



THE POLITICS OF PUBLIC POLICY — PLCY 74

Fall 2005: Monday & Wednesday, 3:30 p.m.-4:45 p.m.

05 Mitchell Hall

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Instructor

Instructor: John Hardin, Ph.D.

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Teaching Assistant

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Course Purpose

The primary purpose of this course is to provide a framework for analyzing and understanding the politics of public policy formation. The course reviews the purpose and historical context of public policy; the motivations, organization, and actions of political and policy actors; how and why certain issues reach the policy agenda; and how politics shapes the process by which issues give rise to policies (or lack thereof). Throughout the course we will work toward developing a rich understanding what the terms “politics” and “public policy” mean and how they relate.

The course is not a survey of various policy matters before the federal, state, or local governments. Instead, it aims to teach you basic theories, concepts, and tools with which to *understand* and *analyze* the policy process and the politics surrounding it. The focus is on our *system of shared powers* (separation of powers; federalism) and *patterns* in the politics of policy formation across and within various policy domains.

At the completion of the semester, I will not expect you to be an expert in policy formation. I hope, however, that you will have learned much more about what is, how to do it, how to analyze it, and why it is an inherently political process. This knowledge will prove useful in whatever activities you pursue during and after college, as it will help you to understand and contribute meaningfully to the policy-making process.

Required Reading

1. Birkland, Thomas A. 2005. An Introduction to the Policy Process: Theories, Concepts, and Models of Public Policy Making, (2nd Edition). New York: M. E. Sharpe.
2. Dye, Thomas R. 2001. Top Down Policymaking. New York: Chatham House Publishers.
3. Dolan, Julie, and Marni Ezra. 2001. CQ's Legislative Simulation. Washington: CQ Press.
4. Spitzer, Robert J. 2004. The Politics of Gun Control (3rd Edition). Washington: CQ press.
5. Reserve Readings. Available online at the UNC Libraries website <<http://www.lib.unc.edu/>>.
6. PLCY 74 Website. To login, go to the Blackboard website — <<https://blackboard.unc.edu/>> — and enter your UNC username (Onyen) and password.* Then select “Fall 2005: The Politics of Public Policy (PLCY 74)” from the courses listed there. **Be sure to check this website on a regular basis; announcements and assignments will appear on it.**

*Note: If you do not have a UNC username and password, or if they do not work, please let me know and/or consult the Onyen website <https://onyen.unc.edu/cgi-bin/unc_id/services>.

Course Format

Most class periods will entail a combination of discussions, lectures, and group work. When relevant, and time permitting, we will have a brief discussion of current policy issues covered in the media, including how those issues relate to information we have already learned or will learn. During the rest of the class period, I will lecture and lead discussions to introduce new concepts and to clarify, provide a context for, or expand upon information presented in readings. Discussions may sometimes involve the whole class, while at other times involve smaller groups of students. For a format of this type to work well, you must attend class and participate. You should feel free to ask questions during lectures, as this will get you actively involved, generate discussion, and indicate what ideas and information you find interesting, important, or confusing. I welcome any input you have regarding the format and content of the course.

Grades

Activities for which I will assign grades fall into the following five categories:

Quizzes (5% of course grade): On each day for which a reading is assigned, the class has the *potential* to begin with a five-minute quiz. The quizzes will ask you simply to provide one or more basic facts (of my choosing) from the readings. To determine whether we have a quiz, I will flip a coin. If the coin comes up heads, we will have a quiz; if it comes up tails, we will not have a quiz. The goal of the quizzes is to encourage you to read and to think about what you have read. I will assign either a “pass” or “fail” to each quiz. If you read the assigned material, you should have little problem passing the quizzes.

Worksheets (5% of course grade): Throughout the semester, you will complete three worksheets (available at the course website) using information related to the bill you are considering (see **Memos** and **Legislative Simulation** below). The worksheets will be available on the course website as the semester progresses. I will assign either a "pass" or a "fail" to each of these worksheets. If you make a good-faith effort to complete the worksheets appropriately, you should have little trouble receiving passing grades. The goal of the worksheets is to help you apply the information you learn in readings, lectures, and discussions, and to help you collect and synthesize key information for your memos and simulation.

Memos (30% of course grade): Throughout the semester, you will write three short memos related to the bill you are considering in the legislative simulation (see **Legislative Simulation** below). Additional information regarding the memos will be available on the course website as the semester progresses. You will have the option of rewriting either memo 1 or memo 2, based on the grader's comments, if you are unhappy with your grade. If you rewrite a memo, it is due one week after you receive the graded version. Each memo is worth 10% of your course grade and will receive a number grade, according to the criteria outlined below. The goal of the memos is to allow you to apply, in a systematic manner, the information you learn in readings, lectures, and discussions.

Legislative Simulation (10% of course grade): In the final section of the course, the entire class will participate in a legislative simulation covering at least five class periods. The CQ's Legislative Simulation book describes the simulation in detail. Based on your attendance and participation, you will receive a number grade, according to the criteria below. The goal of the simulation is to give you practice working with others, acting politically, formulating policy through legislative bills, organizing information for presentation, and speaking in public.

Exams (50% of course grade): You will have two exams in this course, each worth 25% of your course grade. The exams will cover information from readings, lectures, and discussions. The format of the exams may include a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. Each exam will receive a number grade according to the criteria outlined below. The goal of the exams is for you to show that you can remember, understand, synthesize, and apply the information you learn in readings, lectures, and discussions.

To summarize, your final course grade is based on the following activities:

Graded Activities	
Quizzes	5%
Worksheets	5%
Memo 1	10%
Memo 2	10%
Memo 3	10%
Simulation Participation	10%
Midterm Exam	25%
Final Exam	25%
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Total	100%

I grade on a standard 100-point scale, where 90-100 is an A, 80-89 is a B, 70-79 is a C, etc. I assign grades according to the following criteria:

Grading Criteria

- A: outstanding work; shows real insight and creativity
- B: above average
- C: average work; meets basic course requirements
- D: below average but passing
- F: unsatisfactory; fails to meet basic course requirements

As for pluses and minuses, I consider the bottom three points within a grade range a minus, and the top three points within a grade range a plus. For example, 80-82 is a B-, 83-86 a B, and 87-89 a B+.

I will allow late assignments/test dates by prior arrangement only. In general, you should raise potential problems as early as possible. The longer you wait, the less flexible I become. I make exceptions to these policies for emergencies, with verification. I take academic dishonesty very seriously and will enforce the honor code to the best of my ability.

Attendance

To have a well-functioning course that promotes your learning, I consider it necessary for all students to have good attendance. Therefore, my attendance policy resembles the attendance policy used in most businesses or work settings.

Like most businesses, you will have a *limited* number of "unexcused" absences (i.e., personal leave). Per year, most businesses allow their workers to have 10 working days out of 260 total working days (4%) for personal leave. For the purposes of this course, unexcused personal leave absences include things such as sleeping late, going to the beach, studying for another course, going to a concert, etc. Because this course meets a total of 29 times throughout the semester, I will allow you one unexcused absence ($.04 \times 29 = 1$). **For each unexcused absence you have beyond one, I will lower your final course grade by half a letter grade.**

Unlike most businesses, however, you will have an *unlimited* number of "excused" absences. Excused absences include things such as illnesses, family crises/deaths, university business, etc. For each of these excused absences, I expect you to provide written documentation verifying the reason for your absence. I also expect you to notify me prior to your absence, unless circumstances make doing so unduly difficult. Discretion regarding what constitutes an excused absence rests with me.

I stress attendance not only for your benefit, but also for the benefit of your classmates. While it is entirely possible that you, personally, could excel in this course with more than one unexcused absence, your poor attendance makes it more difficult for your classmates, collectively, to excel. This course depends upon active participation and input by all students. If you fail to attend regularly, you most likely will fail the course.

COURSE CALENDAR

Date	Topic	Reading	Due
<i>Section 1: The Study, Practice, and Context of Public Policy</i>			
Wed, 8/31	Course Overview & Introduction		
Mon, 9/5	Simulation: A Game of Survival	Dolan and Ezra, Part I	Student Profile
Wed, 9/7	Studying Public Policy; Historical/Structural Context of Policy	Birkland, Chapters 1 & 2	
Mon, 9/12	Context Continued; Overview of Legislative Simulation	Dye, Preface & Chapter 1; Dolan & Ezra, Part II	Simulation Role Request Form
<i>Section 2: Goals; Political and Policy Motivations</i>			
Wed, 9/14	Goals: Equity & Efficiency	Stone, Chapters 2 & 3 (<i>E-Reserves</i>)	
Mon, 9/19	Goals: Security & Liberty	Stone, Chapters 4 & 5 (<i>E-Reserves</i>)	
Wed, 9/21	Electoral Incentives: Credit Claiming and Blame Avoiding	Mayhew (<i>E-Reserves</i>); Weaver (<i>E-Reserves</i>)	Worksheet 1: Goals
<i>Section 3: Political and Policy Actors; Decision Making</i>			
Mon, 9/26	Official Actors and Their Roles in Public Policy	Birkland, Chapter 3	
Wed, 9/28	Leadership Selection and Policy Legitimation	Dye, Chapters 4 & 7	
Mon, 10/3	Unofficial Actors and Their Roles in Public Policy	Birkland, Chapter 4	
Wed, 10/5	Interest Group and Opinion Making Processes	Dye, Chapters 5 & 6	
Mon, 10/10	Guest Speaker		Memo 1: Member Profile
Wed, 10/12	The Interaction between Lobbying and Policy Decision Making	Kersh (<i>E-Reserves</i>); Kingdon, Chapter 10 (<i>E-Reserves</i>)	
Mon, 10/17			Midterm Exam
<i>Section 4: Agendas, Agenda Setting, Alternatives, and Policy Formulation</i>			
Wed, 10/19	Agenda Setting, Power, and Interests	Birkland, Chapter 5	
Mon, 10/24	Agendas and Alternatives	Kingdon, Chapters 2 & 3 (<i>E-Reserves</i>)	
Wed, 10/26	Issues, Institutions, and Policy Formulation	Baumgartner and Jones, Chapter 1 (<i>E-Reserves</i>); Dye Chapter 3	
<i>Section 5: Policy Types, Tools, Implementation, Failure, and Evaluation</i>			
Mon, 10/31	Policies and Policy Types	Birkland, Chapter 6	Worksheet 2: Agendas
Wed, 11/2	Policy Design and Policy Tools	Birkland, Chapter 7	
Mon, 11/7	Policy Implementation and Evaluation	Dye, Chapters 8 & 9	
Wed, 11/9	Policy Implementation and Failure	Birkland, Chapter 8	Memo 2: Constituent Letter
<i>Section 6: Case Study</i>			
Mon, 11/14	The Politics of Gun Control	Spitzer, Chapters 1, 2, & 3	
Wed, 11/16	The Politics of Gun Control	Spitzer, Chapters 4, 5, & 6	Worksheet 3: Policies
<i>Section 7: Legislative Simulation</i>			
Mon, 11/21	Committee Hearing: Patient Access to Responsible Health Care Act		
Wed, 11/23	No Class: Thanksgiving Break		
Mon, 11/28	Committee Hearing: Safe & Sober Streets Act		
Wed, 11/30	Bill Markups (both bills)		Memo 3: Policy Analysis
Mon, 12/5	Floor Debate: Patient Access to Responsible Health Care Act		
Wed, 12/7	Floor Debate: Safe & Sober Streets Act		
Friday, 12/16			Final Exam (4:00 p.m.)