

Public Policy & Administration 210: Political Environment of Policymaking

Spring 2020

Tuesdays 6:00pm – 8:50pm

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WELCOME

Politics, law, authority, democracy, and legitimacy set the MPPA apart from an MBA. Perhaps you use the term “politics” as a euphemism for the great unexplained garbage can where all your best ideas as a policy or administration professional go to die an early death or to be warped beyond all recognition. Perhaps you think of politics as campaigns, promises, disenfranchised voices, and money, and would rather stay as far away as possible. Perhaps you secretly harbor ambition for politics so you can be the one really making all the decisions.

This is a course about politics, but wholly from the perspective of the public sector professional and the institutions of which they are a part. We’ll consider the constitutional and legal context of policymaking. We’ll come at cases not solely through the lens of political science, but also cognitive psychology, economics, and other, unexpected, disciplines. Our purpose will be deepening our political competency for application in real-world policymaking, at least as much inside agencies, local governments, and executive offices as the highly visible parts of the ecosystem like the Legislature and Governor. Our attention to federal politics and policymaking will be limited to comparative purposes and context.

Along the way, we’ll immerse ourselves in mastering key theories and frameworks, and apply them in real cases involving a dizzying range of topics, like infrastructure financing districts, brewpubs and urban farms, undocumented students, smart cities, criminal gangs, marriage equality, climate change, election districts, CEQA, artificial intelligence and citizen engagement, micromobility and automated vehicles, homelessness, and more.

COURSE INFORMATION

Catalog Description: “PPA 210. *Political Environment of Policymaking*. Assists students in learning to identify the political factors impinging on the policy process and in learning to cope with them. With special emphasis on the California political environment and issues, employs case studies, structured role-playing, and including politically feasible policy alternatives and advice to hypothetical clients. The goal is to equip students to work effectively as politically aware policy analysts.”

In exploring this content, the course will strengthen your capacity to:

1. Apply knowledge and skills in a professional setting...
 - Frame/present problems to different audiences to optimize likelihood of support.
 - Work effectively in groups.
 - Write clearly and succinctly as appropriate to various audiences.
 - Use an articulate and confident style of oral presentation.
 - Use different analytical skills and tools strategically.
 - Understand how to recognize when to advance policies based on whether or not windows of opportunity are open or closed.
 - Understand the way a policy choice is framed affects its potential for support.
 - Learn a variety of analytical tools that are helpful in the political arena (e.g., skill at political communication, ability to choose the right venue for action).
2. Synthesize, analyze, and offer solutions...
 - Analyze and evaluate alternatives and offer solutions.
 - Draw upon multiple disciplines to understand and address policy and administrative problems.
 - Effectively review a literature to help address a problem.
3. Frame and present problems to different audiences to optimize understanding and behavioral change.
4. Recognize the role of the profession in society...
 - Consider the ethical dimensions of choices in public policy and administration.
 - Consider the ethical nature and limits of role responsibilities.
 - Understand the critical role of effective leadership in the public sector and the key leadership role played by political entrepreneurs.
5. Understand the difference between analysis and advocacy.
6. Understand the significance of diversity in effective public governance in California and how the diversity of political actors affects the type of policy choices that are made.

This is a graduate seminar where we probe, explore, apply, and integrate theory and practice together, as a team, not an undergraduate lecture course where I teach and you learn.

I’ve completely redesigned PPA 210 this semester. Please share your feedback liberally throughout the semester. I’ll make mid-course corrections.

REQUIRED READINGS

This course does not use a textbook and there is nothing to purchase. Given the vast array of materials available at no cost on the Internet, particularly with your free access to journals through the CSUS Library, I strive for a zero-cost minimum.

All required readings are available to you as a CSUS student at no cost. I will post links to articles and other materials each week on Canvas. To access the scholarly readings below, be sure that you are logged into your MySacState account and the University Library in order to see the full-text version.

The tradeoff in a no-cost class is that the reading will require more focused attention. Journal articles are much less readable than books, because their audience is much more narrow. Plan to give yourself enough time, in a state of cognitive ability, to not just skim but to draw and connect the fundamental ideas and unexpected insights.

RECOMMENDED SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS

If your background in political science is neither recent nor advanced, you ought to read several of these books before the semester commences. Satisfying our program's admission threshold with a single lower-division government/political science course or a course a decade ago won't, by itself, set you up for success in this course, since this is a graduate seminar.

The fourth group of recommended books is from the sciences of psychology, neuroscience, and evolutionary biology. The observed phenomena of politics at the process and institutional levels have microfoundations in the brain and in culture and we'll pay a great deal of attention to them (similar to your study of behavioral economics in PPA 220A). Even if you are already deep in the field of political science, I'd check out one of these. They're among the most readable of the list, too.

Except for Group 4, we have paperback copies of most of these books available for borrowing in Suzi's office at the Downtown Center. I've also **highlighted** those books that were required in various prior years of PPA 210 so that you can ask students or alumni who have already taken the course to borrow a copy from them.

Group 1: Baseline recommended readings for all

- Stone, Deborah. *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making*, Third Edition (W. W. Norton & Company, December 2011)
- Weible, Christopher M., and Paul A. Sabatier. *Theories of the Policy Process*. London: Westview Press, 2018.

Group 2: Major theories of the policy process (summarized in Weible above)

- Nikolaos Zahariadis, *Ambiguity and Choice in Public Policy: Political Decision Making in Modern Democracies* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2003)
- Kingdon, John W. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1995).
- Birkland, Thomas A. *An Introduction to the Policy Process: Theories, Concepts, and Models of Public Policy Making*. Routledge, 5th edition, 2019.

Group 3: California state and local government

- Rarick, Ethan. *Governing California: Politics, Government, and Public Policy in the Golden State*. 2013.

Group 4: Psychology & neuroscience underneath politics

- Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2012.
- Greene, Joshua David. *Moral Tribes : Emotion, Reason, and the Gap between Us and Them*. New York :The Penguin Press, 2013.
- Ridley, Matt. *The Origins of Virtue: Human Instincts and the Evolution of Cooperation*. New York: Viking, 1997.
- Kahneman, Daniel. *Thinking, Fast And Slow*. New York : Farrar, Straus And Giroux, 2011.

Group 5: Topical books

- Francis, Megan Ming. *Civil Rights and the Making of the Modern American State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014)
- Mettler, Suzanne. *The Government-Citizen Disconnect* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation 2018)
- Sandel, Michael, *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009)

CANVAS AND KAHOOT!

This course makes extensive use of Canvas for required readings, assignments, discussions, surveys, games and simulations, updates, and other elements essential to the course. Most assignments will be submitted by you exclusively within Canvas, and I will not accept paper copies in class or by email. Plan to sign into Canvas on a regular basis—in class and at least twice per week. You'll likely end up signing in almost daily.

We'll use Kahoot! for response-based activities and polling in class. You don't need an account and it is web-based so you don't have to download an app.

GRADING

Grading is based on many small assessments rather than a single high-stakes paper or exam. I've designed the assignments and assessments to give you the opportunity to use your growing skills and mastery to create, to play, to demonstrate, to apply, and to extend. But relax...the point of this is that at no single moment will your entire grade or future be on the line. Your grade is broken down as shown in the table at right.

Policy Proposals	2%
Literature summary	5%
Bill Analysis	9%
Local government staff report	15%
Policy process sketch	5%
Strategy Memo	20%
Recombination sketch	6%
In-class projects	7%
Simulations	16%
Engagement/presentations/exit tickets	15%

I understand that you have other personal and professional obligations...because I do, too.

The schedule is a shared contract allowing both of us to plan our work in that context. For the very first assignment (policy & literature scan), late work will be reduced by 10% for each day it is late and will not be accepted at all after two days. For all subsequent assignments, late work will not be accepted.

Skipping an assignment altogether will result in a 10% penalty. For example, not turning in the the bill analysis will mean both zero points (of 9% possible) toward your grade, but also a *reduction* of 0.9% from the final grade.

There are seven weeks in which you will write or draw a short recombination sketch. You may miss one without penalty; alternatively, I will drop the lowest scoring one from the final grade calculation.

Active presence is the only way to earn graded credit for engagement, presentations & exit tickets, in-class projects, and simulations. It is mathematically impossible to earn an A grade without participating in class. The learning of other students depends on your participation.

Grade Calculation	
Final numeric score	Final letter grade
93-100	A
89-92	A-
86-88	B+
82-85	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
67-69	D+
63-66	D
60-62	D-
59 or below	F

Assignments

There are three major (portfolio-level) assignments:

1. Bill Analysis. A legislative committee staff analysis of a proposed bill, understanding the politics of adoption, the politics of the institution, public and media response, and the reaction and behavior of individuals and stakeholders.
2. Local government staff report. A staff report on a proposed policy for a city council or county board of supervisors, taking into account the political environment.
3. Strategy Memo. The capstone assignment, in which you produce a comprehensive memo for a policymaker laying out the political strategy for enacting a proposed policy. You'll apply what you've learned throughout the semester—frameworks, tools, concepts, rules and institutions—in professional style.

In seven of our weeks, you'll write a Recombination Sketch of no more than one page, or produce an equivalent drawing, diagram, or infographic. These quickfire pieces don't summarize the readings or ask your opinion about them; rather, they mash them up, draw connections, and highlight conflicts and applications between them.

Most assignments are due at 8pm on the Sunday prior to the class session associated with the particular assignment on the course schedule.

	Primary Learning Goals
1. Policy Proposals	2, 3
2. Literature summary	2
3. Bill Analysis	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
4. Local government staff report	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
5. Policy process sketch	1, 2, 3, 4, 6
6. Concept map	1, 2
7. Strategy Memo	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
8. Recombination essays	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
9. In-class projects	1, 2, 3
10. Simulations	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
11. Engagement/presentations/exit tickets	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

Students everywhere want clear, step-by-step instructions and rubrics for assignments and assessments. "Professor, just tell me exactly what you want and I'll do it."

The scientific research on learning, however, is unequivocal: Just-tell-me-what-you-want rubrics and steps result in higher student confidence but lower levels of actual learning—especially for graduate school. This isn't a vocational program where we memorize an instruction manual. Just as in the real profession of public policy and administration, your assignment isn't to simply do precisely what a client already knows is needed. Rather, all of the graded assessments are ways to demonstrate what you've learned and mastered, and what you can do with it.

Schedule

Week	Concept Topics	In-Class Project	Main Assignment Due	Recombination?
1 1/21	Political Context		Policy Proposals	
2 1/28	Institutions	Stakeholder analysis		✓
3 2/4			Literature summary	
4 2/11		Forensic analysis		✓
5 2/18	Behavioral Politics		Bill Analysis	
6 2/25				✓
7 3/3	Engagement & Democratic Legitimacy			✓
8 3/10		Legislative Simulation		
9 3/17				✓
10 3/24	Case Study: COVID-19			
<i>Spring break</i>				
11 4/7	Policy Process	220B Topic Crossover	Policy process sketch	
12 4/15	Policy Process; Case Study Part 2	Research Design; Press Release		✓
13 4/21	Change, Identity, Justice, Protest & Ethics		Local Gov't Staff Report	
14 4/28		City Council Online Simulation		
15 5/5	Role of the PPA professional			
FINAL 5/12		Presentation	Strategy Memo	

I adapt the course to you as we progress through the semester, which will sometimes mean changes in this schedule. Be sure to check for updates on Canvas, which will always have the most current, official schedule/plan/requirement for the class.

CONDUCT & DISCOURSE

This is a course about policy and political topics, so we expect controversy and argument about things that matter. Learning happens when our current knowledge, assumptions, and boundaries are challenged—and it can be uncomfortable or even stressful. Assume positive intent, challenge ideas with civility and respect, and be both brave and humble.

Everyone has an opinion about politics. Not in our class. Ours is a stance of inquiry, exploration, and application. Our focus is on concepts, constraints, and ideas, not personal opinion or national and global political ideology. Public policy and administration professionals have enormous influence on policy and politics, but we earn that influence by adhering to professional standards of evidence, integrity, inquiry, role, and ethics. We will, too.

- [View the Hornet Honor Code](#)
- [Academic Integrity Policy from Sac State](#)
- [NETIQUETTE](#)

TECHNOLOGY

[MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS](#)

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you have a documented disability and require assistance or academic accommodation, please contact Services for Students with Disabilities immediately to discuss eligibility. The Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD) is located on the Sacramento State Lassen Hall 1008, 916-278-6955 (Phone), 916-278-7239 (TDD). For a complete listing of services and current business hours visit <http://www.csus.edu/sswd/>

Sacramento State is committed to ensuring that our online learning tools are usable by all students and faculty including those with disabilities. If you encounter any accessibility issues with course or instructional content, please contact our SSWD office. They will assist you with resolving the issue or, where appropriate, connect you with appropriate staff.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Sacramento State offers a wide variety of campus and online academic services. These include tutoring services, library services, advising services, and support for students experiencing hunger, homelessness, mental health, and other challenges. I've provided direct links to these services on Canvas.