

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO

PPA 210: Political Environment of Policy Making Spring, 2017

Professor Ted Lascher
3029 Tahoe Hall

tedl@csus.edu
278-4864 (office)
278-6544 (fax)
(530)400-5688 (cell--
no calls after 8:00 p.m.)

Course meeting time and place:
Wednesdays, 6-8:50
AIRC 1008

Office hours: Mon., 3-4, Wed. 4-6
and by appointment

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 where 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, and negotiation). Outcomes frequently reflect participants' skills, clout, match with the public mood, etc. Timing matters a lot. 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 aim 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, we will touch on how politics enters other forums and stages, including policy implementation.

LEARNING GOALS

The PPA faculty members have established a set of broad learning goals for the program as a whole, and have identified particular ones that are relevant to PPA 210. Following are those broad goals and how they are to be met in the course.

Broad MPPA Program learning objectives covered	What we expect students to learn in PPA 210
Use different analytical skills and tools strategically	<p>Understand the multiple streams model of how and why policies are chosen</p> <p>Understand how to recognize when to advance policies based on whether or not windows of opportunity are open or closed</p> <p>Understand how the way a policy choice is framed affects its potential for support</p> <p>Learn a variety of analytical tools that are helpful in the political arena (e.g., tools to address collective action problems, skill at convey information to policy makers effectively, negotiation skills)</p>
Understand the critical role of effective leadership in the public sector	Understand the key leadership role played by political entrepreneurs
Frame and present problems to different audiences to optimize understanding	<p>Understand how to frame and present problems to different audiences to optimize understanding</p> <p>Understand the particular importance of framing in terms of gains versus losses</p>
Consider the ethical dimensions of choices in public policy and administration	<p>Consider how public policy choices may be viewed from different ethical frameworks (e.g., utilitarianism, Rawlsian justice)</p> <p>Consider the ethical nature and limits of role responsibilities</p>
Understand the difference between analysis and advocacy	Understand the difference between analysis and advocacy
Understand the significance of diversity in effective public governance in California	Understood how the diversity of political actors affects the type of policy choices that are made

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.

Roger Fisher and William Ury, with Bruce Patton, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*, 2nd Edition (New York, Penguin Books, 1991).

Note: this book is also used in our collaborative governance electives, PPA 270 and PPA 272, so you should definitely retain *Getting to Yes* if you plan to take a course(s) in that sequence.

Francis, Megan Ming. *Civil Rights and the Making of the Modern American State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Michael Sandel, *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009)

Nikolaos Zahariadis, *Ambiguity and Choice in Public Policy: Political Decision Making in Modern Democracies* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2003).

There are also a few articles and case studies that will be available on SacCT or otherwise provided to you.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

There will be two short papers, a take home mid-term examination, and a take home 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 summarizing the key argument, specifying what you find most valuable from the work, and specifying what you find most problematic about it or in need of further research. 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 plan to 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%
Take home final examination	30%
Class participation	10%

SPECIAL NEEDS RELATED TO DISABILITIES

Should you need assistance with portions of class due to disabilities, please let me know as soon as possible. The University offers services to student with disabilities and I would be glad to refer you to the appropriate campus unit.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

I take issues of academic honesty (including avoiding plagiarism) seriously and you should as well. If you are unfamiliar with the specifics of University policy in this area I recommend you review the appropriate section of the on-line University Policy Manual: <http://www.csus.edu/umannual/AcademicHonestyPolicyandProcedures.htm>.

DISTRACTIONS

Please do not use cell phones or surf the Web during class. If laptops are being abused in class I may prohibit their use.

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 25

Read: “The Voting Rights Act of 1965, Parts A and B,” case study, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University; available on SacCT

Recommended Film: “Selma” (2014)

Discussion Questions

1. Why did the Voting Rights Act make progress when it did... and not earlier?
2. How exactly did events at Selma contribute to policy change?
3. Who were the critical players in the case? What specifically did each contribute?

B. The “Three Streams” (Kingdon) Framework

February 1

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 8

Agenda setting memo due

Read: 1) Zahariadis, chapters 4 and 7 (review); 2) Rebekah L. Craig et al., “Public Health Professionals as Policy Entrepreneurs: Arkansas's Childhood Obesity Policy Experience,” *American Journal of Public Health*, 2010

Discussion

Come to class prepared to discuss your assignment

II. DEEPER INTO THE PROBLEM STREAM

A. Focusing Events

February 15

Read: 1) Sandra L. Suarez, "The Politics of Executive Compensation: Government Regulation in the Wake of 'Focusing Events'" 2011; Thomas A. Birkland and Megan K. Warnement, "Defining, Explaining, and Testing the Role of Focusing Events in Agenda Change: 30 Years of Focusing Event Theory," 2013

Discussion Questions

1. What exactly *is* a focusing event? What is *not* a focusing event?
2. What factors and circumstances influence how much influence a focusing event has on public policy?
3. Consider the arguments that Ellen Martin and I make about the likelihood of the compensation question arising in the aftermath of another terrorist attack. Do you agree?

B. Issue Framing and Problem Identification

February 22

Read: 1) Zahariadis, chapter 5; 2) David L. Eckles and Brian F. Schaffner, "Loss Aversion and the Framing of the Health Care Reform Debate," *The Forum*, 2010; 3) Ezra Klein, "Obama challenges GOP to offer a 'demonstrably better' health plan. It sounds simple. It isn't." *Vox*, January 6, 2017

Discussion Questions

1. What does prospect theory suggest about human decision making?
2. How did policy framing affect Greek policy decisions?
3. What does the literature we have read suggest about the fate of the Affordable Care Act under the Trump Administration and Republican Congress?

III. DEEPER INTO THE POLITICAL STREAM

A. The Collective Action Problem and the Mobilization of Interests

March 1

Read: 1) Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation*, selection; 2) Robert H. Frank, *Luxury Fever*, selection; 3) Joshua Dyck and Edward Lascher,

“Ballot Initiatives Expand the Scope of Conflict,” typescript, 2017; 4) Edward Lascher, “Lessons from the Collective Action Game” (to be distributed *after* the exercise)

In-Class Exercise: “The Collective Action Game”

Discussion Questions

1. What is the collective action problem? Why is it so perverse?
2. How can the collective action problem be overcome?
3. If there is so much incentive for people to opt out of political involvement, why are there so many interest groups and why are they so active?
4. How can political parties help to address the collective action problem?

B. Three Big Trends: Increased Partisanship, Polarization, and Sorting

March 8

Read: 1) Michael Barber and Nolan McCarty, “Causes and Consequences of Polarization,” American Political Science Association Task Force Report, 2015; 2) Boris Shor, “How U.S. state legislatures are polarized and getting more polarized (in two graphs),” *The Washington Post*, January 14, 2014;

Discussion Questions

1. Is political polarization more pronounced among elected officials or the mass public? Why?
2. What drives increased polarization? What are its consequences?
3. How has demographic change affected party allegiances? Why does this matter in terms of public policy?
4. Where does polarization leave the “multiple streams” model?

C. The Impact of Demographic Change and Immigration

March 15

Take Home Midterm Exam Due

Read: John Korey and Edward Lascher, “Macropartisanship in California,” Marisa Abrajano and Zoltan Hajnal, “How Immigration Shapes the Vote,” in *White Backlash: Immigration, Race, and American Politics*, 2015

Discussion Questions

1. Be prepared to discuss your answers to midterm exam questions.
2. What pushed California to be a “blue state?” How is California different from other states in that regard?
3. How has immigration affected political discourse, election results, and public policies?

D. Group Strategies and Tactics

March 29 (no class March 22: spring recess)

Guest speaker

To be announced

Read: Stacy Gordon Fisher, *Strategic Influence in Legislative Lobbying*, 2015, selection; Lynda Powell, "The Influence of Campaign Contributions on Legislative Policy," *The Forum*, 2013

Discussion Questions

To be added

E. How Can Groups with Few Resources and Representing Disadvantaged Communities Achieve Success?

April 5

Read: 1) Francis, *Civil Rights and the Making of the Modern American State*; entire book; 2) "Against All Odds," case study, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University

Discussion Questions

1. Why did the NAACP approach addressing the anti-lynching battle the way it did? Why did it ultimately change its approach?
2. To what extent was the NAACP successful in its battle against lynching? Why?
3. What lessons can the Francis book offer for other groups wanting social change?
4. What accounts for the success of the campaign to secure redress for Japanese-Americans interned during World War II? To what extent is this strategy replicable?

IV. RESOLVING DEADLOCKS: NEGOTIATIONS

April 12

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: "Bradford Development"

April 19

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: “Redstone”

V. THE ETHICS OF PUBLIC POLICY DECISIONS AND INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS

A. Ethical Policy Choices

April 26

Read: Sandel, chapters 1-6

View in Class: “Justice with Michael Sandel” (selections)

Discussion Questions

What is most and least compelling about the ethical approaches Sandel discusses? Why?

May 3

Ethics Paper Due

Read: 1) “Matters of Life and Death: Defunding Organ Transplants in the State of Arizona,” Kennedy School of Government case study Case Program);
2) Sandel, chapters 7-10

Discussion

Come to class prepared to discuss your paper

B. The Ethics of Administrative Discretion and Entrepreneurship

May 10

Read: 1) Arthur Applbaum, “Professional Detachment: The Executioner of Paris,” *Harvard Law Review*, Vol. 109 (December, 1995), pp. 458-486;
2) “The Case of the Segregated Schools,” Kennedy School of Government case study

Discussion Questions

1. What should we think about Charles Henri-Sanson, the “executioner of Paris? And if we condemn him, what does that imply for others who use their professional status to justify behavior that harms others?
2. Regarding “The Case of the Segregated Schools:” Should Wallace sign the brief?