

Masters in Legislative Affairs Program
The George Washington University
LGAF 6201 LH: Politics and Public Policy
Summer 2016

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Overview:

What is public policy, and what is the role of politics in setting the government's policy agenda? How does the political situation in Washington affect the issues our government acts on, and the policy choices our government makes? This course focuses on these questions. Policy choices are POLITICAL decisions. What that means, and how it affects policy outcomes, is our subject.

The course has three learning objectives; at the end of the course, students will:

- Be familiar with public policy theories and how they aid in understanding modern political debates
- Recognize the key players (both inside and outside of government) who participate in the US national public policy-making system, what roles they play, and how they take part in decision-making
- Examine their own roles/prospective roles in the public policy system and understand how to perform those roles more effectively

The course consists of three sections. **Section One** offers a brief perspective on prevailing public policy theories and the process of political decision-making. **Section Two** examines the roles of the major players in the policy process: how do the Congress, the Administration, the Courts, interest groups and the media shape policy-making? What can each do to achieve their goals, place their issues on the agenda, and/or thwart the policy aspirations of the other players in the game? How have their tactics and strategies changed over the years? What has impacted those changes? How does the media participate in the process? This course will place a heavy importance on Congress and the complexities which exist within the institution. **Section Three** brings our examination of the nexus of politics and policy into focus through the examination of a case study and how the 2014 election will impact future public policy.

Readings:

Stone, Deborah, *Policy Paradox*. (Norton 2005)

Waxman, Henry, *The Waxman Report: How Congress Really Works* (Twelve 2009)

Selected Readings from The Waxman Report will be provided. No need to purchase book.

Additional Readings May Be Assigned

From **electronic reserves** (accessible through our Blackboard site):

Congressional Management Foundation, *Communicating with Congress*, 2008

How your grade will be determined:

- Research Paper: 40%
- Impact Analysis: 10%
- Reflection Paper: 10%
- Participation: 40% [This course format is intended to be interactive]

Assignments:

1.) ONE-PAGERS

At the conclusion of sections one and two of the course, you will be required to write a one-page summary of the material you read and the discussions we had in class. Specifically, do the readings make sense? Do you feel they are helpful in understanding how the public/political process takes place? Would you suggest any other readings?

2.) IMPACT ANALYSIS

This will be a short analysis (3-4 pages) of the ongoing immigration debate. Specifically, your analysis of the potential outcome (your opinion of what the ultimate result will be); its political implications (2014 and beyond); and its future impact on other public policy matters (i.e. health care; entitlement spending, etc.).

Your Impact Analysis is due: **Thursday, August 4th** at the beginning of class

3.) RESEARCH PAPER

Utilizing the required reading materials, class discussions, and information presented by guest speakers, you will write a public policy research paper, 10-12 pages in length, which looks at a major issue in domestic public policy. Additional information will be provided during the first class. Here are some suggestions:

The bruised and battered Obama agenda
Shale: How to become energy independent while protecting the environment
Social security privatization
Protecting the sanctity of the American family
Improving elementary and secondary education
Military reform
Telecommunications & Technology Policy Reform
Privacy

*One-Page Summary of Topic & Research Due on **Thursday, July 7th** at the beginning of class

*Your paper is due on **Friday, August 12th**, by 11:59 p.m.

4.) REFLECTION PAPER

This is your chance to review the course—and me—your perspective—a personal reflection (1-2 pages) of what you have learned, how you learned it, expectations v. reality, and your thoughts for how to improve the class. I have no set format and want you to come at this assignment any way that makes sense to you.

Your Reflection Paper is Due on **Tuesday, August 13th** by 11:59pm

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://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>.

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. Additional information is available at www.gwu.edu/~dss.

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SECTION I:

5 July: Course Introduction/Overview

READINGS: None

7 July: Basic Public Policy Theory

READINGS: Stone; Chapter 1

ASSIGNMENT: One-Page Research Paper Summary Due

12 July: Political Decision Making (Part I)

READINGS: Stone; Chapters 2-5

14 July: Political Decision Making (Part II)

READINGS: Stone; Chapters 6-10

19 July: In-Class Exercise

21 July: A Historical Perspective: The Evolution of Political Decision Making

READINGS: TBD

GUEST SPEAKER: TBD

26 July: Political Decision Making (Part III)

READINGS: Stone; Chapters 11-15

SECTION II:

28 July: The Judiciary: A Growing Public Policy Role?

*READINGS: U.S. Supreme Court Opinion (Majority & Dissenting) on PPACA
Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.*

*U.S. Supreme Court Opinion (Majority & Dissenting) on PPACA
King v. Burwell*

*U.S. Supreme Court Opinion (Majority & Dissenting) on SSM
Obergefell v. Ohio*

ASSIGNMENT: One-Pager #1 Due

2 August: The Influence Game: How Outside Groups & the Media Impact Public Policy

READINGS: Congressional Management Foundation, Communicating with Congress, 2008

GUEST SPEAKERS: TBD

4 August: The Presidency: Setting The Agenda

READINGS: TBD

ASSIGNMENT: One-Pager #2 Due

ASSIGNMENT: Impact Analysis Due

SECTION III:

9 August: Looking Forward: 2016 Elections & The Impact on Public Policy

*READINGS: Paul C. Light, "Government's Greatest Priorities in Next Half Century,"
Brookings Reform Watch, December 2001*

11 August: Course Wrap-Up/Final Research Paper-related Questions/In-Class Project

12 August: **ASSIGNMENT: Research Paper Due by 11:59pm**