

PUBLIC POLICY

Course Description: Public policy is best defined as a pattern of purposive public action. This course provides a broad overview of several important public policies and explores the underlying dynamics of the political system. The overarching goal is to provide a social scientific overview of the policy process and several important public policies.

One cannot understand public policy without having some understanding of politics and institutions. Although it is popular to adopt romantic visions of government (e.g., visions imbued with values of public service, self-sacrifice, altruism, and public spiritedness), such an approach often results in unsatisfactory explanations of policy performance (e.g., policy failed because people had the wrong intentions). The first part of the course is devoted to providing a social scientific framework that will allow one to think systematically about politics and public policy. While one cannot completely dismiss the role of good intentions, it will be argued that policy performance is more often a product of larger institutional dynamics that shape legislative choice, bureaucratic behavior, and strategies of bureaucratic control.

The second part of the course is devoted to the exploration of a number of important substantive policy areas. We will turn to attention to criminal justice, macroeconomic management, educational reform, social welfare policies, health care, and environmental policy. In each case, the goal will be to develop a broad understanding of the policies in question, the factors shaping performance, and the avenues for reform. Moreover, some of these policies will provide an opportunity for considering critical questions such as the model of human nature implicit in public policies, the role of institutional design in shaping policy performance, the sources of governmental failure, the difficulties of managing complexity, and the impact of electoral and interest-group pressures on changing the goals and scope of public policy.

The course will employ case studies on a number of important policy questions. The case study method places a premium on preparation and in-class discussion.

Readings: The following are available from Broad Street Books:

Cochran, Mayer, Carr and Cayer, *American Public Policy: An Introduction*, 10th Edition. (Wadsworth, 2011). ISBN 9781111342883

The Harvard Kennedy School Case Studies
1509.0 The Cleveland School Voucher Program
1510.0 The Cleveland School Voucher Program
1514.0 Cleaning up the "Big Dirties"
1518.0 Prison Fellowship Ministries (B)
1530.0 Assertive Policing, Plummeting Crime
1600.0 The Battle Over the Clinton Health Care Proposal
1680.0 Arsenic in Drinking Water
1870.0 Keeping a Campaign Promise

They cases can also be ordered directly online as downloads (academic rate) at <http://www.ksgcase.harvard.edu/Index.asp>

Meeting Times: GOVT 206 meets from 8:30-9:50, MW, in PAC 004.

Composition of Grade:

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| Participation | 10% |
| Midterm Exam | 20% |
| Case Analyses (4 worth 10% each) | 40% |
| Final Exam (time assigned by registrar): | 30% |

Participation: It is expected that all students will arrive before the beginning of class and remain until the end of class (excessive absences will be noted). If you anticipate that you will not be able to arrive at class as scheduled, you should reconsider your decision to take this course. More importantly, it is expected that students will come to class having read and reflected on the assigned readings. The participation component of the grade will be based on mastery of the course materials as demonstrated in class discussions and postings on the Moodle forum/discussion board. There will be a question posted weekly on Moodle and students will receive credit for postings that occur by the end of the week in question.

Case studies: The course makes use of the case method. On seven occasions during the semester, we will devote a class session to the analysis of a case study on a public policy. On four occasions, you will be required to respond to a written question involving a specific case. Solving cases can be time consuming because a critical piece of information may be buried in the case or missing altogether, forcing you to make plausible assumptions. The maximum length of a case analysis will be two pages (single-spaced, 12-point font). In order to produce a quality analysis, you will need to come to class prepared to discuss the case. The case questions will be posted to Moodle and

analyses will be due at the end of the day (e.g., by midnight), one week after the assigned discussion date. You will **not** be permitted to submit a case analysis if you were absent from the class on the day it was discussed. *All members of the class must complete case study 1 and/or case study 2. Those who do not will receive a zero for their first case study.*

Students with Disabilities: It is the policy of Wesleyan University to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students, however, are responsible for registering with Disabilities Services, in addition to making requests known to me in a timely manner. If you require accommodations in this class, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made. The procedures for registering with Disabilities Services can be found at <http://www.wesleyan.edu/deans/disability-students.html>.

Course Policies: Incompletes and extensions will be allowed only in cases of serious emergencies (e.g., serious illness, family emergency), verified through communication by your dean. Absent an extension, late work will not be accepted.

It is assumed that all students will familiarize themselves with what constitutes plagiarism under University policy and will abide by the provisions of the Honor Code.

Contacts: My office hours (317 PAC) are 9-12 p.m., Tuesday. Other times can be arranged by appointment. Email is my preferred mode of communication (meisner@wesleyan.edu). I check it at the beginning and end of the workday, M-F.

COURSE SCHEDULE

9/5 Course Introduction

I. UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC POLICY

9/7-9/12 Models of the Policy Process

Cochran, et. al., *American Public Policy*, chapters 1- 2

Paul A. Sabatier, "Toward Better Theories of the Policy Process." *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 24, 2. (1991): 147-156. [Download](#)

Institutional Rational Choice

Terry M. Moe, "Political Institutions: The Neglected Side of the Story." *Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization*, 6 (1990): 213-253. [Download](#)

Multiple Streams

Michael D. Cohen, James G. March, and Johan P. Olsen, "A Garbage Can Model of Organizational Choice." *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 17, 1. (1972): 1-25. [Download](#)

Punctuated Equilibrium Framework

Frank R. Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones, "Agenda Dynamics and Policy Subsystems." *The Journal of Politics*, 53, 4 (1991): 1044-1074. [Download](#)

Advocacy Coalition Framework

Hank C. Jenkins-Smith; Paul A. Sabatier, "Evaluating the Advocacy Coalition Framework." *Journal of Public Policy*, 14, 2. (1994): 175-203. [Download](#)

Policy Diffusion

Christopher Z. Mooney, "Modeling Regional Effects on State Policy Diffusion." *Political Research Quarterly*, 54, 1 (2001):103-124. [Download](#)

9/14-9/19 Policy Design

Deborah A. Stone, "Causal Stories and the Formation of Policy Agendas." *Political Science Quarterly*, 104, 2 (1989): 281-300. [Download](#)

Stephen H. Linder and B. Guy Peters, "From Social Theory to Policy Design." *Journal of Public Policy*, 4, 3 (1984): 237-259. [Download](#)

Anne Schneider and Helen Ingram, "Behavioral Assumptions of Policy Tools." *The Journal of Politics*, 52, 2. (1990):510-529. [Download](#)

David L. Weimer, "The Current State of Design Craft: Borrowing, Tinkering, and Problem Solving." *Public Administration Review*, 53, 2. (1993):110-120. [Download](#)

Peter J. May, "Policy Learning and Failure." *Journal of Public Policy*, 12, 4 (1992): 331-354. [Download](#)

9/21-9/26 Policy Analysis

Charles Wolf, Jr., "A Theory of Nonmarket Failure: Framework for Implementation Analysis." *Journal of Law and Economics*, 22, 1 (1979): 107-139. [Download](#)

Lisa Heinzerling and Frank Ackerman, "Pricing the Priceless: Cost-Benefit Analysis of Environmental Protection." Georgetown Environmental Law and Policy Institute, Georgetown University Law Center (2002). [Download](#)

Douglas J. Amy, "Why Policy Analysis and Ethics Are Incompatible." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 3, 4 (1984): 573-591. [Download](#)

Charles W. Anderson, "The Place of Principles in Policy Analysis." *The American Political Science Review*, 73, 3 (1979): 711-723. [Download](#)

Laura Stoker, "Interests and Ethics in Politics." *The American Political Science Review*, 86, 2 (1992): 369-380. [Download](#)

II. SUBSTANTIVE PUBLIC POLICIES

Criminal Justice

9/28 Criminal Justice and Models of Behavior

Cochran, et. al., *American Public Policy*, chapter 6

William J. Sabol, Heather Couture, and Paige M. Harrison, "Prisoners in 2006." Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin (December 2007, NCJ 219416). [Download](#)

The Sentencing Project, "The Federal Prison Population: A Statistical Analysis."
[Download](#)

Gary S. Becker, "Nobel Lecture: The Economic Way of Looking at Behavior."
The Journal of Political Economy, Vol. 101, No. 3. (Jun., 1993), pp. 385-409.
[Download](#)

John J. DiIulio, Jr. "Help Wanted : Economists, Crime and Public Policy,"
Journal of Economic Perspectives, 10 (1996): 3-24. [Download](#)

Ruth D. Peterson and Lauren J. Krivo, "Macrostructural Analyses of Race,
Ethnicity, and Violent Crime: Recent Lessons And New Directions For
Research." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 31 (March 2005): 331-356 [Download](#)

10/3 Case 1: Assertive Policing

KSCS "Assertive Policing, Plummeting Crime: The NYPD Takes on Crime in
New York City."

Analysis due: end of day, 10/10

10/5 Case 2: Prison Ministries

KSCS "Prison Fellowship Ministries."

Analysis due: end of day, 10/12

Education

10/10 Education and Institutional Design

Cochran, et. al., *American Public Policy*, chapter 9

Milton Friedman, "The Role of Government in Education." (1955) [Download](#)

Paul E. Peterson, "Vouchers and the Power of Choice." *Hoover Digest*, 2002, 1.
[Download](#)

U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Secretary, Office of Public Affairs, *A
Guide to Education and No Child Left Behind* (2004). [Download](#)

Kevin Carey, "The Pangloss Index: How States Game the No Child Left Behind
Act." Washington, DC: The Education Sector, November 2007. [Download](#)

Recommended: Caroline M. Hoxby, “School Choice and School Productivity (Or Could School Choice Be A Tide That Lifts All Boats?).” Working Paper 8873 (2002) [Download](#) (highly technical analysis)

10/12 Case 3: School Vouchers

KSCS “The Cleveland School Voucher Program” (A) and (B)
Analysis due: end of day, 10/19

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| 10/17 Midterm exam in Class |
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Economic Policy

10/19 The Keynesian Revolution and the Role of the State

Cochran, et. al., *American Public Policy*, chapters 3-4

Alan S. Blinder, “Keynesian Economics.” *The Concise Encyclopedia of Economics*. [Download](#)

J. Bradford De Long, “Keynesianism, Pennsylvania Avenue Style: Some Economic Consequences of the Employment Act of 1946.” *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 10, 3. (1996): 41-53. [Download](#)

10/26 The Conservative Revolution in Economic Policy

James D. Gwartney, “Supply Side Economics.” *The Concise Encyclopedia of Economics*. [Download](#)

James Tobin, “The Conservative Counter-Revolution in Economic Policy.” *The Journal of Economic Education*, 14, 1. (1983):30-39. [Download](#)

John L. Campbell, “Institutional Analysis and the Role of Ideas in Political Economy.” *Theory and Society*, 27, 3 (1998): 377-409. [Download](#)

The Welfare State

10/31 The Origins and Key Features of the U.S. Welfare State

Cochran, et. al., *American Public Policy*, chapter 7

Theda Skocpol, "State Formation and Social Policy in the United States."
American Behavioral Scientist, 35 (4/5): 559-84. [Download](#)

James Mahmud Rice, Robert E. Goodin, and Antti Parpo, "The Temporal Welfare State: A Crossnational Comparison." *Journal of Public Policy*, 26, 3 (2006): 195-228. [Download](#)

11/2 Welfare Reform: Incentives and Unintended Consequences

Charles Noble, "The Never Ending War on the Welfare State." *Logos* 3.2 (Spring 2004). [Download](#)

Jacob S. Hacker, "Privatizing Risk without Privatizing the Welfare State: The Hidden Politics of Social Policy Retrenchment in the United States." *The American Political Science Review*, 98, 2 (2004): 243-260. [Download](#)

Jill S. Quadagno and Debra Street, "Ideology and Public Policy: Antistatistism in American Welfare State Transformation." *The Journal of Policy History*, 17, 1 (2005): 52-71. [Download](#)

Lawrence M. Mead, "Why Welfare Reform Succeeded." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 26, 2 (2007): 370-374. [Download](#)

11/7 The Entitlement Crisis and Social Security

David M. Walker, "Long-Term Budget Outlook: Saving Our Future Requires Tough Choices Today." Testimony before the Committee on the Budget, U.S. Senate (January 11, 2007). [Download](#)

Chad Stone and Robert Greenstein, "What the 2007 Trustees' Report Shows About Social Security." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (April 24, 2007). [Download](#)

Will Wilkinson, "Noble Lies, Liberal Purposes, and Personal Retirement Accounts." Cato Social Security Choice Paper no. 34 (June 28, 2005). [Download](#)

11/9 Case 4: Medicare Modernization

KSCS "Keeping a Campaign Promise: George W. Bush and Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage."
Analysis due: end of day, 11/16

11/14 Case 5: Clinton Health Care Initiative

KSCS “The Battle Over the Clinton Health Care Proposal.”
Analysis due: end of day, 11/21

11/16 Comprehensive Health Care Reform and the Obama Administration

Cochran, et. al., *American Public Policy*, chapter 8

Michael Tanner, *Bad Medicine: A Guide to the Real Costs and Consequences of the New Health Care Law* (Cato Institute, 2011). [Download](#)

Tony Clark, *The Anniversary of the Affordable Care Act: A Year Later, the False Attacks Continue* (Center for American Progress, 2011). [Download](#)

Environmental Policy

11/21 Regulating the Environment

Cochran, et. al., *American Public Policy*, chapter 5

Patrick Parenteau, “Anything Industry Wants: Environmental Policy Under Bush II” *Duke Environmental Law and Policy Forum*, 14 (2004): 363-405. [Download](#)

Daniel J. Fiorino, “Environmental Policy as Learning: A New View of an Old Landscape.” *Public Administration Review*, 61, 3. (2001): 322-334. [Download](#)

Marc Allen Eisner, “Corporate Environmentalism, Regulatory Reform, and Industry Self-Regulation: Toward Genuine Regulatory Reinvention in the United States.” *Governance*, 17, 2 (2004): 145-68. [Download](#)

11/28 Case 6: Using Markets to Manage Pollution

KSCS “Cleaning up the “Big Dirties”: The Problem of Acid Rain.”
Analysis due: end of day, 12/5

11/30 Case 7: Managing Complexity and Scientific Uncertainty

KSCS “Arsenic in Drinking Water.”
Analysis due: end of day, 12/7

12/5 Climate Change Policy

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Fourth Assessment Report Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report, Summary for Policymakers*. [Download](#)

Robyn Eckersley, “Ambushed: The Kyoto Protocol, the Bush Administration's Climate Policy and the Erosion of Legitimacy.” *International Politics*, 44 (2007): 306–324. [Download](#)

Todd Stern and William Antholis, “A Changing Climate: The Road Ahead for the United States.” *Washington Quarterly*, 31:1 (Winter 2007-08) pp. 175–188. [Download](#)

Peter Christoff, “Post-Kyoto? Post-Bush? Toward an Effective ‘Climate Coalition of the Willing’.” *International Affairs*, 82, 5 (2006): 831-60. [Download](#)

12/7 Course Conclusion