

POLS 4340; 5350: Issues in Public Policy

Course Description

Initially, focus in this course will be on the fundamentals of public policy, addressing such topics as (1) how public policy needs are determined; (2) the making of public policy through law making; (3) the making of public policy through rule-making; (4) interest group involvement; (5) problems in the implementation of public policy; (6) the politics of public policy; and (7) public policy evaluation and outcome analysis. The first six fundamentals focus on the nature of public policy need-awareness, policy content, public policy making processes, the politics involved, and public policy implementation hurdles that must be overcome for public policy to be implemented successfully. All of this helps us to develop a conceptually strong understanding of what public policy as an academic and practical field is all about. The seventh fundamental listed will be our chief focus for the first few weeks of the course to allow us to develop a framework for policy analysis so that we can all be on the same page when we discuss and analyze various public policy issues for the remainder of the semester.

The rest of the course will focus on major public policy issues facing America, almost entirely focusing on domestic issues (e.g., issues related to housing; welfare; health care; education; homeland security; veterans; election administration; social security; law and order; due process and equal protection; privacy rights, economy and jobs, immigration, DACA, border security, municipal court reform, Black Lives Matter, TIFFs). Each week students will be expected to prepare and present a public policy issue and lead a seminar discussion on their public policy topic, although I will also help moderate the discussion. All students will be assigned to read materials pertaining to the upcoming topic so that informed discussions and analysis can take place from week to week. To guarantee that students responsibly read the assignments, each week three students will be randomly targeted to answer questions about the readings.

The presentations and discussions will adhere to a certain format so all public policy issues are presented in a consistent manner throughout the semester. This will insure that specific public policy concerns are addressed. For example, when proposed solutions are presented for a public policy issue, the anticipated costs/benefits must be addressed. These presentations should allow for some exciting seminar discussions. The overall purpose is to make students think deeply about the major public policy issues facing America, allowing them to understand that theoretical solutions to policy problems may not always be politically feasible. For instance, adopting universal health care may have been the best solution to America's health care challenges, but in the prevailing political climate it was never politically feasible. "Compromise" is a word that plays a key role in public policy planning, making, and implementation.

Course/Topical Outline

Date and Topic	Assignments/Readings*
Jan. 18: Introduction to the seminar. What is public policy?	Read background materials on public policy (e.g., how public policies are made; politics of public policy; interest group politics; implementation problems). I will email you some articles to read. Buy and look over Bardach book.
Jan. 25: General discussion of public policy as a field of study	Readings: Bardach, Intro. and Part 1
Feb. 1: Discussion of lessons to be learned from Bardach	Readings: Bardach, Parts II and III
Feb. 8: Discussion of lessons to be learned from Bardach	Read Bardach, Parts IV & Appendices A and B. Think about the public policy issues that we will want to discuss, as well as ideas for your own public policy seminar paper. First students selected to present and lead discussion
Feb. 15 Discussion: Topic of the week t	Readings on public policy topic of the week
Feb. 22: Discussion: Topic of the week	Readings on public policy topic of the week

Feb. 29: Discussion: Topic of the week	Readings on public policy topic of the week
March 1: Discussion: Topic of the week	Readings on public policy topic of the week
March 8: Discussion: Topic of the week	Reading on public policy topic of the week
March 15: Spring break	No new assignments
March 22: Discussion: Topic of the week	Readings on public policy topic of the week
March 29: Spring break	Due to an awkward scheduling of the cancellation of undergraduate classes, but the holding of graduate classes, the class will be cancelled for Easter break
April 5: Discussion: Topic of the week	Readings on public policy topic of the week
April 12: Discussion: Topic of the week	Readings on public policy topic of the week
April 19: Discussion: Topic of the week	Readings on public policy topic of the week
April 26: Discussion: Concluding discussion on lessons to be learned about identifying, analyzing, and proposing viable solutions to public policy problems	Readings on conclusions about resolving the challenges of public policy problem solving
May 3: Papers due	Celebration of end of class

*Most of our readings will be selected on a week to week basis to address the public policy topic for the upcoming week. Two students per week will select the public policy topic and be responsible for sending to the class the reading materials for that week. I may send some reading materials as well. These two students will also be responsible for presenting and leading the discussion on the chosen public policy topic for that week. I will also help to facilitate the discussion.

Contact Information

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursdays: 10:45-10:55 am; 12:15-1:00 pm; 6:45-7:00 pm; and by appointment; students are also encouraged to call my home phone to talk to me about any assignments/issues/concerns/problems

Required Readings*

Bardach, Eugene and Eric M. Patashnik, *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*, 5th ed. (2011) or 5th ed. revised (CQ Press, 2015), ISBN -13: 978-1483359465.

*Articles/books are listed in the Course Outline above. Most reading materials will be added to the required reading list since students are responsible for assigning reading materials from week to week when they present their topics and lead the public policy discussion topic for that week.

Grading Policies

Course Grading Policy

Participation 125

Oral Report 50

Seminar Paper 225

Total Points 400*

*The numerical equivalents of letter grades are:

94-100 = A 91-93 = A- 88-90 = B+ 82-87 = B 80-81 = B-

77-79 = C+ 73-76 = C 70-72 = C- 65-69 = D Below 65 = F

- Grade percentages are determined by dividing the total number of points accumulated in the course by 400 points or the total possible points.
- Graduate students will be expected to perform at a higher level than undergraduate students. Graduate student papers should also be more comprehensive than undergraduate papers. While graduate student papers should run between 24-28 pages, undergraduate student papers should run 18-23 pages. Also, graduate students papers should include more rigorous analysis than undergraduate student papers. This will be explained more in class so every student understands what is expected of them.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is very important in seminars because participation in discussions is crucial. Of course, participation is a key element in determining your grade. Also, do not miss a week when you are responsible for presenting a public policy issue. If for some reason you cannot attend, please notify me as soon as possible. To get credit for the course, students cannot have any more than three unexcused absences, but any unexcused absence will hurt your participation grade since you will not be present to participate. Remember, missing one seminar constitutes missing one complete week of classes and probably the entire public policy issue on the agenda for the week., so please try to come to all classes. Thanks.

Course Objectives

Basically, I have a threefold objective in teaching this course. Firstly, I want students to learn a lot about the academic and practical field of public policy. Secondly, I want students to develop a critical understanding of the issues in public policy. That means I want students to learn to think in a conceptually scholarly way about how public policies are formed, implemented, and analyzed. And thirdly, I want students to scrutinize various public policy problems facing the United States today. This will involve defining a public policy problem; gathering facts/evidence pertaining to the problem; designating and weighing various feasible alternatives to resolving the problem (practically speaking, improving upon the problem); and settling upon the best course to take to reduce the severity of the problem.

Modes of Evaluation and Skills

Students will be assessed on their ability to learn and retain course materials, as well as on their ability to think critically about the subject matter, as demonstrated in seminar discussions, oral presentations, and in their seminar paper. As the semester progresses students will be evaluated on their progress toward thinking critically about public policy problems.

Skills/Knowledges Being Assessed

Students are assessed on their ability to: (1) show improved knowledge of the public policy area as an academic and practical field; (2) identify and define various public policy problems in acceptable public policy terms; (3) identify and evaluate various public policy alternatives to help resolve a defined public policy problem within the context of political realities and in light of credible evidence; (4) select and identify the most viable public policy alternative; and (5) defend their choices of action from the beginning to the end.

In-Class Activities

In-class activities will consist of pro-seminar lectures, as well as thorough discussions of various topics in public policy, including the presentation and analysis of specific public policy problems facing America. Students will be expected to keep up with the reading assignments, especially the assigned current articles from the Internet and other articles so that they can participate meaningfully in seminar discussions pertaining to various public policy problems from week to week. These in-class discussions are important, so a significant percentage of the final grade will reflect how well students did in participating in seminar discussions and presentations. To guarantee responsible readings of the materials, each week three students at random will be targeted to answer questions about the readings.

Student Success Center Syllabus Statement

In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. The Student Success Center assists students with academic and career related services, is located in the Busch Student Center (Suite, 331) and the School of Nursing (Suite, 114). Students can visit www.slu.edu/success to learn more about:

- Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.
- University-level support (e.g., tutoring services, university writing services, disability services, academic coaching, career services, and/or facets of curriculum planning).

Title IX Syllabus Statement

Saint Louis University and its faculty are committed to supporting our students and seeking an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have encountered any form of sexual misconduct (e.g. sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, domestic or dating violence), we encourage you to report this to the University. If you speak with a faculty member about an incident of misconduct, that faculty member must notify SLU's Title IX coordinator, Anna R. Kratky (DuBourg Hall, room 36; akratky@slu.edu; [314-977-3886](tel:314-977-3886)) and share the basic facts of your experience with her. The Title IX coordinator will then be available to assist you in understanding all of your options and in connecting you with all possible resources on and off campus.

If you wish to speak with a confidential source, you may contact the counselors at the University Counseling Center at 314-977-TALK. To view SLU's sexual misconduct policy and for resources, please visit the following web addresses:

<http://www.slu.edu/general-counsel-home/office-of-institutional-equity-and-diversity/sexual-misconduct-policy>

www.slu.edu/here4you .

Academic Integrity and Honesty

<http://www.slu.edu/college-of-arts-and-sciences-home/undergraduate-education/academic-honesty>

<http://www.slu.edu/x12657.xml>

The University is a community of learning, whose effectiveness requires an environment of mutual trust and integrity. Academic integrity is violated by any dishonesty such as soliciting, receiving, or providing any unauthorized assistance in the completion of work submitted toward academic credit. While not all forms of academic dishonesty can be listed here, examples include copying from another student, copying from a book or class notes during a closed book exam, submitting materials authored by or revised by another person as the student's own work, copying a passage or text directly from a published source without appropriately citing or recognizing that source, taking a test or doing an assignment or other academic work for another student, securing or supplying in advance a copy of an examination without the knowledge or consent of the instructor, and colluding with another student or students to engage in academic dishonesty.

Any clear violation of academic integrity will be met with appropriate sanctions. Possible sanctions for violation of academic integrity may include, but are not limited to, assignment of a failing grade in a course, disciplinary probation, suspension, and dismissal from the University. Students should review the College of Arts and Sciences policy on Academic Honesty, which can be accessed on-line at

<http://www.slu.edu/college-of-arts-and-sciences-home/undergraduate-education> under "Quicklinks for Students" or in hard copy form in the Arts and Sciences Policy Binder in each departmental or College office.

Students with Special Needs - Disability Services

<http://www.slu.edu/x24491.xml>

Any student who feels that he/she may need academic accommodations in order to meet the requirements of this course—as outlined in the syllabus, due to presence of a disability, should contact the Office of Disabilities Services <<http://www.slu.edu/x24491.xml>>. Please telephone the office at 314-977-8885, or visit Suite 331 in the Busch Student Center. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

