

The Graduate School of Political Management

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

M.P.S. in Legislative Affairs

Spring 2017

Class start/end date January 19 – April 27, 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

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 Counsel 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.

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.

Out-of-Class/ Independent Learning Expectation

Over the course of the semester, students will spend at least 2 hours (100 minutes) per week in class. Required reading for the class meetings and written response papers or projects are expected to take up, on average, 7 hours (350 minutes) per week. Over the course of the semester, students will spend 25 hours in instructional time and 87.5 hours preparing for class.

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 | 202-994-1149

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

Suzanne Farrand
Director of Academic Administration, GSPM
sfarrand@gwu.edu | 202-994-9309

THE COURSE

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.

Course Paper

Students are required to write a 15-page paper on a specific topic in either the internal or domestic policy environments. The paper is the vehicle by which the student will demonstrate an understanding of the structural contexts and environmental factors influencing the decision making, planning, and policy making processes that make government policy. More information will be presented at the course orientation.

Group Project Analysis

Evaluation and Grading

Students will be assigned to policy groups

Assignment	Learning Objective(s) Addressed	Due Date	Weight
Short Essay No. 1	Application of public policy concepts and principles	As assigned	10%
Short Essay No. 2	Application of public policy concepts and principles	As assigned	10%
Group Policy Analysis Presentation	Student Groups will be assigned to perform a policy analysis for presentation before a panel of judges. The purpose of this exercise is to take the policy concepts that we have discussed in class and apply them to a real world situation. From this exercise students will gain an understanding of how to study an issue/problem, analyze a solution that has been proposed in terms of its strengths and limitations, develop alternatives, and identify official and unofficial actors (stakeholders).	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* (2nd ed.)

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

John B. Judis, *The Paradox of American Democracy*

Paul Light, *The President’s Agenda*

Paul Light, *Government’s Greatest Achievements*

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.

Week 1: January 19

Orientation

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

Readings for Next Week: Start Reading *The Paradox of American Democracy* (John Judis)

Week 2: January 26

Structural Context of the Policy Making System

Readings for Next Week: Finish Judis' *The Paradox of American Democracy* and start reading *Policy Paradox* (Stone)

Group Project Assignments

Hand Out 1st One Pager Assignment

Week 3, February 2

Official and Unofficial Actors in the System

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

Assignment Due: 1st One Pager

Week 4, February 9

Guest Lecturer:

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

Hand Out 2nd One Pager Assignment

Week 5, February 16

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)

Assignment Due Next Week: 2nd One Pager

Week 6, February 23

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

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

Assignment Due: 2nd One Pager

Week 7, March 2

Guest Lecturer TBA

Week 8, March 9

The President's most important power

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

Assignment Due Next Class: Group Project Written Presentations

Spring Break: March 16

Week 9, March 23

Policy Types, Policy Designs, and Tools

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

Assignment Due: Group Project Written Presentations

Week 10, March 30

Policy Implementation and Learning from Successes and Failures

Assignment Due Next Week: Group Project Presentations

Week 11, April 6

Assignment Due: Group Project Presentations

Week 12, April 13

What Government Does Right

Week 13, April 20

Examining Policy Domains

Week 14, December 8

Final Exam

Copyright Statement

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

Key Dates

February 2 – 1st One Pager (Hard Copy)

February 23 – 2nd One Pager (Hard Copy)

March 23 – Group Project Written Presentations (Hard and electronic copies)

April 6 – Group Policy Presentations before panel of judges

April 27 – Final exams due