**CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO**

**PPA 210: Political Environment of Policy Making**

# Spring, 2021

*Via Zoom*

Professor Ted Lascher Course meeting time and place:

tedl@csus.edu Wednesdays, 6-8:50

(530)400-4688, cell Office hours: Wed., 4-6 and

by appointment

OVERVIEW

Policy choices are made in the political arena. Decision makers and activists commonly hold different values and interests about policy matters, and attempt to advance them through a variety of means (e.g., deployment of resources, advantageous issue framing). Outcomes frequently reflect participants' skills, clout, match with the public mood, etc. Timing matters a lot and the role of policy entrepreneurs is critical. Ultimately politics heavily influences what choices are possible.

This course has two broad aims along with specific learning goals. The first is to enhance your effectiveness in the political arena. To that end we consider political features and skills that practitioners in general should appreciate. We also focus in depth on what people need to be able to do in the roles of activist and analyst.

The course’s second broad aim is to enhance your understanding of what people *should* do in the political arena. We consider both what individual practitioners need to consider to act in an ethically defensible way and what constitute ethically desirable policy goals.

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 learning goals for the program as a whole, and have identified particular ones that are relevant to PPA 210. Following are the ones that are primary for the course (we also have secondary goals) and how they are to be met in the course.

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| **Primary MPPA Program learning**  **objectives covered for PPA 210** | **What we expect students to learn in PPA 210** |
| Diagnose, map, and analyze decision making processes, actors, and context. | Understand and apply the multiple streams approach (and its limitations) for determining how and why policies advance in the political arena,  Recognize when windows of opportunity for policy change arise or close.  Understand how the way a policy choice is framed affects its potential for support.    Learn a variety of analytical skills that helpful in the political arena (e.g., ability to choose the right venue for action). |
| Analyze systems and practices to surface systemic biases, including structural racism, that advance or impede a more just and equitable society. | Understand how differences in resources and ability to gain attention advantage some actors and hurt others. |
| Effectively communicate with different audiences to build understanding of public problems and policy and administration strategies. | Learn the different styles of communication most appropriate for the advocate, analyst, and advisor in the political arena. |
| Understand obligations to advance public value consistent with rule of law and an enduring search for reasonable and just action. | Draw from unit on ethics to develop an understanding of different approaches to advance public value. |
| Consider ethical dimensions of choices in public policy and administration. | Develop an appreciation of the choices inherent in both policy decisions and how policy makers carry them out. |
| Understand differences between analysis and advocacy including insider and outsider roles. | Understood the differences between the advocate and analyst roles. |
| Recognize professional role and responsibility/duty of care to your organization. | Appreciate the obligations and limitations that follow from an understanding of role ethics. |

CONDUCT OF THE SEMINAR

The term "seminar" is accurate. Classes will be discussion oriented and lectures limited. 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.

GUIDELINES FOR ONLINE MODE

I have prepared a separate document with guidelines for using Zoom in the course as it will be conducted entirely online. That document is available in the general course information module at the top of the Canvas page for the course.

READINGS

No books are required for the course. Instead, I will assign articles, case studies, and other materials that will be available on Canvas; as well, I will sometimes assign videos for you to watch outside of class. I aim to limit the number of pages you need to read each week, recognizing your professional obligations and work required for other PPA courses. However, this makes it especially critical that you keep up with the material that I assign.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

There will be four short papers and a take home final examination. Assignment due dates are specified in the syllabus.

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

Paper #1 (agenda setting memo) 15%

Paper #2 (development of a bill) 15%

Paper #3 (development of a bill analysis) 15%

Paper #4 (ethical policy choice) 20%

Take home final examination 25%

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/umanual/AcademicHonestyPolicyandProcedures.htm>.

DISTRACTIONS

Please do not use cell phones or surf the Web during class unless I instruct you to do so.

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**

1. January 27. How to View the Policy Making Process as a Whole, Part One

**Read**: 1) “From Research to Policy,” case study, Kennedy School of

# Government, Harvard University; 2) Rebekah L. Craig et al., “Public Health

# Professionals as Policy Entrepreneurs: Arkansas's Childhood Obesity Policy

Experience,” *American Journal of Public Health*, 2010

1. February 3. How to View the Policy Making Process as a Whole, Part Two

**Watch before class**: Heath Brown, “What Are Policy Focusing Events

and Policy Entrepreneurs?,” YouTube video

**Read**: Rebecca Miller, “Prescribed Burns in California: A Historical Case

Study of the Integration of Scientific Research and Policy, *Fire*, 2020

1. February 10. How to View the Policy Making Process as a Whole, Part Three

***Agenda setting memo due***

**Guest Speaker**: Rebecca Miller, Stanford University

**Read**: Michael D. Jones et. al., “A River Runs through It: A Multiple Streams

Meta-Review,” *The Policy Studies Journal*, 2016 (skim for important themes)

1. February 17. Deeper into Achieving Success as a Policy Entrepreneur

**Read**: 1) Sara E. Abiola et. al., “The Politics of HPV Vaccination Policy Formation

in the United States,” *Journal of Health Policy, Politics and Law*, 2013; 2) Paul

# Cairney, “Three Habits of Successful Policy Entrepreneurs,” *Policy & Politics*

# 2018

**Guest Speaker**: State Senator Richard Pan (tentative)

1. February 24. Acting as a Policy Advocate: Going from an Idea to a Bill

**Readings to come**:

**Guest Speaker**: Michael Lynch, Improve Your Tomorrow

1. March 3. Framing Issues for Success

**Read:** 1) Susanne C. Moser and Lisa Dilling, “Communicating Climate Change:

Closing the Science-Action Gap,” 2014; 2) “Language and the Melting Pot,”

Kennedy School of Government Case; 3) Ezra Markowitz and Lucia Graves, “After 2020, We Need to Talk about How We Talk about Catastrophe,” *Washington Post*, 2020

1. March 10. Choosing the Right Venue

***Bill Proposal Due***

**Read**: 1) Joshua J. Dyck and Edward L. Lascher, Jr., *Initiatives without*

*Engagement: A Realistic Appraisal of Direct Democracy’s Secondary*

*Effects*, 2019, selection; 2) Barry Rabe, “Political Impediments to a Tobacco

Endgame,” *Tobacco Control*, 2013

1. March 17. Acting as an Analyst: Developing a Bill Analysis

**Readings to come**

1. March 31 (No class March 24th: spring break). Understanding the Constraints Posed by Partisanship, Ideology, and Interest Group Power

**Watch prior to class**: PBS Frontline Documentary, “Gunned Down: The Power of the NRA,” 2015

**Read**: Boris Shor, “How U.S. state legislatures are polarized and

getting more polarized (in two graphs),” *The Washington Post*, January 14, 2014

1. April 7. Choosing an “Insider” or “Outsider” Strategy to Influence Legislation (or both)

**Watch prior to class**: “Crip Camp,” 2020 documentary movie

**Read**: “Against All Odds,” Kennedy School case study

1. April 14. Mock Legislative Hearing

***Bill Analysis Due***

1. April 21. Thinking about Implementation

**Guest speakers**: David DeLuz, California Department of Transportation; James Goldstene, California Air Resources Board

1. April 28. Role Ethics

**Read:** 1) Arthur Applbaum, “Professional Detachment: The Executioner of

Paris,” *Harvard Law Review*, Vol. 109 (December, 1995), pp. 458-486;

2) Anonymous, “I Am Part of the Resistance Inside the Trump Administration,” *New York Times* op-ed, 2018

1. May 5. The Ethics of Policy Choices, Part One

**Watch prior to class**: “Justice with Michael Sandel” (selections)

1. May 12. The Ethics of Policy Choices, Part Two

***Ethics Paper Due***

**Watch prior to class**: “Justice with Michael Sandel” (selections)

**Read**: “Matters of Life and Death: Defunding Organ Transplants in the

State of Arizona,” Kennedy School of Government case study