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. It is a complement to policy analysis (RPAD 540) and comparative public policy (RPOS 653). 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. The versions of books listed below are what I use. In many cases, older or newer editions are quite similar (but older editions are much less expensive). If you’d like to purchase a different edition of the book than what I use, please feel free to do so except where noted. In addition, articles assigned will be available on eres through blackboard.


**Course Requirements**

4 Response Papers 35%
Final Paper (Literature Review) 40%
Participation (Including reading questions and policy presentation) 25%

**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 are on eres (blackboard) and will be discussed 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 Wednesday before our Thursday 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 22: What is Public Policy?

January 29: How Do We Study It I?
Sabatier and Weible. 2014. *Theories of the Policy Process.* Part II
**Policy Presentation: Environment**

February 5: How Do We Study It 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: Security**

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

February 19: Agenda Setting I
January 30: Agenda Setting I

**Policy Presentation: Education**

February 26: Agenda Setting II

**Policy Presentation: Energy**

March 5: Solutions

**Policy Presentation: Foreign Affairs**

III. Change

March 12: Path Dependence and Policy Feedback

**Policy Presentation: Health**

March 19: Policy Diffusion

**Policy Presentation: Tax**

Recommended

March 26: Inequality and Citizenship

**Policy Presentation: Welfare**

Recommended:

IV. New Directions in Policy Research: Money, Power, Politics

April 2: Money and Markets

**Policy Presentation: Money and Markets**

April 9: Foreign Debt
Zsofia Barta. 2013. "Facing up to public debt - a society-centered approach to the question of fiscal stabilization."

**Policy Presentation: Foreign Debt**

April 16: Poverty and Social Order

**Policy Presentation: Poverty and Social Order**

IV. Conclusion

April 23: Navigating Ethical Dilemmas
PS Symposium: “‘Pracademics’: Mixing an Academic Career with Practical Politics.” PS 44:2. (eres)

April 30: Final Papers Due
Other Topics:
Policy Design and Creation


University Press. Chapters 1, 2, 5. (eres)