**RPOS 303/RPAD 304: Public Policy in Theory and Practice (3 credits)**

Mon/Wed 5:45 – 7:05 PM  
Fall 2018  
ES 245

Professor: Virginia Eubanks  
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Office hours:  
Mondays 3 PM – 4:30 PM (Uptown contact office, HU B16)  
Wednesdays 11 AM – 12:30 PM (Downtown office, Milne 210)  
And by appointment

**Course Description**  
We begin this class with a puzzle: why do the models of policy-making we learn in the classroom so rarely correspond to how public policy is imagined, created, and implemented in the real world? And what does this gap between theory and practice mean for the quality of our democracy, the legitimacy of our institutions, and the health and safety of our communities?

To answer these questions, we will ground our studies in key theories of the discipline, including the stages of policy making, problem definition and agenda setting, democratic deliberation and decision-making, and implementation and street-level bureaucracy. But we will engage these theories through accessibly written, engaging human stories: real-world examples of how policy-making can create suffering and, occasionally, triumph. In 2018, we will study three cases in the U.S. context: housing, work, and welfare.

**Bulletin Description**  
Examines the theoretical foundations of public policy research, of alternative models of public policy formation, their methodologies, and the relationship between the theory and practice of the policy sciences. Inquiries into the practice of public policy; focuses on actual policies in a substantive area. Prerequisite(s): RPOS 101 or RPOS/RPAD 140, or junior or senior standing.

**Learning Objectives**

- Students will become more conversant with key theories and models of policy-making.  
- Students will apply these theories to important social and political problems.  
- Students will identify key strengths and weaknesses in theoretical models of policy-making and suggest alternatives.  
- Students will identify a personal policy interest, use appropriate primary sources to discover more about its history and context, and apply frameworks and ideas learned in class to understand it.  
- Students will develop their skill in drafting and revising written prose for two different audiences: their intellectual discipline and the general public.  
- Students will gain skill and confidence in presenting course content and their own ideas orally.
On Preparation and Participation
Class meetings are structured to provide a mix of discussion and lecture. In formulating discussion questions, I will assume that you are taking primary responsibility for your own learning. Meaning: I will assume you’ve done the readings, taken notes to organize your own thinking, taken time to reflect on the issues the readings raise, and arrived at class with considered opinions. After some conversation, I will review major points, elaborate on key concepts, fill in context, raise alternative perspectives, and/or draw connections to other readings and contemporary events. For this format to work, you will need to read with a critical eye and think about how the readings fit together and relate to your policy area.

Our group includes students with diverse political viewpoints and from many different academic, social, and professional backgrounds. For our class meetings to be productive, people will need to feel comfortable expressing diverse viewpoints, asking basic questions, and sometimes just saying, “I don’t get it.” Please make sure that, inside and outside class, you do what you can to create an environment in which brave but respectful conversation can occur.

Students Needing Accommodation
Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students for whom English is a second language, or for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning and psychiatric disabilities. ESL students should speak with the primary instructor during the first two weeks of class to make arrangements and may be advised to attend additional sessions during the instructors’ office hours so that they can draw comparable value from the course.

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning and psychiatric disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please notify the Director of the Disability Resource Center (Campus Center 130, 518-442-5490, DRC@albany.edu). That office will provide the instructor with verification of your disability and will recommend appropriate accommodations.

Academic Integrity
This course requires brave thinking and hard work. To accomplish this, we have to work together to foster a learning environment characterized by trust, truth, and mutual respect. We will discuss mechanisms and methods for creating this space during our first class, and I will circulate the resulting learning agreement for everyone to sign by the second week.

The University also has very clear and specific expectations and regulations around academic integrity, here: https://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html. Please be sure to read these standards closely. Academic dishonesty—including but not limited to plagiarism, cheating, multiple submission, forgery, sabotage, unauthorized collaboration, and falsification—can be met with severe penalties, including by immediate failure on the assignment. Multiple violations of academic integrity can result in course failure or even expulsion. Resources for practicing academic integrity are available from the university library, here: http://library.albany.edu/infolit/integrity.
Policy on Absences and Lateness

In order to participate effectively in this course, you have to be physically and mentally present. Things happen, and we all have complex lives. As much as I’d like it to be, this course cannot always be your first priority.

To help negotiate life’s unavoidable surprises, everyone is allowed two unexcused absences for the course – use them however you want. You don’t need to “clear” an unexcused absence with me beforehand or explain your absence afterwards. All assignments must be turned in on time if you take an unexcused absence. If you miss a quiz, you will not be able to make it up.

More than two unexcused absences will seriously impact your grade. For every absence after 2, your final grade will go down 3 points.

3 unexcused absences = - 3 points on your final grade
4 unexcused absences = - 6 points on your final grade
5 unexcused absences = - 9 points on your final grade, etc.

Excused absences must be serious in nature (severe illness or injury, death in the family, car accident), unavoidable/unexpected (that is, your brother’s wedding is important, but it won’t count as an excused absence), and documented by someone official (doctor’s note, police report, etc.). If you have more than one excused absence, you must meet with me as soon as possible to create a plan for making up the work.

Lateness is occasionally unavoidable, but regular lateness is very disruptive to the learning environment and disrespectful to your peers. All quizzes will take place in the first 5-10 minutes of class. If you miss a quiz, you cannot make it up. If you have a chronic problem with lateness of more than two or three minutes, it will negatively impact your grade.
Required Texts
All required texts are available in the university bookstore and many of them are available at low cost from online retailers such as Abebooks.com (a portal for independent used book sellers) or Powells.com (a union bookstore). You can also find a physical bookstore near you that carries required books at IndieBound.org.


Articles and primary policy documents, as assigned by instructor, on Blackboard

Recommended Text

Assignments and Grading
*Research and Writing (60%)*
-- Identify your policy area (Due Sept 12, 0%)
-- Policy timeline and research report (Due Oct 17, 10%)
-- Policy brief, first draft (Due Nov 5, 10%)
-- First draft Op Ed, Policy Memoir, or Campaign plan (Due Nov 14, 10%)
-- Op Ed, Policy Memoir, or Campaign plan, revised draft (Due Dec 3, 10%)
-- Policy brief, revised draft (Due Dec 10, 20%)

*Engagement and Synthesis (40%)*
-- Class participation (15%)
There will be many formal and informal ways to participate in class discussion. One primary way we’ll foster engaging dialogue and broad participation is by assigning conversation roles (at random, by drawing from a hat) at the beginning of each class. See attached for the description of different roles. Only one role, the “seeder,” requires advanced work: jotting down a few quotes that you find compelling or drafting discussion questions for each reading. No one knows who the seeders will be in advance, so I suggest everyone come to class prepared.

-- Final oral exam (Mon Dec 3/Tues Dec 4/Wed Dec 5, 25%)
The final exam for this course will be an oral exam, a conversation between student and instructor. The exam will consist of three questions, plus follow-up questions. Each exam will be tailored to the student’s specific interests; and will aim to evaluate your grasp of “big ideas” from course readings, class discussions, and your independent research. The exams will be held serially (one after the other), in 20-minute blocks, Dec 3-5. We will schedule these at the beginning of the semester. There is no makeup available for this exam.

*Weekly quizzes (up to 10 points extra credit)*

-- Weekly in-class quizzes on the reading will test completion and comprehension of the reading, and will provide up to 10 points of extra credit toward your final grade
COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 – August 27 and 29
Introduction to the course, foundations, the policy process

Reading due Wed Aug 29:
Birkland, “Putting it all Together: Models of the Policy Process” (35 pp) [Blackboard]

Week 2 – September 5
Making sense of wicked problems, the policy process in practice

No class Mon Sept 3 (Labor Day)

Reading due Sept 5:
Stone, Chapter 1: The Market and the Polis, pp 17-38 [Blackboard]
Bardach, pp 125-141, “Specimen of a Real-World Policy Analysis” and pp xv-15 (Intro, Step One, Step Two)

Assignment due Wed September 5:
Bring in an example of a public policy that you are interested in. Be prepared to discuss if the policy followed one of the models illustrated by Birkland or Stone.

Week 3 – September 12
Equity and oppression

No class Mon Sept 10 (Rosh Hashanah)

Reading due Wed Sept 12:
Stone, Chapter 2: Equity, pp 39-60 [Blackboard]
Bardach, pp 79-87 (Assembling evidence, Getting Started, Locating Relevant Sources)

Assignment due Wed Sept 12:
Identify your policy area (see “Resources for policy research” handout for help getting started)

Week 4 – September 17
Discourse and dependency

Reading due Mon Sept 17:
Edin and Shaeffer, $2 a Day, pp xi-63 (Introduction, Welfare is Dead, Perilous Work)

No class Wed Sept 19 (Yom Kippur)

Week 5 – September 24 and 26
Policy choice, race and gender

Reading due Mon Sept 24:
Edin and Shaeffer, $2 a Day, pp 64-174 (A Room of One’s Own, By Any Means Necessary, A World Apart, Conclusion)

Reading due Wed Sept 26:

Nancy Folbre, The Invisible Heart: Economics and Family Values (Selections) [Blackboard]

Week 6 – October 1 and 3
Exploring primary sources

Reading due Oct 1:
Primary documents on social welfare [Blackboard]

Bardach, pp 16-46 (Step Three, Step Four)

Reading due Oct 3:
Working with primary documents [Blackboard]

Bardach, pp 89-109 (Gaining Access, Conducting a Policy Research Interview, Using Language, Protecting Credibility, Strategic Dilemmas)

Week 7 – October 8 and 10
Housing and history

Reading due Mon Oct 1:
Desmond, Evicted, pp 1-110 (Prologue, Chapters 1-8)

Reading due Wed Oct 3:
Massey & Denton, American Apartheid, pp 17-59 (Chapter 2 – The Making of the Ghetto) [Blackboard]

Week 8 – October 15 and 17
Interests and agenda setting
Reading due Mon Oct 15:
Desmond, *Evicted*, pp 111-205 (Chapters 9-16)

Reading due Wed Oct 17:
Stone, “Interests,” pp 210-231 [Blackboard]


**Assignment due Wed Oct 17:**
Policy timeline and research report (see assignment handout)

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**Week 9 – October 22 and 24**

*Class, poverty, and cumulative disadvantage*

Reading due Mon Oct 22:
Desmond, *Evicted*, pp 207-314 (Chapters 17-24, Epilogue)

Reading due Wed Oct 24:
Leondar-Wright, *Class Matters* (Selections) [Blackboard]

Nicholas Fitz, “Economic Inequality: It’s Far Worse than You Think,” *Scientific American* (2015) [Blackboard]

Association for Women’s Rights in Development, “Intersectionality,” pp 1-8 [Blackboard]

Suggested Reading:
Alston, UN Report on Extreme Poverty in the United States, 2018 [Blackboard]

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**Week 10 – October 29 and 31**

*Writing workshop*

This week will focus on the craft of writing. Please bring your policy timeline and research report and your outline and draft of the policy brief assignment to class this week.

Reading due Oct 29:
Anne Lamont, *Bird by Bird: Some Instruction on Writing and Life* (Selections) [Blackboard]

Tracy Kidder & Richard Todd, *Good Prose: The Art of Nonfiction* (Selections) [Blackboard]

Bardach, pp 47-68 (Step Five, Step Six)

Reading due Oct 31:
Virginia Eubanks, *Automating Inequality: How High-Tech Tools Profile, Police, and Punish the Poor*, pp 1-13, 39-83 (Intro, Chapter 2)
Week 11 – November 5 and 7

*Work, Labor, Value*

**Reading due Nov 5:**
Goldstein, *Janesville*, pp 1-95 (Prologue, Chaps 1-18)

**Assignment due Mon Nov 5:**
Policy brief, first draft (see assignment handout)

**Reading due Nov 7:**
Danny Katch, *Socialism...Seriously* (selections) [Blackboard]

Lolade Fadulu, “Why is the US so Bad at Worker Retraining?” *The Atlantic*, Jan 4, 2018

Week 12 – November 12 and 14

*Divisions of labor*

**Reading due Monday Nov 12:**
Goldstein, *Janesville*, pp 96-192 (Chaps 19-36)

**Reading due Wednesday Nov 14:**
Heidi Gottfried, “The Puzzle of Gender Segregation” from *Gender, Work, and Economy* (pp 43-75) [Blackboard]

[https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/08/women-gender-roles-sexism-emotional-labor-feminism](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/08/women-gender-roles-sexism-emotional-labor-feminism) [Blackboard]

**Assignment due Wed Nov 14:**
First draft Op Ed, Policy Memoir, or Campaign plan

Week 13 – November 19

*Implementation*

**NO IN-PERSON CLASS.** We’ll meet online in Blackboard this week.

**Reading due Nov 19:**
Goldstein, *Janesville*, pp 193-260 (Chaps 37-49)
Michael Lipsky, *Street Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Service* (Chapter 2: Street-Level Bureaucrats as Policy Makers OR Chapter 11: The Assault on Human Services) [Blackboard]

Week 14 – November 26 and 28

*The future of work*

**Reading due Nov 26:**
Goldstein, *Janesville*, pp 261-298 (Chaps 50-55)

**Reading due Nov 28:**


Arwa Mahdawi, “What Jobs will Still be Around in 20 Years?” *The Guardian* (June 2017)


Week 15 – December 3 and 5

*Final oral exams*

**Assignment due Mon Dec 3:**
Op Ed, Policy Memoir, or Campaign plan, revised draft

Week 16 – December 10

*Wrapping up*

Reading due Dec 10:
TBA

**Assignment due Wed Dec 10:**
Policy brief, revised draft