

Political Science/Public Administration 328-WI
Public Policy
Elon University
Fall 2007

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Monday, Wednesdays, & Fridays 12:15 – 1:25 p.m.
McMichael 322
Office Hours: Tuesdays/Thursdays 12:00 to 2:00 p.m.
and by appointment

Course Description

Public policy touches all facets of our lives - from the time we get up in the morning to the time we go to bed - and we often forget the profound impacts of public policy. This course will endeavor to provide insight into both the policymaking process and the different types (or arenas) of public policy in the United States. More specifically, this course will focus on how public policy is created, evaluated, and changed in the American context. In a democratic society, citizens are uniquely positioned to impact public policymaking, yet levels of citizen engagement in the United States are low and, by some estimates, declining even further. Therefore, our study of public policy will fit into a broader framework of civic engagement and promotion of citizen participation.

In an effort to cultivate civic engagement, students are required to participate in a service learning project throughout the course of the semester. Often, it is only by doing that we truly learn and that philosophy permeates all facets of this course. We will study public policy in the classroom but we will also study public policy in the “real world” by engaging with our local community. Through the synthesis of these two components, a deeper understanding of public policy will ensue.

This course is intended for political science and public administration students who are interested in public policy, how it is created, implemented, and evaluated. Additionally, the course is also meant for students who want to broaden their knowledge of their government and how it impacts their daily lives through policymaking.

Course Goals

- To understand the basic nature of the policy process and apply that knowledge in real world settings
- Be familiar with how policy interacts with the broader social, political, and ethical environment
- To develop policy research skills
- To improve writing and analytical capabilities
- To promote civic engagement and responsible citizenship

Course Expectations

While it goes without saying that students get out of a course what they put into it, it is important to emphasize several key expectations.

Class Participation and Discussion – The goal of this course is to learn about public policymaking and that can only be accomplished by engaging the material. This means that class participation is a must. Everyone, students and the instructor, can and should learn from one another. Learning is a process and is enhanced by dialogue. Additionally, engaging the material requires that students come to class having read the assignments so that they are prepared to thoughtfully and productively contribute to the class discussion. Success in this course requires engagement of the material both inside and outside of class.

Because class participation and discussion are vital to this class, it is imperative that class discussions be conducted in an appropriate manner that befits the larger institutional environment. Therefore, debate is encouraged as long as it is conducted with respect and civility. Courtesy in class discussion extends to making sure cell phones and pagers are off or in silent modes.

Attendance & Tardiness – Attendance is crucial; students who are not in class do not have the opportunity to learn from the rest of the class and the class does not have the opportunity to benefit from an absent student. It is understandable that circumstances, however, will warrant an occasional absence; if such is the case, please make every effort to inform the instructor in advance of an absence. Students are allotted two absences for the semester. Those students who surpass this number must meet with the instructor to devise assignments to make-up for missed classes. It is the responsibility of students to monitor their absences and failure to complete make-up assignments will significantly and adversely impact a student's final grade for the course.

Being late to a class is problematic for the student who is tardy, fellow students, and the instructor. A student who arrives to class late is disruptive to everyone. Students are expected to get to class on time and stay for the duration of the class. Excessive tardiness will negatively impact a student's grade.

Current Events – Studying public policy cannot and should not be done without an awareness of current events because government and politics are constantly changing. Accordingly, students will be expected to stay informed of current events through reading newspapers, magazines, and online news services. Frequently, current events will be part of class discussion.

Course Textbooks

The following texts are required for this course:

Birkland, Thomas A. 2005. *An introduction to the policy process: Theories, concepts, and models of public policy making*. 2nd ed. Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe.

Gerston, Larry N. 2002. *Public policymaking in a democratic society: A guide to civic engagement*. Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe.

Simon, Christopher A. 2007. *Public policy: Preferences and outcomes*. New York: Pearson Longman.

Additional supplemental readings will be assigned periodically.

Course Requirements

The requirements of this course fall into the following categories: service learning, citizen engagement journal, centerpiece project (paper and presentation), and exams.

Service Learning – Students often learn best by doing and it is this premise that is at the foundation of the requirements for this course. Policy does not happen in textbooks or in abstract discussions of a few highly placed individuals, rather policy happens all around us, all the time. Therefore, in an effort to connect the policy in our course textbooks with the real world of policy, a central component of this course is its service learning requirement. Students will be expected to be of service to a local group or organization on a routine basis throughout the semester. We will utilize the Kernodle Center for Service Learning at Elon (www.elon.edu/e-web/students/service_learning) to facilitate placements at various organizations. Students are free to select organizations that interest them provided there is approval from the instructor. The majority of course assignments will center on each student’s experiences at his/her organization; accordingly, students are expected to perform a minimum of 20 hours of service throughout the course of the semester. This service is expected to be performed on a regular, weekly basis. Failure to complete the required number of service hours will severely impact a student’s grade for this course component. Feedback will be sought from the supervisors at the various sites students are serving at. Additional discussion of service learning will occur in class on Monday, September 3rd.

Citizen Engagement Journal – In an effort to connect the course material to the volunteer activities of each student, a citizen engagement journal is required. This journal has multiple objectives. At the most basic level, the journal is a way to ensure that students are keeping up with their required service and that they are making connections between their service and our study of policy. Additionally, the specifics of the centerpiece project of the course, a policy options paper and presentation (discussed below), will originate through various journal entries. In other words, the journal will help get the centerpiece project done.

Journal entries are expected to be rather informal in tone and language while still ascribing to appropriate citation expectations of an upper level course. Each entry will range from two to five double-spaced pages depending upon the particular assignment (please see below). The more effort that is put into each of these entries, the easier the centerpiece project will be.

The specifics of the journal entry assignments are as follows:

	<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Due Date</i>
Entry #1	<u>Site Description</u> Describe your service site. What does the organization do? What are you responsible for doing? What are your initial impressions of the site? 2 pages	Class 8 – September 14

Entry #2	<u>Role of Citizens in Policymaking</u> After reading Gerston, Chapter 1, what do you think the role of citizens in policymaking should be? What do you think the role is at present? What are some of the ways citizens could get involved in fostering change at your site? 2 pages	Class 10 – September 19
Entry #3	<u>Public Problems</u> Upon reflection of your site and your service thus far, what do you think are some of the challenges your site faces? Are they public problems or private problems? Focus on a couple of public problems and detail their specifics. 3 pages	Class 15 – October 1
Entry #4	<u>Policy Alternatives</u> In the last journal entry you identified several public problems. Pick one or two of those public problems and discuss some of the possible policy alternatives you can think of to address them. 3 pages	Class 19 – October 10
Entry #5	<u>Reflections on Citizen Engagement</u> Now that your service is nearly over, reflect on it. What did you learn? What do you think about your level of citizen engagement before your service and after your service? Reflect on any insights offered by Gerston in Chapters 4 and 7. 3 pages	Class 36 – November 26

Policy Options/White Paper and Presentation – The centerpiece project of this course is built around its service learning component. Throughout the course of students’ service to various organizations, students will be asked to reflect on their service experiences in conjunction with class discussions. Accordingly, the policy options paper or white paper will be the culmination of those reflections. Students will be asked to identify a specific public problem that they observe at their place of service and devise various policy options to address that problem. The journal assignments will help students narrow their focus and the discussions of the journal entries in class will help students craft specific policy options.

After the selection of a particular policy problem and policy options, students will be expected to research the problem in a more traditional, academic sense. The paper should provide sufficient background on the origins of the problem, efforts (if any) to deal with the problem, and then propose a variety of different options for dealing with the problem. The paper should conclude with a clear advocacy for one particular option. The paper must be between 15 and 20 pages in length. Much of the research for this paper will likely be done outside of the traditional confines of an academic setting. For example, interviews with individuals at your place of service will likely be extremely valuable as will research online about what other similar organizations may or may not be doing. Therefore, while this is not the typical term paper, the paper must have appropriate documentation and cite appropriate sources nonetheless.

Students will present the problem and policy options they researched. Fellow students will evaluate the persuasiveness of the presentation. More detail about the presentation will be provided later in the semester.

Exams - There will be three exams throughout the semester. The exams will consist of a combination of short answer and essay questions. Exams should not be missed; however, in the unlikely event that one is missed, arrangements must be made with the instructor prior to the exam date to make up the exam.

Grading

Grades will be computed in the following manner:

Class Participation/Attendance	20%
Presentations	10%
Exams (3)	25%
Policy Options/White Paper	30%
Citizen Engagement Journal	15%

Grading Scale

A	90-100
B	80-89
C	70-79
D	60-69
F	59 and below

Honor Code

Students are expected to abide by the Elon University Honor Code. It should be noted that falsifying service hours is a violation of the Elon Honor Code.

Cheating and Plagiarism – Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Any student suspected of either cheating or plagiarism will be referred to appropriate administrative proceedings at Elon University. Additionally, the student will receive a zero for the assignment.

Guidelines for Assignments

All written assignments should meet the following criteria:

1. All work must be typed and double-spaced.
2. Citations should follow one of the following guidelines: Turabian/Chicago Manual of Style, MLA, or APA.
3. Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on their appointed due date according to the syllabus (or any change made during the course). Late assignments will not be accepted. If a student is absent on the day an assignment is due, he/she should make arrangements to turn in the assignment ahead of time.

4. All assignments must be turned in to the instructor in hard copy, unless other arrangements are made.
5. Written work will be evaluated both in terms of content and writing/grammar.

Course Schedule

The chapters indicate the material that should be read prior to coming to class (please note the schedule is tentative and may be amended).

Class 1 – Wednesday, August 29
Course Introduction & Overview

The Study of Public Policy: Context and Actors

Class 2 – Friday, August 31
What is public policy?
Birkland, Chapter 1

Class 3 – Monday, September 3
Service Learning Component and Project Overview

Class 4 – Wednesday, September 5
The Historical Context of Public Policy
Birkland, Chapter 2

Class 5 – Friday, September 7
Theories of Public Policy
Simon, Chapter 1

Class 6 – Monday, September 10
Theories of Public Policy, continued
Simon, Chapter 2

Class 7 – Wednesday, September 12
Values and Public Policy
Simon, Chapter 3

Class 8 – Friday, September 14
Actors in the Policy Process
Birkland, Chapters 3 and 4
Journal Entry #1 due

Class 9 – Monday, September 17
Actors in the Policy Process, continued
Birkland, Chapters 3 and 4

Class 10 – Wednesday, September 19
Role of Citizens in Public Policy
Gerston, Chapter 1
Journal Entry #2 due

Class 11 – Friday, September 21
Exam #1

The Policy Process

Class 12 – Monday, September 24
Introduction to Public Policy Problems
Kraft, Chapter 5 (available on Blackboard)

Class 13 – Wednesday, September 26
Class Cancelled – Instructor presenting a paper at the Southeastern Conference on
Public Administration in Nashville, TN

Class 14 – Friday, September 28
Class Cancelled – Instructor presenting a paper at the Southeastern Conference on
Public Administration in Nashville, TN

Class 15 – Monday, October 1
Agenda Setting
Birkland, Chapter 5
Simon, Chapter 5
Journal Entry #3 due

Class 16 – Wednesday, October 3
Policy Design and Tools
Birkland, Chapter 7

Class 17 – Friday, October 5
Policy Formulation
Simon, Chapter 6

Class 18 – Monday, October 8
Policy Alternatives
Kraft, Chapter 6 (available on Blackboard)

Class 19 – Wednesday, October 10
Policy Alternatives, continued
Gerston, Chapter 3
Journal Entry #4 due

Class 20 – Friday, October 12
Policy Implementation
Simon, Chapter 7

Fall “Break,” October 13 - 16

Class 21 – Wednesday, October 17
Policy Implementation and Federalism
Simon, Chapter 9
Policy Options Paper Topics due

Class 22 – Friday, October 19
Policy Evaluation
Simon, Chapter 8

Class 23 – Monday, October 22
Policy Evaluation, continued
Simon, Chapter 8

Class 24 – Wednesday, October 24
Policy Failure
Birkland, Chapter 8

Class 25 – Friday, October 26
Putting it all Together
Birkland, Chapter 9

Class 26 – Monday, October 29
Putting it all Together, continued
Birkland, Chapter 9

Class 27 – Wednesday, October 31
Exam #2

Policy Arenas

Class 28 – Friday, November 2
Types of Policies
Birkland, Chapter 6

Class 29 – Monday, November 5
Defense Policy
Simon, Chapter 10

Class 30 – Wednesday, November 7
Education Policy
Simon, Chapter 13

Class 31 – Friday, November 9
Social Policy
Simon, Chapter 12

Class 32 – Monday, November 12
Environmental Policy
Simon, Chapter 15

Class 33 – Wednesday, November 14
Criminal Justice Policy
Simon, Chapter 14

Class 34 – Friday, November 16
Health Policy
Simon, Chapter 11

Class 35 – Monday, November 19
Exam #3

Thanksgiving “Break,” November 21 - 25

Class 36 – Monday, November 26
Reflections on Citizen Engagement
Gerston, Chapters 4 and 7
Journal Entry #5 due

Class 37 – Wednesday, November 28
Presentations

Class 38 – Friday, November 30
Presentations
Policy Options Paper due

Class 39 – Monday, December 3
Presentations

Class 40 – Wednesday, December 5
Presentations

Some concluding thoughts...

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

- Margaret Mead (1901-1978)

“It is one of the most beautiful compensations of this life that no man can sincerely try to help another without finding himself.”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)

“Learning is not attained by chance, it must be sought for with ardor and attended to with diligence.”

- Abigail Adams (1744-1818)

“The advancement and diffusion of knowledge is the only guardian of true liberty.”

- James Madison (1751-1836)