**INEQUALITY AND PUBLIC POLICY**
RPAD 604 / RPOS 604 – Spring 2018

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

**Professor William A. Sisk**

Class Location: Husted 014
Class Time: Tuesday 5:45-9:25 pm
Office Hours: Wednesday 2:00-3:00 pm
and by appointment

Office location: Milne Hall 316
Email: bsisk@albany.edu
Office phone: by special request only

**Course Description** - This course addresses the formulation and implementation of public policies that seek to end diverse inequities. 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 causes and politics of inequality; the design of policy solutions and their implications for equality; 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 examine 1 policy area in detail: poverty. In addition, each student, in consultation with the professor, will select a specific policy issue involving an inequity 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 and inequities;
- Analyze policy problems, and the ways policy actors analyze policy problems;
- Understand alternative models and theoretical components of problem definition and agenda-setting in public policy;
- Compare different policy solutions and their merits and demerits;
- Apply policy analytic tools to a significant public policy question.

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1 This is course is the intellectual property of Prof. Jennifer Dodge, PhD. All the course material is borrowed or adapted from content she organized or created.
2 We will focus on inequities relates to class, race, and gender. There are many categories of inequity that we will not cover in course readings such as sexual orientation, physical ability, citizenship 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 used books through the SUNY Campus Center Bookstore 1400 Washington Avenue, Albany NY, 12222. You can also order new copies online.

Required:

Additional readings will be posted on Blackboard at 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 usually respond within 24 hours. If you send an email after 6pm, I may not respond until the following day. Please regularly check for emails from me.

Assignments
General Guidelines
Policy Memos:
- Due dates for policy memos are listed below under “Policy Memos” and in the course schedule. Submit policy memos under the assignments folder in Blackboard by 11:59pm on the due date.
- Write all assignments in complete sentences and paragraphs, double-spaced, with one-inch margins, Times New Roman 12 point font, and number the pages. I will return essays that do not meet these guidelines to be rewritten.
- Be sure to include your name, the memo number (e.g., “Memo 1”), the course number and the instructors name at the top of your memo. You can do this in 1 or 2 lines. Do not use this as an opportunity to fill space!
- The length of each policy memo is specified in separate instructions. You can provide tables and figures to support your arguments; place them at the end of the paper. Bibliographies, tables and figures do not count towards page length. Please do not include cover pages.
- All references should be cited in APA style. Formatting instructions can be found at http://library.albany.edu/cfox. For guidelines and a list of appropriate sources see Appendix A.
- I grade all electronically submitted assignments electronically. Please submit policy memos in word so I can type notes in the margins and make editing suggestions in track changes. Be sure to check blackboard for my feedback and comments. I will expect you to take into account my feedback in subsequent memos.

Short assignments:
- All short assignments are due (submitted electronically) the day before class at 2pm. You must submit your short assignment by 2:00 pm on the day prior to class or the assignment will expire (in other words, you will no longer have access to submit it). If you cannot submit on Tuesday at 2pm, you are welcome to submit your assignments early on Sunday or Monday.
- Short assignments should be no longer than 2 pages, double-spaced, in length.
Policy Memos

To assess your understanding of course materials and your ability to apply concepts to real-life cases of public policy, students will write 3 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. Each memo will be 5 pages in length. 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. I will not accept drafts of policy memos; instead the short assignments are designed to give you an opportunity to prepare and get feedback on your ideas for your policy memos.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Memo Due Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Memo 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy Memo 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy Memo 3</td>
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Short Assignments

Each student is required to submit 8 short assignments of no more than 2 pages in length (double-spaced) that relate to class readings. The assignment for each class is listed on the course schedule. 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, students 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy memos</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short assignments</td>
<td>24%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(20% for each essay x 3) (3% for each assignment x 8) (1% for each class)*

(This equals 98%. I will scale the final percentage to 100% to calculate the final grades.)
Grading Criteria

Policy memos – I will assess policy memos based on a single grading rubric attached in Appendix B and posted on Blackboard. 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.

Attendance – Attendance will be measured by your presence in the classroom, and stands as a proxy for your commitment to the course. If you do not attend class, you will not receive credit for attendance that day. I understand that sometimes there are circumstances related to professional and personal obligations that will require students to be absent on certain days.

Late assignments - For every 24-hour period that a policy memo assignment is late, the grade will be reduced by 1 percentage point. The first 24-hour period begins at the beginning of the class in which the assignment is due.

Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-66.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>below 60</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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): Introduction: Inequality and Public Policy
- Case: The Marriage Equality Act of New York State and related Tax Regulations
- Come to class with an idea for a policy issue that you would like to study throughout the semester. The issue MUST have to do with an inequity. (Note: You should make a final choice for the policy issue that you will analyze throughout the course by class 3.)

Reading tips: The Parson’s reading gives you an overview of some of the key concepts that scholars and practitioners use to describe public policy and the policy making process. Do not worry if you do not understand everything in the reading, but look for the meaning of “public” and “policy,” and be prepared to discuss in class. (Does this fit your notion of public policy, or do you understand policy differently? What concepts are unclear or new?) The Stone reading does a great job of describing and illustrating several different kinds of inequity. You might think about how the concepts in this reading apply to some of the policy issues that you care about. It is possible that more than one concept could be used to describe a policy problem? Think about what difference it makes to define inequality in different ways. The Marriage Equality Act provides an example of a recent policy that was enacted by the New York State Legislature. As you read it, think about the words that are used to describe the policy problem and the policy solution. What do they mean? Why are they in there? Do any of the concepts from the Stone reading help describe the type of inequality that you seeing being described and addressed in the Marriage Equality Act?

Class 2 (January 30): Conceptualizations of Equity, Equality, Fairness and Justice
NOTE: the readings for this week are challenging, and the Young reading is long. Be sure to leave enough time to get through them.
- Come to class with at least two documents (policy reports, hearing transcripts, academic articles or something similar) that express two different ways of describing the issue you have chosen to study in class. We will use them to do an in-class assignment that will begin to prepare you for your class projects.
*** Draft - Final Syllabus will be distributed during the first day of class. ***

Class 3 (February 6): Policy Analysis: Between Facts and Norms
- Bring the marriage equality act (and related documents) to class.

UNIT TWO: POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

Class 4 (February 13): The Problem with Poverty
- Newman, preface and ch. 1
- Mishel, ch. 1

Analytics: Structuring Policy Problems.

**Short assignment 1 (due February 12 by 2pm)**: Analyze how two different actors have defined the policy problem for the issue that you have chosen to analyze in class. Drawing on Rochefort & Cobb (1994), describe three dimensions of the competing definitions and the actors who advocate for them. **DO NOT DISCUSS CAUSALITY. WE WILL DISCUSS THIS NEXT WEEK.**

Class 5 (February 20): Explanations of Poverty
- Mishel, ch. 3

Analytics: Causal Stories and Agenda Setting.

**Short assignment 2 (due February 19 by 2pm)**: Using the case you selected to analyze in class, describe two causal stories that appear in the controversy. Be clear about who is promoting the causal stories, whether or not the causal stories are mechanical, accidental, intentional or inadvertent, and how they help (or not) to put the issue on the agenda.

Policy Memo #1 (due February 26 at 11:59pm). Instructions will be handed out separately.
Class 6 (February 27): Poverty and Housing Insecurity

- Play this game before coming to class: Spent: [http://playspent.org](http://playspent.org)

UNIT THREE: KNOWLEDGE AND NORMS IN POLICY DESIGN

Class 7 (March 6): Poverty and Target Populations


Analytics: Constructing Target Populations


*Short assignment 3 (due March 5 at 2pm):* How are the main actors constructing target populations with respect to the policy issue you have chosen to study in class: as advantaged, contenders, dependents or deviants? What are the consequences of these different constructions? (If the construction of target populations is not an issue, consider what else the actors might be seeking to construct, such as the acceptance of certain values, constructions of government agencies, the political process or something else.)

*** Spring Break – No class on March 13. ***

Class 8 (March 20): Poverty and the Politics of Evidence


Analytics


*Short assignment 4 (due March 19 at 2pm):* Using the figures in the Schneider & Ingram reading, determine whether or not “the policy community” is unified or divided regarding the evidence in your
case, and analyze how the different actors in your case discuss evidence, science, and/or expertise.

NOTE: Figure 6.3 has a typo: the first mention of “deviants” should be “dependents.”

Class 9 (March 27): The Contest over Values


Short assignment 5 (due March 26 at 2pm): Assess the values that are at stake in the policy issue you’ve decided to focus on in class. Who are the debaters? What are their main narratives? And what values can you discern in those narratives? (Even if you strongly disagree with one of the debaters, do your best to identify what it stands for – its values – in the debate.)

Policy Memo #2 (due April 2 at 11:59pm): Instructions will be handed out separately.

UNIT FOUR: DESIGNING SOLUTIONS TO POVERTY

** CONTENT TO BE DETERMINED **

Class 10 (April 3): Improving Individuals through Human Capital Development

- Newman, ch. 5.
- NOTE: This week you should choose one policy solution to the problem you have been analyzing this semester. Your next three short assignments will involve analyzing different aspects of these policies. You may consult Professor Dodge in selecting the policy you will analyze.

Recommended:


Reading notes: Ziliak provides a useful overview of some of the US’s major anti-poverty programs, providing a little bit of history of their development, and an analysis of what has worked (or not) over the last 10 years to reduce poverty (and income inequality), and for whom (especially children versus the elderly). The overview should help you get a sense of the big picture. Focus on what he says about how well these programs have worked to reduce poverty and why this might be the case. Heckman and Newman focus more on programs that help poor children (Heckman) and workers (Newman) develop skills. Think about how much you like their solutions to poverty, and what are its advantages and disadvantages of human capital development.
Class 11 (April 10): Improving Job Placement through Workforce Development

- Newman, ch. 3, 4, 8 (If you have to make choices about what to read this week, skim chapters 4 and 8 here.)

Analytics: Assessing Goals and Problem Definitions

- Schneider & Ingram on goals/problems (Chapter 4, p. 82-84).
- NOTE: Over the next few weeks, we will analyze Governor Cuomo’s Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative. Please review the documents under the “ESPRI” folder on blackboard to familiarize yourself with the initiative (they are short). We will review these in class. I will hand out copies of the documents.

Short assignment 6 (due April 9 at 2pm): Using the Schneider and Ingram framework on policy design, analyze the stated (or implicit) policy goals of the policy solution you have chosen to analyze in class. What are the explicit and implicit goals? What values do they promote?

Class 12 (April 17): Raising the Minimum Wage

- Mishel, ch. 4

Recommended:

- Neumark, D. (2015). The effects of minimum wages on employment. FRBSF Economic Letter (2015-37). (This piece explains why the results of wage effect on employment studies get such mixed results.)

Analytics: Agents and Implementation

- Schneider & Ingram on agents and implementation structures (Chapter 4, p. 89-93).

Short assignment 7 (due April 16 at 2pm): Using the Schneider and Ingram framework on policy design, analyze the agents and implementation strategies of the policy solution you have chosen to analyze in class. Who are the agents that will benefit from this policy or be empowered to act? In what ways will the policy be implemented?
Class 13 (April 24): Making Work Pay


Analytics: Tools and Rules

- Schneider & Ingram on tools and rules (Chapter 4, p. 93-99).

**Short assignment 8 (due April 23 at 2pm): Using the Schneider and Ingram framework on policy design, analyze the tools and rules of the policy solution you have chosen to analyze in class. What are the tools that will be used? What are the main rules of the policy?**

Class 14 (May 1): Cash Transfers: Welfare and the Effects on Poverty and Citizenship

  - Chapter 4 (133-190), 133-172 on welfare programs. 173-190 covers work-fare programs.
  [http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/666735](http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/666735)
- Come prepared to discuss your class projects. What did you learn over the semester? Did your views on the policy issue you analyzed change or get strengthened? How does your analysis inform how you might take into account of both facts (scientific evidence) and competing values in policy conflicts?

Class 15 (May 8): Bring Paper Drafts of Projects To Class & Share Informally [Refreshments As Desired] Opportunity to Peer Review Work Before Final Due-Date.

**Policy Memo #3 (due May 11 at 11:59pm): Instructions will be handed out separately.**
Subject to deliberation on the time required for Peer Reviewing and Addressing Peer Feedback.
Appendix A: Citations and Sources

Citations. Include a bibliography in each essay. Students are to cite sources in a manner consistent with academic honesty policies. I would rather you include too many citations rather than too few. As a general rule of thumb, provide a citation for something you did not know before you began your research. In-text citations and the bibliography should be formatted in APA style. See the on-line help sheets at University at Albany’s citation fox website at http://library.albany.edu/cfox. This reference explains how to cite references in the works cited section (bibliography) of your paper and how to cite references in the text of your essay.

Acceptable Sources. You may use primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include, but are not limited to, government reports, legislative hearings and testimonies, court decisions, and government auditor reports. Secondary sources are summaries and interpretations of primary sources. Secondary sources include, but are not limited to, articles from major newspapers and news magazines, network and cable news programs, and academic research. Blogs and Wikipedia are not acceptable sources. Be an intelligent consumer of information by evaluating secondary sources for potential political bias. If it is well known that a particular source is liberal or conservative, you must compensate for this in the paper. Acknowledge its bias and balance the information with something from a source on the other side of the political spectrum. Here are some places to start with your research, but feel free to consult other sources:

- Academic research published in public policy, public administration or political science journals such as: Journal of Public Policy Analysis and Management, Public Administration Review, Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, American Review of Public Administration, Administration and Society, American Political Science Review, American Journal of Political Science, and Journal of Politics, etc. There are likely to be policy journals that are specific to your policy domain that can also be great sources of public policy analysis.
- Congressional Research Service reports (opencrs.com and scattered elsewhere around the internet)
- Congressional testimony (available through Lexis/Nexis via the library) and reports completed by Congressional committee staff
- Agency Inspector General reports
### Appendix B: Grading Rubric, PAD 604, Prof. Dodge

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substance</th>
<th>Excellent (2)</th>
<th>Average (1.5)</th>
<th>Needs Improvement (1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates sharp understanding of policy theory</td>
<td>Demonstrates adequate understanding of policy theory</td>
<td>Demonstrates poor understanding of policy theory</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applies theory so that arguments link conceptual ideas to evidence from the case</td>
<td>Applies theory but link between conceptual ideas and evidence from the case is unclear at times</td>
<td>Does not apply theory at all or the link between conceptual ideas and evidence from the case is often unclear</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes arguments that are substantive</td>
<td>Makes arguments that are substantive in a majority of cases</td>
<td>Makes arguments that are superficial</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows a sharp understanding of the complex policy questions</td>
<td>Shows an adequate understanding of the policy questions</td>
<td>Shows a poor understanding of the policy questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides sufficient, clear and balanced evidence</td>
<td>Provides evidence that is either insufficient, unclear or unbalanced</td>
<td>Provides evidence that is insufficient, unclear or unbalanced</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Organization

| Organizes overall essay into logical sections. | Organizes overall essay into logical sections, although some sections are poorly ordered. | Overall essay is not well organized; sections are missing and/or are poorly ordered. |
| Arranges ideas within each section in a logical manner that supports the purpose or argument. | Generally arranges ideas within each section in a logical manner, although some sections are confusing. | Generally ideas within each section are not logically ordered, and many sections are confusing. |
| Writes without spelling, grammar or English errors from start to finish. | Writes with occasional spelling, grammar, and/or use of English errors. | Writes with many spelling, grammar, and/or use of English errors. |

### Formatting

| Follows APA formatting for citations in the text and bibliography. Sources in the bibliography are listed in alphabetical order. A majority of citations are from primary sources. | One of these conditions was not met. | More than one of these conditions was not met. |
| Follows formatting instructions including length, font, margins, and the numbering of pages. | One of these conditions was not present. | More than one of these conditions was not present. |