
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<td>Bonus points for attending class</td>
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<td>November 26th &amp; 28th</td>
<td>No Class (Thanksgiving Break)</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 1st, 3rd, 5th</td>
<td>Foreign Policy</td>
<td>Cochran, et al, ch 12</td>
<td>Quiz on Readings (Tuesday)</td>
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<td>December 8th</td>
<td>Course wrap-up Students evaluations and clarifications on the take home</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 10th, 12th</td>
<td>No class (reading days)</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 15th</td>
<td>Final Take Home Exam Due</td>
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For all weeks:
* Prepare for weekly quizzes
** See additional readings on Blackboard