

Public Policy 201: Systematic Thinking About Problems of the Day
Fall 2018
TTH 1-2:20 pm
1120 Weill Hall

<i>Professors:</i>	<i>Contact:</i>	<i>Office</i>	<i>Office Hours</i>
Paul N. Courant	pnc@umich.edu	4126 Weill	Tuesday 3:30-4, Friday 10:30-12
Alan Deardorff	alandear@umich.edu	3314 Weill	TBD
Paula Lantz	plantz@umich.edu	4125 Weill	TBD
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Public policy is an imperfect means to improve the world in which we live. A fundamental premise of policy research, and of this course, is that we can't improve what we don't understand. To make a coherent difference, we have to understand how the part of the world we care about works. What aspects of it can we and should we change? And what is the best way to do that? What are the risks? Who would gain and lose from change? Answering those questions is difficult but not impossible. It requires systematic thinking – the application of social science theory and the development of models, knowledge, evidence, and methods – focused on concrete policy problems. We learn how to engage in systematic thinking in part by practicing it.

This course will focus on four policy problems, with one 3-week module on each, taught jointly by Professor Paul Courant and a faculty expert in the field. *Professor Paula Lantz* will teach the first module, focusing on public policy approaches to the social problem of tobacco use in the United States, with special attention to the policy tensions that exist between the government's interest in promoting and protecting public health and its interest in protecting the individual freedom and behavioral choices of adults. *Professor Deborah Ball* will teach the second module, focusing on the issue of teaching quality in K-12 education and how to improve it, paying special attention to the problems that arise from the heterogeneity and scale of elementary and secondary education in the United States. Professor Deardorff will teach the third module, focusing on how international trade has affected consumers, workers, and firms in the United States, with particular attention to the trade deficit, currency manipulation, increased imports from China, and the North American Free Trade Agreement, as well as the changes in tariff and other trade policies that are currently under national and international discussion. Policy issues will concern how these issues have been and should be addressed, most notably in the renegotiation of NAFTA that is currently underway. In the final module, *Professor Rick Hall* will review the rapid growth in federal election campaign spending in the aftermath of *Citizens United v. FEC*, discuss its implications for democratic elections and political speech, and examine the possibilities for campaign finance reform.

The course will sometimes examine current events to amplify and illustrate its major themes, and it stresses the value of constructive disagreement as a tool to improve

the quality of both understanding and policy. Attendance and participation are thus important to your success in the course. It seems likely that much of the course will be coterminous with a contentious election season, including mid-term congressional elections and a race for Governor of Michigan. To the extent that the political debates are also policy debates, the elections should provide a good deal of material that will invite constructive disagreement.

In addition to three hours of lecture each week (which will often be more interactive than the word “lecture” might suggest) there will be a one-hour section taught by one of the GSIs, Hinh Tran and or Ben Eikey. Students must register both for the main lecture and for one discussion section.

Course Materials

Materials and information pertinent to each module will be posted on the Canvas site well in advance of their required use, but not all such material will be available at the beginning of the course. *Students should check the Canvas site frequently.*

iClickers: We will be using iclickers quite frequently, so please remember to bring them to class. *Your iClicker must be registered on the Canvas course site.*

Assignments

Quizzes (50%): The modules will run for six lecture classes. A quiz will be given at the beginning of the first lecture after a module is completed. (See schedule below.) The GSIs will participate in determining the coverage of the quizzes and final exam, which will contain material from the sections as well as readings and lectures. Students will be able to drop their weakest quiz.

Op-Ed (15%): Each student will be assigned a brief paper – in the form of an Op-Ed piece of about 800 words -- on one and only one of the topics. The topics will be assigned to students randomly and announced the second week of class.

Attendance & Participation (15%): This portion of the grade will depend primarily but not exclusively on your participation in section.

Final Exam (20%): The final exam will be given on Wednesday, December 19, 10:30-12:30, per the time schedule. *Students must take the final exam at the assigned time.*

Policy on Classroom Recording and Use of Laptops

All audio and video recording in the classroom is prohibited in lecture and section unless the instructor gives explicit permission to do so. If you need an exception because of a relevant disability, please contact Professor Courant. *By taking this class you are agreeing to abide by this policy.*

Each instructor will set his or her own policy regarding the use of laptops during class.

Ford School Inclusivity Statement

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

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

If you need an accommodation for a disability, please let Professor Courant know as soon as possible. Some aspects of the course may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make Professor Courant aware of your needs, you and he can work with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office to help us determine appropriate academic accommodations. Any information you provide will be treated as private and confidential

If you need an accommodation for special religious obligations or observances or for absences when representing the University or the military, please let me know as soon as possible, and I will try to accommodate you.

Student Mental Health and Well-Being Resources

The University of Michigan is committed to advancing the mental health and wellbeing of its students. 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)** at (734) 764-8312 and <https://caps.umich.edu/> during and after hours, on weekends and holidays, or through its counselors physically located in schools on both North and Central Campus. You may also consult **University Health Service (UHS)** at (734) 764-8320 and <https://www.uhs.umich.edu/mentalhealthsvcs>, or for alcohol or drug concerns, see www.uhs.umich.edu/aodresources.

Academic Integrity

You are responsible for knowing the university standards for academic integrity, including but not limited to the prohibition of and penalties for plagiarism. Plagiarism is representing someone else's ideas, words, statements, or other work as one's own without proper acknowledgment or citation. Examples of plagiarism include:

- Copying word for word or lifting phrases or a special term from a source or reference, whether oral, printed, or on the internet, without proper attribution.

- Paraphrasing, that is, using another person’s written words or ideas, albeit in one’s own words, as if they were one’s own thought.
- Borrowing facts, statistics, graphs, or other illustrative material without proper reference, unless the information is common knowledge or in common public use.

The penalties for plagiarism and other violations of academic integrity will be harsh.

Please review additional information and policies regarding academic expectations and resources at the Ford School of Public Policy at this link:

<http://fordschool.umich.edu/academics/expectations>

Overview of Course Schedule

Sept. 4-6:	Problems of Policy Research (Courant et. al.)
Sept. 6-25:	Module 1: Tobacco Control Policy (Lantz)
Sept. 27:	Quiz on Module 1 (Beginning of class)
Oct. 2:	Tobacco Control Op-Ed due, 5:00 p.m.
Sept. 27-Oct 18:	Module 2: Teaching Quality (Ball) [Oct. 16: Fall Break]
Oct. 23:	Quiz on Module 2 (Beginning of class)
Oct. 23-25:	Review, Preview, Lessons Learned (Courant)
Oct. 28:	Teaching Quality Op-Ed due, 5:00 p.m.
Oct. 25-Nov. 13:	Module 3: International Trade (Deardorff)
Nov. 15:	Quiz on Module 3 (Beginning of class)
Nov. 20:	International Trade Op-Ed due, 5:00 p.m.
Nov 15-Dec. 6:	Module 4: Campaign Finance Reform (Hall) [Nov. 22: Thanksgiving Break]
Dec. 11:	Quiz on Module 4 (Beginning of class)
Dec. 11:	Conclusion (Courant et. al.)
Dec. 15:	Campaign Finance Op-Ed due, 5:00 p.m.
Dec. 19:	Final Exam, 1:30-3:30, 1120 Weill Hall