

Political Science 5100/3810
Course Syllabus 2.0
Fall 2017

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Course Introduction

Public policy is purposeful governmental intervention in the lives of citizens. Prominent examples include taxing, operating public schools, defining and prosecuting crime, building highways, regulating pollution, providing old age assistance, and conducting war. This course examines U.S. public policy and the implications of various policies for our society. The course emphasizes policy analysis rather than policy advocacy or the descriptive overview of programs. Accordingly, we will not debate which policies are most virtuous nor will we conduct an exhaustive survey of current government programs. Instead, our objective will be to explain the political, social, and economic logic of policy: why government enacts some policies yet not others, what the enacted policies seek to accomplish, why they often fail, and how different policies might accomplish agreed upon objectives more effectively.

The course is organized into two sections. In the first six weeks or so of the course we will develop a theoretical framework for policy analysis. This framework will draw together the complementary perspectives of economic theory and political theory. Economic theory addresses the attainment of abstract economic objectives--efficiency, equality, and providing public goods. It focuses on how policy can maximize the welfare of society. Political theory addresses realities rather than abstract objectives. It explains policy in terms of political self interest--reelection for politicians, power and public service for bureaucrats, and policy benefits for voters and interest groups. The second section of the course applies this theoretical framework to the analysis of selected policy issues. These issues include the federal budget, fiscal policy, taxation, welfare, health care, drugs, farm policy, public education, environmental regulation, and global climate change policy. We will may also spend two days discussing the policies that contributed to the 2007-09 housing market meltdown and the subsequent economic recession.

The course will emphasize domestic rather than foreign policy, and national rather than state and local issues. Although there is no prerequisites other than Political Science 1100, many students find the integration political and economic theory challenging, and students should recognize that the course will require mastery of basic economic concepts such as "opportunity costs."

Course Learning Objectives

1. To provide students with a basic conceptual understanding key U.S. public policy issues.
2. To apply theory to explain the political and economic logic of U.S. public policy.
3. To stimulate critical and independent thinking about U.S. public policy.
4. To contribute the *General Education* of USU students, by giving them critical thinking skills, writing skills, and a better appreciation of human behavior and human organizations.

Canvas

The course syllabus, course reading assignments (other than the text) exam study questions, and other course information will be available on Canvas.

Class Participation

I prefer P.S. 5100/3810 to be a mix of lecture and class discussion, and participation will account for 25% of each student's course grade. In addition to discussions prompted day-in-day-out by question or comments, we will devote at least 5 class periods during the semester to the discussion of a reading assignment or another other topic that I will select, or that the class will select. Our first discussion will be on diminishing importance of facts in U.S. politics—"the politics of alternative realities." Other discussions will focus on what appears to many to be the increasing dysfunctionality of the U.S. political system, the contrasting perspectives on economic justice offered by John Rawls and Robert Nozick, fixing U.S. public education, and one or two other topics that the class will select.

I will assign a discussion grade, on a 25 point scale, to each student based largely upon participation in these 5 discussions, but partly also upon day-to-day class participation and attendance. When in doubt about what participation grade is appropriate for a student, I will use the student's average exam grade as a benchmark for establishing a participation grade. Students who attend class at least 95% of the time, appear to be alert, and who make a real effort to participate in these discussions, will always receive participation grades at or above this benchmark.

Readings

One text, *Public Policy*, 5th ed. by Charles Cochran and Eloise Malone, is required for purchase. It is available in the USU Bookstore. There are also required supplementary readings, taken from sources such as *Atlantic*. In the course outline, reading assignments from the text appear as chapter numbers, or as specific pages within a chapter. The supplementary readings are listed by title. With the exception of "Finland's Unorthodox Education System," the supplementary readings can be accessed through Canvas. Click on "Files" and then go to Readings. To read "Finland's Unorthodox Education System" simply do a Google search for "26 Amazing Facts About Finland's Unorthodox Education System" in *Business Insider*. I reserve the right to add one short, additional reading assignment to those listed in the syllabus if I happen to run across something I consider to be particularly worthwhile during the course of the semester.

Exams

The course has 3 exams. Each will account for 25% of each course grade. You will need to buy a large (8C x 11C) "blue" (standard examination) book for each essay exam. The exams consist of both short answer and longer essay questions, and will emphasize conceptual analysis and logic, not the memorization of facts. They will cover material from the preceding 12-13 days of class, as indicated in the course outline.

Exam Dates

Students will not be permitted to take early exams under any circumstances, and make up exams will be given only in extraordinary circumstances. Students who anticipate a conflict between an exam and required participation in a university activity or a serious personal emergency should consult the "Missed Exams Policy" section of the syllabus. Tentative midterm and certain final dates are:

Midterm Exam #1	Monday, October 2
Midterm Exam #2	Friday, November 3
Final Exam:	Wednesday, December 13, 1:30-2:30 pm

Exam #1 will cover text chapters 1, 2 (36-37 only), 3, "Old v Young," "How America Went Haywire," and "How American Politics Went Insane"

Exam #2 will cover text chapters 2 (up to 41), 4, 5 (up to 131), 6, "Stop Pretending You Are Not Rich," "The Submerged State," and "Going Dutch."

Exam #3 will cover text chapters 5 (131-138), 7, 9, 11 (335-360), and "How American Health Care Killed My Father," "Why 'Repeal and Replace' Will Become 'Tweak and Move On,'" and "Finland's Unorthodox Education System."

Missed Exams Policy

Students who miss an exam as the result of required participation in a university activity, a death in the immediate family, hospitalization, or a comparable personal emergency, will be given a make up exam on final exam day. Students who miss an exam for other reasons--such as the weddings of friends, car problems, or alarm clock failures--will fail the exam missed. If a student misses an exam and does not contact me within 24 hours, I will presume there is no justification for a make up exam, and unless there are extraordinary circumstances, this will result in the student failing the missed exam.

Exam Preparation

I will post exam study questions on the course web site 7-10 days prior to each exam. Each set of questions will cover both lectures and readings, and each exam will be based exclusively on that group of study questions. Although exam questions will not be taken verbatim from these study questions, they will cover the same material. I strongly recommend that students reserve sufficient time prior to each exam to outline a complete answer for each study question. I may also conduct a review session prior to each exam. At these review sessions, I will summarize the answers to lecture based review questions and respond to other questions about lecture material. I strongly recommend that you complete your study question outlines *prior* to the review.

Course Grading Policies

In Political Science 5100/3810 no extra credit is awarded, nor do certain students receive special consideration for any reason. In addition, there are no grade quotas, and overall course

grade distributions vary from quarter to quarter. Many students find the exam grading standards in this course to be quite rigorous. Please do not conclude that college instructors establish their grading standards to make students feel inferior, or to intimidate them. We simply want you to prepare you for careers in which you will be required to think logically and to write intelligibly. The “grading standards” that most of you will encounter in your postgraduate careers will be far more rigorous than the grading standards in this course.

Exam Grading Criteria

1. Responsiveness to the assignment: addressing the questions that have been asked
2. Command of information: demonstrated knowledge of the relevant concepts and facts.
3. Analysis: putting concepts and facts in logical cause-and-effect relationships.
4. Specificity: presenting concepts and facts exactly.
5. Organization: clarity and coherence of the overall essay.
6. Creativity: presenting original thoughts about the question.

I strongly encourage students to meet with me to question the evaluation of an exam, or to seek further explanation of the reasons for a grade, or to get advice about how to improve in the future. I ask, however, you do so as soon as possible after an exam is returned to you, as I can do much more to help you if you come to me sooner rather than later.

Tape Recording and Laptop Computers

The tape recording of lectures is not permitted. Occasionally I will make exceptions to this policy for a disabled student. Students can use laptop computers in P.S. 3810/5100 only for note taking and only with the instructor’s approval.

Classroom Civility

Regrettably, a small minority of USU students demonstrate insensitivity to other students and to instructors by disrupting classes unnecessarily. Students who behave in this manner will receive one firm warning, and will be dismissed from class permanently if they cause any further problem.

Disabled Students

Students with disabilities likely require accommodation by the instructor must contact the instructor and document the disability through the Disability Resource Center during the first week of classes. Requests for special consideration. must be approved by the instructor.

Course Outline

“Readings” entries in the course outline indicate how readings tie in with lecture material, but students should not feel any obligation to complete the readings in precise accord with the outline. The material in text chapters 1-3 does correspond roughly with what I will cover in lecture in weeks 2-6, but the organization is very different.

Week	Lecture Topics	Readings (subject to revision)
	Part I: Policy Theory	

August 28 Sept. 1	Approaches to the Study of Public Policy: Normative, Economic, and	Chapters 1 and 2 (36-37)
September 6-8	The “Post-Positive or “Constructivist” Approach to Policy	“How America Went Haywire”
September 11-15	Elite Theory, Interest Group Theory, Government Self Interest Theory	
September 18-22	Predictions of Government Self Interest Theory: About Voters, Interest Groups, Congress, Presidents, and Agencies	“Old v Young”
September 25-29	U.S. Government in Decline?	Chapter 3, “How American Politics Went Insane”

Part II: Policy Issues

October 2-6	Government vs. Markets Market Efficiency and “Failure”: Public Goods, Equality Concerns	Chapter 2 (up to 41, but not 36-37)
October 9-13	The Federal Budget Economic Policy International Trade	Chapter 4
October 16-19		The 2008-12 Recession

Note: following university policy, MWF classes will meet on Thursday, October 19

Oct. 23-27	Taxes	Chapter 5 (up to p. 131)
Oct. 30- Nov. 3	Income Equality Welfare	Chapter 6 “Stop Pretending You Are Not Rich” “The Submerged State” “Going Dutch”
November 6-10	Social Security	Chapter 5 (131-138)

November 14-18	Health Care Drug Policy	Chapter 9 “Why ‘Repeal and Replace’ Will Become ‘Tweak and Move On’” “How American Health Care Killed My Father”
November 20- November 27-	Education	Chapter 7, “Finland's Unorthodox Education System”
<p>To read “Finland's Unorthodox Education System” simply do a Google search for “26 Amazing Facts About Finland's Unorthodox Education System” in <i>Business Insider</i>.</p>		
December 6-10	Environmental Regulation Climate Change, Immigration	Chapter 11 (335-360 only)