

GVPT 419A: SEMINAR IN PUBLIC POLICY: THE PUBLIC POLICY PROCESS IN THE U.S.

Fall 2017
T/Th 2:00-3:15
TYD 1102

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Office Location: TYD 3140N
Office Hours: T-Th 3:30PM-4:30PM
W 12:30-1:30, and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is designed to introduce students to public policy making in the United States. We will begin by examining some foundational debates over the role and purposes of government. Turning from theory to strategy, we will then investigate the ways policy actors frame political issues to mobilize supporters and disseminate their ideas. Why do policymakers pay more attention to some issues than others? Why do they consider some policy proposals carefully and reject others out of hand? How do organized interests and other policy actors inside and outside government influence the process? We will examine the institutional, historical, and organizational factors that affect whether, when, and which policies are adopted. We conclude by considering the policy tools at government's disposal and the challenges and pitfalls of policy implementation.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Deborah Stone, *Policy Paradox*, 3rd edition (W. W. Norton, 2012)

John Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies* (Longman, 1995)

Selected readings available online via ELMS or in hyperlinks embedded below.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Midterm Exam:	25%
Presentation & First Draft:	10%
Participation and Peer Reviews	10%
Final Exam:	30%
Term Paper:	25%

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS:

EXAMINATIONS

Exams will include both objective components (short answer) and essays. Students will be provided with review materials to aid in preparation.

Make-up exams will only be given if justified by a written excuse accompanied by appropriate documentation. The following are legitimate excuses: illness (self or dependent), religious observance, participation in university sponsored activities, or compelling circumstances beyond a student's control. If none of these apply, no make-up exam will be granted.

READINGS

Reading assignments are specified on a calendar on this syllabus. It is important that students do the assigned reading *before class* in order to participate actively in discussion.

TERM PAPER

This assignment requires you to analyze a recent public policy initiative using the concepts developed in Deborah Stone's *Policy Paradox*. Term papers are **due on December 5, 2017**. Late papers will be penalized 10 points per day.

A list of policy initiatives to spur your thinking is provided below. You may select one of the following policy initiatives to research, or you may opt for a topic not on this list, provided that you clear your alternative choice with the instructor. You should feel free to choose an initiative that failed to result in policy change or new law.

- American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009
- Dodd–Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act (2010)
- Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (2010)
- Budget Control Act of 2011
- Bipartisan Student Loan Certainty Act of 2013
- Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015
- Every Student Succeeds Act (2015)
- Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015
- Keystone XL Pipeline Approval Act (2015, vetoed)
- DREAM Act (failed repeatedly)

Term papers will be 15-21 pages long (double-spaced in a 12 point font with one inch margins) and must consist of six parts. Do NOT exceed the page limits for any section. One important part of this assignment is learning how to convey a great deal of information concisely.

Part I: Introduction (1-2 pages). This part identifies the topic of the paper and describes the paper's organization. It should briefly outline the paper—what you are going to do in

the paper and what you find. This provides an overview of the paper for your reader, letting him/her know what to expect. (You should write this section *last*).

Part II: *Summary of the Initiative* (2-3 pages). This section is largely descriptive, requiring you to identify the key facts about your policy initiative. You should answer the following questions.

- What is the purpose and significance of the policy initiative?
- Provide a brief timeline of the initiative: when was it proposed, by whom, and when was it disposed of?
- What was the most significant controversy surrounding the initiative? This discussion must identify the relevant leaders and groups (both inside and outside government) involved in the controversy.

Part III: *Goals of the Initiative* (4-5 pages). This section requires you to apply the concepts from Part II of *Policy Paradox*. In doing so, you will answer two questions:

- What is the primary goal underlying your policy initiative? Stone identifies five goals that “dominate policy discourse”: equity, efficiency, security, liberty, and community. Which of these goals stands out in the debates over your policy issue? (The initiative will almost certainly involve multiple goals. Your task is to identify the goal you think predominates.)
- Discuss one or two “ambiguities” or “problems of interpretation” (see Stone 37-8) that make this goal the object of political struggle. Relate these problems of interpretation to the struggle over the policy initiative.

Part IV: *Defining the Problem* (4-5 pages). This section requires you to apply the concepts from Part III of *Policy Paradox*. As explained by Stone, problem definition is “the strategic representation of situations.” You should answer the following two questions:

- How do proponents of the policy initiative define (or frame) the problem the policy initiative addresses?
- How do opponents of the policy initiative define (or frame) the problem the policy initiative addresses?

Part V *Solutions* (3-4 pages). This section requires you to apply the concepts from Part IV of *Policy Paradox*. This section should include answers to the following questions:

- What are the primary strategies proposed in your policy initiative for dealing with the problem?
- What were the disagreements over solutions within your policy initiative?

Part VI: *Conclusion* (1-2 pages). Here you briefly summarize the paper. In addition, address the following questions,

- What was the primary focus of the political struggle over your policy initiative? Was the controversy primarily over policy goals (liberty, equity, security, etc.), over problem definitions (dispute over the sources/nature of the policy problem), or over appropriate solutions (inducements, rules, etc.)
- Discuss how well the concepts from *Policy Paradox* fit your topic, taking note of any difficulties you faced in applying them.

PRESENTATIONS, FIRST DRAFTS, AND PEER REVIEWS

PRESENTATIONS: All students will be assigned a date on which they will present their term paper research. Presentations will be 9-10 minutes in length, with time limits strictly enforced so as to ensure that every student has adequate time to present. Students should focus their presentations on the areas in which the most significant debates regarding their policy initiative occurred (e.g., goals, problem definition, solutions).

FIRST DRAFTS & PEER REVIEWS: Every student will be randomly assigned to a peer reviewer. Students will email their draft paper to their peer reviewer on the same day they give their in-class presentation, cc'ing the instructor.

Peer reviews will be due within one week. Peer reviews should be returned to the author and cc'd to the instructor at FLee1@umd.edu. The quality of peer reviewing will be factored into students' participation grade

The goal of peer reviewing is to give students constructive feedback to help them write an excellent term paper. Peer reviewers should provide feedback to the student in the form of in-text comments. In addition, they should write a summary review addressing the questions below:

- How well does the paper address the assigned questions?
- Is the analysis convincing?
- Is the research adequate and well documented?
- Is the writing clear, concise and organized? .

Students must submit papers and peer reviews on time. Penalties will be imposed on students' participation grades for failure to complete peer reviews on deadline. Penalties will be imposed on students presentation grades for failure to submit a first draft on deadline.

TERM PAPER FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS:

Papers should be double-spaced in 12-point font, with one inch margins. A separate cover page should include the student's name, date, the title of the paper, and the Honor Code pledge.

You must document all sources you use in writing your papers according to an accepted style guide. Any standard documentation style is acceptable.

COURSE POLICIES

ABSENCES

Attendance is required as part of expectations regarding class participation. The following penalties apply based on the number of unexcused absences documented in a student's record.

0-2 recorded absences
3+ recorded absences

no penalty on participation grade
10 points subtracted from participation grade for each unexcused absence. All excuses must be requested in writing and accompanied by appropriate documentation.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who are registered with Disability Support Services (301-314-7682) are encouraged to meet with the instructor early in the semester to arrange appropriate academic accommodations.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

Exams will be rescheduled for the next class meeting if the university is officially closed because of inclement weather. Similarly, any assignments due should be turned in at the next class meeting. Official closures and delays are announced on the campus website (<http://www.umd.edu/>) and snow phone line (301-405-SNOW), as well as local radio and TV stations.

ACADEMIC HONESTY & HONOR CODE PLEDGE

Students should write and sign the following statement on the cover page of the papers they submit in this course, *"I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment."*

Plagiarism is a very serious offense and any infractions will be taken up with the appropriate university judicial proceedings. According to the MLA Handbook, to plagiarize includes two activities: (1) repeating "as your own someone else's sentences, more or less verbatim" and (2) "paraphrasing another person's argument as your own, and presenting another's line of thinking as though it were your own."

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS & ASSIGNMENTS

PART ONE: The Goals of Public Policy

- 08/29 (T): Challenges of policymaking
READ: Stone, pp. 1-36
- 08/31 (Th): **NO CLASS**
- 09/05 (T) Equity
READ: Stone, pp. 39-62
Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (Basic Books, 1974), 149-164
John Rawls, "Justice as Fairness," *The Philosophical Review* 67 (1958) 164-194.
- 09/07 (Th): Efficiency and welfare
READ: Stone, pp. 63-106
Frank, Robert. *The Darwin Economy: Liberty, Competition and the Common Good* (Princeton University Press, 2011).
Greenberg, Mark. "[It's Time for a Better Poverty Measure](#)," Center for American Progress, August 25, 2009.
Rector, Robert, and Rachel Sheffield. "[Understanding Poverty in the United States: Surprising Facts about America's Poor](#), Heritage Foundation, September 13, 2011.
- 09/12 (T): Liberty and security
READ: Stone, pp. 107-154
William A. Galston, "Taking Liberty," *The Washington Monthly* (April 2005).
Amartya Sen, "Individual Freedom as a Social Commitment," *The New York Review of Books* (June 14, 1990).

PART TWO: Agenda Setting, Problem Definition, and Framing

- 09/14 (Th): Defining problems
READ: Kingdon, chapter 1
Downs, Anthony "Up and Down with Ecology: The Issue Attention Cycle," *The Public Interest* 28 (1972): 38-50.
DUE: Paper topic decision
- 09/19 (T): Major players in agenda setting
READ: Kingdon, chapters 2-3
Grossman, Matt. *Artists of the Possible: Governing Networks and American Policy Change Since 1945* (Oxford University Press, 2014), chapter 3.

09/21 (Th): Framing
READ: Stone, pp. 157-247
Pride, Richard A. "How Activists and Media Frame Social Problems: Critical Events Versus Performance Trends for Schools." *Political Communication* 12 (1995): 5-26

09/26 (T): Framing
READ: Dagan, David and Steven M. Teles, *Prison Break: Why Conservatives Turned Against Mass Incarceration* (Oxford University Press, 2016), chapter 1-2, 4.
Dagan, David and Steven M. Teles, "[The Conservative War on Prisons](#)," *Washington Monthly*, November/December 2012.

09/28 (Th): Mobilization and countermobilization
READ: E. E. Schattschneider, *The Semi-Sovereign People* (HBJ, 1960), 1-19, 60-73.

10/03 (T): Policy type and arenas of conflict
READ: James Q. Wilson, *Political Organizations* (Basic Books, 1973), 327-346
Stone, pp. 228-247

10/05 (Th): Public understanding and misunderstanding
READ: Bartels, Larry M. "Homer Gets a Tax Cut: Inequality and Public Policy in the American Mind" *Perspectives on Politics* (March 2005): 15-31
Mettler, Suzanne. "Reconstituting the Submerged State: The Challenges of Social Policy Reform in the Obama Era." *Perspectives on Politics* 8 (September 2010):803-824

10/10 (T): MIDTERM EXAM

PART THREE: Policymaking

10/12 (Th): Garbage can models
READ: Kingdon, chapters 4-7

10/17 (T): Policy Windows
READ: Kingdon, chapters 8-9
Mayhew, David R. "Wars and American Politics," *Perspectives on Politics* 3(2005): 473-493.

10/19 (Th): Path dependent processes & punctuated equilibrium
READ: Skocpol Theda, "Targeting Within Universalism: Politically Viable Policies to Combat Poverty in the United States." In Jencks C, Peterson PE, *The Urban Underclass*. (Brookings Institution; 1991) 411-36.
Jones, Bryan, D., Tracy Sulkin and Heather A. Larsen, "Policy

Punctuations in American Political Institutions,” *American Political Science Review* 97(1, 2003):151-169.

10/24 (T): Lobbying and congressional decisionmaking
READ: Levine, Bertram. *The Art of Lobbying* (CQ Press 2009), chapter 2.
Baumgartner et al. *Lobbying and Policy Change: Who Wins, Who Loses, and Why* (University of Chicago Press, 2009), chapter 4.

10/26 (Th): **NO CLASS**

10/31 (T): Presidential decisionmaking
READ: Shambaugh, George E. IV, and Paul J. Weinstein Jr., *The Art of Policymaking*. 2nd edition. (CQ Press 2016), pp. 1-35, 82-91.

11/02 (Th): **PRESENTATIONS GROUP 1 (first draft due)**

11/07 (T): **PRESENTATIONS GROUP 2 (first draft due)**

11/09 (Th): **PRESENTATIONS GROUP 3 (first draft due)**

11/14 (T): **PRESENTATIONS GROUP 4 (first draft due)**

11/16 (Th): **NO CLASS**

11/21 (T): Rationality and decisionmaking
READ: Stone, pp. 248-268
Lindblom, Charles E. “The Science of Muddling Through.”
Public Administration Review 19 (2): 79-88

11/23: **THANKSGIVING**

PART FOUR: Policy Instruments and Implementation

11/28 (T): Policy tools: incentives, rules, and powers
READ: Stone, pp. 271-310, 354-377

11/30 (Th): Implementation: government managers
READ: Wilson, James Q. *Bureaucracy*. (Basic Books, 1989), Chapters 7 and 9.

12/05 (T): Federalism
READ: Teles, Steven M. “[Kludgeocracy in America](#).” *National Affairs*. 17 (Fall 2013).
Rabe, Barry, “Contested Federalism and American Climate Policy,” *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 41(3, 2011): 494-521.

TERM PAPERS DUE

12/07 (Th): Policy sustainability
READ: Patashnik, Eric M. and Julian E. Zelizer, "The Struggle to Remake Politics: Liberal Reform and the Limits of Policy Feedback in the Contemporary American State."
Perspectives on Politics 11 (2013, 4): 1071-1087
Patashnik, Eric M. *Reforms at Risk: What Happens After Major Policy Changes are Enacted* (Princeton University Press, 2008), chapter 3.

12/16 (Sat): **FINAL EXAM**, 10:30AM-12:30PM