

SYLLABUS: PUBLIC POLICY 422, FALL 2017

Public Policy 422: Congress and the State Legislatures, is a course designed to familiarize students with the inner workings of the legislative process, federal and state. This will be done through reviewing the structure of state legislatures and the Congress, as well as by studying method and nuance of the workings of these bodies politic.

We will use various issues before state legislatures and the Congress as the vehicles for our discussions. A wide range of issues will be covered during the semester. Special attention will be focused on the 2016 elections and their results: 1) Gerrymandering of Congressional and Legislative districts, 2) Term Limits, good, bad, or indifferent, and, 3) Campaign Finance. Be familiar with the "Citizens United" decision, 501 (c) 4's, 527's, and other details of campaign finance in all its complexities. You will be assigned readings from multiple publications. Examples: The Economist, Foreign Affairs, Stratfor, Time, U.S. News and World Report, the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Chicago Tribune, the Wall Street Journal, and other media. It is suggested that you familiarize yourselves with the content of editorial pages and op-ed pages of the New York Times and Wall Street Journal to become familiar with differing views on issues. Assignments will also be given from the Detroit News and Detroit Free Press from time to time when we are dealing with Michigan issues. And, occasionally, even the Michigan Daily will get some playing time.

Grading for the class will be based on several factors. Attendance will be taken at each Tuesday and Thursday lecture/discussion section, and will constitute 25% of your grade. If you cannot make it to class due to a legitimate conflict, family emergency, religious holiday, et al, let me know that you will be absent. If you have missed class due to illness, tell me. Repeated and unexpected absenteeism is not acceptable. Remember the old political adage, "showing up is half the battle".

You will be required to submit three, and possibly four, papers during the semester. They will be submitted in hard copy, and each will be read, commented upon, and graded by myself. Elections 2016 and beyond: Was this election cycle the "new normal", or just a rather strange, even "weird" deviation from what has gone before? And, we will deal with some national issues, eg, immigration reform, the Defense Budget, the debt and the deficit, the decaying relationship between the Congress and the White House, the seeming greater loyalty to "party" as opposed to "country or state" as seen in the case of Congress and the State Legislatures, as well as state issues, eg, infrastructure funding and general tax reform, education, public safety, et al. The papers will consist of a formal policy memorandum and an op-ed on a topic/issue in which you have an interest, and perhaps a shorter paper on an issue about which YOU have a strong opinion. The papers will represent 30% to 35% of your grade. Participation and performance in class on Tuesdays and Thursdays will represent an additional 30% to 35% of your grade. The remaining 10%, or so, is simply based on your interest and depth of participation. I encourage you to speak your minds. I will start each lecture and get the discussion going. Your comments and questions keep it going.

Those who wish to arrange appropriate tutorial times for a fourth credit hour in Pub Pol 422, please visit my office during the first week of class or speak to me after class, and plans will be made.

At times, I will reference my own experience in the Legislature, the Congress, and municipal government, as well as my service in the intelligence community, when it is germane to our purpose.

We will have at least four guest lecturers during the semester, each an experienced and knowledgeable member of the public policy community. Jack Lessenberry, well-known columnist and commentator, Phil Power, CEO of the Center for Michigan, and Ellen Jeffries, Director of Senate Fiscal Agency in Lansing, and John F. Kelly, former head of the Africa Division of the National Defense University in Washington, DC, have already accepted invitations to speak to PubPol 422. Others will be invited

Traditionally, and on a lighter note, the final five minutes or so of most lecture sections will consist of a short “trivia” exercise in history, policy, diplomacy, and other trenchant topics for your enjoyment and edification.

Public Policy 422 IS NOT a “make or break” class. IT IS a class where you will learn the ins and outs of the “process” of policy development, warts and all. It is a class that I hope will be enlightening and, at the same time, enjoyable.

My office hours will be: Tuesday and Thursday 1:15 to 3:15, and by appointment. My email: joefmd@umich.edu and my cell: 269 986 5646 for urgent matters.

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