As analysts of public policy, we use social science tools to assess policy options from a technical standpoint. We emphasize systematic analysis of empirical data and a more detached perspective. This is not how the policymaking process typically operates in real-world conditions, where various interests clash and fight to win policy outcomes that are favorable to their own objectives. The perspectives of “experts” with scientific training may be treated with skepticism or regarded as irrelevant.

The central goal of this course is to give policy practitioners the skills necessary to understand the political nature of the policymaking environment and to operate within it effectively. This involves the ability to identify the various stakeholders and participants in the policymaking process, to discern what motivates these actors and shapes their interests, and to understand the institutional, social, economic, and cultural factors that structure this environment. In short, we learn to approach the policymaking process from a political perspective and to think strategically about our actions.

This course is comparative in nature. Although many of the cases we discuss will come from the American political context, we draw upon cases from many other countries as well. By looking across different contexts, the comparative approach helps identify factors that are critical for understanding a particular political context but that are less obvious without a basis for comparison. The comparative approach also enables us to assess a wider range of alternatives, fostering the spread of good ideas.

Course objectives:

- To understand the policy process;
- To identify the range of interests, stakeholders, institutions, and other factors that shape the policymaking environment around an issue;
- To develop strategies that respond to the particular challenges in a given political context;
- To develop written and oral communication skills critical for being an effective participant in policymaking;
- To build capacity to work well with others in group settings
Class Meeting Schedule

Unless otherwise noted, class meetings are Mondays and Wednesdays from 2:30–4:00 pm in 1210 Weill Hall.

Readings

Most reading assignments are available on the course Canvas site (http://canvas.umich.edu) or through links to electronic holdings in the University of Michigan library. Some readings must be purchased, such as the cases from the Harvard Kennedy School Case Program (http://case.hks.harvard.edu).

Assignments and Grading

Your grade for this course will be determined by your performance on a variety of different assignments and class participation. These assignments are described in detail in the Assignments Guide on Canvas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briefing memo</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stakeholder Analysis memo</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Policy memo</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy Environment Assessment group memo</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roundtable presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-assessments and self-critique</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer questions and critiques</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Policy memo</td>
<td>15%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Since this course is largely discussion-based, class participation is an important element of this course. It is expected that you will come to class having completed the readings in advance. I reserve the right to give a brief reading quiz without warning should I sense that too many students are not prepared.

All writing assignments are expected to be turned in by their respective deadlines, which will typically be the time that class starts on the day the assignment is due. You will upload a PDF-formatted file to Canvas through links in the Assignments folder. Rather than your name, put only your student ID number at the top of the page.

Late assignments: Since your real-world policy memos will have deadlines that cannot be changed, we will follow the same practice in this course. A grade deduction of 10% per day will be applied for late assignments. Please note that Canvas records the time an assignment is uploaded and will automatically flag any assignment that is turned in late. If there are extenuating circumstances, such as a family emergency or serious illness, please get in touch with me as soon as possible.

Communication skills: a central objective of this course is to help you improve your written and oral communication skills for addressing a policy audience. The ability to write clearly, succinctly, and persuasively is critically important to being an effective practitioner in this field. Policy writing has some unique features, among them an emphasis on clarity and efficiency, that may differ from other forms of writing that you have done in the past. Writing assignments are typically short, but this part of what makes them difficult.
You are encouraged to make use of the Ford School’s excellent writing tutors. Appointments are available through the following link: [http://www.fordschool.umich.edu/writing-center/](http://www.fordschool.umich.edu/writing-center/). Another great resource is the Sweetland Writing Center: [http://www.lsa.umich.edu/swc/](http://www.lsa.umich.edu/swc/). No matter how good the quality of your writing is at present, you will surely benefit from these resources.

The last part of the course consists of roundtable discussions. Members of the class will be divided into groups of 5-6 students. Each group will work on a particular policy question, and each member of the group will take on a particular role: government official, interest group representative, etc. Your job will be to advocate for your position on the issue, convincing the members of the audience (i.e. the rest of the class) to support your position on the issue.

In addition to your roundtable presentation, class discussions will offer an important opportunity for you to practice your oral communication skills. There are many ways to be an effective class participant: making an insightful comment, asking a question, showing good listening skills, and through overall engagement. Sometimes we will debate matters that are controversial or generate strong emotions. Your ability to discuss these issues respectfully and without rancor or personal attacks is essential.

The final course letter grade reflects the Ford School’s guidelines. An A is awarded for work that is Excellent, an A- for work that is Very Good, a B+ for work that is Good, a B for work that is Acceptable, and a B- for work that is below expectations for graduate work. You should know I do not have a predetermined formula to convert numeric point totals into these categories. It would be a mistake, for instance, to assume that a grade of 10 out of 16 points on a writing assignment translates into a D.

**Academic Integrity**

It is expected that students are familiar with the Ford Schools expectations for academic integrity as described at [http://fordschool.umich.edu/academics/expectations](http://fordschool.umich.edu/academics/expectations), which adhere to the academic integrity policies for Rackham Graduate School. Violations of these policies will be taken seriously.

**Students with special needs**

If you believe you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of this course may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities to help us determine appropriate accommodations. I will treat any information you provide as private and confidential.

**Student Mental Health and Wellbeing**

The University of Michigan is committed to advancing the mental health and wellbeing of its students. We acknowledge that a variety of issues, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, and depression, directly impacts students’ academic performance. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services are available. For help, contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) and/or University Health Service (UHS). For a listing of other mental health resources available on and off campus, visit: [http://umich.edu/~mhealth/](http://umich.edu/~mhealth/).
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

Please refer to http://fordschool.umich.edu/academics/expectations for a full statement on the Ford School’s academic expectations.

September 5: Introduction to the Course

September 10: The Policy Process


September 12: Policymaking in Comparative Perspective


September 17: Theories of Public Policymaking

- Turn in roundtable topic preferences


Frank M. Baumgartner, Bryan D. Jones, and Peter B. Mortensen (2014). "Punctuated Equilibrium Theory:


**September 19: Theories of Public Policymaking continued**


**September 24: Institutional and Cultural Contexts**


**September 26: Institutional and Cultural Contexts continued**


KSG Case 2062.0. “Pricing Carbon: The Birth of British Columbia’s Carbon Tax.”

**October 1: Agenda Setting**

- Briefing memo due by beginning of class.


**October 3: Actors Inside Government**


**October 8: Actors Outside Government**

- Group Stakeholder Proposal due October 8 by 5 pm


**October 10: Political Activists**


**October 15: Fall Break**

**October 17: Social Movements**


October 22: In-Class Writing Exercise

October 24: Public Opinion


October 29: Public Opinion and Truth

- Stakeholder Analysis memo due October 29 by 11:59 pm


October 31: The Politics of Expertise


November 5: The Politics of Expertise


November 7: Bureaucratic and Regulatory Politics


November 12: Bureaucratic and Regulatory Politics

- Policy memo due Monday, November 12 by 5 pm.

KSG Case 1349.0. “Taking on Big Tobacco: David Kessler and the Food and Drug Administration.”

KSG Case 1737.0. “‘Dealing With The Devil’: The Tobacco Control Negotiations Of 1997-98.”

November 14: Policymaking Through Litigation


November 19: Policymaking Through Litigation

- Group Comparative Political Assessment memo due Monday, November 19 by 5 pm.


November 21: Politics of Program Evaluation

- Roundtable Press Release due by 2:30 pm.


KSG Case 1958.0. “Michelle Rhee’s IMPACT on the Washington D.C. Public Schools.”

November 26: Policy Roundtable # 1

November 28: Policy Roundtable # 2

December 3: Policy Roundtable # 3

December 5: Policy Roundtable # 4

December 10: Policy Roundtable # 5

Wednesday, December 19: Long Policy Memo due