

**Political Science 120: Introduction to Public Policy**  
**Spring 2010**  
**T TH 10:30 – 11:45**  
**Lawson B151**

**Instructor:** Laura Young  
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**Office Hours:** 11:50 – 1:00 TTH

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

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. Course readings, in-class exercises, and group discussions will allow us to apply these general concepts to specific policy areas. Some of our discussions will focus on socially, politically, or morally controversial topics. These discussions are designed to help students appreciate a diversity of perspectives, as well as to help students critically evaluate policy positions. By the end of the semester students should be well versed in the basic facets of policymaking and should be well equipped to pursue more advanced courses in public policy.

**REQUIRED READINGS:**

Course readings outside of the required texts will be available through the course website on blackboard. In addition to the electronic readings there are two required books.

**Lindblom, Charles E. and Edward J. Woodhouse. (1993). *The Policy Making Process (Third Edition)*.N.J.: Prentice Hall. Third Edition. (Available at the University bookstore)**

**Orwell, George. (1950). *1984*. New York: Penguin Group. (Available at most bookstores and for purchase online.)**

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

Class Participation:

Preparation for and participation in class discussions is part of your final grade. You are expected to follow the Purdue University Class Attendance and Absence Reporting Policy, meaning that you are required to attend all lectures and events. Absences will be excused only for documented physical or mental illness, accident, or emergency as determined by the Dean of Students.

Quizzes:

A number of short quizzes will be given at random throughout the semester to measure the level of student understanding regarding the required reading assignments.

Exams:

A mid-term exam and a final exam will be given to measure the student's level of class material.

Evaluation: 100 – 94 A, 93-90 A-, 89-87 B+, 86-84 B, 83-80 B-, 79-77 C+, 76-74 C, 73-70 C-, 69-67 D+, 66-64 D, 63-60 D-, 59 (and below) F

Class attendance and Participation	10%
Reading Quizzes	20%
Midterm	35%
Final Exam	35%

**COURSE POLICY:**

Attending class is of the utmost importance. Students should attend every class session. Students that are not regularly attending will not be able to earn full participation points. In the event of an absence the student must present documentation that the absence was an officially excusable absence. Without an excused absence the student will receive a zero for that day's attendance. Excusable absences are described in the Dean of Students Handbook. In cases of excessive absences, the instructor reserves the right to lower the final grade of any student.

Students must adhere to the Purdue University standards for academic integrity. Cheating or any form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Consequences for cheating or academic dishonesty include receiving a failing grade in the course up to turning cases in to the Dean of Students.

In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines, and grading percentages are subject to changes which may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances. Changes to the course caused by such unforeseen events will be described on Blackboard Vista web page for this class. I can also be contacted directly at the e-mail address listed on the first page of this syllabus.

**Teaching Philosophy:**

I believe in shared responsibility toward the common goal of student learning. As an instructor, I am responsible to express clear expectations for students and help students to fulfill expectations; to design and organize effective learning activities; to provide information and provide direction for students to find further information; and to accept, consider, and respond to students' learning needs during the semester. Students are

responsible to be prepared for class; to participate in class, to take the opportunities available for learning; and to communicate honestly with me as the instructor.

**Special Needs:**

If you are an individual with a disability and require accommodations for this class, please notify the instructor immediately.

**Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism and/or cheating on any assignments or exams will not be tolerated.

**Course Caveat:**

The instructor reserves the right to make adjustments to the syllabus, schedule and/or assignments contained therein at the sole discretion of the instructor. All rules and regulations set forth by Purdue University will be adhered to and in effect at all times.

**COURSE SCHEDULE:**

**January 12 – Introductions & Syllabus.**

*Goals:* Get to know the people around you. Understand the structure of the syllabus and the expectations for the semester.

**POLICY FORMATION**

**January 14 – What is Public Policy?**

- Lindblom and Woodhouse. *The Policy-Making Process*. Chapters 1 and 2 (pp.1-22)

*Goals:* To understand what is meant by public policy and to identify some of the problems associated with policy formation.

*Questions:* Who makes policy? 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?

**January 19 – Policy Formation and Human Cognition**

- Lindblom and Woodhouse, *The Policy-Making Process* Chapter 3 (pp. 23-32).
- Boustead, Greg. "Deciding How to Decide." *Seed Magazine*. March 18, 2009. [http://seedmagazine.com/content/article/deciding\\_how\\_to\\_decide/](http://seedmagazine.com/content/article/deciding_how_to_decide/)

*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?

### **January 21 – Policy Formation and “Group Think”**

- Janis, Irving L. 1982. “Groupthink”

*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?

## **THE STRUCTURE OF THE POLICY FORMATION PROCESS**

### **January 26 – Policymaking and the Bureaucracy – (SW)**

- James Q. Wilson. 1975. “The Rise of the Bureaucratic State.” *Public Interest* 41 (Fall), p. 77 - 103.

*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?

### **January 28 – No Class**

### **February 2 – Policymaking and the Legislature – (MP)**

- Lindblom and Woodhouse, *The Policy-Making Process* Chapters 4 & 5 (pp. 34-56).

*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? What are the advantages and limitations of political parties?

#### **February 4 – The Rationalization of Policymaking**

- Allison, Graham, “Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis” IKENBERRY (pp. 402-413)

*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”?

#### **February 9 – Policymaking and Standard Operating Procedures**

- Allison, Graham, “Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis” IKENBERRY (pp. 413-426)

*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?

#### **February 11– The Bureaucratic Politics Model**

- Allison, Graham, “Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis” IKENBERRY (pp. 426-441)

*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.

### **February 16– No Class/ISA**

### **February 18 – The Policymaking Process – Applied**

- 1984 – pp 1 – 63 (skim pp 64- 104)

*Goals:* To recognize groupthink, standard operating procedures, rational choice, and bureaucratic politics in action.

*Questions:* Give at least two examples of groupthink. What is the significance of the use of standard operating procedures by INGSOC? How does Orwell describe the bureaucratic structure of INGSOC? Can the rational-choice model help explain the adherence and acceptance to the policies of Big Brother?

## **WHO MAKES POLICY?**

### **February 23– Ideas, Interests, and Institutions**

- Hall, Peter A. 1997. "The Role of Interests, Institutions, and Ideas in the Comparative Political Economy of Nations," in Mark Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman, eds. *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

*Goals:* To be able to recognize and define interest, institution, and idea-based approaches to problems. Additionally, to be able to predict how scholars of each stripe would see a new event, such as attempts to pass stricter gas mileage requirements for cars.

*Questions:* Which approach focuses on the material interests of principal actors? Are political economists still primarily concerned with class-based cleavages? What are some principal actors in the institutional approach? Which approach captures human interactions more effectively? In what way is politics a "struggle for the interpretation of interests"?

### **February 25 – The Policymaking Process - Applied**

- 1984 – pp. 105-167

*Goals:* To identify ways in which interests, ideas, and institution based-approaches explain policies.

*Questions:* In what way can the institutional approach be applied to explain the policies of Big Brother (hint – consider the limitation of access points)? What about ideas? Interests?

### **March 2 – The Influence of the Bureaucracy**

- Lindblom and Woodhouse, *The Policy-Making Process* Chapter 6 (pp. 57-72)
- Mason, Henry L. 1988. “Implementing the Final Solution: The Ordinary Regulating of the Extraordinary,” *World Politics* vol. 40, pp. 542-569.

*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. What is the difference between the functionalist and intentionalist view of the Final Solution? What does Mason mean when he says the Final Solution was “routinized”? What is doubling?

### **March 4 - The Role of Interest Groups and Business**

- Lindblom and Woodhouse *The Policy-Making Process* Chapter 7 & 8 (73-103)

*Goals:* To understand the role of interest groups and business 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. 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?

### **March 9- Review for Mid-Term Exam**

- *In class review session*

### **March 11 – Mid-term Exam**

- Review the reading questions along with the readings themselves and class notes

*Goals:* To be able to answer questions about the material covered so far.

### **March 16 – Spring Break/No Class**

### **March 18 – Spring Break/No Class**

### **March 23 - The Role of the Media**

- Karvounis, Niko. "Can the Media Derail Health Care Reform?" *Health Beat*. January 5, 2009. <http://www.healthbeatblog.org/2009/01/can-the-media-derail-health-care-reform.html>

*Goals:* To understand what role the media plays in the formation of public policy.

*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?

### **March 25 – Who Makes Policy? - Applied**

- 1984 – (pp. 167-201)

*Goals:* To identify ways in which the media and the bureaucracy influence the public's perception of government policies.

*Questions:* How can Mason's theory regarding the Final Solution be applied to the policies of Big Brother? What is the significance of the never-ending wars? What role does the media play in the acceptance of the policies of Big Brother?

### **March 30 - The Influence of Public Opinion**

- Downs, Anthony. 1972. "Up and Down with Ecology: The 'Issue-Attention Cycle.'" *Public Interest* 28 (Summer), p. 38 *et seq.*

*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? Why did attention paid to NASA plummet?

### **April 1 – The Impact of Crises**

- Young, Laura D. 2008. *Unilateral Presidential Policymaking and the Impact of Crises*.

*Goals:* To identify the impact of a crisis on the policy making process and to identify the role of the president and his ability to unilaterally establish policies.

*Questions:* Through what means can a president unilaterally establish policies? What is the impact of a crisis on the ability of the president to unilaterally establish policies? What happens during a "rally around the flag" event? Give two examples when a president is able to unilaterally establish policies.



### **April 6 – Political Inequality**

- Lindblom and Woodhouse. *The Policy-Making Process*. Chapters 9 and 10 (pp.104-124)
- *1984* (pp. 201-224)

*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. How does education cause political impairment? How do parents, peer groups, and the media contribute to political impairment? What examples of political inequality and political impairment are evident in *1984*? Is political inequality and political impairment important to the success of Big Brother?

### **April 8 – The Media and Crises in Policymaking – Applied**

- Film - Wag the Dog

### **April 13 – The Media and Crises in Policymaking – Applied (Continued)**

- Film - Wag the Dog

## **THE POLICYMAKING PROCESS**

### **April 15 – Pulling it all together**

- *1984* (pp. 225-298)

*Goals:* To understand how the concepts learned so far work together in the formation of policy.

*Questions:* Why is it important for Big Brother to control the past? What is the significance of the never-ending war? How can Down's argument be applied to explain the changing enemy in the war? Why must Big Brother control the minds of the masses? Can the functionalist explanation be applied to O'Brien's ability to carry out the torture of Winston? Or is the intentionalist approach more accurate?

### **April 20 – No Class/MPSA**

### **April 22 – No Class/MPSA**

### **April 27 – Is There Room for Improvement in the Policymaking Process?**

- Lindblom and Woodhouse. *The Policy-Making Process*. Chapters 11 & 12 (pp.126-150)

*Goals:* To understand the obstacles to policymaking and the limits of analysis to overcoming those obstacles and to examine ways to improve the policy making process.

*Questions:* 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? According to the authors, what is the reason why undemocratic processes undermine intelligent policymaking? What is required to reach a well-reasoned judgment on how to proceed with policy?

### **April 29 – In class Assessment**

- Review the reading questions along with the readings themselves and class notes

*Goals:* To be able to answer questions about the material covered so far.