

# Public Policy Formation

POLITICAL SCIENCE 320  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
SPRING 2009

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Office Hours: M 1:00-2:30 pm and T 10 to 11:30 am, or by appointment.  
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Course Website: <http://faculty.unlv.edu/kfernandez/policy.htm>  
Class Meets: MW 10 am – 11:15 a.m., WRI C237.

**Introduction:** This course provides an introduction to the study of public policy formation by focusing on major emphases in the literature and providing a survey of basic public policy concepts and processes. We will look not only at the mechanics of the public policy process, but also at the various actors, those who influence or seek to influence policy, in government, business and the citizenry. We will also focus on how the field might contribute to central theoretical issues in political science, such as democracy, representation and responsiveness as well as effectiveness and efficiency. These issues often revolve around questions of who has power and what are the relationships among institutions, rules, and norms in the allocation of the advantages and disadvantages in the policy process.

## Course Objectives:

- 1: Understand the complexity of the policy process in the U.S. political system.
2. Understand political economy (rational choice) approach to the policy process and outcomes.
3. Understand why public policy (government intervention) is sometimes needed.
4. Understand the complexity of evaluating the effectiveness of a given policy.

## Texts:

- Bickers, Kenneth and John T. Williams, *Public Policy Analysis*, 2001.
- Dye, Thomas, *Top Down Policy Making*, 2001.
- Kraft, Michael E., *Environmental Policy and Politics* 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 2007
- Other Readings (available on WebCampus in PDF format):
  - 1) Chermak, Steven & Alexander Weiss. 1997. "The Effects of the Media on Federal Criminal Justice Policy." *Criminal Justice Policy Review* 8: 323-341
  - 2) Cochran, Clarke, et al. 2003. *American Public Policy*: Chapter 4 – Economic Issues: Taxing, Spending, and Budgeting
  - 3) Glazer A. and M. Robbins. 1985. How Elections Matter: A Study of U.S. Senators. *Public Choice* 46: 163-172.
  - 4) Norrander, Barbara. 2000. "The Multi-Layered Impact of Public Opinion on Capital Punishment Implementation in the American States." *Political Research Quarterly* 53: 771-93
  - 5) Pape, Robert A. 2003. "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism." *The American Political Science Review* 97, 3 (August): 343-361.
  - 6) Sabatier, Paul A. 1991. "Toward Better Theories of the Policy Process." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 24, 2 (June): 147-156.
  - 7) Theodoulou, Stella Z. and Chris Kofins. 2004. Defense Policy in *The Art of the Game: Understanding American Public Policy Making*

**A copy of each book has been placed on 2 hour reserve at the Lied Library**

**Grading Policy:** The value of each course component is as follows:

COMPONENT	DUE DATE	COURSE VALUE
Midterm	Mon. February 23	25%
Attendance/Participation	N/A	10%
Pop quizzes	N/A	20%
Paper	Wed. April 22	20%
Final Exam	Mon. May 4, 10:10am	25%

**The assignment of letter grades is as follows:**

92 < = A	80-81 = B-	67-69 = D+
90-91 = A-	77-79 = C+	62-66 = D
87-89 = B+	72-76 = C	60-61 = D-
82-86 = B	70-71 = C-	> 59 = F

**Attendance & Participation:** 10% of your grade will be based on your attendance and participation. If you are habitually late, the attendance portion of your course grade will be marked down substantially

**Exams:** There will be a midterm and a final exam. They will be based on the assigned readings and lectures. Make-up exams will be arranged for emergency situations only and the reason must be documented (police report for an accident, doctor's letter on official letterhead). In regard to the observance of a religious holiday, University policy requires students to notify the instructor about anticipated absences by the last day of late registration.

**Pop Quizzes:** 7 pop quizzes will be given during the course. Only the highest 4 scores will be used to calculate your quiz grade which is 20% of your overall course grade. Pop quizzes cannot be made up (no exceptions). The quiz will cover only the readings assigned for that day.

**Research Papers:** Students will write an original paper based on a topic described at the end of this syllabus. The paper should be a systematic exploration of the chosen topic (i.e. not an opinion piece). It should be at least 2500 words. Internet sources are acceptable, but should be kept to a minimum. Further information will be given during the lecture of January 26<sup>th</sup>. Papers will be graded on the mastery of the subject/topic, writing style (e.g., clarity, organization, use of citations) and grammar. UNLV has a writing center with tutors who help students of all skill levels in all disciplines. All services are free for enrolled students. The Writing Center is located at CDC 3-301 and can be reached at 895-3908. Students should also familiarize themselves with the university's policy on plagiarism (see the undergraduate catalog).

**Rebelmail** – By policy, faculty and staff should e-mail students' Rebelmail accounts only. Rebelmail is UNLV's official e-mail system for students. It is one of the primary ways students receive official university communication. All UNLV students receive a Rebelmail account after admission to the university. Non-admitted students should contact the Student Help Desk at (702) 895-0761, in the Student Union Room 231, or by e-mail: [studenthelp@unlv.edu](mailto:studenthelp@unlv.edu). See <http://rebelmail.unlv.edu/> for additional information.

**Disability Policy:** The UNLV Disability Resource Center (DRC) houses the resources for students with disabilities. If you have a documented disability that may require accommodations, you will need to contact the DRC for the coordination of services. The DRC is located in the Student Services Complex (SSC), Room 137. Their numbers are: (702-895-0866/Voice; 702-895-0652/TDD). For additional information please visit <http://studentlife.unlv.edu/disability/>.

**COURSE CALENDAR:**

<b>WEEK</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>READINGS</b>
Week 1	M – January 12	Introduction to Public Policy	
Week 1	W – January 14	Democracy and Public Policy: the Role of Government	Dye ch. 1; Bickers & Williams Ch. 1 & 2
Week 2	M – January 19	<b>Martin Luther King Day: No Classes</b>	
Week 2	W – January 21	American Political Institutions & Policy Process	Dye ch. 2; B&W ch. 3
Week 3	M – January 26	The Research Paper	
Week 3	W – January 28	Theories and Models of Policymaking	Dye ch. 3; Sabatier*
Week 4	M – February 2	Societal Problems: Causes and Solutions	B&W ch. 4, 5
Week 4	W – February 4	Societal Problems: Markets as Solutions	B&W ch. 6, 7
Week 5	M – February 9	Policy Actors: Public Officials	Dye ch. 4
Week 5	W – February 11	Policy Actors: National Government	B&W ch. 8
Week 6	M – February 16	<b>President's Day: No Class</b>	
Week 6	W – February 18	Policy Actors: Interest Groups	B&W ch. 9 & Dye ch. 5
Week 7	M – February 23	<b>MIDTERM</b>	
Week 7	W – February 25	Research Paper Continued	
Week 8	M – March 2	Elections and Public Policy	Glazer and Robbins*
Week 8	W – March 4	Policy Actors: Bureaucracy	B&W ch. 10
Week 9	M – March 9	Policy Actors: The Media	Chermak & Weiss*
Week 9	W – March 11	The Media Cont.	Dye ch. 6
Week 10	M – March 16	Environmental Politics	Kraft ch. 1-2
Week 10	W – March 18	Environmental Policy Process	Kraft ch. 3-4
Week 11	M – March 23	Environmental Policy Implementation	Kraft ch. 5-6
Week 11	W – March 25	Economic 101	

\* available on WebCampus

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC	READINGS
Week 12	M – March 30	Macroeconomic Policy	Cochran ch. 4*
Week 12	W – April 1	Public Opinion and Public Policy	Norrander*; Dye ch. 7
	April 6-11	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>	
Week 13	M – April 13	Foreign Policy	Pape*
Week 13	W – April 15	Foreign Policy Cont.	Theodoulou & Kofins*
Week 14	M – April 20	Analysis of Proposed Policies	B&W ch. 11
Week 14	W – April 22	Implementation of Public Policies	Dye ch. 8
		<b>PAPERS DUE IN CLASS</b>	
Week 15	M – April 27	Policy Evaluation	Dye ch. 9; B & W ch. 12; Kraft ch. 7
Week 15	W – April 29	Course Conclusion	B&W ch. 13
Final	M – May 4	<b>Final Exam – 10:10 AM</b>	

\* available on WebCampus

## RESEARCH PAPER FOR PUBLIC POLICY COURSE: PROBLEMS AND POLICY SOLUTIONS

The paper should discuss the following six items:

1. *Discussion of Research Topic:* Identify a societal **problem** (e.g., increased poverty, crime, traffic, inequality, declining education quality, etc.) that interests you. Make sure you frame the issue as a "social problem". Specify whether you will be focusing your attention at the local, state or federal level.
2. *Definition of the Problem:* How does society see this problem (how do they define the problem, the scope of the problem)? Discuss how citizens, the media, and government define the problem. Discuss conflicts between definitions (i.e., scope, causes, etc.) and solutions. Back up your statements with sources.
3. *Literature Review:* What has the academic community written on this topic. Write a brief literature review regarding what they have written on this social problem. What does the literature suggest are the causes of the problem? Use at least 6 academic sources.
4. *Policy History.* What has the government done to solve this problem? Be specific - what legislation, bills, ordinances, how much money spent, etc.
5. *Qualitative Research:* Identify the policy experts and political actors that are addressing this issue – what are their names, positions/occupations, what agencies to they belong to. Contact and briefly interview two individuals and summarize what s/he said. Avoid street-level bureaucrats (i.e. a professor, a teacher or a police officer). If in doubt who is a policy expert/player, contact the professor.
6. *Conclusion:* What caused this problem?; What should be done about it (what policies)? How would one begin to accomplish this (policy implementation)? This can be your own opinion but back it up with evidence from section 4 (literature review) and what the policy experts you identified said.

## REQUIREMENTS OF FINAL PAPER:

Length: at least 2500 words

Papers are due in class April 22<sup>nd</sup>. An electronic copy must also be presented by the deadline. Late papers will be penalized by a full grade for each day (24 hours) it is late.

Use academic articles and books for literature review (no internet sources)

Internet cites can be used to help provide examples and/or to supplement your research but should be kept to a minimum.

Use proper citations throughout the paper, for example:

The general public may often have conflicting policy preferences; wanting more public services along side lower taxes (Wlezien 1995).

Include a bibliography with full information about cited material (for example: Wlezien, Christopher. 1995. "The Public as Thermostat: Dynamics of Preferences for Spending." *American Journal of Political Science* 39:981-1000.). This cannot be included in your 2500 word count.

Avoid excessive use of quotes. Summarize material in your own words and cite where the ideas come from.

Use academic style of writing. Try not to use clichés, overgeneralizations, or derogatory comments. Make an argument backed up with facts, don't just rant and rave.

Provide the word count of the paper (not including the bibliography).

The paper must have a title page that includes the title of the paper, the student's name, the course name, quarter/year, and the following statement.

This paper represents my own work. It is not a recycled paper from another course and it is not a paper purchased or obtained from another source. I understand the meaning of plagiarism and no part of this paper has been plagiarized. I have properly documented and cited all of the references and sections. I am familiar with the rules for documenting sources and understand that any violations of the university's code of student conduct will cause me to fail this course and the case turned over to Student Judicial Affairs with the instructor's recommendation that I be expelled from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

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Student's Name