

Making Public Policy

Instructor: John D. Rackey

Time: MWF 9:30AM to 10:20AM

Location: Couch Center Cafeteria, 0206

Course Number: PSC 3223-001-001

Semester: Fall 2020

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Office: Headington College, D122

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays by appointment via Zoom

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course introduces the important components, relevant concepts, and dominant theories of the policymaking process in the United States. The course will focus primarily on the federal level, but policymaking at the state and local levels will also be discussed when appropriate.

Along with promoting a theoretical and conceptual understanding of the policymaking process, the course will require students to apply the theories and concepts to a specific policy domain of their choosing, such as education, health care, or tax policy. These applications will promote critical thinking skills as well as a deeper understanding of the relevant theories, concepts, and policy domain.

The format of the course will be a combination of lecture and discussion. In each class, I will begin by introducing the relevant concepts and theories and then we will discuss their important features and consider interesting applications. Consequently, students are expected to come to class having completed all readings listed on the syllabus for the relevant date and be ready to contribute to a class discussion.

REQUIRED TEXT(S):

Birkland, *An Introduction to the Policy Process: Theories, Concepts, and Models of Public Policy Making*, 4th ed.

ISBN: 9780765646620

Additional readings and materials will be posted to the Canvas page for the course. Please pay attention to the Canvas Announcements to keep up with the additional readings and materials needed upcoming classes and topics.

*Syllabus is subject to change. Your instructor will update you to any changes to the syllabus throughout the semester.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Assignments Summary	
<u>Component</u>	<u>Weight</u>
Discussion Questions & Participation	15%
Reading Quizzes	15%
Midterm Group Project	25%
Policy Memo	35%
Policy Memo Roundtable	10%
TOTAL	100

Grading Scheme

A = 89.5-100;
B = 79.5-89.4;
C = 69.5-79.4;
D = 59.5-69.4;
F = 0-59.4

I. Discussion Questions and Participation (15%):

To start class discussion and help frame my lectures I ask that you **submit 2 discussion questions via Canvas by 8am on days we have class.** Questions can be based on the reading, current events, or something else you think may be relevant to the course. Participation during in-class discussion and activities is required to succeed in this course. *

*This course does not have an attendance policy because of rapidly changing COVI-19 conditions. However, if you are healthy, you should be in class. The more you are in class, the better you will understand the material. Be smart. Be Safe. Be healthy.

II. Reading Quizzes (15%):

During the semester I will give 3 “pop quizzes” over the assigned readings for that day. Questions will be based on assigned readings. Makeup quizzes will only be given for those with a university approved excuse.

III. Midterm Group Project (25%):

Students will be required to complete a group project of their choosing during the first half of the semester. Each student will be assigned to a group by the second week of class. The policy topics for this assignment may not be one any member of the group is writing about for their final paper. The topic and project must be approved by the instructor. The form of project is open, examples of possible project forms: podcast, presentation, or magazine. A summary from each member of the group explaining what they did to help complete this assignment is also required. ***Proposal Due 9/11. Project and Member Evaluation Due 10/23.***

IV. Policy Memo (35%):

The major writing component of this course is a term paper, completed in three stages over the course of the semester. Students should select a topic in a policy area in which they are interested. The policy topic can be at the federal or state level. Topics are constrained to issues that only involve the United States (sorry Foreign Relations folks). It might help to start with a bureaucratic agency or branch of government in which you are interested or might like to pursue a career in.

- Example research questions might include: “Should a teacher’s pay be affected by the test scores of his or her students?” OR “Should Oklahoma give tax breaks to oil companies?” OR “Should municipal law enforcement agencies have access to drones?”

The memo will be submitted in separate assignments over the course of the semester. This style is to make sure you stay on the correct path with the assignment. If you take each portion seriously and make edits based on feedback throughout the semester, by the end you will have a paper that requires very little work before final submission.

The assignment is broken up as follows, specific instructions for each section will be available on Canvas.

- Topic Proposal: Due 9/4
- Policy Introduction and Infographic: Due 10/2
- Policy Background and Context: Due 11/13
- Final Memo and Infographic: Due 12/15

V. Policy Memo Roundtables (10%):

These roundtables will be informal discussions about your project and how your findings and understanding of the issue differed and overlapped with those who wrote about similar topics. You will be assigned a day to complete this assignment as we get closer to the end of the semester.

EXPECTATIONS:

Students are expected to read the material, think about it, come to class and participate. Adhering to the following policies will help us meet those expectations:

1. Come to class. Students with better attendance find the class more enjoyable and more useful.
2. We will maintain an environment that reduces distractions. No cell phones visible in class. They need to be on silent, not on vibrate, in a bag or otherwise off the desk/lap.
3. Laptops are fine for notetaking in class. But if I suspect based on your behavior that you’re doing something other than taking notes, you will automatically lose participation points for the day.
- 4. I do not engage in grade negotiations.**

ETIQUETTE:

Your actions in the classroom should take others into consideration. A major part of this course involves interaction amongst each other through discussions. If you haven't noticed lately, politics can be a contentious or controversial topic. I encourage spirited debate and discussion. But I also assume that this course can be conducted in the spirit of full academic freedom with civility and courtesy. Any member of this course may express any serious idea, point of view, and/or partake in a serious learning environment without disrespect. Racist, sexist, ethnocentric, and other rude behavior are not acceptable in the classroom. Students who exhibit rude and/or unacceptable behavior will be removed by the instructor, to be reinstated only after meeting with the instructor to discuss and amend their inappropriate behavior.

Avoid language that can be misconstrued as or is explicitly offensive. In class discussions or online discussions are not to be treated like Facebook walls or YouTube comment sections.

ACCOMMODATION POLICY:

The University of Oklahoma is committed to providing reasonable accommodation for all students with disabilities. Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent them from fully demonstrating their abilities should contact me personally at the beginning of the semester, so we can discuss accommodations. The university requires students requesting accommodations go through the Accessibility and Disability Resource Center prior to receiving accommodations.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.ou.edu/drc>

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION:

In an ideal world, science would be objective. However, much of science is subjective and is historically built on a small subset of privileged voices. In this class, we will make an effort to read work from a diverse group of scholars, but limits still exist on this diversity. I acknowledge that it is possible that there may be both overt and covert biases in the material due to the lens with which it was written, even though the material is primarily of a scientific nature. Integrating a diverse set of experiences is important for a more comprehensive understanding of social science. I would like to discuss issues of diversity in political science as part of the course from time to time.

Please contact me (in person or electronically) if you have any suggestions to improve the quality of the course materials.

Furthermore, I would like to create a learning environment for my students that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives, and experiences, and honors your identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.) To help accomplish this:

If you have a name and/or set of pronouns that differ from those that appear in your official OU records, please let me know.

If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, please don't hesitate to come and talk with me. I want to be a resource for you. If you prefer to speak with someone outside of the course, the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

is an excellent resource: <http://www.ou.edu/diversityandinclusion>

Learning about diverse perspectives and identities is, and should be, an ongoing and continuing process. Meaning, mistakes will likely be made. If something was said in class (by anyone) that made you feel uncomfortable, please talk to me about it so the situation can be appropriately addressed and corrected.

As a participant in course discussions, you should also strive to honor the voices, experiences, and backgrounds of your classmates.

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS:

It is the policy of the University to excuse absences of students that result from religious observances and to provide without penalty for the rescheduling of examinations and additional required classwork that may fall on religious holidays. Students who plan to observe a holiday should notify me immediately to make appropriate arrangements.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Academic misconduct includes plagiarism, cheating on exams, improper collaboration, and fraud (such as submitting the same assignment for different classes or fabricating sources).

1. Plagiarism includes
 - a. Copying words and presenting them as your own by failing to use quotation marks or block quote format
 - i. even when a source is cited, and
 - ii. even when you change them slightly from the original.
 - b. Taking ideas, information, and arguments without citing the source
 - i. even when you express them in your own words.
2. You are encouraged to read and familiarize yourself with the university's guide to academic integrity <https://integrity.ou.edu/students.html> which I will adhere to.
3. **TLDR: I have zero tolerance for academic dishonesty including cheating and plagiarism. Students who engage in those practices will receive an immediate zero on the assignment in question and will be sanctioned according to university policy.**

LATE ASSIGNMENTS:

If an assignment is not turned in by the appointed time on the due date (or appears in my email inbox, Canvas folder, or office mailbox after the deadline), it is late. *Each day an assignment is late earns the owner a 10 point reduction in the assignment grade.* Students with documented, legitimate emergencies should make arrangements with me as soon as possible. Note that it is your responsibility to contact me if you foresee or experience a problem that will affect an assignment.

INCOMPLETES:

A situation may arise which compels a student to request an incomplete in the course. The appropriate University regulations shall govern the granting of such a mark.

<http://www.ou.edu/registrar/transcripts-and-records/grading-policies>

PROFESSIONAL OBLIGATIONS:

As an instructor, my primary obligation is always to my students. However, working at research institutions such as the University of Oklahoma, we are expected (and at OU are required) to engage in scholarly research in our fields of expertise and engage in the academic exchange of ideas by sharing this research with other scholars. This is an important obligation that the University takes very seriously, and which will occasionally require me to grade assignments slower than you'd probably prefer to work on my own research and attend academic conferences. I have tried to plan the class schedule around these obligations, but at times my absence will be inevitable. I, therefore, ask for your understanding during times I'm devoted to the fulfillment of these obligations.

REMEMBER: *I want each of my courses to be a collaborative enterprise between myself and all of you, moving together toward an intellectual goal. But an instructor can be no more than a resource. Whether you effectively learn and grow intellectually through this course depends, ultimately, on your own commitment and efforts. My goal in this class is to provide you with a structure that can help you direct your own learning. Everything else is up to you.*

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Readings & Learning Activities</u>	<u>Assignments Due</u>
Week 1	Introduction What is Policy? The Policy Process	M8/24: Syllabus Introduction W8/26: Birkland Ch. 1 F8/28: Birkland Ch. 2	
Week 2	Policy Contexts, Events & Institutions	M8/31: Binder Ch. 1&2 W9/2: Birkland Ch. 3 F9/4: Listen-PAP Ep. 9	Policy Memo Project: Proposal Due 9/4 at 11:59PM
Week 3	Policy Types	M9/7: Labor Day-No Class W9/9: Birkland Ch. 7 F9/11: Listen-Binder and COVID Politics	Midterm Project: Proposal Due 9/11 at 11:59PM
Week 4	Actors Making Choices: Formal Actors in the Policy Process	M9/14: Birkland Ch. 4 W9/16: Shogan- "The Knowledge Culture of Congress"; McCrain- "Convincing Evidence that Congressional Staff Do, In Fact, Matter." F9/18: Listen-Legislating in the Dark	
Week 5	Actors Making Choices: Informal Actors in the Policy Process	M9/21: Birkland Ch. 5 W9/23: Listen- Get Organized F9/25: Guest Speaker- Connor Kish	
Week 6	Agenda Setting	M9/28: Birkland Ch. 6 W9/30: Lovett et al. 2014 F10/2: Listen-Big Money, Big Power	Policy Memo Project: Introduction (with bibliography of 5 potential initial sources) + Intro. Infographic Due 10/2 11:59 PM
Week 7	Venue Shopping: Vote-by-Mail	M10/5: Assorted Readings via Canvas W10/7: Barber & Holbein 2020 F10/9: OU-Texas- No Class	
Week 8:	Punctuated Equilibrium Theory	M10/12: Jones et al. 2003 W10/14: Robinson & Caver 2006 F10/16: Listen-Is the Death Penalty Dying?	

Week 9	Midterm Workshops		Midterm Project: Project and Evaluation Due 10/23 11:59PM
Week 10	Policy Design	M10/26: Birkland Ch. 8 W10/28: Birkland Ch. 9 F10/30: Hacker 2010	
Week 11	Election Breakdown	M11/2: The Campaign W11/4: The Results F11/6: The Policy Road Ahead	
Week 12	Policy Implementation, Outcomes, and Learning	M11/9: Birkland Ch. 10 W11/11: May 1992 F11/13: Listen- Unintended Consequences	Policy Memo Project: Policy Background and Context Due 11/13 11:59 PM
Week 13	Policy Evaluation	M11/16: Smith & Larimer Ch. 7 W11/18: Guest Speaker- Jolene Lauria Sullens F11/20: Mettler & Soss 2004	
Week 14	Real Life Policy	M11/23: COVID Policy Update W11/25: Thanksgiving-No Class F11/27: Thanksgiving-No Class	
Week 15	Class Choice	M11/30: TBD W12/2: TBD F12/4: Course Wrap-Up	
Week 16	Policy Memo Roundtables		
Dec. 15	Final (Final Policy Memo + Final Infographic) Due 12pm/Noon		