Course Description:
This is a course in the policy process. It is organized along the conventionally accepted sequence that begins with agenda setting and moves through policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. While a simplification of how the world works, this sequence offers a convenient and useful way of dividing issues and problems into manageable bits for analysis and instruction.

There are three distinct perspectives found in the policy process literature. First, is an incrementalist view derived from the literature on decision making under conditions of uncertainty, high information costs and limited power. Second is a view from political science and that stresses the primacy of politics in raising issues for consideration, in shaping preferences, and determining which choices are made. This view seeks to explain why things happen the way they do. Finally there is a more linear, rationalistic and prescriptive view drawn from economics and is more concerned with making efficient choices and improving outcomes. All three perspectives will be incorporated into the course because they all influence the way we think about and seek to influence the policy process.

We will begin with the question of where political problems come from or how issues get on the public agenda. A variety of models will be discussed at this point including: incrementalist, garbage can, market and government failure perspectives. In the policy formulation section which is about how policy decisions get made, we will cover topics ranging from the rudiments of policy and risk analysis, available policy tools, and major generic arguments typically found in policy debates. We will conclude with a review of the elements and issues encountered during policy implementation and evaluation.

Required Readings:


In addition, there are readings on ERSEERVE under this course number.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**
1. Exams (60%). 3 in class exams at the times indicated under Weekly Assignments. These exams will cover both the readings and lectures. They are intended to test your knowledge of the materials and not your general intelligence or background. If you don’t do the reading and understand the lectures, you won’t pass the exams.
2. Paper (25%). This paper will require you to choose a policy and answer the following questions about it explicitly using and citing the course materials. (1) How did the policy get on the elite agenda? (2) What was the process for deciding on it (passing a law? Making an administrative decision? What?) and (3) how did the process shape the outcome in implementation and evaluation? Papers that merely talk about the policy and do not make use of the course materials will not receive a passing grade. You must choose a topic and be prepared to discuss the topic and likely sources with me during my office hours on the dates indicated.
3. Discussion questions via e mail (5%). 2 sets. You are expected to submit three discussion questions based on the readings by midnight on the dates indicated in the weekly assignments. These assignments will be graded high pass, pass, lo pass, fail.
4. Class participation (includes attendance) (10%). This is not intended to be simply a lecture class. You are expected to participate in a knowledgeable fashion during class discussions. The participation component will make a difference of a half a grade (up or down).

**Honesty Policy**
The usual standards of conduct prohibiting cheating will apply. Papers are expected to cite the source materials and expected to be more than mere cutting and pasting of those materials. You are required to submit the papers in electronic form so that they can be checked for originality.
Weekly Assignments
Policy Process

**I. INTRODUCTION TO THE POLICY PROCESS**

Week 1
Introduction. Thursday, January 21
No assignment

Week 2
Stages of the Policy Process, Tuesday, January 26
Thomas Birkland, An Introduction To The Policy Process, Chapter 1. The Study and Practice of Public Policy, Chapter 2 The Historical and Structural Context of Public Policy Making

Harold Lasswell, The Decision Process, ereserve

**II. AGENDA SETTING**

Starting the Process by getting the attention of policy makers, Thurs., Jan. 28
Nakamura, The Textbook Policy Process ERESERVE
Birkland, Chapter 3. Official Actors and Their Roles in Public Policy
Birkland, Chapter 4. Unofficial Actors and Their Roles in Public Policy
Birkland, Chapter 5. Agenda Setting, Power, and Interest Groups

**FIRST DISCUSSION QUESTIONS DUE** BY midnight, Wed.

Week 3
Agenda Setting in Rational Models: The Tragedy of the Commons
Tuesday, February 2
Hardin, Tragedy of the Commons, e reserve

Thursday, February 4
Agenda Setting in an Incrementalist Model
Lindblom, The Science of Muddling Through, e reserve
Start Kingdon, Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policy (first half)

Week 4
Tuesday, February 9
Agenda Setting in a A Political Model
Finish John Kingdon, Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies (first half)

**SECOND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS DUE** by midnight Wed.
Taking Stock of Agenda Setting, Thursday, February 11
No Assignment

Week 5
Tuesday, February 16  NO Class

**FIRST HOUR EXAM.**  Thursday, February 18


Week 6
Introduction to Making Choices, Tuesday, February 23
Birkland, Policies and Policy Types

Choices are driven by constraints on information and power: An Incrementalist Model of Policy Choice, Thursday, February 25

Week 7
Choices should be driven by problems: A rational comprehensive view of policy choices: what’s the problem determines the solution, Tuesday, March 2
Weimer and Vining, Market Failure, e reserve

A rational view continued… Thursday, March 4
Weimer and Vining, Government failure, e reserve

Week 8
What are the choices? Policy Tools and Implements, Tuesday, March 9
Policy Tools. Elmore and McDonnell ERESERVE
Birkland, 7. Policy Design and Policy Tools

Policy Tools and Implements, continued, Thursday, March 11.

Week 9
Taking Stock, Tuesday March 16
No assignment

**SECOND HOUR EXAM,** Thursday, March 18

**III.b. Policy Formulation and Politics**

Policies Shape Politics, Tuesday March 23
Lowi, selection, e reserve
Watkins, Intro to Cost Benefit, ereserve

Rational Models: Cost Benefit and Risk Tradeoff Approaches, Thursday, March 25
Graham, selections from risk vs. risk, on reserve

DISTRIBUTE TERM PAPER ASSIGNMENT

Week 10
March 30 NO CLASS
April 1 NO CLASS

Week 11
An Economists View: Shaping Public Choices for Private Gain, Tuesday, April 6
Stigler, Theory of Economic Regulation, ereserve

The Politics of Regulation, Thursday, April 8
Nakamura and Church, section on Regulatory policy tools ERESERVE

Week 12
The Policy Debate: Generic Arguments, Tuesday, April 13.
Start Hirschman, The Rhetoric of Reaction

The Policy Debate continued.,Thursday, April 15
Finish Hirschman, The Rhetoric of Reaction

Week 13
Making the Decision, Tuesday, April 20
Nakamura Policy Formulation
Birkland, Chapter 8. Policy Implementation and Policy Failure
Birkland, Chapter 9. Putting It All Together: Models of the Policy Process

THIRD HOUR EXAM. Thursday, April 22
Make Appointments to Discuss Term Papers

IV. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

Week 14
Implementation, Tuesday April 27
Nakamura and Smallwood, Environment of Implementation, ereserve
Salamon, selection, e rreserve
Evaluation, Thursday, April 29
Nakamura and Smallwood, Environment of Evaluation, e reserve

V. CONCLUSION
Final paper due (in both hard copy and electronic form). Mon., May 4