

PS3538 Introduction to Public Policy

Dr. Tatyana Ruseva, Fall Semester 2011

Class time: Wed. 2:00 pm - 4:30 pm

Classroom: Belk Hall 19

Instructor: Tatyana B. Ruseva

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Class Number: 15035

Office: Ann Belk Hall 2051

Office hours: Wed 10:30-11:30

Secretary: Mrs. KayRon Lantz

Prospectus:

This course introduces students to different approaches in the study of public policy, the process of making and evaluating public policies, as well as a number of substantive policy issues. Students will be acquainted with the politics surrounding policy-making and the key institutions and policy actors. Finally, the course will introduce students to some of the tools and methods of policy analysis.

Course objectives:

In this course students will gain an understanding of the importance and value-laden dimensions of public policies on everyday life. By end of the semester students should be able to:

- Understand what we mean by "public policy";
- Identify and discuss public policy decisions impacting their lives;
- Understand the justifications and potential shortcomings of governmental (in)actions;
- Apply their knowledge of the policy process to any issue or topic of policy relevance;
- Intelligently analyze sources of information, and find the strengths and weaknesses in partisan or news media depictions of policy issues;
- Complete an analytical paper that examines a public problem and its policy alternatives;
- Learn and/or enhance their critical thinking, writing, and analytical skills.

Required texts:

1. Michael Kraft, and Scott Furlong. *Public Policy: Politics, Analysis, and Alternatives*. 3rd ed. CQ Press: Washington DC, 2010. ISBN: 9780872899711
 - a. Online companion site: <http://www.cqpress.com/cs/publicpolicy/default.asp>
 - b. Optional: The CQ Researcher, *Issues for Debate in American Public Policy*, 12th ed., CQ Press, 2011.

2. Selected Readings on AsULearn

I reserve the right to assign additional readings throughout this course. Additional readings will be sent by email or posted on AsULearn. Naturally, the readings are integral to the course – they will serve as the basis of lectures and discussions. Students are responsible for completing each reading before class.

Course Requirements:

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|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • Exam 1 | 15% of grade |
| • Exam 2 | 15% of grade |
| • Problem analysis paper | 30% of grade (more on page 4) |
| • Participation | 30% of grade |
| • Attendance | 10% of grade |

Exams (30%)

There will be two in-class exams during the semester. Each test will be approximately one hour, closed-book, and will cover material up to the date of the exam. The exams will draw heavily on readings and discussions, and will contain one or more essay questions in addition to multiple-choice items.

Problem Analysis Paper and Presentation (30%)

Students will be responsible for delivering a problem analysis paper at the end of the semester (25%) and a short in-class presentation (5%). A number of steps will prepare you for this assignment (see page 4 for details).

Participation (30%)

Active participation in class is integral to your learning and will constitute a third of your grade. We will have 4 out-of-class (20%) and 5 in-class assignments (10%). Each assignment is designed to help you demonstrate your preparation with the course material for that week. Some weeks I may ask you to share a current public policy event with us; others – to conduct a quick online search on a policy issue. The in-class exercises will include brief one or two question responses, multiple-choice items, and/or keyword definitions. In order to do well on these assignments regularly visit the discussion questions at the end of each chapter, and the book's online companion site: <http://www.cqpress.com/cs/publicpolicy/default.asp>. I intend to make good use of these resources.

Attendance (10%)

Regular attendance is expected and comprises 10% of your grade. Note that this course meets once a week, which accounts for two class sessions in a regular 75-min class. Your attendance grade will be a straight percentage of the days you come to class. We will meet 15 times this semester, an equivalent to 30 class days or 100 points.

Grading Scale (rounded to the nearest number):

97 - 100 = A+	93 - 96.9 = A	90 - 92.9 = A-	87 - 89.9 = B+
83 - 86.9 = B	80 - 82.9 = B-	77 - 79.9 = C+	73 - 76.9 = C
70 - 72.9 = C-	67 - 69.9 = D+	63 - 66.9 = D	60 - 62.9 = D- <59.9=F

Policy on Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

If you have any questions about whether a particular practice constitutes academic dishonesty, please ask the instructor or contact the Dean of Students. Other items such as your rights in grievance procedures related to academic integrity can be found under the Office of Student Conduct at: <http://studentconduct.appstate.edu/pagesmith/4>. *Plagiarism* and other forms of academic misconduct will be dealt with under the strictest terms provided for under ASU policy. In most cases, plagiarism will result in a failing grade and a formal report to the Dean of Students office. *Plagiarism* is using another person's words, ideas, artistic creations, or other intellectual property without giving proper credit. A student must give credit to the work of another person when he/she does any of the following:

- Quotes another person's actual words, either oral or written;
- Paraphrases another person's words, either oral or written;
- Uses another person's idea, opinion, or theory; or
- Borrows facts, statistics, or other illustrative material, unless the information is common knowledge.

Here is the menu for the course:

Course Content

Date	Topic/ Assignment	Readings
August 24	Introduction to the course Why Study Public Policy?	Syllabus Kraft and Furlong Chapter 1
August 31	Justification for Government Intervention Market Failure	Kraft and Furlong Chapter 1, *Weimer and Vining Chap. 5 and Chap. 7 (<i>AsULearn</i>)
September 7	Limits to Government Intervention: Government Failures	*Weimer and Vining Chap. 8 (<i>AsULearn</i>)
September 14	Government Institutions and Actors * Paper part 1 due	Kraft &Furlong Chapter 2
September 21	The Process and Tools of Policymaking	Kraft & Furlong Chapter 3
September 28	Introduction to Policy Analysis	Kraft & Furlong Chap. 4 & 5
October 5	Policy Evaluation *Paper part 2 due	Kraft &Furlong Chapter 6
October 12	Fiscal Policy EXAM 1	Kraft & Furlong Chapter 7
October 19	Health Care Policy	Kraft & Furlong Chapter 8
October 26	Welfare and Social Security	Kraft &Furlong Chapter 9
November 2	Education Policy *Paper part 3 due	Kraft and Furlong Chapter 10
November 9	Environmental Policy	Kraft &Furlong Chapter 11
November 16	Foreign Policy and Homeland Security EXAM 2	Kraft & Furlong Chapter 12
November 23	No class: Thanksgiving break	
November 30	Politics, Analysis and Public Choice	Kraft & Furlong Chapter 13
December 7	In-class Presentations *Paper parts 4 and 5 due	Problem Analysis Paper

Problem Analysis Paper: Analyzing Public Problems and Policy Alternatives

In this assignment you will analyze a public policy issue and consider existing and/or new policy actions. It is important to know how to obtain valid and reliable information about a policy issue, diagnose the root causes of the problem, assess and formulate policy solution(s). Policy analysts are confronted with such tasks on a daily basis. This written assignment asks that you put on the hat of a policy analyst and look for creative solutions to public problems. You will be conducting a professional policy analysis. Any ideological, partisan or personal biases need to be removed from your writing. Essential readings for this assignment are chapters 4 and 5 in Kraft and Furlong.

Required components:

<i>Component</i>	<i>Format</i>	<i>Due</i>	<i>Grade %</i>
1. Policy issue	2 page overview and justification	Sept. 14	5%
2. Problem definition	5-6 pages	Oct. 5	5%
3. Policy alternatives	5-6 pages	Nov. 2	5%
4. Problem analysis paper	15-20 page double-spaced, Times New Roman	Dec. 7	10%
5. In-class presentation	Your choice of ppt, poster, or video	Dec. 7	5%

All written assignments are due on the date specified above and should be submitted online through the AsU Learn course webpage. If you anticipate a major conflict that prevents you from completing an assignment on time, please come and talk to me, or contact me by email (rusevatb@appstate.edu).

1. Policy Issue & Information Sources

Find an issue of interest to you. The text offers numerous examples: childhood obesity, illegal immigration, violent crime, affordable health care, renewable energy, etc. You are encouraged to go beyond the covers of the book. Start by exploring and learning more about the policy issue. To get started conduct a [Google](#) search. Depending on your perspective and interest, you may visit a number of government sites, think-tanks and research centers. Be sure to take the source of your information into consideration, and any biases that may be present, as you assess the information provided. *Write a two-page overview of your chosen policy issue. Include a list of your information sources.* Questions to consider:

- Why is this issue of interest to you?
- Should we, as a society, be concerned about it? Why?
- Where does the issue/problem exist?
- How amenable is it to government intervention? To private action?
- Where did you go to find information or evidence about this issue?
- How do you know whether a particular source of information is reliable or not? Which sources offered a solid, professional analysis of the issue? Which ones were weaker or biased?

2. Problem Definition

Defining the problem and analyzing its root causes is the first step in a problem analysis. For a policy analyst, a problem typically implies “some state of the world that is and will remain unsatisfactory or undesirable without government intervention” (Mohr 1995, 14). For this component you will need to:

Define the problem

- What is the nature of the problem? For instance, what do we mean by “poverty” or “violent crime” or “illegal immigration”? (For heuristic purposes, let’s assume we are looking at poverty in the United States)
- What are the leading causes of <poverty>? What other causes should be considered? How did the problem come about, and why does it continue?

Provide measures of the problem

- Find a way to measure <poverty> that is consistent with the way you define it.
- What kinds of quantitative indicators are available from reliable sources?
- What is the best measurement to use for <levels of poverty>? According to whom?

Describe the extent or magnitude of the problem

- What facts or data about the magnitude and extent of <poverty in the US> can you provide?
- Who or what is affected? How seriously?
- How long has <poverty> existed and how might it change over the next years or decades?
- What do the latest statistics say about <poverty in the US>? What is the trend in these data?

3. Policy Alternatives

Now that you have some insight into the situation, what possible solutions are there to this problem? For this component of the paper, you will identify policy alternatives currently under consideration or in the works. This means examining some of the solutions developed to address the problem. Using Google, conduct a search by typing in your policy issue plus government program, e.g. "poverty alleviation government program" to see what options are available. Address the following:

- What policy options exist for dealing with the problem? List at least 3 of these programs.
- Who is promoting each option, and why?
- What has been the impact of each on the problem (if known)? Have they produced the desired effect?
- Which of these solutions may require government action? Which of these options relies primarily on private action or changes in personal lifestyle?
- To explore this issue further, check what the [Government Accountability Office](#) has to say about the problem. *Summarize these findings.*

4. Problem Analysis Paper

A starting point for completing the paper is integrating parts 1, 2, and 3. Please, note that you may need to edit or revise some of the text. Take all feedback on the previous components into consideration as you finalize your paper. The final product needs to read as a professional problem analysis report. Be concise and clear in your writing. For this last component, consider the following:

- What should be done about the problem, and why? (*key question*)
- What action (if any) should the government – or the private sector – take to address the problem?
- What policy action(s) would you recommend to address the problem? Can you think of any creative solutions that have not been tried so far?
- Describe the relationship between *your* proposed alternative and the problem. (Recall that linking alternatives to problems implies an associational or causal link – if the government does X, Y is likely to happen.)
- Is ‘no-action’ an alternative? What are the costs (social, economic, political, etc.) of no action?

5. In-class Presentation

Prepare a 15-minute presentation to give in front of your peers. We may have guest judges, who will help us determine the best two presenters based on quality and substance of the talk. You are welcome to use a power point, video, and/or poster presentation.