THE POLITICS OF POLICY MAKING

This course is about problems, solutions, and the politics of joining them together into public policy. We will think about how our political system transforms social conditions into public problems, and how political actors decide which solutions to adopt. At any given time, many definitions of policy problems are possible, and many alternative solutions are available. How do we decide which problems to solve? How do we choose a solution? How should we make these decisions? Is there a “public good” or merely competing special interests? What stands in the way of policy change?

In this course we will learn to analyze the policy making process, and to write policy memos that can help decision makers and advocates to do their work. We will do this through readings, discussions, and in-class case studies.

By the end of the semester, you will:

• be able to explain the process of policy making in the American political system, including how different political actors affect public policy, and
• gain experience conducting research on policy issues, evaluating sources of information, and drafting policy memos with appropriate documentation, and
• understand how to analyze political arguments, and apply analytic concepts to actual policy cases.

REQUIRED READING MATERIAL

All course readings are available on Blackboard or can be accessed on the internet through links or instructions provided on Blackboard. Please let me know immediately if you are having trouble gaining access to any of the assigned readings. Please note that in addition to reading material I select and post, you will also be conducting policy research, which will involve additional reading. I expect students to complete assigned readings prior to class each week.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course assumes basic knowledge of the American political system. The Political Science course 201, Introduction to American Government, is a required prerequisite. If somehow you have not taken this or a similar course, it is up to you to consult additional materials to get up to speed.

Timeliness and Attendance

Be on time. Attendance is required, and students will check in via Blackboard. Check-in will take place from 5:55 - 6:05 p.m. Students who are late should see me after class or email me to explain why they were late. You can be marked “Late” twice with no penalty. After that, you will lose ½ point from your final grade for each late arrival. You will lose 1 point for each unexcused absence. In accordance with
university policy, absences can be excused in cases of: illness, death in the family, religious observance, official college business. Please communicate with me promptly about any excused absences.

Written assignments. This is a writing-intensive class. Throughout the semester you will write three Policy Memos about a problem that you choose. You will receive written instructions for each assignment, including the criteria used to evaluate the memos. I encourage you to meet with me and to make good use of the on-campus Writing Center in Conklin Hall: myrun.newark.rutgers.edu/writing-center.

In general, grades reflect how well your essay demonstrates 1) your understanding of course material, and your ability to apply concepts to new cases, 2) your ability to conduct research about a policy issue to answer the assignment’s questions, 3) your ability to convey your ideas persuasively and effectively, 4) your ability to write clearly in a well-organized manner, with proper mechanics. Late papers lose one-half grade per day.

You have the chance to revise each memo, and to increase each grade by up to 7 points (three-quarters of a grade increase). Papers must show substantial “re-vision” to earn additional points — that is, clarification of arguments and information, additional research, re-thinking of your conclusions, and rewriting for clarity, precision, and grace. Simply fixing typos will not result in any grade change. It is a good idea to meet with me to discuss what needs to be done in a revision.

The deadline for revisions is during Final Exam period, noted below. I will not accept late revisions.

Other course assignments. Students will work in groups to prepare a presentation that draws upon class concepts, in-class group projects, and their individual policy memos. They will present these on the last class meeting. You will receive separate written instructions for the presentations.

COURSE GRADE
Your course grade will be constructed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 Policy Memos</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in class discussion and in-class projects</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ADDITIONAL COURSE POLICIES
Students with disabilities: If you have a documented learning or other disability, please arrange to meet with me during the first week of class to discuss any accommodations necessary for your successful participation.

Classroom behavior: Silence cell phones and computers, and refrain from texting, emailing, and surfing the Internet during class for purposes other than class assignments. Such behavior disrupts all of us in the classroom, interferes with the learning process, and creates lapses in attention that often require fellow students or the professor to repeat important information. You should not expect additional time from students or the professor because you have failed to pay attention in class. In general, your behavior and classroom participation should strive to convey integrity and respect toward others.
Academic Integrity and Plagiarism: We are knowledge producers. This means that we must be attentive to, and honest about, how we build on the knowledge of others as we learn and express ourselves in written work. It is critically important to familiarize yourself with the University’s policy on Academic Integrity, which can be accessed on the menu of our course site, and here: academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-at-rutgers/

You should ask me for help if you have questions about this while preparing written work. I have a zero-tolerance policy toward plagiarism, cheating, and other breaches of academic integrity, and will refer all instances to the university’s disciplinary process.

“Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the use of another person’s words, ideas, or results without giving that person appropriate credit. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or appropriate indentation and both direct quotation and paraphrasing must be cited properly according to the accepted format for the particular discipline or as required by the instructor in a course. Some common examples of plagiarism are:

- Copying word for word (i.e. quoting directly) from an oral, printed, or electronic source without proper attribution.
- Paraphrasing without proper attribution, i.e., presenting in one’s own words another person’s written words or ideas as if they were one’s own.
- Submitting a purchased or downloaded term paper or other materials to satisfy a course requirement.
- Incorporating into one’s work graphs, drawings, photographs, diagrams, tables, spreadsheets, computer programs, or other nontextual material from other sources without proper attribution.

Cheating: Cheating is the use of inappropriate or prohibited materials, information, sources, or aids in any academic exercise. Cheating also includes submitting papers, research results and reports, analyses, etc. as one’s own work when they were, in fact, prepared by others. ...

Fabrication: Fabrication is the invention or falsification of sources, citations, data, or results, and recording or reporting them in any academic exercise. Some examples are:

- Citing a source that does not exist.
- Making up or falsifying evidence or data or other source materials.
- Falsifying research papers or reports by selectively omitting or altering data that do not support one’s conclusions or claimed experimental precision.”
CLASS SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS
(All readings are on Blackboard under the menu heading “Readings” and organized in Folders by Week and Topic)

Week 1, Jan. 22
Introduction to class, review syllabus
Which policy issues do students want to study?

Week 2, Jan. 29
What are Public Policies?
Read Mintrom, Public Policy: Investing for a Better World:
Ch 1, The Purpose and Nature of Public Policy
Read Case in Week 2 folder:
What Livability Looks Like for Black Women

Week 3, Feb. 5
What are Policy Memos?
Read Smith, Writing Public Policy:
Ch 2, Communicating in the Process
Ch 8, Briefing Memo or Opinion Statement
White, Broad Institute, “Policy Memo”
Read Cases in Week 3 folder

Week 4, Feb. 12
Media Literacy, Part 1: Fake News
“Evaluating News Resources: Steps for Evaluating the News”
“Fake News, Lies and Propaganda: How to Sort Fact from Fiction”
“Fake News. It’s Complicated”
Glader, “10 Journalism Brands Where You Find Real Facts”
Pew Research Center: Future of Truth and Misinformation Online
(skim key points)
Play 3 rounds of Factitious and bring scores
Read Cases in Week 4 Folder

Week 5, Feb. 19
Media Literacy, Part 2: Bias and Fact Checking
Allsides.com: read About Us and watch the two videos on that page
Politifact.com: read About Us
Mediabiasfactcheck: From About link, read Methodology, About, Frequently Asked Questions
Fact Checker – The Washington Post: read About Fact Checker and Watch the Video at the top of About
Read Cases in Week 5 Folder

*****Memo 1 Due Monday, February 24 at noon*****

Week 6, Feb. 26
Stages of the Policy Making Process
Read Mintrom, Public Policy: Investing for a Better World,
Ch 2, The Policy-Making Process
Read Cases in Week 6 folder
Week 7, March 4
Lobbying Congress for Policy Change
Black, *From Inspiration to Legislation*,
Ch 6, “Winning Friends to Influence People”
Ch 8, “Finding a Way to the Floor”

Wolpe and Levine, *Lobbying Congress*,
Read at least two of these three chapters
Ch 3, “Lobbying: The Fundamentals”
Ch 4, “On Political Contributions and Fund Raising”
Ch 5, “Lobbying: The Corollaries”

Week 8, March 11
The President as Policy Maker
Rudalevige, “The Executive Branch and the Legislative Process”
Read Cases in Week 8 folder

**** Memo 2 due Friday, March 13 (or Monday of Spring break, March 16)****

Week 9, March 18
No Class Spring Break

Week 10, March 25
Stories about Policy Problems: Causes and Effects
Stone, *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making*,
Ch. 9, “Causes”
Read Cases in Week 10 folder

Week 11, April 1
No Class – Work on Assignments

Week 12, April 8
Numbers and Data in the Policy Process
Best, *More Damned Lies and Statistics*
Ch. 2, “Confusing Numbers”
Ch. 3, “Scary Numbers”
Ch. 4, “Authoritative Numbers”
Read Cases in Week 12 folder

Week 13, April 15
Numbers and Symbols in the Policy Process
Stone, *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making*,
Ch. 7, “Symbols” and Ch. 8, “Numbers”
Read Cases in Week 13 folder

Week 14, April 22
Work on projects; meetings with professor

**** Memo 3 due Friday, April 24 by midnight****

Week 15, April 29
Presentations

**** Revisions of memos due May 11 by midnight ****