INEQUALITY AND PUBLIC POLICY
RPAD 604 / RPOS 604 – Spring 2012

Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy, SUNY Albany
Department of Public Administration and Policy

Professor Jennifer E. Dodge

Class Location: Husted 006
Class Time: Monday 5:45-8:50 pm
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Course Description - This course addresses the formulation and implementation of public policies that seek to end inequalities based on gender, race, and class.1 Specifically, this course will explore alternative definitions of equality and their implications for public policy; the role of issue definition and agenda-setting in policy making; the troublesome challenge of measuring equality for purposes of developing or assessing policy; the causes and politics of inequality, and the dynamics of governing institutions that produce, exacerbate or ameliorate inequalities. The course will equip students with a variety of policy analytic tools to help them analyze inequalities and the various public policies used to address them.

To learn how to apply course concepts to real policy issues, the course will use environmental justice as a test case. Environmental justice draws attention to the disproportionate burden that low-income communities, communities of color and (sometimes) women bear for environmental hazards. In addition, each student will select a specific policy issue involving an inequality in a policy domain of their own choosing (e.g., environment, housing, homelessness, poverty, etc.). Assignments will focus on providing students with ample opportunities to apply course concepts and practice various policy analytic tools within their chosen policy domain. Class sessions will also provide opportunities for students to share and develop their analyses.

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Develop and use a vocabulary about equality and inequality;
- Identify different inequalities relates to race, class, and gender;
- Analyze policy problems, and the ways that other policy actors analyze policy problems;
- Understand alternative models and theoretical components of problem definition and agenda-setting in public policy;
- Explore the policy implications of different measures of inequality and their advantages and disadvantages;
- Analyze a significant public policy question and present related public policy research.

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1 There are many other categories of inequality that we will not cover in course readings such as sexual orientation, physical ability, immigrant status, and so on. It is not possible to adequately cover all these topics in the course. However, students are encouraged to cover these topics in their assignments, and thus to bring them into the classroom.
Text Books
You may purchase required books through Mary Jane books at 215 Western Avenue. They are also on reserve at the Dewey Library.

Required:

Recommended:

Additional readings will be posted on Blackboard at [https://blackboard.albany.edu/](https://blackboard.albany.edu/). Use the same login and password required for MyUAlbany.

Communication
Students are invited to ask questions in class, during office hours, or via email. The best way to contact me outside of class is by email. I will usually respond to emails within 24 hours. If you send an email after 6pm, I may not respond until the following day. Please write “PAD 604” in the subject line of emails. Please check your email regularly for emails from me as well.

Assignments
General Guidelines
- Submit all essay assignments electronically on blackboard before class on the designated date.
- Submit all short assignments on paper in class on the designated date.
- Write all assignments in complete sentences and paragraphs, single-spaced, with one-inch margins, Times New Roman 12 point font, and include page numbers.
- All sources should be in MLA citation style. For further guidelines on Citations and Sources see Appendix A.
- The length of both short and essay assignments are specified below.
- For essays, you can provide tables and figures to support your arguments; place them at the end of the paper. Cover pages, bibliographies, tables and figures do not count towards page length.
Policy Memos
To assess your understanding of course materials and your ability to apply concepts to real-life cases of public policy, each student is required to write four (4) policy memos throughout the course. Each policy memo will require students to use course materials to define and analyze a public policy issue within a policy domain of their choosing (e.g., environment, housing, homelessness, poverty, domestic violence, etc.). The policy memos will require students to conduct independent research. The first 3 memos will be 5 pages in length. The final memo will be 20 pages in length (and will include revised sections from the first 3 memos). Instructions for each assignment will be distributed in class and posted on blackboard several weeks before the assignment is due. These instructions will include details about the exact questions of each assignment. For guidelines on Citations and Sources see Appendix A.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy Memo 1</td>
<td>February 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Memo 2</td>
<td>March 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Memo 3</td>
<td>April 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy Memo 4</td>
<td>May 11</td>
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Short Assignments
For every class (except those classes when a policy memo is due), each student is required to submit short assignments of 1-2 pages in length that relate to the topic of the day. The assignment for each class is listed on the syllabus. These assignments require students to do an exercise to practice some dimension of policy analysis (such as structuring policy problems). At the beginning of the course, each student will select one policy issue to focus on throughout the semester. Students will use their policy issue as a case for completing each assignment. These assignments will help students prepare to write the policy memos. Importantly, the short assignments should not be summaries of or commentaries about the reading. Instead they are opportunities to apply the policy tools from the readings to real policy issues. Students should be prepared to share their short assignments in class each week. As a class, we will work together to critique some of them for the purposes of improving the analysis and students’ knowledge of how to use these tools effectively.
Grading
Student performance in the course will be determined as follows:

Policy memos 70 %  (15% for each of the first 3; 25% for the final)
Short assignments 30 %  (3% for each assignment x 10 classes)

Grading Criteria
Policy memos – Rubrics with grading criteria will be provided for each memo and will be handed out in class and posted on the course Blackboard page along with the instructions. In general, submissions will be assessed according to 1) the degree to which the student answers the assigned question in a sophisticated manner, 2) the degree to which the student illustrates a complete understanding of the course material, 3) overall organization and professionalism of the paper, and 4) the degree to which formatting and citation guidelines are followed.

Short assignments – Your short assignments will be evaluated based on the degree to which you demonstrate 1) that you have read the material and 2) that you have applied the policy tools critically and thoughtfully to your test case.

Late assignments - For every 24-hour period that an essay assignment is late, the grade will be reduced by 10%. The first 24-hour period begins at the beginning of the class in which the assignment is due.

Grading Scale
A: 93-100  B-: 80-82  D+: 67-69
A-: 90-92  C+: 77-79  D: 63-66
B+: 87-89  C: 73-76  D-: 62-60
B: 83-86  C-: 70-72  E: below 60

Other policies
Academic Integrity - As members of the SUNY community, we are all expected to adhere to high standards of intellectual and academic integrity. You can view our Academic Code at: http://www.albany.edu/content_images/AcademicIntegrity.pdf. This is a good resource, especially regarding integrity in writing. Violations of these standards will result in one of the following penalties: reduction in the grade for the assignment, failure of the assignment, failure of the course, or expulsion. In all cases, a Violation of Academic Integrity Report will be submitted to the Dean of Graduate Studies to be placed in your university file, with copies provided to you, the department head, and the Dean of Rockefeller College.

- Students with needs consistent with the Americans with Disability Act should inform the instructor during the first week of class so that reasonable accommodations can be made.
- This syllabus serves as a general outline. The instructor reserves the right to deviate from the plan if necessary. Students will be notified promptly of any modifications.
Course Schedule

UNIT ONE: CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS

Class 1 (January 23): Dealing with Definitions: Equality, Equity and Distributive Justice

- Review the table of contents for the lists of goods that Walzer analyzes in the book.
- Focus on the section on environmental justice, skim the rest.

** Short assignment 1 (due in class): Write a statement that is no longer than 1 page about a policy issue that you would like to analyze for class assignments. Be sure to include the policy domain (e.g., environment, housing, homelessness, poverty, etc.), a description of the people who are impacted (e.g., women, children, people of color, the poor, etc.), the geographic scope that you are interested in (e.g., the United States, South Africa, New York State, Albany, etc.), and the policy problem that you would like to address (e.g., how to provide services to new immigrants, etc.). Be prepared to share with the class. **

Class 2 (January 30): Introducing an Approach to Policy Analysis

- For chapter 2, focus on the following sections and skim the others: policy making process, models of policy change, and policy analysis in the policy process.

Recommended:

** Short assignment 2 (due in class): Using readings from classes 1 and 2, sketch out a theory of inequality and its relationship to public policy. Include in the sketch the key terms that are relevant to analyzing inequality in a public policy context according to the readings and include any additional concepts that you think might be missing. Illustrate the ways the concepts are related (for example, by drawing arrows between concepts to show their relationship). Be prepared to explain your sketch in class. Hint: Keep it simple. Focus on 3-4 key concepts (or clusters of concepts) and how they are related. Focus your sketch by thinking of it within the context of the policy issue you have chosen to work on in class. **
Class 3 (February 6): Structuring Policy Problems

Recommended:

Short assignment 3 (due in class): Using the tools in Hoppe (2010) and Rochefort & Cobb (1994) analyze how different actors have defined the policy problem in the policy domain that you have chosen to analyze in class. Drawing on Hoppe (2010), describe whether the problem in your case is structured, unstructured, or moderately structured. Drawing on Rochefort & Cobb (1994), describe the different dimensions of two competing problem definitions and the actors who advocate for them. (Hint: You do not need to discuss all of the dimensions of problems that Rochefort & Cobb describe, but select the ones that are most relevant to your case.)

Class 4 (February 13): Causal Stories and Agenda Setting

Short assignment 4 (due in class): Starting with the two problem definitions that you analyzed in short assignment 3, describe the causal stories that the different actors you identified use to embed these problems in some argument about causality. In other words, are the causes of these problems described by the relevant policy actors as mechanical, accidental, intentional or inadvertent? What are their arguments? What strategies of causal argumentation are used, if any, to push the policy problems onto the public agenda? Do the causal arguments succeed in placing responsibility for taking action on a particular individual or group? How?
UNIT TWO: CATEGORIES AND CAUSES OF INEQUALITY

Class 5 (February 20): Categories and Causes of Inequality: Income and Social Class
- Reading on class TBD
*** Focus on chapters 1 and 2, skim the rest.

Policy Memo #1 (due electronically just before class). Instructions will be handed out separately.

Class 6 (February 27): Categories and Causes of Inequality: Race
  o Chapter 1: Constructing categories: Naming, counting, science and identity (pp. xx-xx)
  o Chapter 7: Public policies as identity stories: American race-ethnic discourse (pp. xx-xx)
*** Focus on chapter 5, skim the rest.

Short assignment 5 (due in class): Building on your analysis of the causal stories used to describe the policy issue you are addressing, describe how the different actors use race and class if at all to explain the policy issue. Is race used as a category, lens or cause of the issue you are analyzing? How? Is class used as a category, lens of cause? How? If race or class is not used, how could it be used to highlight another aspect of the problem? What are the implications of the different uses of race and class for public policy? In your analysis, be sensitive to the independent importance of race and class and their potential intersectionalities.

Class 7 (March 5): Categories and Causes of Inequality: Gender

(this class continues on the next page)
Recommended:


*Short assignment 6 (due in class):* Building on your short assignment 5, how is gender used as a category, lens or cause of the issue you are analyzing? How? If gender is not used, how could it be used to highlight another aspect of the problem? What are the implications for public policy? In your analysis, be sensitive to the independent importance of gender and its intersectionalities with race and class.

*** Spring Break March 12 – 18 ***

UNIT THREE: THE POLITICS OF INEQUALITY AND PUBLIC POLICY

Class 8 (March 19): The Politics of Evidence


*Policy Memo #2 (due electronically just before class):* *Instructions will be handed out separately.*

Class 9 (March 26): Mapping the institutions of policy making: forums, arenas and courts


*Short assignment 7 (due in class):* In what “forums,” “arenas” and/or “courts” are the policy issue you selected being discussed and decided? How are these venues related (or not)? In other words, do decisions in one venue affect what happens in another? Are the inequalities that you have described earlier in your assignments discussed in these venues? In what ways?
Class 10 (April 2): Mapping the players of policy making: Policy Coalitions and Discursive Communities

- Case: Revisit Dumping in Dixie.

Short assignment 8 (due in class): Who are the key players involved in the policy process related to the policy issue you have selected? Are these actors organized into one or more policy or discourse coalitions that focus on bringing attention to inequality? Drawing on Sabatier (1988) and Fischer (2003), describe the key features that help this coalition hang together. These features might include a core set of beliefs or interpretations about the policy problems and its solution(s).

*** Easter Holiday April 6-9 ***

UNIT FOUR: POLICY SOLUTIONS TO INEQUALITIES

Class 11 (April 16): Crafting Policy Solutions to Inequality: Policy Tools

  *** Read only section on “Design elements and effects on democratic values,” pp. 81-100.***
  *** Read only sections A, C, C1, and D and their related questions. You may also read B and E if you are interested in international or tribal cases but we will not discuss these in class. We will read section F in two weeks.***

Policy Memo #3 (due electronically just before class): Instructions will be handed out separately.
Class 12 (April 23): Crafting Policy Solutions to Inequality: Rules
- Readings TBD

  **Short assignment 9 (due in class): Assignment TBD.**

Class 13 (April 30): Crafting Policy Solutions to Inequality: Participatory Policy Making
- Readings TBD

  **Short assignment 10 (due in class): Assignment TBD.**

- Readings TBD

  **Policy Memo #4 (due May 11 via email): Instructions will be handed out separately.**

**Appendix A: Citations and Sources** – I’m revising the appendix. It will be included in the final syllabus.