

Public Policy 320: Politics, Political Institutions, and Public Policy
Fall 2017
Tuesday and Thursday, 10:00-11:30

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Office Hours:	Tuesdays 1:00-2:00 (4128 Weill) Wednesdays 3:00-4:00 (7764 Haven)	Office Hours:	Fridays 11:00-1:00

Course Description

This course provides students with an introduction to the policymaking process. The goal is to understand how policies are created and why we get the specific policies that we have. To this end, our focus will be on the factors that affect the creation of public policies, rather than on an assessment of how well these policies are working. In other words, we will focus on the policy *process*, rather than on policy *outcomes*.

The course will be divided into four sections. In the first section we will address foundational issues concerning the study of public policy and will introduce the general framework that will be used throughout the course: the idea that public policies result from the interplay of preferences and institutions. In the second section we will turn to an examination of how preferences influence policy choices. In the third section we will analyze the role of political institutions in policymaking. Finally, although we will be discussing a wide range of policies throughout the course, in the last section we will apply the framework that we have developed throughout the semester to a series of policies.

For the most part, we will focus on domestic policymaking in the United States at the national level. But to provide a broader context for understanding public policy, at times we will turn our attention to foreign policy, policymaking in other countries, and policymaking in the US states.

Grading

Your grade for this course will be determined by the following factors:

- Midterm (20%)
- Final exam (20%)
- Memos (30%)
- Discussion Section (20%)
- Short Assignments (5%)
- Lecture and Course Performance (5%)

Exams: The midterm will be an in-class, closed-book exam and will consist of a mixture of short and long essays. The final will be a take-home exam that will be passed out during the last week of classes and will be due at 10:30 am on Tuesday, December 19.

If you need to reschedule an examination, you must provide a substantial and documented reason for doing so (e.g., a note from a physician, a written statement from a coach, etc.) and must contact the professor or GSI *prior* to missing the exam.

Memos: In addition to learning a framework for understanding policy, it is also essential to learn to communicate about policymaking in an effective manner. To this end, I will assign four memos during the semester. The fourth one is mandatory (i.e., everyone in the class will need to do the fourth memo). Of the first three that I will assign, you need to do two; and you get to choose which two. Overall, then, you will write three memos during the semester, each of which is worth 10% of your final grade. We will provide separate handouts with more details about each of these memos at the appropriate times.

Discussion Section: The discussion section is an integral part of this course. Your section grade will be based on a mixture of attendance, participation, and assignments. Positive participation includes being prepared, being willing to use this preparation to contribute during discussion sections, and any other activities that add to the learning environment of the class overall. Being unprepared for section, consistent tardiness or absences, working on non-course-related materials during class, and any other behavior detrimental to the learning environment may adversely affect your section grade.

Short Assignments: You will be given a number of short assignments during the semester. I will announce these in class and will post them on Canvas.

Lecture and Course Performance: This final category takes into account whether you are contributing to the overall success of the course. Positive contributions include being on time and prepared for lectures, as well as being attentive and participating during these lectures. As with discussion section, negative contributions include consistent tardiness or absences, working on non-course-related materials during class, and any other behavior detrimental to the learning environment.

Lectures

Due to the size of the course and our goal of constructing a useful framework for understanding policymaking, I will usually lecture during our Tuesday and Thursday classes. But I encourage students to ask questions during these sessions. In addition, we will regularly engage in discussion of various points that I raise during lecture. The more engaged you are, the more you will get out of this class.

PowerPoint slides for each lecture will be made available on Canvas after each class.

Discussion Sections

Discussion sections provide a valuable opportunity for you to take part in a variety of activities that are designed to increase your understanding of the material and improve your ability to succeed in the course. These activities will include working on the memos, developing oral communication skills, discussing the readings, going into more depth on lecture topics, preparing for the exams, and so on.

Sections will meet weekly unless otherwise noted. You should attend only the section for which you are registered, unless you receive permission to do otherwise.

Readings

The following two books are required and are available at local bookstores and online:

Elaine Kamarck, *How Change Happens – Or Doesn't*
Robert Spitzer, *The Politics of Gun Control*, 6th ed.

Other readings will be available either on Canvas or online. I also strongly recommend that you read a national daily newspaper that covers national-level politics and policymaking.

COURSE SCHEDULE

You should read each article or chapter prior to class on the day it is listed. Readings marked with ** are available on Canvas; those marked with ## are available online.

Please note that I will likely add new readings to the syllabus and change some of the existing readings as the semester proceeds. I will always announce any changes in class.

Part 1: Foundations

Sept. 5 – Introduction to Public Policy

- Spitzer, Preface and Introduction

Sept. 7 – Studying Public Policy, part 1

- Kamarck, Preface and ch. 1
- Spitzer, ch. 1
- **Theodoulou, “How Public Policy Is Made”
- **O’Hare, “A Typology of Government Action”

Sept. 12 – Studying Public Policy, part 2

- Spitzer, ch. 2

Sept. 14 – Studying Public Policy, part 3

- Kamarck, ch. 2

Sept. 19 – Studying Public Policy, part 4

- Kamarck, ch. 3 and 4

Part 2: Preferences and Public Policy

Sept. 21 – Interest Groups, part 1

- Spitzer, ch. 3 (skim)
- ## [“The abortion rights movement is bolder than it’s been in years. That’s Cecile Richards’s plan”](#) (*Washington Post*)

Sept. 26 – Interest Groups, part 2

- Spitzer, ch. 4

Policy Memo #1 due on Sept. 26

Sept. 28 – Interest Groups, part 3; Public Opinion, part 1

- **Nestle, ch. 2, 7, and 12 of *Soda Politics*
- ## [“Making a Killing: The Business and Politics of Selling Guns”](#) (*New Yorker*)

Oct. 3 – Public Opinion, part 2

- Kamarck, ch. 6
- **Cook, “Public Opinion and Party Positions on Guns”

Oct. 5 – Public Opinion, part 3

- Kamarck, ch. 7
- **Aronow and Miller, “Policy misperceptions and support for gun control legislation”

Oct. 10 – Elections, part 1

- Kamarck, ch. 8

Oct. 12 – Elections, part 2

- **Gilens, “Inequality and Democratic Responsiveness” (As a heads up: This is a hard article. But work your way through it and try to figure out what the main takeaways are.)

Policy Memo #2 due on October 13

October 17 – Fall Break!

Part 3: Institutions and Public Policy

Oct. 19 – Congress, part 1

- ##Draper, “[Inside the Power of the NRA](#)” (*New York Times Magazine*)
- **Baumer and Van Horn, ch. 5

Oct. 24 – Congress, part 2

- Kamarck, ch. 5

October 26 – Midterm Exam

Oct. 31 – Congress, part 3

- Spitzer, ch. 5
- ##Chishti and Hipsman, “[With Little Debate, Congress Enacts Broad Range of Immigration Changes in Spending Bill](#)” (Migration Policy Institute)
- ##Pear, “[Cures Act Gains Bipartisan Support That Eluded Obama Health Law](#)”

Nov. 2 – Congress, part 4

- **Ornstein and Mann, “When Congress Checks Out”
- **Howell and Pevehouse, “When Congress Stops Wars”

Nov. 7 – President, part 1

- **Baumer and Van Horn, ch. 6

Nov. 9 – President, part 2

- **Rosati and Scott, ch. 3
- ##Rudalegiva, "[Trump says he'll cancel Obama's 'unconstitutional' executive actions. It's not that easy.](#)" (*Washington Post*)
- Baker, "[Can Trump Destroy Obama's Legacy?](#)" (*New York Times*)

Policy Memo #3 due on Nov. 10

Nov. 14 – President, part 3

- ##Klein, "[The Unpersuaded](#)" (*New Yorker*)

Nov. 16 – Courts

- TBD

Nov. 21 – Policy Diffusion

- **Shipan and Volden

Nov. 23 – Thanksgiving

Part 4: Case Studies

Nov. 28 – Health Care

- ##Ezra Klein, "[The Lessons of '94](#)" (*The American Prospect*)
- **Oberlander, "Long Time Coming: Why Health Reform Finally Passed"
- **Obama
- ##Julian Zelizer, "[How Medicare Was Made](#)" (*The New Yorker*)

Nov. 30 – Immigration

- **Massey

Dec. 5 – Guns

- Spitzer, ch. 6
- ##Chapman, [Over Our Dead Bodies](#), ch. 1 and pp. 81-85 (then skim remainder of ch. 4)

Policy Memo #4 due on Dec. 6

Dec. 7 – Death Penalty

- **Baumgartner, DeBoef, and Boydston, Ch. 7

Dec. 12 – Conclusion

Final Exam: Due December 19 at 10:30 am. No late exams will be accepted.

Additional Important Considerations

Attendance: Each student will be responsible for all announcements and materials covered in lectures and discussion sections.

Grade Grievances: We will go to great lengths to make sure that the grading of exams and assignments is as fair and consistent as possible. Still, on rare occasions you might find that you disagree with a grade that you received on an exam or assignment. In such cases, you deserve, and will have, the opportunity to discuss and potentially contest this grade. If you choose to pursue this option, the procedure that you must follow is spelled out in the document “Grade Grievance Procedure,” which is available in Files/Handouts on Canvas.

Laptops and other electronic devices: Refrain from using your phone during class. If you prefer to use a laptop to take notes during class, you may do so. You should know, however, that studies clearly indicate that students who take notes by hand tend to do better on exams than those who take notes on computers. In addition, if you are going to use your laptop to take notes, then please use it *only* for that purpose (i.e., not for Facebook, shopping, etc.). Using your laptop for non-class-related purposes is disrespectful to the person who is teaching and distracting to the students sitting around you. If students end up using laptops during class for purposes unrelated to the class, I reserve the right to prohibit laptops.

Arrangements for Students with Disabilities: If you think you will need an accommodation for a disability, please contact Professor Shipan or Sinéad Redmond *at least two weeks* prior to the time when the accommodation will be needed, and ideally during the first two weeks of the semester. Details about how to proceed are provided in the document “Arrangements for Students with Disabilities,” which is available in Files/Handouts on Canvas.

Plagiarism and Cheating: My experience at the University of Michigan has been that the vast majority of students act honorably and with complete integrity when taking exams and completing assignments. You should be proud to be a part of a student body that behaves with such integrity! Out of fairness to all of the students who are behaving ethically, I have absolutely no tolerance for any type of cheating, including plagiarism. Any student who is found to have cheated on any test or assignment will **fail this course**. Ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism or cheating does not provide an excuse or justification for engaging in such behavior. To familiarize yourself with these issues you should read this statement on academic misconduct (<http://www.rackham.umich.edu/current-students/policies/academic-policies/section11#112>) and look at these examples (<http://www.lsa.umich.edu/academicintegrity/examples.html>).

Religious and Academic Conflicts: In keeping with the University of Michigan's policy of respecting students' religious commitments, all attempts will be made to accommodate conflicts arising out of religious observances. For more information, see the document "Religious and Academic Conflicts," which is available in Files/Handouts on Canvas.

Student Mental Health and Wellbeing: The University of Michigan is committed to advancing the mental health and wellbeing of students. For information about support services that are available, see the document "Student Mental Health," available in Files/Handouts on Canvas.

Email policy: I will reply to emails that I receive during regular working hours (i.e., Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.) as soon as possible, usually the same day. For emails received outside of those working hours, I will generally reply during the next working day.

Inclusivity: Members of the Ford School community represent a rich variety of backgrounds and perspectives. We are committed to providing an atmosphere for learning that respects diversity. While working together to build this community, we ask all members to:

- share their unique experiences, values, and beliefs
- be open to the views of others
- honor the uniqueness of their colleagues
- appreciate the opportunity that we have to learn from each other in this community
- value one another's opinions and communicate in a respectful manner
- keep confidential discussions that the community has of a personal (or professional) nature
- use this opportunity together to discuss ways in which we can create an inclusive environment in Ford classes and across the UM community