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Spring 2005

### **GOVERNMENT 206: PUBLIC POLICY**

Public policy is best defined as a purposive pattern of 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. We will explore the role of self-interest and the factors shaping democratic choice and collective action. We will consider the institutional expressions of, and responses to, these problems. 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. Following some discussions of how social scientists understand public policy, we will turn to attention to criminal justice and the war on drugs, educational reform, social welfare policies, macroeconomic management, health care, social security reform, 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.

#### **Readings**

To conserve on resources, the majority of the readings for this course will be made available on the internet. The only required books for the course (available at Broad Street Books) are:

1. Jonathan Rausch, *Government's End: Why Washington Stopped Working*. (PublicAffairs, 1999) ISBN: 1891620495
2. Kenneth Shepsle and Mark Bonchek, *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions*. (W. W. Norton & Company, 1997) ISBN: 0393971074

Many of the readings for the course are policy analyses from think tanks (including the American Enterprise Institute, the Brookings Institution, the Cato Institution, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the National Bureau of Economic Research and the Progressive Policy Institute, and the Rand Corporation) and government agencies.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Midterm Exam	30%
Research Paper Prospectus	10%
Research Paper	30%
Final Exam	30%

### **THE MIDTERM EXAM**

The midterm exam will be given on March 4<sup>th</sup> and will be worth 30% of the grade. It will cover all readings and lectures through March 2<sup>nd</sup>. The exam will consist of short answer identifications and will provide ample opportunity for choice.

### **THE RESEARCH PAPER**

The research paper must engage a topic of core relevance to the course. Examples would include episodes of policy origination or change, analyses of policy performance, and events or theoretical debates that shaped the prevailing understanding of a given policy area. The paper must employ some subset of the works assigned in the course, in addition to research conducted primarily for the assignment.

The research paper requirement has two components: a research paper prospectus, due on or before April 1<sup>st</sup>, and a research paper not to exceed 20 pages in length, due by midnight May 2<sup>nd</sup>. Both components must be submitted as electronic documents.

The prospectus is an invaluable tool for writing a research paper. It must contain an introduction which establishes the thesis, purpose, and relevance of the project to the course. The body of the prospectus should summarize the key elements of your research (i.e., how you will support your thesis, claims, hypothesis). In addition, there must be an annotated bibliography with at least 4 sources (journal articles, book chapters, or books) not assigned in the course.

The research paper, not to exceed 20 pages, is due on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. The best papers will effectively develop a thesis and an argument, support the thesis by exploring relevant research on the topic, and exhibit a broad competence of the subject matter.

## **COURSE POLICIES**

It is an expectation of the course that students will attend class regularly and arrive before the beginning of the period. If you anticipate that you will not be able to arrive at class as scheduled, you should reconsider your decision to take this course. Likewise, if you anticipate that you will not be able to meet the due dates (e.g., you have commitments to

be absent during key periods of the semester) you are urged to reconsider your decision to take this course.

All written work must be submitted to Blackboard as a Microsoft Word attachment by midnight on the date due. Late work will be penalized one full grade per day, beginning at 12:01 on the day following the due date.

Incompletes and extensions will be allowed only in cases of serious and verifiable emergencies (e.g., serious illness, family emergency).

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.

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## CONTACTS

My office hours are as follows:

Wednesday	1-2
Friday	10-12

Meetings outside of these periods must be arranged by appointment.

### **Electronic Communications**

Email is the preferred mode of communication ([meisner@wesleyan.edu](mailto:meisner@wesleyan.edu)). All emails should have the course number GOVT 220 in the header for filtering purposes. I hope to reply to all emails at the end of business on the day received. Emails that ask questions or request information that may be beneficial to the class will be circulated via email, albeit with the name of the original correspondent removed. I have also established an Instant Messenger screen name (ProfEisner) that can be used to contact me during office hours (and outside of office hours, when logged on).

Session	Date	Topic
		<b>PART I: INTRODUCTION</b>
1	1/19	<b>Course Introduction: What is Public Policy</b>
2	1/21	<b>Perspectives on Public Policy</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Shepsle and Bonchek, <i>Analyzing Politics</i>, chapters 1-2.</li> <li>2. B. Guy Peters, <i>American Public Policy</i>, chapters 1-2.</li> </ol> Reserve
3-5	1/24-28	<b>Understanding Group Choice</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Shepsle and Bonchek, <i>Analyzing Politics</i>, chapters 3-7.</li> <li>2. Rauch, <i>Government's End</i>, chapter 1.</li> </ol>
6-8	1/31-2/4	<b>The Problems of Collective Action</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mancur Olson, <i>The Logic of Collective Action</i>, chapter 1,</li> <li>2. Reserve.</li> <li>2. Shepsle and Bonchek, <i>Analyzing Politics</i>, chapters 8-10</li> <li>3. Rauch, <i>Government's End</i>, chapters 2-3.</li> </ol>
9-11	2/7-11	<b>The Institutional Ramifications</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Shepsle and Bonchek, <i>Analyzing Politics</i>, chapters 11-17</li> <li>2. Rauch, <i>Government's End</i>, chapters 4-10.</li> </ol>
		<b>PART II: PUBLIC POLICY</b>
12-13	2/14-16	<b>Understanding Public Policy as a Social Scientist</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. James E. Anderson, <i>Public Policy-Making</i>, chapter 5.</li> </ol> Reserve <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Theodore Lowi, "American Business, Public Policy, Case Studies, and Political Theory," <i>World Politics</i> 16 (July 1964), 677-715. <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>3. William T. Gormley, Jr., "Regulatory Issue Networks in a Federal System." <i>Polity</i>, 18 (Summer 1986): 595-620.</li> </ol> Reserve.

14-16	2/18-23	<p><b>Crime and Punishment</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Gary S. Becker, "Nobel Lecture: The Economic Way of Looking at Behavior." <i>The Journal of Political Economy</i>, Vol. 101, No. 3. (Jun., 1993), pp. 385-409. <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>2. James Q. Wilson, <i>Thinking About Crime</i>, chapters 4, 12-13. Reserve.</li> <li>3. John J. DiIulio, Jr. "Help Wanted : Economists, Crime and Public Policy," <i>Journal of Economic Perspectives</i>, 10 (1996): 3-24. <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>4. Ryan S. King and Marc Mauer, "Distorted Priorities: Drug Offenders in State Prisons." The Sentencing Project, September 2002. <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>5. Jonathan P. Caulkins, Peter Reuter, Martin Y. Iguchi, James Chiesa, "Drug Use and Drug Policy Futures: Insights from a Colloquium." Rand Drug Policy Research Center, 2003. <a href="#">Download</a></li> </ol>
17-19	2/25-3/2	<p><b>Education</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Milton Friedman, "The Role of Government in Education." (1955) <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>2. Paul E. Peterson, "Vouchers and the Power of Choice." <i>Hoover Digest</i>, 2002, 1. <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>3. Caroline M. Hoxby, "School Choice and School Productivity (Or Could School Choice Be A Tide That Lifts All Boats?)." Working Paper 8873 (2002) <a href="#">Download</a> (skim; highly technical analysis)</li> <li>4. U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Secretary, Office of Public Affairs, <i>A Guide to Education and No Child Left Behind</i> (2004). <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>5. Martin R. West and Paul E. Peterson, "The Politics and Practice of Accountability." In <i>No Child Left Behind?</i> ed. Paul E. Peterson and Martin R. West. (Brookings Institution, 2003). <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>6. Chester E. Finn, Jr. &amp; Frederick M. Hess, "On Leaving No Child Behind." <i>The Public Interest</i>, 157 (Fall 2004): 35-56. <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>7. Stan Karp, "Bush Plan Fails Schools." Rethinking Schools Online. <a href="#">Download</a>.</li> </ol>
20	3/4	<b>Midterm Exam: In Class</b>
		<b>Break</b>

21-22	3/21-23	<p><b>The Rise and Pause of the Welfare State</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Theda Skocpol, "State Formation and Social Policy in the United States." <i>American Behavioral Scientist</i>, 35 (4/5): 559-84. <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>2. Charles Noble, "The Never Ending War on the Welfare State." <i>Logos</i> 3.2 (Spring 2004). <a href="#">Download</a></li> </ol>
23-25	3/25-30	<p><b>Welfare Policy</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Robert Haveman, "Poverty and the Distribution of Economic Well-Being since the 1960s." <i>Economic Events, Ideas, and Policies: The 1960s and After</i>, ed. George L. Perry and James Tobin (Brookings Institution, 2000): 243–298 <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>2. Charles Murray, <i>The Underclass Revisited</i>. (AEI, ). <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>3. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, HHS Fact Sheet, September 1996. <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>4. Claudia J. Coulton et. al., "Did Welfare Leavers' Employment Levels and Job Characteristics Change During TANF Implementation: An analysis using SIPP 1996-2000." JCPR Working Paper 342 01-13-2004. <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>5. Health and Human Services, Temporary Assistance For Needy Families (TANF). Sixth Annual Report to Congress, Executive Summary. <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>6. "Working Toward Independence." Bush Administration welfare reform proposal. <a href="#">Download</a></li> </ol>

26-28	4/1-6	<p><b>Macroeconomic Management</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Alan S. Blinder, "Keynesian Economics." <i>The Concise Encyclopedia of Economics</i>. <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>2. William A. Niskanen, "Reaganomics." <i>The Concise Encyclopedia of Economics</i>. <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>Jude Wanniski, "Taxes, Revenues, and the 'Laffer Curve.'" <i>The Wall Street Journal</i> June 1978. <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>3. Martha Coven And Richard Kogan, "Introduction to the Federal Budget Process." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (2004). <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>4. Council of Economic Advisors, <i>Economic Report of the President</i>, Chapter 1. <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>5. Veronique de Rugy, "The Republican Spending Explosion." Cato Institute Briefing Paper, 87 March 3, 2004. <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>6. William G. Gale and Peter R. Orszag, "The US Budget Deficit: On an Unsustainable Path." <i>New Economy</i>, (December 2004): 236-42. <a href="#">Download</a></li> </ol>
	4/8	<p><b>No Class: Conference</b></p>
29-31	4/11-15	<p><b>Health Care Policy</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Paul Starr, "What Happened to Health Care Reform?" <i>The American Prospect</i>, 20 (Winter 1995): 20-31. <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>2. "Number of Americans without Insurance Reaches Highest Level on Record." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. (2004) <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>3. Christopher J. Conover, "Health Care Regulation: A \$169 Billion Hidden Tax." Cato Policy Analysis (2004). <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>4. John Sheils and Randall Haught, <i>Covering America: Cost and Coverage Analysis of Ten Proposals to Expand Health Insurance Coverage</i>. The Lewin Group, October 2003. <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>5. Joseph Antos et. al., <i>Analyzing the Kerry and Bush Health Proposals: Estimates of Cost and Impact</i>. American Enterprise Institute (2004). <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>6. Jeff Lemieux, David Kendall, and S. Robert Levine, MD, "A Progressive Path Toward Universal Health Coverage." Progressive Policy Institute Policy Report (2000) <a href="#">Download</a></li> </ol>

32-34	4/18	<p><b>Social Security Old Age Pensions</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Social Security Administration, <i>A Brief History of Social Security</i>, SSA Publication 21-059 (August 2000). <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>2. David M. Walker, Comptroller General of the United States, "Social Security: Long-Term Financing Shortfall Drives Need For Reform." Testimony before the Committee on the Budget, House of Representatives, June 19, 2002. <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>3. Robert Greenstein, "What The Trustees' Report Indicates about the Financial Status of Social Security." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. (2004) <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>4. Michael Tanner, "No Second Best: The Unappetizing Alternatives to Social Security Privatization." Cato Project on Social Security Privatization, SSP 24 (January 29, 2002). <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>5. Peter A. Diamond and Peter R. Orszag, "Reforming Social Security: A Balanced Plan." The Brookings Institution Policy Brief, 126 (2003). <a href="#">Download</a></li> </ol>
35-37	4/25	<p><b>Environmental Protection</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Marc Allen Eisner, Jeff Worsham, and Evan J. Ringquist, <i>Contemporary Regulatory Policy</i> (Lynne Rienner, 2000), Chapter 7. Reserve</li> <li>2. Jonathan Adler "Bean Counting for a Better Earth: Environmental Enforcement at the EPA," <i>Regulation</i>, 21:2 (Spring 1998). <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>3. Cary Coglianese and Gary E. Marchant, "The EPA's Risky Reasoning." <i>Regulation</i>, 27, 2 (2004): 16-22. <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>4. "Protecting the Environment." <i>Economic Report of the President</i> (2004). <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>5. Patrick Parenteau, "Anything Industry Wants: Environmental Policy Under Bush II." <i>Duke Environmental Law and Policy Forum</i>, 14, 2 (2004): 363-405. <a href="#">Download</a></li> <li>6. Marc Allen Eisner, "Corporate Environmentalism, Regulatory Reform, and Industry Self-Regulation: Toward Genuine Regulatory Reinvention in the United States." <i>Governance</i>, 17, 2 (2004): 145-67. <a href="#">Download</a></li> </ol>
38	5/2	<p><b>Course Conclusion</b></p>