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. Third 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 ERSERVE 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

Introduction. Mon., Aug. 30
No assignment

Wed., Sept. 1
Stages of the Policy Process,

Fri., Sept. 2
No Class
Read: 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

Mon., Sept. 6
No Class (Labor Day)

Wed., Sept. 8
A Functional Model
Read: Harold Lasswell, The Decision Process, ereserve

II. AGENDA SETTING

Fri., Sept. 10
Starting the Process by getting the attention of policy makers
Read: Nakamura, The Textbook Policy Process ERESERVE

Mon., Sept. 13
Birkland, Chapter 3. Official Actors and Their Roles in Public Policy

Wed., Sept. 15
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, Thurs.

Fri., Sept. 17
Agenda Setting in Rational Models
Read: Hardin, The Tragedy of the Commons, e reserve
Mon., Sept. 20
Agenda Setting in an Incrementalist Model
Lindblom, The Science of Muddling Through, e reserve

Wed., Sept. 22
Start Kingdon, Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policy (first half)

Fri., Sept. 24
Agenda Setting in a A Political Model
Finish John Kingdon, Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies (first half)

SECOND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS DUE by midnight Sun.

Mon., Sept. 27
Taking Stock of Agenda Setting
No Assignment

Wed., Sept. 29
Discussion of exam
No assignment

Fri., Oct. 1
FIRST HOUR EXAM

III.a. Policy Formulation and Making Choices: Policy Analysis and Policy Tools,

Mon., Oct. 4
Introduction to Making Choices
Read: Birkland, Policies and Policy Types

Wed., Oct. 6
Choices are driven by constraints on information and power: An Incrementalist Model of Policy Choice

Fri., Oct. 8
Choices should be driven by problems: A rational comprehensive view of policy choices: what’s the problem determines the solution
Read: Weimer and Vining, Market Failure, e reserve

Mon., Oct. 11
A rational view continued… Thursday, March 4
Weimer and Vining, Government failure, e reserve
Wed., Oct 13
What are the choices? Policy Tools and Implements
Policy Tools.
Read: Elmore and McDonnell ERESERVE

Fri., Oct. 15
Policy tools continued….
Read: Birkland, 7. Policy Design and Policy Tools

Mon., Oct. 18
Taking Stock
No assignment

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

Wed., Oct. 20
Rational Models of Policy Formulation: Efficiency and Other Criteria
Read: Watkins, Intro to Cost Benefit, ereserve

Fri., Oct. 22
Rational Models: Risk Tradeoff Approaches
Read: Graham, selections from risk vs. risk, on reserve

Mon., Oct. 25
Taking Stock
No Assignment

**DISTRIBUTE TERM PAPER ASSIGNMENT**

Wed., Oct. 27
SECOND HOUR EXAM

Fri., Oct. 29
Introduction to Policies Shaping Politics
Read: Lowi, selection, ereserve

Mon. Nov. 1
An Economists View: Shaping Public Choices for Private Gain
Read: Stigler, Theory of Economic Regulation, ereserve

Wed., Nov. 3
The Politics of Regulation
Read: Nakamura and Church, section on Regulatory policy tools ERESERVE

Fri., Nov. 5
The Policy Debate: Generic Arguments
Start Hirschman, The Rhetoric of Reaction

Mon., Nov. 8
The Policy Debate continued., Thursday
Finish Hirschman, The Rhetoric of Reaction

IV. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION
Wed., Nov. 10
Making the Decision and Policy Implementation, Tuesday
Read: Nakamura Policy Formulation ereserve

Fri., Nov. 12
Read: Birkland, Chapter 8. Policy Implementation and Policy Failure
Make Appointments to Discuss Term Paper Topics and Progress (Be prepared to present the policy, availability of data, and approaches)

Mon., Nov. 15
Read: Birkland, Chapter 9. Putting It All Together: Models of the Policy Process

Wed., 17
Taking Stock
No Assignment

Fri., Nov. 19
THIRD HOUR EXAM

Mon. Nov. 22
Implementation
Read: Nakamura and Smallwood, Environment of Implementation, ereserve
Salamon, selection, ereserve

Wed. Nov. 24 and Fri., Nov. 26 NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

Mon. Nov. 29
Implementation continued.....
Nakamura and Smallwood, Environment of Evaluation, ereserve

V. CONCLUSION
Wed., Dec. 1
Fri., Dec. 3

Mon., Dec. 6
Final paper due at start of class (in both hard copy and electronic form)