Course Overview:

This course is intended to serve as an introduction to public policymaking processes in the United States with special emphasis on the formation of public policy. During the course of the semester we will cover multiple theories about the policy formation process and discuss the many actors that help shape policy outcomes. Specifically, the role ideas, interests, and institutions play in the policymaking process is examined. Case studies of current issues are also examined within the context of the theories. By the end of the course students will have a general knowledge of the policymaking process and will be able to apply that knowledge to understand policy outcomes in the United States. **There are no prerequisites.**

**STRUCTURE OF COURSE**

**Course Material/Readings:** There is one required textbook for this course. All other course readings outside of the required text are available on blackboard.


**Student Requirements:**

1. **Assignments:** Completion of periodic assignments to test the student’s ability to think critically about the material.

2. **Exams:** Five exams consisting of multiple choice and short answer questions are given to test comprehension of the material.

3. **Policy Examination Essay:** Students will research one policy issue area and discuss the actors involved in the policy process as well as explain whether ideas, interests, or institutions played a role in the policy outcome.

**Class Format:** The course is divided into weekly segments. Each week has a lesson plan which contains links to any outside material not provided on Blackboard and instructions for completing the assignments for that week. Reading questions are provided for each reading. These questions are designed to help you focus on the key points in the articles. Although these questions are not graded, you should answer the questions as you complete the readings. They will be used to test your knowledge of the reading in weekly quizzes.
All quizzes and exams will be posted online. The due dates for the exams are posted on each exam, but are always due by Sunday at 11:59 p.m.

All assignments are posted online. The instructions and due dates for the assignments are posted on each assignment, but are always due by Sunday at 11:59 p.m.

For all work, the Purdue University Student Code of Conduct is in effect. Every assignment, quiz, and exam must be your own work. Students who cheat or copy will fail the course and be turned into the Dean of Students.

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### GRADES AND POLICIES

**Evaluation:**


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<th>Components</th>
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<tr>
<td>Assignments</td>
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<td>Policy Essay</td>
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<td>Exams</td>
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**Grades:** It is a violation of FIRPA to discuss grades via email. As a result, UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCE WILL I DISCUSS GRADES OTHER THAN BY APPOINTMENT. Since this is a distance learning course, appointments are scheduled in person or via Skype or some other electronic teleconferencing means. All emails asking about grades will be referred to this syllabus.

***Please note: Your grades are your responsibility, not mine. If you are doing poorly I am always available to help. It is your responsibility, however, to seek help as soon as you know your grades are not as good as you would like. **DO NOT wait until the end of the semester to ask how you can improve your grade.** By that point there will be little you or I can do to help improve the situation.***

**Extra credit:** I periodically offer extra credit, though this is NOT guaranteed. If you are concerned about your grade you should take these opportunities if offered. **Under no circumstance will I offer extra credit at the end of the semester just for you because you are unhappy with your grade.** All requests for extra credit will be referred to this syllabus.

**Make-up Policy:** I do not give make-up exams, quizzes, or assignments unless you have a verified absence by the Dean of Students. In such cases it is your responsibility to contact me to arrange a time to make-up the missed assignment. At my discretion make-up assignments, quizzes, and/or exams may be different than that given in class, but will be of equal difficulty level.

**Special Needs:** If you are an individual with a disability and require accommodations for this class, please notify the instructor immediately.
COURSE SCHEDULE:

31 Aug  Introduction

Goals: To familiarize yourself with the course website and understand the structure of the syllabus and the expectations for the semester.

THE POLICY FORMATION PROCESS

2 Sep  What is Public Policy?

Goals: To understand what is meant by public policy.

Questions: Who makes policy? What is a functionary? Why is it important for policymaking to remain political? Why do many people distrust democratic politics when it comes to policymaking? What is the link between political inequality and the policymaking process?

Readings: Lindblom and Woodhouse. The Policy-Making Process. Chapter 1

4 Sep  The Policymaking Process

Goals: To understand the basic structure of the policymaking process as well as the policy lifecycle.

Questions: What are the five stages of the policymaking process? Define agenda setting. How does political ideology drive the political agenda? How is the media involved in agenda setting? How do special interests impact the policymaking process? How do you change policy through grassroots actions? What role does public opinion play in the policymaking process? What is it called when political leaders refuse to pursue a particular policy because they fear that certain powerful interests may oppose it?

Readings: (n.a.), Politics and the Policymaking Process, Chapter 1

7 Sep  No Class – Labor Day

9 Sep  Ideas, Interests, and Institutions

Goals: To understand the US policymaking process in broad terms, with a focus on agenda setting and the role of policy entrepreneurs, as well as understand the main features of the US government and politics at the federal, state, and local levels.

Questions: What is necessary in order for an issue to make it on the policy agenda? What are some of the most central factors in the politics of policymaking? What is the difference between group, elite, institutional, and rational choice theory? What is the policy process model? List and define each stage of the policy process. What is the policy stream? Who/what is a policy entrepreneur? What role do international policy
actors play in US policy decisions? What role do technical experts play in US policy decisions?


11 Sep  The Policymaking Process

Goals: To identify some of the problems associated with policy formation.

Questions: What is the consequence of limited cognitive ability in policymaking? Do the authors consider the policymaking process democratic? Do the authors view policymaking as a rational process? What do the author’s mean by being caught between the devil and the deep? Are policies typically good for all?


14 Sep  Policy Formation and Human Cognition

Goals: To understand the limits of human cognition on the decision making process.

Questions: Should hugely consequential decisions always be rationally deliberated? Is it possible to overanalyze a decision? Are the decision-making styles of the people we put in power important? What are the benefits and costs of focusing on small variations from present policies? What are the four strategies employed for making social problems more comprehensible for policy makers? How do complex social problems become manageable?

Readings: Lindblom and Woodhouse, The Policy-Making Process Chapter 3

16 Sep  Policy Formation and Human Cognition

Goals: To understand the limits of human cognition on the decision making process.

Questions: Do all decisions require the same mental tools? How did Chesley Sullenberger, the pilot of the US Airways flight that landed on the Hudson a couple of months ago, choose to divert to the river to execute that flawless emergency landing without a single fatality? What is the difference between rational deliberation and an emotional gut instinct? Should hugely consequential decisions always be rationally deliberated? Can you over-analyze a situation? What are some limits to cognition?


18 Sep  EXAM 1
THE ACTORS INVOLVED IN THE POLICY FORMATION PROCESS

21 Sep  
Policymaking and the Bureaucracy

Goals: To understand the role and impact of the bureaucracy in the policy making process.

Questions: How are bureaucrats active in the policy making process? What is the result of vague policies? Why are street-level bureaucrats in a better position to implement policies? Give two examples of the limitations on bureaucratic intelligence.


23 Sep  
Policymaking and the Bureaucracy

Goals: To understand the history of the American bureaucracy in theory and in action.

Questions: How can power be “gathered undesirably” by an agency? Why did the status of the US Post Office as a monopoly inhibit its efficiency? Why has the military budget increased even as its numbers decrease? In what ways was the US system a “client oriented bureaucracy”? How do separated powers keep US institutions from changing? How do majoritarian politics help presidents intent on creating new programs? Why do agencies resist deregulation?


25 Sep  
Policymaking and the Legislature

Goals: To understand the role of the citizen in shaping public policy.

Questions: How do citizens influence policy? Do the authors consider voters to be intelligent and well-informed about elected officials? What does a voter need to do in order to use his/her vote effectively? What is the problem with one vote versus many policies? Do different systems of voting have different effects on the ability of voters to translate their views into policy?

Readings:  Lindblom and Woodhouse, The Policy-Making Process Chapter 4

28 Sep  
Policymaking and the Legislature

Goals: To understand the role of elected functionaries in shaping public policy.

Questions: Why does direct authority with regard to policymaking rest largely in the hands of elected functionaries, their appointees, and civil servants? How do elites pose a threat to democratic policymaking? What does “the gains for democracy are bought at a cost” mean? How does our current system of checks and balances lead to a tyranny over the majority by the minority? What are the advantages and limitations of political parties? Why are political arrangements often designed to obstruct popular control?

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30 Sep  
Exam 2 review

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2 Oct  
EXAM 2

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**DECISION-MAKING THEORIES**

5 Oct  
**Policy Formation and “Group Think”**

*Goals*: To understand the nature of groupthink and how it impacts the policy formation process.

*Questions*: What is groupthink? What are the symptoms of groupthink? How can groupthink be avoided?


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7 Oct  
**The Rationalization of Policymaking**

*Goals*: To understand how the rational choice model can be applied to explain policy outcomes.

*Questions*: How do analysts think about problems of foreign and military policy? According to the rational choice model, how do analysts attempt to understand policy decisions? What set of assumptions characterizes the rational-policy model? What are the characteristics of the national actor? How is action chosen? What does Allison mean when he says “Rational choice is value-maximizing”? 


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9 Oct  
**The Bureaucratic Politics Model**

*Goals*: To understand how the bureaucratic politics model can be applied to explain policy outcomes.

*Questions*: According to the bureaucratic politics model, how are policy decisions understood? What is bureaucratic politics? How are government decisions made according to the bureaucratic politics model? Who are the actors? What defines what players may and must do? How are solutions to strategic problems achieved? Each player’s ability to “play” successfully is determined by what? Give three examples of complications to policymaking which arise as a result of democratic governance.

**12 Oct**  
No Class – October Break

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**14 Oct**  
Policymaking and Standard Operating Procedures

*Goals:* To understand how the organizational process model can be applied to explain policy outcomes.

*Questions:* According to the organizational model, how are policy decisions understood? How do governments perceive problems? How do governments define alternatives and estimate consequences? Can government leaders control the behavior of organizations? What does coordination require? Who are the organizational actors? What is the benefit of factoring problems? What are the five components of organizational parochialism? What is the benefit of arranging a negotiated environment?

*Readings:* Allison, Graham, “Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis” *The American Political Science Review,* Volume 63, Issue 3 (Sep., 1969), (pp. 698-707 ONLY)

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**16 Oct**  
EXAM 3

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**OTHER ACTORS IN THE POLICYMAKING PROCESS**

**19 Oct**  
The Influence of Interest Groups

*Goals:* To understand the role of interest groups in the policy making process.

*Questions:* Why is there a negative view of interest groups by Americans? Give three examples of an interest group. Name three functions of interest groups. What is the effect of interest groups on elections? Name two sources of interest group influence.

*Readings:* Lindblom and Woodhouse *The Policy-Making Process* Chapter 7

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**21 Oct**  
The Influence of Business

*Goals:* To understand the role of business in the policy making process.

*Questions:* How can a government official be confident that managers will discharge the functions that keep an economy affluent? Give three examples of inducements. What are the two categories of benefits to business? What are the three advantages businesses have in electoral politics?

*Readings:* Lindblom and Woodhouse *The Policy-Making Process* Chapter 8
23 Oct The Influence of Social Media’s on Public Policy

Goals: To understand the role social media plays in influencing public policy

Questions: How are public policies like record labels? How are politics like the decrease in record sales? How is social media impacting politicians? What are Americans looking for when they watch the news? How are business interests related to the news? Where do The Daily Show and Colbert Report fit into informing the public? How do these shows impact politicians’ behavior? How do they help set the agenda?

Readings: Global, Ipsos. “Impact of Social Media on Politics and Public Policy.” @advisor's channel. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7MO_pYU1RSw


26 Oct The Influence of Public Opinion

Goals: To understand how public opinion impacts the policymaking process

Questions: What did Churchill mean by “there is no such thing as public opinion; just published opinion”? What is a consequence of ignoring public opinion? How do today's public leaders better use public opinion to achieve their ministerial set public policy objectives? How can public opinion set the pace of reform?


28 Oct The Influence of Public Opinion

Goals: To understand how the issue-attention cycle works in the US media.

Questions: Why can’t public attention remain on a single issue for very long? What are the five stages of the issue-attention cycle? How can you keep an issue from going through the issue attention cycle? Why did attention paid to NASA plummet?


30 Oct Political Inequality

Goals: To understand the relationship of equality and democracy, the extent and origins of inequality, and the implications of inequality and political impairment for effective policy making.
**Questions:** What do the authors mean by political inequality? Give at least two sources of political inequality. Are the majority of individuals informed about the government in the United States? What are two causes of political inequality? Who makes up the largest group of inactive citizens in the US? Does political inequality reduce the extent to which policymaking is democratic?


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<td>Goals: To understand the relationship of equality and democracy, the extent and origins of inequality, and the implications of inequality and political impairment for effective policy making.</td>
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<td>Questions: Name at least two socially caused or exacerbated impairments. How does impaired thinking reduce the intelligence of policymaking? How do schools, parents, peer groups, elites, and the media contribute to political impairment? What does the author mean by the “underlying consensus” in society? How many democracies have placed on the political agenda an assault on wealth and the privileges it gives some individuals in society over others?</td>
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| 4 Nov | Exam 4 review |

| 6 Nov | EXAM 4 |

### IDEAS, INTERESTS, & INSTITUTIONS – APPLIED

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<th>9 Nov</th>
<th>The Role of the Media: Health Care Policy</th>
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<td>Goals: To understand what role the media plays in the formation of public policy.</td>
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<td>Questions: What is the most important thing that will affect us with regard to health care reform? Why does the media typically ignore covering technical stories such as health care? Why is news important to citizens? What is the most important thing to the media when it comes to covering/reporting a story? Based on this article, did ideas, interests or institutions play a role in the past and current policies regarding health care policy in the United States?</td>
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11 Nov  Policymaking Applied: Marijuana Legalization

Goals: To apply the theories discussed by Michael Kraft to understand what has influenced marijuana laws in this country.

Questions: Has marijuana always been illegal in the United States? When did the US begin regulating marijuana? How did the Mexican Revolution increase the opposition to marijuana in the US? How did the Great Depression increase the opposition to marijuana in the United States? How did the media play a role in the increase in opposition to marijuana in the United States? How has research impacted marijuana laws in this country? Based on this article, did ideas, interests or institutions play a role in the past and current policies regarding marijuana in the United States?


13 Nov  Policymaking Applied: Civil Rights Policy

Goals: To apply the theories discussed by Michael Kraft to the policies arising from the civil rights movement.

Questions: Based on the information provided in the film, did ideas, interests, or institutions play a role in the advancement of civil rights in this country?

Readings: Daniels, Lee. 2013. The Butler

16 Nov  Is There Room for Improvement in the Policymaking Process?

Goals: To examine ways to improve the policy making process.

Questions: What do the authors argue is necessary to strengthen and improve the capacity for intelligent, democratic policymaking? What are the three methods to conflict resolution? Which method do the authors argue is the most effective? What are two problems with trial and error learning?


18 Nov  Is There Room for Improvement in the Policymaking Process?

Goals: To examine ways to improve the policy making process.

Questions: Why are policies often not monitored or changed very quickly? What impact do social and economic inequalities have on democratic policymaking? From where do some of the gravest deficiencies in public policy come? According to the authors, how do we contribute to the intelligence of the policymaking process?

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<td>EXAM 5</td>
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<td>23 Nov</td>
<td>NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING VACATION</td>
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<td>30 Nov</td>
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<td>2 Dec</td>
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<td>4 Dec</td>
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