

# The Graduate School of Political Management

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

## **M.P.S. in Legislative Affairs**

Fall 2017

Class start/end date Aug. 28 – Dec. 14, 2017

**Course Name:** Politics and Public Policy

Course Number LGAF 6201

# Credits 3

Class Day/Time Thursdays, 6 – 8 pm

Class Location Hall of the States

## **BASIC INFORMATION AND RESOURCES**

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### **Instructor**

For most of his career, Gene has worked in politics at either the electoral or policy levels. A veteran Hill staffer, he has worked for several members of Congress and developed a working knowledge of the appropriations and budget processes. Currently, he serves as Director of Legislative Affairs for the District of Columbia Department of Employment Services (DOES). Previously he worked for the Council of District of Columbia where he was Director of the Committee on Business, Consumer, and Regulatory Affairs. The Committee has jurisdiction over workforce development, labor standards, wage replacement programs, small business development policy; business regulatory and consumer affairs; the regulation, sale and distribution of alcoholic products. Gene earned a BS in history from Campbell University, an MA in political management from The George Washington University, and an MA in national security and strategic studies from the U.S. Naval War College. He serves on the Advisory Council of North Carolina State University's School of Public and International Affairs.

### **Contact Information**

Phone Number: (202) 281-8725

Email Address: gene.fisher.dc@gmail.com

### **Communication**

Best phone number to reach me is the (202) 281-8725. I am prompt when responding to email correspondence, and I always acknowledge receipt of email communications. If you do not receive a response from me within 4 to 5 hours, please either text or call me. If you desire to meet with me personally, I am generally available after class. I am available to meet with students most evenings after 5 pm and by appointment on weekends.

### **Blackboard Site**

A Blackboard course site has been set up for this course. Many course materials will be posted and each student is expected to check the site throughout the semester. I regularly email students when new material is posted on the Blackboard site. Students can access the course site at <https://blackboard.gwu.edu>. Support for Blackboard is available at 202-994-4948 or [helpdesk.gwu.edu](mailto:helpdesk.gwu.edu).

### **Academic Integrity**

All members of the university community are expected to exhibit honesty and competence in their academic work. Students have a special responsibility to acquaint themselves with, and make use of, all proper procedures for doing research, writing papers, and taking exams. Members of the community will be presumed to be familiar with the proper academic procedures and will be held responsible for applying them. Deliberate failure to act in accordance with such procedures will be considered academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty is defined as “cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one’s own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” Acts of academic dishonesty are a legal, moral, and intellectual offense against the community and will be prosecuted through the proper university channels. The University Code of Academic Integrity can be found at <http://studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity>.

### **Support for Students with Disabilities**

GW’s Disability Support Services (DSS) provides and coordinates accommodations and other services for students with a wide variety of disabilities, as well as those temporarily disabled by injury or illness. Accommodations are available through DSS to facilitate academic access for students with disabilities. Please notify your instructor if you require accommodations. Additional information is available at <http://disabilitysupport.gwu.edu/>.

### **In the Event of an Emergency or Crisis during Class**

If we experience an emergency during class time, we will try to stay at this location until we hear that we can move about safely. If we have to leave here, we will meet at **[fill in proximate location]** in order to account for everyone and to make certain that everyone is safe. Please refer to Campus Advisories for the latest information on the University’s operating status: <http://www.campusadvisories.gwu.edu/>.

### **Attendance Policy**

Students’ are not graded on attendance; however, they are reminded that class participation accounts for 20 percent of the course grade. Students who do not contribute to class discussion are graded accordingly.

### **Course Evaluation**

At the end of the semester, students will be given the opportunity to evaluate the course through GW’s online course evaluation system. It is very important that you take the time to complete an evaluation. At the course’s end, the professor will ask students to complete an anonymous course evaluation. Students are also encouraged to provide feedback throughout the course of the semester by contacting any/all of the following:

Dr. Steven Billet  
Director, Legislative Affairs Program  
[sbillet@gwu.edu](mailto:sbillet@gwu.edu) | 202-994-1149

Dr. Jack Prostko  
Associate Dean for Learning and Faculty Development  
College of Professional Studies  
[jackp@gwu.edu](mailto:jackp@gwu.edu) | 202-994-3592

Suzanne Farrand  
Director of Academic Administration, GSPM  
[sfarrand@gwu.edu](mailto:sfarrand@gwu.edu) | 202-994-9309

## **THE COURSE**

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### **Legislative Affairs Program Objectives**

Upon completion of the Master's degree in Legislative Affairs, students will:

1. Gain both theoretical and practical knowledge related to the U.S. Congress, general issues in the legislative arena, and how to effectively advance legislation;
2. Hone their oral and written communication skills in both theoretical and technical aspects of legislative affairs;
3. Be able to conduct cutting-edge research and engage in effective problem solving by learning critical thinking skills;
4. Learn how to work effectively with others, the value of collaborative work, and will understand ethical issues involved in the legislative arena.

### **Course Description and Overview**

The Politics and Public Policy course is about policy processes, making choices and getting things done in our political institutions, principally at the federal level. The course looks at process models and policy choice theories decision makers use to achieve positive political outcomes and solutions to public policy problems.

### **Course Learning Objectives**

Course objectives are to expand the students' understanding and knowledge of the particular concepts that influence the policy process, including the study of process models and policy choice theories.

Specific learning objectives for the course are to:

1. Increase the ability to perform effectively as a decision maker or staff member in a political institution's decision-making structure;
2. Apply critical thinking and analyze policy decisions and implementation involving complex political issues; and
3. Increase understanding of key concepts and issues that impact on, and are useful in developing policy solutions, making policy choices, and addressing public policy challenges within the political environment.

### **Course Requirements**

#### **Short Essays**

Each student will be required to write and submit at least two summary essays of one page in length in memo form (approximately 500 - 750 words), single spaced (or two pages, double-spaced) analyzing topics assigned in class. These essays will be assigned at roughly equal intervals over the course of the semester. Essays will focus on analyzing key concepts, principles and, where appropriate, historical phenomena or case studies covered in course readings and other relevant material. Although some of the readings deal with historical case studies, students should avoid straying into factual or historical

narration such as dates, proper names and detailed descriptions of events. The emphasis is to focus on key concepts and principles of public policy analysis.

**Group Project**

Students will participate in a group project, policy-development exercise to cover the concepts discussed in this course. From this exercise students will gain an understanding of how policy process works. Elements of the project will require groups to:

- Analyze and define a public issue/problem;
- Develop a solution;
- Examine the solution’s strengths and limitations;
- Consider alternatives;
- Discuss expected outcomes;
- Develop plans to advance an issue to the government’s agenda; and
- Identify key official and unofficial actors.

The exercise will require policy groups to prepare a policy decision memo and make a 15-minute policy proposal presentation before a panel of experienced judges.

**Evaluation and Grading**

Assignment	Learning Objective(s) Addressed	Due Date	Weight
One-Page Memo No. 1	Application of public policy concepts and principles	As assigned	10%
One-Page Memo No. 2	Application of public policy concepts and principles	As assigned	10%
Group Policy Project Presentation	See above	As assigned	30%
Exam	Demonstrate a comprehension of the material covered in the course	Dec. 8	30%
Participation			20%
Total			100%

Following is the grade scale for all GSPM classes:

Grade*	Grading Standard
A 94-100	Your work is outstanding and ready for submission in a professional environment. Your material, effort, research, and writing demonstrate superior work.

A-	90-93	Represents solid work with minor errors. Overall, excellent work.
B+	87-89	Very good. Represents well-written material, research, and presentation, but needs some minor work.
B	83-86	Satisfactory work, but needs reworking and more effort. Note that although not a failing grade, at the graduate level, anything below a “B” is viewed as unacceptable.
B-	80-82	You’ve completed the assignment, but you are not meeting all of the requirements.
C+	77-79	Needs improvement in content and in effort. Shows some motivation and concern.
C	73-76	Needs reworking, improved effort, and additional research. Shows minimal motivation and concern.
C-	70-72 (lowest grade to pass)	Poor performance. Major errors, too many misspellings, problems with accuracy, etc.
F	Below 70	Unacceptable performance, or inability to submit the assignment.

\*Please note that you may be penalized for late submission of assignment(s).

### Required Text and Learning Materials

#### Politics and Public Policy

John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policy* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)

Deborah A. Stone, *Policy Paradox* (2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.)

Paul Light, *The President’s Agenda*

Paul Light, *Government’s Greatest Achievements*

Selected readings on Blackboard

### Optional Supplemental Text and Learning Materials

Additional readings may be assigned and will be posted on Blackboard.

### Tentative Course Calendar\*

\*The instructor reserves the right to alter course content and/or adjust the pace to accommodate class progress. Students are responsible for keeping up with all adjustments to the course calendar.

### Course Schedule

#### Week 1: August 28 (Cancelled, class material will be covered on Sept. 7)

##### Orientation

Course Introduction: The Policy Making Process and Elements of the Policy Making System

Readings for Next Week: Read Assignments posted on BB: Theodoulou: “The Contemporary Language of Public Policy: Starting to Understand”; Mezey: “Congress Within the U.S. Presidential System”; Edsall: Chaps. 1-A, 1-B, 2 and 3; start reading *Policy Paradox* (Stone).

#### Week 2: September 7

##### Structural Context of the Policy Making System

Readings for Next Week: On BB Cahn: “Institutional and Non-Institutional Actors”, Continue reading *Policy Paradox* (Stone)

**Group Project Assignments**  
**Hand Out 1<sup>st</sup> One Pager Assignment**

**Week 3, September 14**

**Official and Unofficial Actors in the System**

Readings: Continue with *Policy Paradox* (Stone) and start reading *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policy* (Kingdon)

**Assignment Due Next Week: 1<sup>st</sup> One Pager**

**Week 4, September 21**

**Reserved for Guest Lecturer: Examination of the Historical/Structural Context of the Government of the District of Columbia**

Readings for Next Week: Finish *Policy Paradox* (Stone) and start reading *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policy* (Kingdon)

**Assignment Due: One-Pager**

**Week 5, September 28**

**Rational theory versus Practical Political Thinking**

Readings for Next Week: Finish reading *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policy* (Kingdon) and start reading the *President's Agenda* (Paul Light)

**Hand Out 2nd One Pager Assignment**

**Week 6, October 5**

**Setting the Policy Agenda: Interest Groups, Focusing Events, and Power**

Readings: Finish the *President's Agenda* (Light)

**Assignment Due Next Week: 2<sup>nd</sup> One Pager**

**Week 7, October 12**

Reserved for Guest Lecturer TBA

**Assignment Due: 2<sup>nd</sup> One Pager**

**Week 8, October 19**

**The President's most important power**

Readings: Start reading *Government's Greatest Achievements* (Light)

**Week 9, October 26**

**Policy Types, Policy Designs, and Tools**

Readings: BB: Lowi: "4 Systems"; start reading *Government's Greatest Achievements* Continue reading *Government's Greatest Achievements* (Light) and start reading *Politics and Public Policy* (Van Horn, et. al.)

**Assignment Due Next Class: Group Project Written Presentations**

**Week 10, November 2**

Policy Implementation and Learning from Successes and Failures

Readings for Next Class: Finish *Government's Greatest Achievements* (Light)

**Assignment Due: Group Project Written Presentations**

**Week 11, November 9**  
**What Government Does Right**  
**Assignment Due Next Class: Group Policy Presentations**

**Week 12, November 16**  
**Group Policy Presentations**  
Readings for Next Class: *Politics and Public Policy* (Van Horn, et. al.)

**(November 23, Thanksgiving holiday)**

**Week 13, November 30**  
**Examining Policy Domains**

**Week 14, December 7**  
**Course Review**  
**Distribute Final Exam**

**Week 15, December 14**  
**Exams due.**

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### **Copyright Statement**

*Unless explicitly allowed by the instructor, course materials, class discussions, and examinations are created for the express use of class participants only. The recording and rebroadcasting of such material, by any means, is forbidden.*

### **Key Dates**

**September 21** – 1<sup>st</sup> One Pager (Hard Copy)

**October 5** – 2<sup>nd</sup> One Pager (Hard Copy)

**November 3** – Group Project Written Presentations (Hard and Electronic Copies)

**November 2** – Group Project Presentations (Hard and Electronic Copies)

**November 23** – Thanksgiving

**Exams Distributed** – December 7

**Exams Returned** – December 14 (Hard and Electronic Copies)