American Public Policy

Baylor University
Political Science (PSC) 3322-01
Spring 2022

Instructor Information
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Office hours: Tuesdays 9:30 AM – 12:30 PM, Thursdays 11:30 AM – 2:30 PM
       (please email me to set an appointment)

Class Time and Location
Tuesdays and Thursdays
3:30 – 4:45 PM
Morrison 120

Course Description and Goals
Government policies impact our lives every single day. From the government-funded road you drive on to get to school or work, to the safety regulations for the food you eat for lunch, to the content of the television shows you watch at night; federal, state, and local governments have a hand in nearly everything we do. In this course, you will learn how our elected officials address specific public problems, and why they select the solutions they do. First, we'll discuss the "players of the game" – political actors and the institutions they're a part of – and weigh different theories about how public policies are ultimately formulated. Along the way, we'll pay close attention to how particular issues and problems grab the public's attention, and how policymakers weigh various alternatives when deciding what to do. Second, you'll earn a new (and exciting!) title: Policy Analyst. You'll become equipped with the tools necessary to systematically evaluate whether a particular policy is achieving its desired goals and whether it's being implemented effectively and efficiently. Third, we'll extensively cover the nitty-gritty of public policies in the United States today, from education to health care to immigration to homeland security. In sum, this course will not only make you a better student, but a better citizen as well; someone who is able to identify public problems, weigh possible solutions, and make informed evaluations about government policies.

As with any endeavor in life, it is important to set goals at the outset so we can evaluate our performance when we finish. So, after taking this course, you should be able to:
- Explain different theories of the public policymaking process, with a detailed knowledge of the political actors and institutions that guide the process along the way
- Evaluate the utility of particular policies and appraise whether they are being implemented effectively, efficiently, and equitably
- Debate intelligently about the problems and corresponding policies in the United States today in the areas of taxes and the budget, health care, social welfare, education, energy and the environment, immigration, criminal justice, and homeland security

- <u>Demonstrate</u> expertise in a particular policy area of your choosing by developing a detailed knowledge of pressing problems and current policy solutions, and by proposing original policy alternatives of your own

Readings
There is one textbook you will need to acquire for this course. It is available at the Baylor Bookstore or from an online retailer. <u>Make sure you purchase the correct edition!</u>

> Michael E. Kraft and Scott R. Furlong. 2020. *Public Policy: Politics, Analysis, and Alternatives* (**7th Edition**). Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press. ISBN: 9781544374611.

In addition, there are reading assignments posted on our class Canvas page. To access them, go to the <u>Modules</u> tab. I will also post detailed assignment guidelines, exam study guides, and other important class documents in this tab so you can access them at your convenience.

Course Requirements
Coming to class is a necessary, but not sufficient, part of being an active participant in the learning process. It is also crucial that you read the assigned material for each class completely and carefully. This course does not have hundreds of pages of reading per week. However, it does require very thorough attention to the reading that is assigned. Doing the assigned reading before each class session will provide important background information and greatly enhance what you learn and ultimately take away from this course. In addition, <u>there will be questions on all exams that are taken directly from the readings</u>. So, do the reading. All of it. Every time. If you don't, your grade for this class will suffer.

Your final grade for this class is made up of six components. The breakdown of the course requirements as a percentage of your final grade is as follows:

100 points (20%)	Exam #1
100 points (20%)	Exam #2
125 points (25%)	Cumulative Final Exam
50 points (10%)	Policy Process Paper
100 points (20%)	Professional Policy Memo
<u>25 points (5%)</u>	Class Attendance (after 2 absences, you lose 5 points for each additional)
500 points (100%)	

Exams
There are three exams for this course, two during the semester and a cumulative final exam. The exams will draw on both class lectures and the assigned readings and are designed so you can demonstrate your understanding of the course material. I will post a detailed <u>study guide</u> prior to the exam to aid your preparation.

The exam will be available on Canvas as a Word document at 6:00 AM on the day of the exam. You are to download the document, type your answers in the allotted time, and then upload your

completed exam in the Assignments tab on Canvas by 11:59 PM. While taking the exam you are to only use your brain (no class notes, readings, study aids, etc.).

The exams will be on the following dates and will take the place of our class meeting that day:

Exam #1: Thursday, February 10
Exam #2: Thursday, March 31
Cumulative Final Exam: Tuesday, May 10

Policy Process Paper (4-5 pages)
What does it take for an idea to become policy? Drawing on class readings and lectures about the policymaking process and paying special attention to how the "three streams" come together, you will select a single national policy decision of your choice and research the process by which it progressed from a policy idea into law. I will post detailed assignment guidelines early on in the semester. Your completed paper must be posted to Canvas by 11:59 PM on Thursday, February 24. It will be graded out of a possible 50 points.

Professional Policy Memo (8-10 pages)
You are to select a policy area of interest, analyze current problems and policies, and then propose your own alternative solutions. After completing this assignment, you will be well on your way to becoming a policy expert in your chosen area. I will post detailed assignment guidelines a few weeks into the semester. Your completed paper must be posted to Canvas by 11:59 PM on Thursday, April 28. It will be graded out of a possible 100 points.

Congressional Committee Hearings
To facilitate discussion and debate about current issues and public policies, we will conduct eight Congressional committee hearings during the semester. Students will serve as committee members, and six students will be assigned to testify as expert witnesses in front of the committee for each hearing. We will make expert witness assignments in the first few weeks of the semester. The date for each Congressional hearing is listed in the detailed schedule at the end of this syllabus.

Policy Solution "Crunch Time" Meetings
To hone our skills as policy analysts, we will have several small group meetings in class during the semester. Your job during these meetings is to collaborate with your classmates and (1) come up with a policy solution for the problem that is presented and (2) explain how you will evaluate whether your policy solution is having its intended effect. Groups will then be responsible for reporting their policy solution to the rest of the class if asked to do so.

Class Attendance
Students who regularly miss class will not do well in this course. At the beginning of every class, I will pass an attendance sign-in sheet around the classroom. It is your responsibility to make sure you sign the sheet for every class session. If you do not sign the sheet, you will be counted as absent for that day.

Each student is allowed **two** unexcused absences during the semester without penalty. For the third and each subsequent absence, a student will lose 5 points (1% of their final course grade) from the Class Attendance component of their grade. In accordance with the Baylor University College of Arts and Sciences' official attendance policy, any student who misses more than seven class sessions (i.e. attends less than 75% of the classes) will automatically receive a failing grade for the semester. So, you are strongly encouraged to attend each and every class session.

If you have any questions about your attendance record during the semester, please contact me.

Questions About Graded Assignments
I am happy to answer any questions about your grade on an exam or written assignment. However, you are required to wait 24 hours after the grade is posted before contacting me to discuss your grade.

Letter Grade Breakdown
I will use the following metric when calculating your semester letter grade. Please note that there will be no "rounding up" for borderline grades. You can view your scores for completed assignments at any time during the semester on our class Canvas page in the Grades tab.

A	465-500 points	(93-100% of the total points possible)
A-	450-464	(90-92.8%)
B+	435-449	(87-89.8%)
B	415-434	(83-86.8%)
B-	400-414	(80-82.8%)
C+	385-399	(77-79.8%)
C	365-384	(73-76.8%)
C-	350-364	(70-72.8%)
D+	335-349	(67-69.8%)
D	315-334	(63-66.8%)
D-	300-314	(60-62.8%)
F	299 or less	(less than 60%)

Late Assignments Policy
Assignments that are uploaded to Canvas late will still be accepted, but with a penalty. For each part of a 24 hour period the assignment is late, your grade will be reduced by 10 points. For example, if you submit your paper two hours late, you will incur a 10 point deduction. If your paper is one day and two hours late, you will incur a 20 point deduction; and so on. So, it certainly benefits you to get all assignments turned in on time.

Academic Integrity
Plagiarism or any form of cheating involves a breach of student-teacher trust. This means that any work submitted under your name is expected to be your own, neither composed by anyone else as a whole or in part, nor handed over to another person for complete or partial revision. Be sure to document all ideas that are not your own. Instances of plagiarism or any other act of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Honor Council and may result in failure of the

course. Not understanding plagiarism is not an excuse. I expect you, as a Baylor student, to be intimately familiar with the Honor Code at: http://www.baylor.edu/honorcode/.

Baylor University Equity, Civil Rights, and Title IX
Baylor University does not tolerate unlawful harassment or discrimination on the basis of sex, gender, race, color, disability, national origin, ancestry, age (over 40), citizenship, genetic information or the refusal to submit to a genetic test, past, current, or prospective service in the uniformed services, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal, Texas, or local law (collectively referred to as Protected Characteristics).

If you or someone you know would like help related to an experience involving:
1. Sexual or gender-based harassment, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, stalking, intimate partner violence, or retaliation for reporting one of these types of prohibited conduct, please visit www.baylor.edu/titleix, call 254.710.8454, or email TitleIX_Coordinator@baylor.edu.
2. Harassment (excluding those issues listed in #1) or adverse action based on Protected Characteristics, please visit www.baylor.edu/civilrights, call 254.710.7100, or email Civil_Rights@baylor.edu.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
Any student who needs academic accommodations related to a documented disability should inform me immediately at the beginning of the semester. You are required to obtain appropriate documentation and information regarding your accommodations from the Office of Access and Learning Accommodation (OALA). Stop by the first floor of Sid Richardson, East Wing in the Paul L. Foster Success Center or call 254.710.3605 or email OALA@baylor.edu.

Detailed Reading/Assignment Schedule for the Semester
Below, I list the class topic and assigned reading for each day of our semester together. You should have the assigned reading completed in time for the class session it is listed next to. So, for example, you should read Chapter 1 in our *Public Policy: Politics, Analysis, and Alternatives* (Kraft and Furlong) textbook and "Hate your cable company? Economics explains why" on Canvas before coming to class on Thursday, January 20. Class sessions where an assignment is due or we have a Congressional committee hearing are indicated with **BOLD LETTERS**.

The following abbreviations are used to indicate where to find the assigned reading for each class session:
- **KF** = Kraft and Furlong, *Public Policy: Politics, Analysis, and Alternatives*
- **C** = Reading available on our class Canvas page (Modules → Class Readings)

Day	Date	Class Topic	Reading/Assignment Due
Tuesday	January 18	Introductions and syllabus	Carefully read the syllabus
Thursday	January 20	Why does government get involved?	(1) KF Ch. 1 (2) C: "Hate your cable company? Economics explains why"

Tuesday	January 25	Government institutions and political actors	KF Ch. 2
Thursday	January 27	Theories of the public policymaking process	KF Ch. 3
Tuesday	February 1	So you want to be a policy analyst?	(1) KF Ch. 4 (2) C: "Can Government Play Moneyball?"
Thursday	February 3	Defining and understanding public problems	KF Ch. 5
Tuesday	February 8	Assessing and explaining policy alternatives	(1) KF Ch. 6 (2) C: "It's time to make ourselves public policy guinea pigs"
Thursday	February 10	**EXAM #1**	
Tuesday	February 15	Managing the economy	KF Ch. 7
Thursday	February 17	The budget process	C: "Introduction to the Federal Budget Process"
Tuesday	February 22	Tax policy	C: "Why It's So Hard To Tax the Rich"
Thursday	February 24	PAPER WORKING DAY	**DUE: POLICY PROCESS PAPER**
Tuesday	March 1	Health care	KF Ch. 8
Thursday	March 3	Health care **Congressional Hearing #1**	(1) C: "Football Team at the Buffet: Why Obamacare Markets Are in Crisis" (2) C: "The fix for American health care can be found in Europe"
Tuesday	March 8	NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK	
Thursday	March 10	NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK	
Tuesday	March 15	Social welfare and poverty	KF Ch. 9
Thursday	March 17	Social welfare and poverty **Congressional Hearing #2**	C: "Automatic Aid for the People? How Jobless Benefits Can Fit the Economy"
Tuesday	March 22	Education	KF Ch. 10
Thursday	March 24	Education **Congressional Hearing #3**	C: "The End of the Education Debate"

Tuesday	March 29	Environment and energy **Congressional Hearing #4**	KF Ch. 11
Thursday	March 31	**EXAM #2**	
Tuesday	April 5	NO CLASS – ENJOY DIADELOSO!	
Thursday	April 7	Immigration **Congressional Hearing #5**	C: "How the United States Immigration System Works"
Tuesday	April 12	NO CLASS	
Thursday	April 14	NO CLASS – HAPPY EASTER!	
Tuesday	April 19	Criminal justice/Law enforcement	C: "Broken Windows"
Thursday	April 21	Criminal justice/Law enforcement **Congressional Hearing #6**	(1) C: "16 theories for why crime plummeted in the US" (2) C: "Trump Doesn't Know Why Crime Rises or Falls. Neither Does Biden. Or Any Other Politician"
Tuesday	April 26	Homeland security **Congressional Hearing #7**	KF Ch. 12
Thursday	April 28	PAPER WORKING DAY	**DUE: PROFESSIONAL POLICY MEMO**
Tuesday	May 3	Social/Moral issues **Congressional Hearing #8**	(1) C: "Public Opinion on Abortion" (2) C: "Where the Public Stands on Religious Liberty vs. Nondiscrimination"
Thursday	May 5	Public policy and political science: How do they fit together?	KF Ch. 13
Tuesday	May 10	**CUMULATIVE FINAL EXAM**	