

UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

ROCKEFELLER COLLEGE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND POLICY
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Semester in Washington

Syllabus -- Spring 2011

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This syllabus is meant to be a guide. The general structure will not change, but the order of specific topics and readings will depend upon guest speakers' schedules as well as ours.

Class times: We are scheduled to meet Mondays and Fridays. Normal meeting times will be in your apartment building, at 3-6 PM on Mondays in Room 101 and 9:30AM-12:30PM on Fridays in the first floor lounge. However, these times are not rigid. I may schedule meetings at other locations, and these may occur earlier on Mondays or later on Fridays if guest speakers' schedules or other events call for it. I would generally expect to let you know about these at least one week in advance.

Use of the Library: The reason for these class hours is to give you an extended block of time every week for using the **Library of Congress** or another library of your choice. The Library of Congress is one of the world's great libraries. We will have an orientation class taught by a Library of Congress reference librarian early in the semester. The facility has wonderful collections, but it is a closed-stack facility. That means you have to request materials and wait. It is much more cumbersome than an open-stack facility to use. In addition, because it is not a university library, many of its reading rooms are only open 8:30-9:30 on MWTh and only until 5 on TFS. You will have to start using the library early in the semester and keep going back. The early class on Friday and late class on Monday leaves time for Friday-Saturday-Monday research. The end of the semester will creep up too quickly if you don't use that time well.

Other libraries: **Bender Library, American University:** 4400 Mass. Ave NW (at Ward Circle, intersection of Nebraska Ave.) Open access, open stacks, no borrowing privileges. Open 24 hours. In many ways, this is your best option. American University ID needed if you stay later than midnight. There is a free shuttle bus to cover the 1 mile from the Tenley Circle Metro stop (which is two stops from Woodley on the Red Line, at the intersection of Wisconsin and Nebraska.) Apparently, they don't ask for AU IDs. Shuttle especially recommended late at night for security reasons. The following interactive map link shows you the Library (on the left or West side of the main quad, where the shuttle drops you off (South side) and the stop where you pick up the bus (on campus, toward the north.)). <http://video.realviewtv.com/education/au/map/>
Gelman Library, George Washington University, 2130 H St NW.: 7AM – Midnight. GW card is said to be needed, but they have regularly given access in the past with a SUNY ID. Near Foggy Bottom Metro. <http://www.gelman.gwu.edu/>.

DC Public Library, Cleveland Park Branch 3310 Connecticut Ave NW.
<http://www.dclibrary.org/clevelandpark>

Attendance at all classes is expected. I will accept legitimate medical excuses and will give absence permissions for academically appropriate reasons, but I expect to be asked in advance about these.

Emergency number: (xxx) xxx-xxxx.

ACADEMIC COURSE WORK AND GOALS FOR THE SEMESTER

BOOKS TO PURCHASE:

1. *The Unofficial Guide to Washington DC*, or any other good guidebook of your choice.
2. Grant Reeher and Mark Mariani, eds. *The Insider's Guide to Political Internships: What to Do Once You're in the Door* (Westview 2002). Good buys available used.

Other readings in the syllabus (*) will be available on Blackboard.

COURSES:

The academic content of The Washington Semester Program is comprised of three distinct courses:

- POS 341: Washington in Perspective (3 credits)
POS 342: Washington Internship (9 credits)
POS 495Z: Reading and Writing in Washington (3 credits)

POS 341: WASHINGTON IN PERSPECTIVE

Goals: The substance of POS341 varies each year. The general goal is to use the students' proximity to events to assess how a variety of actors use, typify, or stand as examples against, some of the generalizations about politics to which they may have been exposed in their classrooms. The course this year will have students (1) using primary source documents and policy research reports to gain an understanding of the arguments being put forward for competing policy proposals in a significant policy arena and (2) using this understanding to test and evaluate one of the major contemporary major political science disputes about how Washington works. The students will have an opportunity to meet and refine their thinking by questioning some of the participants in the process. They will work in groups to gather and weigh the competing evidence and to make presentations to the class. Each student will also write individual papers on the subjects to be covered.

Description for 2011: It is often said that politics in Washington has become polarized. At a nationally televised Memorial Service in Tucson, Arizona on January 12, President Obama spoke to this issue:

"[I]f, as has been discussed in recent days, their death helps usher in more civility in our public discourse, let us remember it is not because a simple lack of civility caused this tragedy -- it did not -- but rather because only a more civil and honest public discourse can help us face up to the challenges of our nation in a way that would make them proud." <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/01/12/remarks-president-barack-obama-memorial-service-victims-shooting-tucson>

In the immediate aftermath of a gunman's rage in Tucson, pundits and some news outlets were willing to blame the shootings on the polarization of our political discourse. The President was right to criticize these comments. Nevertheless, there is a general sense among people who have followed politics for a long time that even if polarization did not cause these murders, the increase in polarization is real, and is one reason for the country's inability to make policy decisions about certain key policy issues.

This semester, we will look at these claims, in sequence.

- First, we will look at how political scientists define and disagree with each other about the extent, causes and even the basic descriptions of polarization and civility.
- We will then dig into the substance of one major concern that all political figures said during the 2010 election season that they would like to address: the long term federal budget deficit.

- We will begin by reading up on the general lay of the land. We will read the key sections of two recent bipartisan commission reports, another plan introduced in 2010 by Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI), currently chair of the House Budget Committee, and critiques of all of these plans from a variety of perspectives. From these overviews, you will have a broad sense of the policy possibilities and options.
- Next, we will divide the class to divide into teams for group work for the rest of the semester. I am tentatively thinking of three three-person teams, one each for tax policy, defense spending and entitlements. The teams' subjects are open to discussion depending upon student's preferences. For example, entitlements could be divided into Medicare/Medicaid and Social Security, or all domestic discretionary spending could be added as a subject to replace tax policy. Whatever the division, each team will deal with large sections of the budget. We are forming teams this because the learning task is large and you will gain a stronger mastery by interacting and sharing.
 - Each team will learn the major issues in its field. In at least one class, it will present the pros and cons of the major budget options to the class.
 - Realistically, because the three policy arenas are each huge, the teams will specialize on a few of the key choices. This is fine, but each group should focus on ones on which there are disagreements with significant budget implications.
 - Do not limit yourself to arguments about pure dollars and cents. In each of the policy arenas, the arguments about how to spend and save dollars are in fact arguments about goals and strategies. (For example, an argument to reduce the defense budget by cutting land forces, ships, or a particular airplane is based on assumptions about future threats and interests.) The groups should not be taking positions on what are the best goals or strategies, but should be clarifying the connections between budget proposals and policy goals. This will help clarify the next steps, when the objective is to connect budget proposals and policy goals to the positions being taken by players in the system.
 - In another class, the groups will describe the major players on their issues in the key congressional committees, as well as the major political factions on the issue within the four party groups in Congress. You will describe the players' histories on the issue and their political objectives or constraints on the issue.
 - In another class, the team will describe the major interest groups and think tanks working the issue and describe what they are doing.
 - In the end, we will link back to the earlier discussion of polarization. Each group should be able assess: (1) Has Congress has been treating your issue in a more polarized or partisan manner now *than in the past*? (2) Is polarization producing a policy deadlock? Each group will be expected to do document its answers to these questions with evidence.

Individual papers for POS 341 will be designed around these group assignments. Note that students are free to work on a paper subject for POS 495 that grows out of the policy arena treated in 341.

During the semester, the class will meet with guests who work in these arenas. If we play our cards right, your work will lead you to identify a potential speaker and we can try to get a meeting with him/her.

Grading for POS 341 (A/E):

40% for group preparations and presentations.

50% for a series of mid-length papers using the group research.

10% for *reading and preparing* for class discussion and questioning of guests.

POS 342: WASHINGTON INTERNSHIP

Students enrolled in this class have all found internships in Washington for three full days per week.

Goals: The goals of a credit-bearing internship are both personal and academic. The internship gives the student an opportunity to see how skills learned in college are put to use outside of the classroom. From a personal vantage point, this will give the student the change to test what kind of setting may be a “good fit” for a career. In addition, however, the academic goal is to develop the skills of participant observation, sharpened through weekly logs. By the end of the semester, the student should be able to report on whether what s/he has seen is consistent with what s/he has read in scholarly writings about the way things “really” work.

Grading for POS 342 (S/U): Requires (1) Satisfactory performance on internship; (2) completion and submission of assignments (weekly logs, internship evaluation).

POS 495Z: RESEARCH AND WRITING IN WASHINGTON

Goals: Students will learn how to work through the steps required to write a multi-draft 25-page research paper based on primary source material. The most common papers have been case studies of a policy choice or an institutional setting. The papers are *not* meant to be descriptive narratives but to test a significant thesis question. Since the paper will be the entire work for this course, students should work through the following steps in sequence – topic selection, question formulation, research design, finding and using appropriate primary source material, testing the validity of one’s evidence and argument, drafting, critiquing, revising and polishing.

Description: The standard paper in this course will be a 25-page case study that tests one or more political science (or other appropriate disciplinary) generalizations about how institutions, organization or the policy process works. (Alternative topics are possible. Any alternative must be approved in advance by the instructor.) A case study presumably will be chosen because the subject interests you. It can relate to the subject matter with which your internship office deals or grow out of your group work for POS 341, but neither is mandatory. All papers are to be based on an extensive use of primary source material and all will involve multiple steps and drafts. To avoid any confusion or disappointment:

- (1) Journal articles and news reports should be used, but they are not primary sources for governmental or actions. Neither, typically, are reports from the Congressional Research Service. These are often valuable and I encourage you to use them, but they generally are summarizing bills or laws which *are* the primary sources.
- (2) Your papers are *not* to be papers about the merits of one or another approach to policy, although they often will document arguments among participants about the merits.
- (3) You are almost certainly *not* going to be in a position to make an independent test of the impact (let alone the likely future impact) of a policy, or make an independent judgment from primary source material about which of several competing claims is correct. However, you *will* be in a position to show what claims are being made and how they are being used.

Due date: The syllabus lists April 25 for turning in a draft. This is a “no later than” date. You are encouraged to turn in drafts early if you want feedback early to help guide your work. The final paper is due May 6. All papers should be submitted electronically.

Grading for POS 495Z: (A/E): The final grade for the course will be based entirely on the final draft of the paper as long as you finish each required interim step in a timely manner. Failure to complete the earlier steps, when due, will result in a reduction of the final grade.

COMBINED ASSIGNMENT OUTLINE

What follows is a GENERAL outline of the flow of assignments and events. Specific dates and readings will become firmed up as we proceed to allow for guests and other activities. These calendar pages of the syllabus thus will be modified frequently during the semester. Later editions will be distributed, or posted on Blackboard, when modified.

Required reading will be posted on Blackboard, except for the internship book. Anyone who wants to see the reading and read ahead should look there. Readings will be added as the semester progresses and updated syllabi will be posted on Blackboard.

Date	341: Washington in Perspective 342: Internship	495Z Research and Writing
JAN Th 20	Check into apartment.	
F 21	10-3: Tour of Washington.	
M 24	2-5PM Grabowski on ethics + <i>Insiders' Guide to Political Internships</i> . All read ch. 1, 2, 13, 14, 15. Congressional interns read 3, 12. NGO interns read ch. 8.	
T 25	First Day of Interning	
F 28	Read: Fenno, "Participant Observation", 55-94 Write First weekly interning logs	
M 31	Articles in "Civility" Folder: In Hate's Wake (National Journal) Pew Report: Media Coverage of AZ Shootings Allegheny Report on Civility (37) + Nov. follow up Washington Post survey Bipartisanship may not extend (Roll Call)	
FEB Thurs Feb 3	Alumni reception. 6PM. Tortilla Coast. 400 First St SE (Behind S. Capitol Metro stop). Register online ASAP. Use the link in the forwarded email. Ignore the request for credit card info. The event is free.	
Fri 4	Polarization readings (in this order) Krugman Fiorina + comments Abramowitz Lee – review of Fiorina and Abramowitz	
Mon 7	Class trip: Capitol Visitors Center?	
F 11	Polarization (continued) Nivola Pildes Galston – No Labels (+ visit www.nolabels.org)	
M14	From here, the readings will turn to the deficit. Dates or specific readings TBD. This is the day of the President's budget message. Budget reading will be light (to allow focus on POS495 paper – see column on the right.) However, we will work through a budget cutting game that was published in the NY Times.	At about this time, we'll have a class on case study research and begin planning papers. You ought to have a general topic or subject idea by the end of the month. Another class will be spent in the Library of Congress and a third on using government sources online. From there, you'll move

		to develop a real topic or thesis question and a research design. Reading: *Yin, <i>Case Study Research</i>
<u>Week 4:</u> F18	Review analyses of President's Budget. (Presumably not available until the 15 th or later. Begin reading (1) Hennessy on the Budget Process for New Members; (2) the major reports on the deficit (Simpson-Bowles, Rivlin-Domenici, Rep. Ryan's Roadmap) and (3) Critiques of the reports. This reading will take more than one class to digest and discuss. Date TBD, depending on guests.	
M 21	President's Day (no class)	
<u>Week 5:</u> F25- M28		
MARCH <u>Week 6:</u> F 4 – M7	M 7: Meet with Jim Saturno of the Congressional Research Service. Read his CRS report, "The Congressional Budget Process: A Brief Overview."	
<u>Week 7:</u> F11 – M14		
<u>Week 8:</u> F18-M21		
<u>Week 9:</u> F25-M28	F 25: Temporary shift of subject: read and discuss briefs in <i>McComish v Bennett</i> and <i>Arizona Free Enterprise v Bennett</i> + supplementary material. M 28: Attend Supreme Court oral argument for above case. Be in line VERY early (6AM).	
APRIL <u>Week 10:</u> F 1 – M 4		
<u>Week 11:</u> F8-M11		
<u>Week 12:</u> F15-M18		
M18 and F22	NO CLASS	
M25	TBD. See POS 495 →	Drafts of paper due electronically.
Th Apr 28	Last day of internship	
<u>Week 14:</u> F29	Submit final logs: Retrospective overviews of the internship. What did you learn from a political science perspective? What did you learn about yourself for life? What might you have done differently? Would you recommend this office for a future student?	Present abridged versions of the main arguments and findings of your papers in class. Receive critiques from assigned reader.
MAY May 1-6		Finish papers. Turn in by May 6.
Sat May 7	Check out of apartments	