

*NOTE: The only readings that must be purchased for the course are Harvard Kennedy School case studies (see page 2). The remaining readings are articles or reports that are available online or on the Moodle course page. While the assigned readings may change (there are always new articles and reports that may prove more enlightening than those that have been listed in the syllabus), the assigned case studies will not.*

## **PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF SOCIAL ENGINEERING**

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 policy process with the goal of addressing several enduring problems. For example, we will examine criminal justice to better understand how competing models of human behavior impact on policy design. We will explore educational policy to better appreciate the potential role of institutional design (e.g., the debates over vouchers). Macroeconomic policy will provide a context for understanding what happens when models or the underlying policy problems change dramatically in response to policy failure. Social welfare will allow us a window into the problems of perverse incentives and unintended consequences. Social security and Medicare will provide an opportunity for appreciating the impact of large demographic trends. Environmental policy will allow us to consider how policies can be “reinvented” as a means of allowing for new approaches to vexing problems like acid rain. Finally, we will turn to emerging regulatory issues—with a focus on nanotechnology—to reflect on what happens when policy problems are highly complex and dynamic and thus difficult to address with standard policy instruments.

During the semester, we will examine a number of cases in greater detail. Some of these cases (e.g., assertive policing in New York, prison mentoring, school vouchers, Medicare modernization, the regulation of acid rain, and decisions regarding arsenic standards) will draw on Harvard Kennedy School case studies. Others (e.g., Progressive Era eugenics, welfare reform, and the sub-prime crisis) will be developed using a combination of scholarly research and government reports. In each instance, the case studies will provide a means of deepening our understanding of the problems and tensions inherent in making and implementing public policy.

### **Course Readings:**

The following Harvard Kennedy School Case Studies are assigned:

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

1680.0 Arsenic in Drinking Water

1870.0 Keeping a Campaign Promise

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

### Course Grade

Case Analyses (3 worth 20% each)	60%
Participation	10%
Final essay	20%

Case Analyses: The course makes use of the case method. On several occasions during the semester, we will devote a session to the analysis of a case study on a public policy. On three occasions of your choice, you will be required to respond to a written question involving a specific case. The questions will be posted on Moodle following class. Solving cases can be time consuming because a critical piece of information may be buried in the case or missing altogether, forcing students 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 analyses will be due at the end of the day, 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.*

Participation: On one occasion, each member of the class will introduce the readings for the week. This presentation, not to exceed ten minutes, will involve identifying the core arguments and posing some questions for discussion. The presentation should be supported by a one-page handout listing questions. Additionally, the participation component of the grade will be based on exhibited mastery of course readings in seminar discussions and responses to weekly questions posted on the forum on the Moodle course page. Note that credit will be given for responses posted within one week of the session in question.

Final Essay: The final essay for the course (10 pages, double spaced) will provide an opportunity for participants to develop an argument regarding the factors that facilitate and impede successful public policy. A detailed question will be distributed in class.

SOCS 635W: Students enrolling in SOCS 635W will be required, in addition, to write three brief analytical essays (5 pages) in response to questions that will be distributed in advance via Moodle.

Note: This is a paper-free course. All written work must be submitted via email as a Microsoft Word attachment (or in rich text format if using another word processing program).

**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 GLSP).

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 normal office hours (317 PAC) are 9 a.m.-12 p.m., Tuesday. However, I am pleased to meet with you before or after class by appointment.

Email is my preferred mode of communication ([meisner@wesleyan.edu](mailto:meisner@wesleyan.edu)).

## Course Schedule

### Session 1 (9/15) Introduction: What is Public Policy?

### Session 2 (9/22) A Primer on Public Policy and the Policy Process

#### 2.1 Understanding the Policy Process

##### Reading:

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

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

Michael Howlett, "Beyond Good and Evil in Policy Implementation: Instrument Mixes, Implementation Styles, and Second Generation Theories of Policy Instrument Choice." *Policy and Society* 23, 2 (2004): 1-17. Moodle

#### 2.2 Critical Perspectives

##### Reading:

Richard O. Zerbe Jr . and Howard McCurdy, "The End of Market Failure." *Regulation*, 23, 2 (2001): 10-14. Moodle

Bruce Yandle, "Bootleggers and Baptists in Retrospect" *Regulation*, 22, 3 (1999). Moodle

Jonathan Rauch, "Demosclerosis." *National Journal* (1992). Moodle

Jonathan Adler, "Rent Seeking Behind the Green Curtain." *Regulation*, 19, 4 (1996). Moodle

### Session 3 (9/29) Public Policy in Historical Context

#### 3.1 The Rise of the Interventionist State

##### Reading:

Thomas G. West and William A. Schambra, "The Progressive Movement and the Transformation of American Politics." Heritage Foundation First Principles Series, July 18, 2007. Moodle

Morton Keller, "Governance and Democracy: Public Policy in Modern America." *Journal of Policy History*, 20, 1 (2008). Moodle

Marc Allen Eisner, *The American Political Economy*. (New York: Routledge, 2011), chapter 4-5. Moodle

Carl M. Brauer, "Kennedy, Johnson, and the War on Poverty." *The Journal of American History*, 69, 1 (1982): 98-119. Moodle

### 3.2 The Pause of the Interventionist State

#### Reading:

Marc Allen Eisner, *The American Political Economy*. (New York: Routledge, 2011), chapter 6-7. Moodle

Paul C. Light, "A Government Ill Executed: The Depletion of the Federal Service." *Public Administration Review*, 68, 3 (2008): 413-419. Moodle

## **Session 4 (10/6) Criminal Justice, Human Nature, and the Environment**

### 4.1 Competing Perspectives on Criminality

#### Reading:

Gary S. Becker, "Nobel Lecture: The Economic Way of Looking at Behavior." *The Journal of Political Economy*, 101, 3. (1993): 385-409. Moodle

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

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. Moodle

### 4.2 Eugenics and the Prevention of Criminality

#### Reading:

Thomas C. Leonard, "Eugenics and Economics in the Progressive Era." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 19, 4 (2005): 207-224. Moodle

Ian Robert Dowbiggin, "A Rational Coalition": Euthanasia, Eugenics, and Birth Control in America, 1940-1970." *Journal of Policy History*, 14, 3, (2002): 223-60. Moodle

Edwin Black, "Ethnic Cleansing in Connecticut." Moodle

Edwin Black, "Hitler Made Eugenics Famous, But He Took It From the United States." Moodle

## **Session 5 (10/13) Alternative Approaches to Criminality**

### 5.1 Case Study of New York and Compstat

#### Reading:

1530.0 Assertive Policing, Plummeting Crime

### 5.2 Case Study of Prison Fellowship Ministries

#### Reading:

1518.0 Prison Fellowship Ministries (B)

## **Session 6 (10/20) Education and Institutional Design**

### 6.1 From School Choice to No Child Left Behind

#### Reading:

OECD, "Education at a Glance, 2007: Briefing Note for the United States." (2006). Moodle

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

Joseph P. Viteritti, "School Choice: How an Abstract Idea Became a Political Reality." *Brookings Papers on Education Policy: 2005*: 137-73. Moodle

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

### 6.2 Case Study of School Choice

#### Reading:

1509.0 and 1510.0 "The Cleveland School Voucher Program" (A) and (B)

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)

## **Session 7 (10/27) Markets, Models and Macroeconomic Management**

### 7.1 The Rise and Fall of the Keynesian Consensus

#### Reading:

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. Moodle

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

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. Moodle

## 7.2 The Sub-Prime Crisis and the Costs of Neoliberalism

### Reading:

Marc Allen Eisner, *The American Political Economy*. (New York: Routledge, 2011), chapter 10. Moodle

Roger D. Congleton, “On the Political Economy of the Financial Crisis and Bailout of 2008–2009.” *Public Choice*, 140 (2009): 287-317. Moodle

Fred Block, “Crisis and Renewal: the Outlines of a Twenty-first Century New Deal.” *Socio-Economic Review* 9 (2011): 31–57. Moodle

## **Session 8 (11/3) Welfare, Perverse Incentives, and Unintended Consequences**

### 8.1 The American Welfare State

#### Reading:

David Brady, “The Welfare State and Relative Poverty in Rich Western Democracies, 1967-1997.” *Social Forces*, 83, 4 (2005): 1329-1364. Moodle

G. John Ikenberry and Theda Skocpol, “Expanding Social Benefits: The Role of Social Security.” *Political Science Quarterly*, 102, 3, (1987): 389-416. Moodle

Christopher Howard, “The Hidden Side of the American Welfare State.” *Political Science Quarterly*, 108, 3 (Autumn, 1993): 403-436. Moodle

### 8.2 Reforming Poor People

#### Reading:

Charles Noble, “The Never Ending War on the Welfare State.” *Logos* 3.2 (Spring 2004). Moodle

Margaret R. Somers and Fred Block, "From Poverty to Perversity: Ideas, Markets, and Institutions over 200 Years of Welfare Debate." *American Sociological Review*, 70, 2 (2005): 260-287. Moodle

Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson, "Winner-Take-All Politics: Public Policy, Political Organization, and the Precipitous Rise of Top Incomes in the United States." *Politics & Society*, 38 (2010): 152-204.

## **Session 9 (11/10) Entitlements, Demographics, and Debt**

### 9.1 Program Design and Demographics

#### Reading:

U.S. Census Bureau, *65+ in the United States: 2005*, [Download](#). Read pp. 1-32, 183

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

John F. Cogan and Olivia S. Mitchell, "Perspectives from the President's Commission on Social Security Reform." *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 17, 2 (2003): 149-172. Moodle

U.S. Government Accountability Office, *The Federal Government's Long-Term Fiscal Outlook*, November 2010. GAO-11-201SP. [Download](#)

Congressional Budget Office, *Long-Term Budget Outlook, 2011*. [Download](#)

### 9.2 Case Study of Medicare Modernization

#### Reading:

1870.0 "Keeping a Campaign Promise: George W. Bush and Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage."

## **Session 10 (11/17) Reinventing the Regulation of the Environment**

### 10.1 Environmental Policy and Politics in Transition

#### Reading:

Michael E. Kraft, "U.S. Environmental Policy and Politics: From the 1960s to the 1990s." *Journal of Policy History* 12,1 (2000) 17-42. Moodle

Daniel J. Fiorino, "Environmental Policy as Learning: A New View of an Old Landscape." *Public Administration Review*, 61, 3. (2001): 322-334. Moodle

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. Moodle.

Glen Sussman, "The USA and Global Environmental Policy: Domestic Constraints on Effective Leadership." *International Political Science Review / Revue internationale de science politique*, 25, 4 (2004): 349-369. Moodle

#### 10.2 Case Study of Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990

##### Reading:

1514.0 "Cleaning up the "Big Dirties": The Problem of Acid Rain."

### **Session 11 (12/1)      Regulating Complexity**

#### 12.1 Case Study of George W. Bush and Arsenic Regulation

##### Reading:

1680.0 "Arsenic in Drinking Water."

#### 12.2 Emerging Challenges: Nanotechnology

##### Reading:

Robin Fretwell Wilson, "Nanotechnology: The Challenge of Regulating Known Unknowns." *Journal of Law, Medicine and Ethics*, 34, 4 (Winter 2006): 704-13. Moodle

J. Clarence (Terry) Davies, EPA and Nanotechnology: Oversight for the 21st Century. (Woodrow Wilson Center, Project on Emerging Nanotechnologies, May 2007). Moodle

### **Session 12 (12/8)**

### **Course Conclusion**