This course introduces students to public policy and the policy process in the United States and in comparative context. 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 American or comparative politics broadly or policy students looking for theoretical background.

**TEXTS**
The books listed below are available for purchase at Mary Jane books or at online retailers such as Amazon.com. In addition, articles assigned will be available on the course website eres (password: strach).


**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

- **Response Papers**: During the course of the semester you are required to write four response papers. These papers integrate the readings for the week and provide your own thoughtful evaluation and criticism. **Papers should be between three and four pages.** You may choose whatever weeks you wish to write your papers but you must turn in your paper at the beginning of class on the material that we are discussing for that class. You may only turn in one paper per week.

- **Literature Review**: A literature review is due at our last class meeting. More specific instructions on how to write and structure a literature review will be handed out in class.
Class Participation: There are three components to your class participation grade. First, you must submit two discussion questions to me via e-mail (pstrach@albany.edu) by midnight on Monday before our Tuesday class. The questions should be interesting and engaging questions that you would feel comfortable leading class discussion. Second, you will each sign up for a policy presentation. In these, you will do a brief background on the policy area hitting some of the major works and key issues. Policy presentations should be no more than 15 minutes.

Because this is a small class, we will have an active discussion about the ideas and arguments in the reading. Your participation (and even excitement) is essential. You are expected to come to class ready to engage the reading and your fellow classmates. The date next to the readings indicates when they should be completed. You should read the assigned readings for class on that day.

I. Introduction
January 29: What is Public Policy and Why Do We Study It?

February 5: How Do We Study It?
Sabatier. 2007. Theories of the Policy Process. Part I and II
Peter A. Hall. 2003. “Aligning Ontology and Methodology in Comparative Politics.’ In James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences. Cambridge University Press. (eres)
**Policy Presentation: Environment

II. Constructing Public Policy and the Policy Agenda
February 12: Framing
**Policy Presentation: Pensions and Retirement

February 19: Agenda Setting I
**Policy Presentation: Education

February 26: Agenda Setting II
**Policy Presentation: Energy

March 5: Policy Design and Creation
University Press. Chapters 1, 2, 5. (eres) 
**Policy Presentation: Science and Technology**

March 12: Solutions 
Chapters 5-7. 
**Policy Presentation: Foreign Affairs**

March 19: Classes Suspended

III. Change

March 26: Path Dependence and Policy Feedback 
University Press. Selections (eres) 
the United States. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Selections. (eres) 
Dependence, and Political Institutions in Denmark.” Comparative Political Studies, 40. 
(1059-1084). (eres) 
Change in Advanced Political Economies. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (eres) 
**Policy Presentation: Health**

April 2: Policy Diffusion 
Comparative Political Studies 41(2). (eres) 
Liberalism.” International Organization 60(4):781-810. (eres) 
Political Science 52(4):840-857. (eres) 
Reform.” World Politics 57(2):262-295. (eres) 
**Policy Presentation: Tax**

Recommended 
Institutionalism.” Journal of Politics. (eres)

April 9: Activism


**Policy Presentation: Human Rights**

April 16: Inequality and Citizenship


**Policy Presentation: Welfare**

Recommended:


**IV. New Directions in Policy Research**

April 23: Gun Control


**Policy Presentation: Gun Control**

April 30: Navigating Ethical Dilemmas


PS Symposium: “Pracademics’: Mixing an Academic Career with Practical Politics.” *PS* 44:2. (eres)

**Policy Presentation: Electoral Reform**

May 7: Papers Due