Introduction to Public Policy
RPAD140
Spring Semester, 2017

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Lecture: Tue & Thurs from 10:15 to 11:35
Location: Lecture Center LC22

Course Description
(updated January 17th; please check regularly for updates on blackboard)

This class is intended to familiarize you with the basics of Public Policy theory and practice. You will know what public policy is, how it is written, and how we know all this weird stuff about it. There is plenty of theory to talk about, and many real-world situations to discuss. Our goal is to give you the tools you need to dig deeper, as well as the information you will need to contextualize your future study.

In this class, you will get a skillset for academic life and for the outside world. We will focus on skills needed to write good policy memos, how to do good teamwork, how to avoid plagiarism and use the awesome information you find in an appropriate way, and finally how to find “good” objective information.

Goals

After taking this course, you will be able to:

- Write policy memos with the objectivity and professionalism of a policy analyst;
- Explain how public policy theory relates to real world issues, and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of various theories for their explanatory power;
- Summarize and describe the stages of policy development that a policy has completed, is in, and still faces;
- Predict the consequences of public policy design, both intended and unintended;
- Critically argue your perspectives on policy issues using evidence and public policy concepts;

Class Work Components and Grading

Grade Breakdown:

- 30% for 3 memos,
  - Memo 1: 8%
  - Memo 2: 10%
  - Memo 3: 12%
- 40% for 2 exams (non-cumulative)
  - Midterm: 20%
  - Final Exam: 20%
- 15% RAT Quizzes
  - 10% Individual
  - 5% Group
- 5% Lecture activities
- 5% Peer Evaluations
- 5% Discussion Section Participation

**Memos**

The written work for this class consists of three (3) memos that you will write and submit to blackboard. Memos are the primary information document in the policy world (and the business world as well), so learning how to write them is an extremely useful skill. Memos are short (usually less than 2 pages), and are all about conveying the most important information quickly to the reader. Policy actors get memos from their analysts, and usually read them in less than a minute to very quickly get an understanding of an issue or problem. Your goals are to make this easy – to transmit your points efficiently and clearly in a short document – but also to be informative.

Specific requirements and rubrics will be posted separately for the memos, and we will go over what we expect in class.

**Exams**

There will be two exams for this class – a midterm and a final. The final is semi-cumulative (pre-midterm concepts may apply to more advanced subjects after the midterm), and we will talk more about these as we get closer. However, I want to stress that you will have already practiced the kinds of things the exams will test on in class and discussion sections.

**Assessment quizzes - RATS**

At the start of every unit, you will take a 10-question quiz known as a readiness assessment test, or RAT. This will be based on the reading material for that unit. You will take it first as individuals, and then together as a group, and both grades will count. These quizzes help me to quickly understand where to focus class time, and sets a baseline for what everyone in class is expected to know. You are not expected to have a perfect understanding of the material yet – RATs are meant to guide the rest of our learning, not test what you’ve learned. I will discuss details soon, because your first RAT is coming up.

**iClickers**

You are responsible for getting an iClicker. These are wireless transmitters that send your answer to a central receiver which I get to play with. You can rent them for $40, buy a used one for $50, or buy a new one for $60 - all from the University Bookstore. I will take attendance in
lecture using iClickers, and will ask questions using them. Some of these may be graded, and I will let you know ahead of time when that is the case.

**Discussion section**

Finally, a part of your grade is determined by your attendance and participation in the Friday discussion section. This is the domain of Amani and Crystal, so I will let them discuss in more detail what they expect from you when you meet for the first time. Make sure you go. Attending discussion is just as important as attending lecture. The same rules regarding absences apply, so please make sure you are attending and participating in discussion section regularly.

**Class Principles and Organization**

**Team Based Learning**

I believe (and research shows) that the best way for us to accomplish the goals of this course is to practice your skills and apply what you know in class. Several graded assignments will involve close collaboration with a permanent team which you are a part of. However, (1) everything that teams will submit for a grade will first also be submitted by individuals; (2) no team-based assignment will be completed outside of class; and (3) you will get a chance to evaluate each of your team member’s individual contributions to the team. These are intended to let us get the most out of the teams we have, while also protecting against the most common pitfalls of groupwork.

**Peer Evaluations**

At three points over the semester, we will administer a peer review. You will log into an online portal and give feedback to your teammates. This will be de-identified, so you will not know who wrote what comments to you or gave you what score. The first two evaluations will only be graded on whether you completed your evaluation of your teammates (we will go over in class what we expect), and are meant to give you feedback on what areas to improve. The third, given at the end of the semester, will be graded on how high your group rated your contribution. This should give you the chance to hear constructive feedback from peers who have worked with you, and to return that favor to them so that they may improve.

**Grading Policy**

I wish to make clear our stance on grading. First, we see it as very important to be transparent about the reasons for the grades we give, and we therefore will provide rubrics for all written assignments. I will also go over any questions on quizzes or the exams which gave you trouble. We hope and expect that you will use this information productively to improve in the areas we have identified.

We also see it as important to give you feedback quickly, while it is still relevant to you. However, I also want you to recognize that grading is seriously time consuming, especially if done well. While we generally anticipate to return grades within 2 weeks of a due date, we ask for your patience should we fail to do so. Due dates for future assignments will be changed if we fall too far behind.
The standard grading scheme is A-E, but you may opt into a S/U (pass/fail) grading scheme by April 5th (although this is not an option for some majors – check with your advisor first). You are also welcome to inquire about any grading issues from any of us.

**Attendance Policy**

We track your attendance in both lecture and discussion sections. If you have a university recognized reason for an absence (illness, death in the family, and so on), you may get a note from the dean’s office and we will excuse you for that day. You will still need to contact us about making up any missed work. Exams may be made up for officially excused absences.

We also recognize that sometimes things in life happen that will keep you from class that aren’t on this official list of reasons (flat tires and so on). Therefore, you have two (2) absence passes for lecture, and two (2) absence passes for discussion – which you may use whenever you like with no questions asked. You do not need to let us know that you will be absent or explain to us why – we simply let 2 absences go, and it is up to you when you wish to use these passes. However, any content you miss due to any absence (officially recognized or not) must be made up, and it is up to you to contact us about doing so. *Note that exams may not be made up after absence passes.* Therefore, please make every effort to be in class on time for the midterm and final exam.

**Academic Integrity**

Many of you may have read this before, as it is important and standard policy in all University Classes. You are forbidden from using someone else’s work, resubmitting the same assignment from a different class, and from generally pretending that work done by someone else is yours. These are all forms of, but not the only examples of, plagiarism. Should any of this occur, I cannot stress enough that the consequences are not cool – up to and including dismissal from this university.

More specifically, this means you MUST use citations for any information, ideas, and anything else that you might use which was produced by another person, or for another purpose, than by you as coursework for this class.

Since this is an introductory level course, we see it as our responsibility to teach you the rules of this for academic life, and so we will be going over specifics in the first few weeks. Feel free to see proper citations and academic integrity as a skill this class aims to teach you, and take this chance to nail this down early in your academic career.

**Textbook and Readings:**

There is one textbook for this class:


You will need it soon. You may purchase the 4th edition or the 5th, and I don’t care if you borrow, rent, or buy it (don’t steal it – that’s not nice). Used copies of the 4th edition sell on Amazon for around $20, and the new 5th edition retails for $95. You can rent the 5th edition for around $25.
Other readings will be posted on blackboard and announced. You are expected to read the materials posted for that day of class by the start of class.

**Schedule**

Note that revisions may be made and announced or discussed in class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATES</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>READINGS</th>
<th>ASSIGNMENTS DUE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 24th, 26th, and 27th</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Kraft and Furlong Chapter 1</td>
<td>due Thursday</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Jan 31st</strong>, Feb 2nd, and 3rd</td>
<td>Policy Analysis</td>
<td>Kraft and Furlong Chapter 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 7th, 9th, and 10th</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Kraft and Furlong Chapter 2</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Feb 14th, 16th, and 17th</td>
<td>Case Study: Marijuana</td>
<td>RAND Vermont Budget Analysis (Blackboard)</td>
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<td><strong>Feb 21st</strong>, 23rd, and 24th</td>
<td>Public Policy Theory</td>
<td>Kraft and Furlong Chapter 3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 28th, Mar 2nd, and 3rd</td>
<td>Case Study: Housing</td>
<td>Blackboard Readings</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 7th, 9th, and 10th</td>
<td>Midterm Prep; Midterm Exam March 9th</td>
<td>Review Materials</td>
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<td>Mar 14th, 16th, and 17th</td>
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<td><strong>Mar 21st</strong>, 23rd, and 24th</td>
<td>Policy Evaluation</td>
<td>Kraft and Furlong Chapter 6</td>
<td>RAT 3 March 21st</td>
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<td>Mar 28th, 30th, and 31st</td>
<td>Case Study: Healthcare</td>
<td>Kraft and Furlong Chapter 8</td>
<td>Memo 2 Due Mar 31st</td>
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<td>Apr 4th, 6th, and 7th</td>
<td>(Pending guest lecture requests)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Apr 13th</strong> and 14th</td>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>Anderson Chapter 6</td>
<td>RAT 4 April 13th</td>
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<td>Note, No Class Apr 11th</td>
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<td>Lipsky Chapters 1 and 2 (Blackboard)</td>
<td>(Tuesday)</td>
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<td>Apr 18th, 20th, and 21st</td>
<td>Case Study: Economic policy</td>
<td>Blackboard Readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr 25th, 27th, and 28th</td>
<td>Case Study: Criminal Justice</td>
<td>Blackboard readings</td>
<td>Memo 3 Due April 28th</td>
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<td>May 2nd, 4th, and 5th</td>
<td>Final Review Tuesday Exam Thursday (5/4/17)</td>
<td>Review Materials</td>
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<td>May 9th</td>
<td>No Class, have a nice summer</td>
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<td>Good luck on other exams!</td>
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Spring Break
No Class