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 the University bookstore 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 dropbox.


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 dropbox 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 24: What is Public Policy?

January 31: How Do We Study It I? Theories.
Weible and Sabatier. 2018. Part I: Theoretical Approaches to Policy Process Research

February 7: How Do We Study It II? Epistemology and Methodology
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. (Dropbox)
Marsh and Furlong. 2002. Epistemology a skin not a sweater. (Dropbox)

**Policy Presentation: Security—

II. Constructing Public Policy and the Policy Agenda

February 14: Framing
Chapters 1 and 4.

**Policy Presentation: Housing—**

February 21: Agenda Setting I

**Policy Presentation: Education—**

February 28: Agenda Setting II
Baumgartner and Jones. *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*.

**Policy Presentation: Energy—**

March 7: Solutions
Chapters 5-7.

**Policy Presentation: Foreign Affairs—**

March 14: Classes Suspended (Conference)

**III. Policy Change and Implementation**

March 21: Classes Suspended Spring Break

March 28: Path Dependence, Policy Feedback, and Change

**Policy Presentation: Health—**

April 4: Policy Diffusion


**Policy Presentation: Tax—**

April 11: Implementation

Pressman and Wildavsky, Chapter 3 "Trials of Implementation," *Implementation: How Great Expectations in Washington Are Dashed in Oakland; Or, Why It's Amazing that Federal Programs Work at All, This Being a Saga of the Economic Development Administration as Told by Two Sympathetic Observers Who Seek to Build Morals on a Foundation of Ruined Hopes*

Michael Lipsky, Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services, Chapter 2.


**Policy Presentation: Immigration --**

**IV. Equality**

April 18: Inequality, Citizenship, and the Welfare State


**Policy Presentation: Welfare—**

April 25: The Politics of Inequality


**Policy Presentation:**

**IV. Conclusion**

May 2: Navigating Ethical Dilemmas

**Final paper due**

PS Symposium: “‘Pracademics’: Mixing an Academic Career with Practical Politics.” PS 44:2. (Dropbox)
**Policy Presentation:** ____________________________