RPOS/RPUB350: Comparative Public Policy

Class number 9439 / 9427
11.45am to 1.05pm, Tuesdays and Thursdays in SS256

Professor Holly Jarman
Office Hours for Professor Jarman: 1.30pm to 2.30pm, Tuesdays and Thursdays in Humanities B16, please email hjarman@albany.edu for appointments at other times.

Course Summary

What are the consequences of the recent financial crisis for public policies? How do industrialized states cope with the demands placed on their institutions, societies, and budgets by economic globalization? The course tackles these core questions by analyzing public policy in a comparative context, examining multiple levels of policymaking through a series of policy case studies including economic policy, health policy, education, and climate change. By the end of the course, you should have an appreciation of the underlying structural and political differences between modern industrial countries and how these affect the policies that they adopt.

This course combines elements of global politics, comparative politics and public policy, and is aimed at upper level undergraduates who want to reflect on these topics in some depth. We will compare public policymaking in the United States, Japan, Germany, France, the UK, Italy, the European Union, and at the global level. Additional case studies and examples will be drawn from Canada, Mexico, Australia, China, Brazil, and India.

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

- discuss the global economy with others, using evidence from contemporary sources to construct coherent arguments in writing and in person.
- evaluate public policies through in-depth comparison: 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 and in writing.

This course contributes to fulfillment of the University at Albany learning objectives for social science courses, which 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**

The textbook for this course is Charles H. Blake and Jessica Adolino, 'Comparing Public Policies: Issues and Choices', 2nd Edition. 2010. Washington DC: CQ Press. This book can be purchased at either Mary Jane Books on Western Avenue or in the University Bookstore. Please don’t buy the textbook online- buy local and support these great bookstores!

Additional readings for this class can be accessed on our Blackboard site. These readings are required for successful completion of the class- they are not optional, and will form part of the assessments for the course.

**What I Expect From You**

- Please come prepared. I 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 me!
- 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 midnight 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 me at hjarman@albany.edu –assignments submitted by email before the deadline are still considered on time, but Blackboard submission is strongly preferred as it stops assignments from getting lost in my inbox.
- 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.

Assessments

There are no formal prerequisites for this course. The course is graded A-E. Formal assessment requirements, in addition to full participation in class discussion on the basis of the assigned readings, are:

1. Weekly Quizzes 40%
2. 3 Response Papers 60%

1. Weekly Quizzes (40%)

I expect you to come to class having read and thought about all the assigned readings for that class. One quiz will be available on Blackboard per week, with questions based on all of the readings for that week. The quizzes are open book. Each quiz will ask ten straightforward comprehension questions about the readings – 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 quiz scores will count towards your final grade. There will be no opportunities to make up quizzes that you miss.

2. Response Papers (60%)

During the semester, you will write three response papers which address topics covered in our class. Each paper is worth 20 points towards your final grade. The paper should take the form of a response to a one of the questions listed at the end of this syllabus. It is better to make a few coherent points well than to cram in irrelevant information just for length. The paper length is deliberately short to encourage students to edit and revise their work. Make every word count!

In order to receive a good grade I strongly recommend that you do the following:

• Start by reading the textbook and Blackboard readings relevant to your topic (you should have already done this for the quizzes), and supplement these with related readings: search the library catalog, online academic databases such as JSTOR, EBSCO or Google Scholar for journal articles, and Lexis Nexis for newspaper articles. Use this evidence to back up your argument. Look at the web sites of relevant organizations e.g. the OECD for useful data and reports.
• Draft your paper well before the deadline and edit it several times. It is obvious when a paper has been written at the last minute or has not been edited.
• Read your paper aloud to see if the prose flows well.
• Run spelling and grammar checks before you submit your paper.

Length and Formatting:

• Each paper should be no more than 5 pages long plus a bibliography.
• Papers should be formatted using a plain 12 point font (e.g. Arial or Times New Roman) and double-spaced with page margins of no more than 1 inch.
• Please write the question on the first page, write your name in the header of the paper so that it appears on all pages, and number all pages. I am not responsible if you fail to put your name on your paper and I can’t grade it!
• Please include in-text references in the Harvard style (Author, Publication Year: page number) e.g. (Young, 1998:63) as well as a bibliography at the end of the paper which lists all of the publications that you cite.

What You Can Expect From Me

• **Instructor accessibility:** I will hold regular office hours each week in Humanities B16 on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1.30pm to 2.30pm. Please try to come and see me 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), I can arrange an alternative meeting time with you—but be aware that you might have to wait a bit longer for an appointment. Many problems can be solved if you bring them to my attention early enough, so please come to me 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, I encourage you to visit me in my scheduled office hours to talk about the problem. However, I 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. 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 me know the situation as soon as it is practical, so that alternative arrangements can be made.
• **Alternative class requirements:** Please contact me 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 for advice, [http://www.albany.edu/disability/index.shtml](http://www.albany.edu/disability/index.shtml)
# Class Schedule

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<td>1</td>
<td>Comparisons I</td>
<td>Jan 24: Why We Compare</td>
<td>Jan 26: Democracies and Their Institutions</td>
<td>Quiz</td>
<td>A&amp;B Chapters 1&amp;2</td>
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<td>Comparisons II</td>
<td>Jan 31: Interest Groups and the Scope of Conflict</td>
<td>Feb 2: Culture and the Spread of Ideas</td>
<td>Quiz</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Our Case Study: Countries in Context</td>
<td>Feb 7: From Bretton Woods to G8</td>
<td>Feb 9: From G8 to G20</td>
<td>Quiz</td>
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<td>Fiscal Policy</td>
<td>Feb 14: Spending and Stimulus</td>
<td>Feb 16: Back to Austerity</td>
<td>Quiz Paper 1 due on Feb 16.</td>
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<td>Taxation Policy</td>
<td>Feb 21: Taxes- What You Pay and How You Pay It</td>
<td>Feb 23: What You Get- Benefits Compared</td>
<td>Quiz</td>
<td>A&amp;B Chapter 7 OECD (various, see Blackboard)</td>
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<td>Health Policy</td>
<td>Mar 6: The Rich Countries</td>
<td>Mar 8: The Poor Countries</td>
<td>Quiz</td>
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<td>Education Policy</td>
<td>Mar 20: Schools and Standards</td>
<td>Mar 22: Challenges to Higher Education</td>
<td>Quiz</td>
<td>A&amp;B Chapter 10 OECD Higher Ed. at a Glance</td>
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<td>Environmental Policy</td>
<td>Mar 27: Choosing Policy Mechanisms for Environmental Regulation</td>
<td>Mar 29: Climate Change and Global (Dis)Agreements</td>
<td>Quiz</td>
<td>A&amp;B Chapter 11 Bodansky</td>
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<td>Trade Policy</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
<td>Apr 5: Trade Policy in Hard Times</td>
<td>Quiz Paper 2 due on Apr 5.</td>
<td>Barton et. al. WTO Trade Policy Reviews</td>
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<td>Aid Policy</td>
<td>Apr 10: The Old Model-OECD Countries</td>
<td>Apr 12: The New Model-The BRICs Countries</td>
<td>Quiz</td>
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<td>Law &amp; Order</td>
<td>Apr 24: Crime Reporting and Prisons Policy</td>
<td>Apr 26: Policing Across Borders</td>
<td>Quiz</td>
<td>Confronting Confinement Case Study Materials (Blackboard)</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Ethics &amp; Public Policy</td>
<td>May 1: Regulating Blood &amp; Blood Products</td>
<td>May 3: Regulating Tobacco</td>
<td>Quiz</td>
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**Required Readings**

**Textbook:**


Excerpts from the following are required reading, available on Blackboard:

In addition, a list of recommended readings by topic (essential for assignments!) is available on Blackboard.

Questions for Response Papers

Every student should complete one question from each of the three sections below. You may not complete two questions from one section. Please read the questions carefully when planning your answer.

For Paper 1, please choose one of the following questions:

1. “The Westminster Model of government has survived for centuries. We should not be so quick to dismantle it.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not? Explain the main features of the Westminster model, then argue for or against the statement, explaining the model’s strengths and weaknesses. Use examples from at least three Westminster Model countries to back up your argument.

2. “When the time comes for swift policy action, federalism fails us”. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not? Define federalism in a comparative context, then argue for or against the statement, explaining the strengths and weaknesses of a federal political system. Use examples from at least three federal countries to back up your argument.

3. “Political culture is a useless concept. Not because it explains nothing, but because it explains everything.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not? Then argue for or against the statement, comparing the political culture of the United States with that of one other case study country. Refer extensively to the classification systems used by scholars of political culture, as well as public opinion polls, to back up your argument.

4. “The flaw in the pluralist heaven is that the heavenly chorus sings with a strong upper-class accent.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not? Does it reflect the political reality in pluralist countries today? Identify the author of this statement and explain what they meant by it. Then argue for or against the statement, using examples from the United States and at least one other pluralist country (or the European Union). Explain why the statement does or does not reflect current interest group politics in your chosen countries.

5. “Policymakers only use the term ‘governance’ when they don’t have any solutions to the problem at hand.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not? Define governance, then argue for or against this claim. Use examples from international organizations AND the European Union to back up your argument.

6. “Bretton Woods is broken, but the G20 is no more effective at solving problems in the global economy.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not?
Explain the main strengths and weaknesses of each of these systems, constructing an argument for or against this claim. Use examples from international organizations AND the European Union to back up your argument.

For Paper 2, please choose one of the following questions:

7. “Industrialized countries are facing their biggest crisis since the second world war. They must drastically cut back public spending in order to prove to global markets that they are responsible.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not? Argue for or against the statement using comparative data, and examples from at least two countries, to back up your argument.

8. “A high tax burden is a sure sign of a failing economy.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not? Explain how you will define a ‘high tax burden’. Using comparative data (I recommend the OECD’s tax calculator), analyze the relative tax burdens of OECD countries. To do this thoroughly, you will also need to think about other indicators such as the country’s GDP, debt, and perhaps even its social welfare indicators. You do not need to use statistical tests, but you should provide some tables and / or graphs which allow the reader to compare the data you have used to come to your conclusion.

9. “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.” Identify the origins of this statement, and explain its importance. Compare the United States with EITHER France, Italy, Germany, the United Kingdom, Canada, or Sweden, and explain to what extent each country has a welfare state which covers these rights. Focus on the most salient rights -you do not have to comment on every aspect for each country. Account for the differences between your chosen countries in terms of their respective welfare states.

10. “Gender inequality in social policy is a luxury we cannot afford.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not? Define what ‘gender inequality in public policy’ might mean, then argue for or against the statement. Use comparative data, and examples from at least two countries, to back up your argument.

11. “Controlling healthcare costs is one of the biggest policy problems faced by industrialized states, but it is a problem to which we have very few good solutions.” Compare healthcare cost control mechanisms in the United States with those in the UK’s National Health System and the French social insurance system. What are each systems’ solutions to controlling healthcare costs? Which methods of controlling healthcare costs seem to be the most effective? Use comparative data to back up your argument.
12. “Not all young people need a university education. Students, not governments, should be the ones paying for universities. Governments should concentrate public funding on primary and secondary education instead.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not? Argue for or against the statement, using comparative data, and examples from at least two countries, to back up your argument.

For Paper 3, please choose one of the following questions:

13. You are being asked to make a policy recommendation to the White House on energy policy for the next 50 years. Compare the current environmental and energy policies of the United States with those of Germany, France or Spain. What lessons should the United States learn from the German, French, or Spanish experience? Explain briefly the key problems the US faces in deciding future environmental and energy policy, then state your recommendation clearly. Explain why this is your recommendation, using examples from your chosen country.

14. You are being asked to make a policy recommendation to the US Trade Representative on trade policy after the Doha round. The USTR is keen to forge better trade links with the ‘emerging economies’ of the BRICs. Compare the current trade policy of the United States with the trade policy of EITHER the European Union, Canada, or Japan, as it relates to the BRICs countries. What lessons should the US learn from your chosen country? What should the US avoid doing?

15. You are being asked to make a policy recommendation to the OECD on the future of aid policy. Briefly explain the problems that the OECD faces in providing aid to developing countries. Compare the ‘old’ aid model of the OECD countries with the ‘new’ model practiced by the BRICs countries, stating the strengths and weaknesses of each. What lessons should the OECD learn from the BRICs model? What should the OECD avoid doing?

16. You are being asked to make a policy recommendation to the NAFTA leaders on a future joint border security policy between their three countries. Explain briefly the challenges faced by the NAFTA countries in implementing joint border security. Use an analysis of the current policy of the European Union to assess the strengths and weaknesses of any future NAFTA policy. What lessons should the NAFTA countries learn from the EU experience? What should the NAFTA countries avoid doing?

17. You are being asked to make a policy recommendation to the New York State Governor’s Office on the future of prison policy in New York. Compare the current prison policy in New York State with the policy in one other case study country. What lessons should New York State learn from this experience? What should New York State avoid doing?

18. You are being asked to make a policy recommendation to the EU on the current financial crisis. Compare government actions during the financial crisis in the EU with
the prior financial crisis in either Sweden or Japan. What lessons should the European Union member states learn from the Swedish or Japanese experience? What should the EU member states avoid doing?

Useful Resources

**Recommended Media in English:** LexisNexis, BBC News & BBC World Service (BBC iPlayer for radio broadcasts), NPR (for podcasts), Financial Times, The Economist, New York Times, Le Monde (International), Der Spiegel (International), Toronto Star, The European Voice, EurActiv, The Japan Times, Al Jazeera (English)

**Recommended Foreign Language Media:** Le Monde, Der Spiegel, La Vanguardia, El Pais, BBC World Service, BBC Mundo, Al Jazeera

**Organizations Providing Good Sources of Comparative Data:**
- The OECD - almost every policy area. Especially good on education, health, social policy, gender, employment, taxation, and aid. See also their list of social policy related web sites: [http://tinyurl.com/brb77bm](http://tinyurl.com/brb77bm)
- The World Bank - comparative economic statistics for developed and developing countries. Conducts policy reviews of member countries.
- The International Monetary Fund. For economic statistics. They also produce regular ‘economic outlook’ reports.
- The WTO, trade statistics, comparative trade profiles for WTO members showing tariffs, trade flows in goods and services, intellectual property. Conducts trade policy reviews for each country.
- United Nations- look for the Human Development Index.
- The Commonwealth Fund. US NGO with large amount of comparative health data.
- Eurostat. The EU’s statistical service.
- Pew Global Attitudes Project. US Foundation which conducts comparative surveys on important political issues.
- World Values Survey. Surveys of over 50 countries with questions about culture and values.
- Transparency International. NGO based in Germany that ranks countries on a ‘perceptions of corruption’ index.
- Freedom House. Ranks countries on upholding the rule of law and civil liberties issues.
- International Labour Organization. International organization which oversees labour standards. Produces reports on the status of working conditions in member countries.
- UNCTAD. United Nations body that reports regularly on trade and development, trade and environment, investment, globalization, and economic development.
- World Health Organization. International organization that reports on its members’ health policies (mainly from a developing country perspective) and collects the world health statistics.