RPOS/RPAD 140: Introduction to Public Policy  
Spring Semester 2010

Lectures (Class number 16653):  
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:15-2:35 in LC23, with Professor Holly Jarman  
Office Hours for Professor Jarman: Tuesdays and Thursdays 3-4pm in Humanities B16, please email hjarman@albany.edu for appointments at other times.

Discussion Sessions (you must register for one of these sessions):  
Susan Appe (Class number 16764): Fridays, 9:20-10:15 in Humanities 0132,  
Office Hours for Instructor Appe: Tuesdays, 2.45-4.45pm in the Corner Café, Campus Center, or email sa454483@albany.edu  
Rick Caceres-Rodriguez (Class number 16766): Fridays, 11:30-12:25 in Humanities 0123  
Office Hours for Instructor Caceres-Rodriguez: Fridays 1-3pm in Humanities B16, or email rc385995@albany.edu

Course Summary

In high school civics courses you may have learned how a bill becomes a law. But where do ideas for laws come from in the first place? Why do some ideas get attention while other problems are ignored? What does it take to get a law 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?

This course introduces students to the process of public policy making. Because the policy process engages nearly all elements of politics, this course analyzes public policy making as the outcome of a number of political actors and processes. Students 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. Because public policy affects all fields of human activity, this course is a good introduction to policy for students in political science as well as other social sciences, criminal justice, social work, business, and related disciplines. At the end of this course, students should be able to:

• discuss how public policy is made in the United States with others, using evidence from contemporary policy issues to construct coherent arguments in writing and in person.  
• evaluate several issue areas in depth: explain why an existing policy came to be, debate its effectiveness, and identify potential alternatives.  
• compare US policy debates with those in other countries and at the global level, and discuss those differences with others.

This course can be taken to fulfill the General Education requirement for social science. The learning objectives for social science courses are as follows:

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**

There is one textbook that you need to purchase for the class:


This book is available for purchase at the University bookstore on the uptown campus and Mary Jane Books on Western Avenue. Please support our bookstores and buy local! Other readings will be posted on Blackboard for each week to supplement the main textbook. The Blackboard site can be accessed at [https://bls.its.albany.edu/webct/logon/615442585001](https://bls.its.albany.edu/webct/logon/615442585001)

**What We Expect From You**

- Please come prepared. We expect you to read all of the required texts for each class before you come to class. Come to class ready to discuss, debate and disagree with the arguments they contain, with your fellow classmates, and us!
- Please be respectful of other people’s opinions. This does not mean that those opinions should or will go unchallenged, but that we all agree to listen carefully to one another and offer constructive criticism.
- Assignments should be submitted to Blackboard by 12 noon on the day of the deadline. 5 points will be deducted from late assignments for every day that they are late, unless there are mitigating circumstances (see below). If for some reason Blackboard does not allow you to upload, simply send the assignment by email to your instructor – assignments submitted by email before the deadline are still considered on time, but Blackboard submission is strongly preferred.
- Please respect the university’s policy on academic integrity, available at: [http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html](http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html). Using someone else’s argument without citing their work, quoting an article, book, web site or other source without giving the source, claiming as your work a paper written by someone else, and resubmitting a paper you wrote for another class are all examples of plagiarism. Plagiarism is considered to be a serious matter, even if it was not intentional. Plagiarism could 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.

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:
1. Weekly Quizzes

We expect you to come to class having read and thought about all the assigned readings for that class. One quiz per week will be given at the start of either lecture class, and will begin promptly. The quiz will ask a few straightforward comprehension questions about the reading for that week – they are designed to test your understanding of what you have read. Each quiz is worth a maximum of 5 marks, and your top 8 quizzes will count towards your final grade. **There will be no opportunities to make up quizzes that you have missed.**

2. Participation in the Discussion Sessions

The discussion sessions are designed to do just that – they are your opportunity to talk about policy, get clarification on something covered in the lectures, or share your own views.

Attending the discussion sessions is mandatory, and attendance will be taken at every discussion section. For every discussion section that you fail to attend (mitigating circumstances excluded) 1 point will be deducted from your participation grade at the end of the semester.

On three occasions during the semester, we will work together on three different exercises:

- **Congressional Committee role-play on health reform:** you will take the role as either a member of the Senate Finance Committee or the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee to discuss the reform of US healthcare.
- **Negotiation exercise:** you will be assigned to either the American or Chinese delegation to take part in the US and China dialogue, discussing both economic issues and climate change.
- **Policy Solutions Presentation:** Team presentation on alternatives within a specific policy area, either ‘Tackling Inequality in the United States’, ‘The Future of Higher Education’, ‘Options for Guantanamo’ or any contemporary policy issue as approved by your instructor.

Your participation in these exercises will be assessed by your instructor. Your instructor will observe your participation in both the preparation session and the exercise itself before awarding you a grade. In addition to the instructor’s observations, students may submit no more than 2 pages of notes to the instructor at the end of both the preparation session and the exercise itself as evidence of their preparation for the exercise.

3. Short Written Assignments

In relation to each of the three exercises, we require you to complete a short written assignment. The assignment will be different for each exercise:

- **Congressional Committee role-play on health reform:** acting as a committee staffer, write a policy briefing outlining the key issues under debate by your committee. Set out a range of policy alternatives in your report.
- **Negotiation exercise:** write an account of the negotiations: outlining your arguments, the other party’s arguments, and the settlement reached.
**Policy Solutions Presentation:** write an outline of your presentation, including an assessment of the effectiveness of available policy alternatives, backed up with evidence.

In each exercise, you will be using information from real life sources such as Congressional Committee reports, policy documents, legislation, media accounts, statistics, etc. Assignments should be no more than three pages, using 1 inch margins, double spaced, using 12point font. All references and source materials should be fully cited (see plagiarism, above).

**What You Can Expect From Us**

- **Instructor accessibility:** each instructor will hold regular office hours each week in Humanities B16. Please try to come and see us during those hours. If you can’t come to office hours due to a conflict with another class or a work commitment (and only for those reasons), we can arrange an alternative meeting time with you –but be aware that we all have full schedules and you might have to wait a bit longer for an appointment. Many problems can be solved if you bring them to our attention early enough, so come to us sooner rather than later.
- **Grading:** If you submitted your assignment on time, you have the right to get the graded work returned to you within a reasonable timeframe (approximately one week), with a set of written comments.
- **Right to appeal:** if you believe your grade is wrong for whatever reason, we encourage you to visit us in our scheduled office hours to talk about the problem. However, we ask that you 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. Professor Jarman will consult with the other instructors as necessary to review your grade. 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 Professor Jarman know the situation as soon as it is practical, so that alternative arrangements can be made. Allowances for missed or late assignments require documentation as per University policy.
- **Alternative class requirements:** Please contact Professor Jarman 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 contact UAlbany’s Disability Resource Center, [http://www.albany.edu/disability/index.shtml](http://www.albany.edu/disability/index.shtml)
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<td>January 21&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; Why we study public policy. Reading and writing about policy.</td>
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<td>January 28&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Who else makes policy? The media, interest groups, &amp; Citizens (networks)</td>
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