

Public Policy Formation

POLITICAL SCIENCE 320

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Summer 2008 - Session II: June 9 – July 11

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Class Meets: Online

Course Description (catalog): Analysis of the political and economic values and processes involved in the making of public policy in the United States today. Prerequisite: PSC 101. 3 credits.

Introduction: This course provides an introduction to the study of public policy formation by 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. 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. This course has several objectives. Students should be able to define public policy and recognize government action/inaction on behalf of citizens; identify and compare competing explanatory models of policy formation; identify and place major political actors and institutional features of the policymaking process; critically assess policy initiatives and evaluate public policy, and finally, improve students' critical thinking regarding the policy process.

Texts:

- Kenneth Bickers and John T. Williams, *Public Policy Analysis*, 2001. Houghton Mifflin Co.
- Thomas Dye. *Top Down Policy Making*, 2001. New York: Chatham House.
- Elaine Sharp, *The Sometime Connection: Public Opinion and Social Policy*, 1999. SUNY Press

- Other Readings (available on WebCampus as PDF files):

1) Cochran, Clarke E., Lawrence C. Mayer, TR Carr, and N. Joseph Cayer. 2003. American Public Policy: Chapter 4 – Economic Issues: Taxing, Spending, and Budgeting

2) Stella Z. Theodoulou and Chris Kofins. 2004. Defense Policy in *The Art of the Game: Understanding American Public Policy Making*

Copies of the texts are available at the UNLV bookstore. A copy of each book has been placed on 2 hour reserve at the Lied Library

Participation: An online course provides the benefit of flexibility. Students can view the lecture material at a time that best fits their schedule. This does not mean that the class is designed as a "go at your own pace" course. This is a 5 week course and there are 5 quizzes (see below) given at specific times. This means that you must keep up with the lecture and reading material. Many students like the flexibility of an online course, but in my experience some students can quickly get behind because of the lack of structure. Because of this I have added recommended dates to the syllabus for the lecture and reading material. It is recommended that you view and read the assigned material by that date.

Participation: 5% of your grade will be based on your participation in the discussion board. The online discussion forum in WebCT allows students and the instructor to post messages at any time for everyone in the class to read and respond to. It will be your responsibility to check the discussion board on a regular basis and respond to the question posed by the instructor. Most of the lecture modules will have discussion board questions that will require your input.

Exams: There will be a midterm and a final exam. They will be based on the assigned readings and lectures. Late exams are not accepted except for emergency situations and the reason must be documented (police report for an accident, doctor's letter for a serious illness on official letterhead). In regard to the observance of a religious holiday, University policy states that students must notify the instructor about anticipated absences by the last day of late registration to be assured the opportunity to make up missed work. Late exams will be marked down a full grade for every day (24 hour period) late. For your convenience exams will be made available for 36 hours, but you will only have 4 hours to complete the exam once you open the exam.

Quizzes: 5 quizzes will be given during the course which will count for 20% of your overall course grade. The Quiz dates are listed in the syllabus and will be posted by 10 am on that day. The quiz will need to be completed with 72 hours of that time. The quiz can be started any time during that 72 hour period but you will only have 2 hours to complete the quiz once you open it. It is your responsibility to continually log into WebCT to check for quizzes and announcements.

Opinion Article: Students will be required to write an op-ed piece to be submitted to a media outlet of their choice. The op-ed should be around 800 words give or take 50. It should discuss a policy issue that is timely and relevant. If you do not know what an op-ed is I recommend typing "publishing an op-ed" or "writing an op-ed" in [google.com](http://www.google.com) for good examples. Unlike traditional op-eds, I will require that the op-ed contain at least 4 citations to *academic sources* as evidence/validation of your point of view. See the link "Tools & Resources" on the course page for a definition of an academic source and an example of what I am looking for.

Computer Issues: Students with computer problems should contact the Student Computing Services Help Desk at 702-895-0761. The Help Desk can assist with passwords and access issues. The SCS website is especially helpful regarding WebCampus, computer labs, software (including virus protection and anti-spyware), and browser problems: <http://ccs.unlv.edu/scr/support/default.asp>. The Help Desk does not address any content issues of WebCampus courses — those questions must

be directed to the instructor. The WebCampus server will be down every Saturday from 1 to 5 am for maintenance. Do not plan course activities, such as assessments, during that time.

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://www.unlv.edu/studentlife/drc>.

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

COMPONENT	DUE DATE	COURSE VALUE
Midterm	Wednesday, June 25/Due June 26- 8pm	30%
Participation	N/A	5%
Five (5) Quizzes	TBA	20%
Opinion Paper	Monday, July 7 by 10am	15%
Final Exam	July 11, 8am; Due 8pm July 12	30%

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

* Rounding at .5

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty: The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The University will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws. Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability as well as disciplinary action under University policies. To help familiarize yourself with copyright and fair use policies, the University encourages you to visit its copyright web page at <http://www.unlv.edu/committees/copyright>.

Provisions for Religious Holidays: As a general rule, a student missing a class assignment because of observance of a religious holiday shall have the opportunity to make up missed work. Students must notify the instructor of anticipated absences by the last day of late registration to be assured of this opportunity.

COURSE CALENDAR:

DATE	LECTURE # AND TOPIC	READINGS
<i>WEEK 1</i>		
June 9, Monday	1. What is Public Policy	Dye ch. 1
June 11, Wednesday	2. The Political Economy Approach	Bickers & Williams (B&W) ch. 1 & 2
June 13, Friday	3. Democracy and Public Policy QUIZ 1	Dye ch. 2, 3 & B&W ch. 3
<i>WEEK 2</i>		
June 16, Monday	4. Societal Problems: Causes and Solutions	B&W ch. 4, 5
June 18, Wednesday	5. Societal Problems: Markets as Solutions	B&W ch. 6, 7
June 20, Friday	7. Policy Actors: Public Officials & Elections <i>Note: We skip lecture 6</i> QUIZ 2	Dye ch. 4
<i>WEEK 3</i>		
June 23, Monday	8. National, State, and Local Governments	B&W ch. 8 & 10
June 25, Wednesday	9. Interest Groups MIDTERM Available 8am June 25 DUE 8 pm Thursday, June 26th	B&W ch. 9 & Dye Ch. 5
June 27, Friday	10. The Media QUIZ 3	Dye ch. 6
<i>WEEK 4</i>		
June 30, Monday	11. the Sometime Connection	Dye Ch. 7; Sharp Ch. 1
July 2, Wednesday	12. Morality Policy: Criminal Justice; Pornography; Abortion	Sharp Ch. 2, 4, 5
July 3, Thursday	13. Economic Policy: Taxing and Spending – Welfare and Social Security	Sharp Ch. 3, 6, 7; Cochran, et al

	QUIZ 4	
<i>WEEK 5</i>		
July 7, Monday	14. Policy Analysis Opinion Paper Due 10 am	B&W Ch. 11; Theodoulou & Kofins
July 9, Wednesday	15. Policy Implementation and Evaluation LAST QUIZ	Dye Ch. 8 & 9; B & W Ch. 12
July 11, Friday	Final Exam posted 8am - Due 7/12/08 8pm	