OVERVIEW

One of the recurring themes in American history is the desire to remove politics (that great beast!) from policy making. Fortunately or unfortunately, we live in the real world. In that environment, politics matters. Decision makers commonly hold different values and interests, and attempt to advance them through a variety of means (e.g., deployment of resources, advantageous issue framing). Outcomes frequently reflect participants’ skills, clout, etc. Persuasive arguments and efforts to achieve mutual gain through negotiation are also important, although commonly underestimated. Additionally, the role of political entrepreneurs is especially critical.

This course asks students to embrace the notion that politics matters, and then go beyond that. I am to develop your ability to diagnose the political factors that affect outcomes. The ultimate goal is to improve your effectiveness in the policy arena.

PPA 210 also has a strong focus on ethics. I believe it is possible to teach people both to be skilled about acting within a highly political system and to do so in an ethically defensible way, cognizant of broad public purposes.

This course focuses mainly (although not exclusively) on the development stage of the policy process, and particularly efforts to secure enactment of legislation. I find legislative battles especially useful for illustrating key analytical points. However, students should remain aware that politics enters other forums and stages, including policy implementation.

SPECIFIC LEARNING GOALS

At the end of PPA 210 it is expected that students will:

1. Understand a useful way of thinking about how and why policies are adopted: the “multiple streams” (Kingdon) model;
2. Understand the critical role of “policy entrepreneurs” in policy development;

3. Understand how policy problems are identified and policies may be attached to them;

4. Understand how problems are framed more or less effectively;

5. Understand the pervasive nature of collective action problems and their impact on political mobilization;

6. Appreciate the role of the policy community in developing policy options;

7. Engage in more effective policy negotiations than would have been possible at the beginning of the course;

8. Understand the ethical subtleties of role obligations facing political entrepreneurs and other policy actors;

9. Understand key ethical frameworks for assessing public policy choices; and

10. Be better able to write effective short memos and papers.

CONDUCT OF THE SEMINAR

The term "seminar" is accurate. Conventional lectures will be limited and classes will be discussion oriented. While I will guide the conversation, summarize points, and draw lessons, the bulk of class time will be devoted to exchange about course topics, in-class exercises, etc.

Student participation is therefore not a luxury; it is essential to a successful course. I expect that students will come to class consistently, be prepared to discuss the week’s readings, and be prepared to accept special in-class assignments such as leading a critique of a particular argument from the literature.

In an effort to help encourage and guide discussion, I have included discussion questions for most class sessions.

READINGS

The following books are required and available at the Hornet Bookstore.


Simon Blackburn, Being Good: An Introduction to Ethics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)


There are also a few articles and case studies that will need to be downloaded from the Internet, as specified later in the syllabus. Additionally, a few readings not available in electronic form will be on two hour reserve at the University library; I will also include them in the library’s electronic collection, if permissible.

**ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING**

There will be two short papers, a take home mid-term examination, and an in-class, open book final examination. Assignment due dates are specified in the syllabus.

Additionally, each student will choose one required reading to critique during the course of the semester. The critique must be no more than two double spaced pages and should focus on what you find most valuable from the work as well as what you find most problematic about it. The critique will be due on the day we discuss the reading and you should inform me before the class if you plan to submit one, as I will call upon you to discuss your points in class.

Course grades will be determined in accordance with the following weights:

- Article critique: 5%
- Paper #1 (agenda setting memo): 15%
- Take home mid-term examination: 20%
- Paper #2 (ethics paper): 20%
- Final examination: 30%
- Class participation: 10%

**MAKE-UP ASSIGNMENTS AND MISSED CLASSES**

Late assignments will not be accepted. At my discretion, a student who misses a deadline may be given a make-up assignment. Whether or not a penalty will be assessed depends on the reason (e.g., a family emergency constitutes a good reason; a competing requirement for another course does not).

You should inform me prior to the session if you must miss class on a specific
day. Except under very unusual circumstances, a student who misses three classes will be penalized one entire grade (e.g., a B+ for the course will become a C+), and a student who misses more than three classes will receive a failing grade.
CLASS SCHEDULE

I. THE POLITICS OF POLICY MAKING: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Introduction

January 27

Read: “From Research to Policy: The Cigarette Excise Tax” (download from the Case Program, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University; instructions will be forwarded to you)

Discussion Questions
1. Why did the work of Eugene Lewit and his colleagues have an influence on the policy process? What prevented their findings from being mired in obscurity?
2. Who was (or who were) the entrepreneur(s) in this case, and why?

B. The “Three Streams” (Kingdon) Framework

February 3

Read: Zahariadis, chapters 1-2, 7
Note: based on input from students in prior years, I suggest you start with chapter 1, then move to chapter 7 which summarizes all the main arguments in the book, and then return to chapter 2.

Discussion Questions
1. What accounts for the different results in Britain and France with respect to privatization?
2. How does “streams” theory differ from the “rational” theory of policy making?

February 10

Paper #1 (agenda setting memo) due

Read: Zahariadis, chapters 4, 5, and 7 (review)

Discussion
Come to class prepared to discuss your assignment

II. DEEPER INTO THE PROBLEM STREAM

A. Focusing Events
February 17


Discussion Questions
1. What exactly *is* a focusing event? What is *not* a focusing event?
2. To what extent were the September 11 terrorist attacks similar to other focusing events? To what extent were they different?
3. Consider the arguments that Ellen Martin and I make about the likelihood of compensation in the aftermath of another terrorist attack. Do you agree?

B. Issue Framing and Problem Identification

February 24

Read: Baumgartner et al., chapters 1-5, 7-8

Discussion Questions
1. What exactly is “framing”?
2. How can the death penalty be framed as a public policy issue? Why may the “innocence” frame be compelling?
3. What caused the attention to innocence to occur in the 1990s, and not earlier?

III. DEEPER INTO THE POLITICAL STREAM

A. The Collective Action Problem and the Mobilization of Interests

March 3


In-Class Exercise: “The Collective Action Game”

Discussion Questions
1. What is the “collective action problem?” How may it affect willingness to engage in political action?
2. How can the collective action problem be overcome?
March 10

**Read:** 1) Stimson, entire book; 2) Baumgartner et al., chapter 6

**Discussion Question**
1. So, if people are generally uninterested in politics, and have relatively little incentive to pay attention to public affairs, can public opinion be meaningful?
2. What drives people’s views of political leaders?
3. Given Stimson’s arguments, what should we expect in the 2008 presidential election?

March 17

*Take Home Mid-Term Exam Due*

**View in Class and Discuss:** “Control Room”

IV. DEEPER INTO THE POLICY STREAM

March 24

**Read:** 1) “Michael Mintrom, “The State-Local Nexus in Policy Innovation Diffusion: The Case of School Choice” (*Publius*, Summer 1997, pp. 41-59); 2) other reading forthcoming

**Discussion Questions**
1. What does the “school choice” movement teach us about when and how policy ideas can be influential?
2. How are policy ideas spread from one location to another?

V. RESOLVING DEADLOCKS: NEGOTIATIONS

April 7 (no class on March 31: spring break)

**Read:** Fisher, Ury, and Patton, parts I and II

**Discussion Questions**
1. Why is productive negotiation often so hard for people?
2. How can people negotiate more effectively?

**In-Class Exercise:** “The Ugli Orange Case”

April 14

**Read:** Fisher, Ury, and Patton, parts III, IV, and V
Discussion Questions

1. To what extent can someone negotiate effectively if the other party is in a stronger position?
2. Is lying fair in negotiations? Is it effective?

In-Class Exercise: “Bradford Development”

VI. THE ETHICS OF ADMINISTRATIVE DISCRETION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

April 21


Discussion Questions
1. What justifies ethical principles in the area of public policy and administration?
2. To what extent should religion influence ethical principles?
3. Despite our differences, can we come to common ethical understandings?
4. What should we think about Charles Henri-Sanson, the “execution of Paris”? And if we condemn him, what does that imply for others who use their professional status to justify behavior that harms others?

April 28

*Paper #2 (ethics paper) due*

Read: “The Case of the Segregated Schools” (download from the Kennedy School of Government Case Program)

Discussion
Come to class prepared to discuss your assignment

VII. THE ETHICS OF PUBLIC POLICY DECISIONS

May 5

Read: 1) “Matters of Life and Death: Defunding Organ Transplants in the State of Arizona” ((download from the Kennedy School of Government Case Program); 2) Alan Dershowitz, *Rights from Wrongs* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), chapter 8 (on reserve in the library)
Discussion Questions
1. Did the Arizona legislature make the right decision in the organ transplant case? Why or why not?
2. Is there a “right” to health care? If so, what does it entail? If not, why not?
3. And while we’re on this subject, what exactly is the source of our “rights” as Americans?

May 12

Review: 1) Baumgartner et al. pp. 143-148 re various arguments that have been used to justify or oppose capital punishment; 2) Lascher and Martin, “Beyond the September 11 Victim Compensation Fund”

In-Class Discussion Topic 1: Should the death penalty be abolished?

In-Class Discussion Topic 2: What should be done for victims if another terrorist attack in the United States results in casualties?