**GOVT 4998 / ALS 4998 / AMST 4998 / CAPS 4998 / PAM 4060 / NS 4998 SYLLABUS**Professor David Silbey, silbey@cornell.edu,  
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**Course:** This course is about changing the world, or at least figuring out how. To do that, we have to to think clearly about how to turn knowledge into action. We know many of the problems the world has and we understand what causes those problems. The challenge is to figure out how to take that knowledge and apply it; how to use our knowledge to create effective change. This is the central challenge for any decision-maker, public or private. They must make decisions about what to do and how to do it, whether in dealing with natural disasters, winning elections, and everything in between. They base those decisions on larger bodies of knowledge, whether political, economic, historical, ethical, or any of the other broad range of disciplines. The key question is *how* to apply that knowledge: what is the problem? What is the goal? What will change the current situation? What policies or actions could start that change? Changing the world requires both knowledge and action. This course is about a careful figuring out of both.

**Learning Goal:** By the end of this course, each student will have executed an independent research project on a policy or political topic (or one that is affected by policy or politics or has implications for policy or politics) of their own choosing. In doing so, they will learn to a) outline and argue for the importance of a particular policy or political problem, b) offer a practical goal for that problem, c) gather evidence on the issue, d) explain what that evidence shows about the drivers of the problem, e) define, evaluate, and recommend solutions to that problem, weighing the effectiveness, feasibility, ethics, and equity of each f) and communicate their findings through both a presentation and papers. **GPHS majors** must do a public health related topic. **CAPS majors** must do an Asia-related topic. **PAM majors** must do a policy-related topic.

**Mindset:** One of the challenges of this class is figuring out how to balance analysis with advocacy. Analysis requires an observational and exploratory mindset, one that seeks to *understand* a particular issue. Advocacy requires an involved and engaged mindset, one that seeks to *argue* for a particular reaction to the issue. Both mindsets are important but they can clash with each other, and the challenge is to figure out how to balance them so as do *both* effectively.

**Safety Protocols:** You must wear a mask at all times in class.

**Structure**: You must bring your laptop to class and be ready to use it. Assignment extensions are possible but must be cleared with me ahead of time. Late assignments will be penalized one grade increment (ie, an A to an A-) per day. I reserve the right to change this syllabus but will make reasonable attempts to warn you if I have to do so.

My **office hours** to meet with studentsare Wednesdays, 4:30 - 6:00 pm and Fridays 3:00 - 4:00 pm in my office. I’m also happy to do an appointment at another time, if those times aren’t convenient. The two official channels of communication for the course are via email or on Canvas, so be sure to monitor both of those.

**The Project:** Since the start of the program (in 1981!) Cornell in Washington students have done a substantial research project as the academic center of their experience. The project, as noted in the learning goal, has been to investigate and research a topic of their choosing, analyze it, and present the results. The topic itself is, with guidance from us, up to you. It should be policy or politics related, foreign or domestic. I tend to define both of those things *quite* broadly. You will be assigned to a specific tutor who will mentor you through the process. The course is designed to guide you through the process of doing the project and it is important for you to stick with the process, work with your tutor, and keep up with the assignments.

**Resources**: There are a number of resources available. The Canvas site has the readings, resources, style guides, and grades. The library guide has helpful links for research and library resources. There are useful tools available as well, including Zotero (a bibliography manager), Passkey (a way to get password protected articles), and a guide on how to share Google docs.

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| **Assignments** | **Grade %** | **Due Date** | **How to Hand in** |
| Participation, including Research Logs & Tutor Meetings | 15% | In class and tutor meetings. | Research Log via Google Drive |
| Part I: The Issue Paper (10 - 12 pages) | 10% | September 26 | Canvas |
| Part II: The Policy Response Paper (10 - 12 pages) | 10% | October 24 | Canvas |
| Rough Draft (Parts 1 & II) (20-25 pages) | 15% | November 21 | Canvas |
| Final Paper (30-35 pages) | 35% | December 13 | Canvas |
| Presentation during Student Conference | 15% | December 3 | Student Conference |

**Grading:** The early assignments are graded on a “draft” standard. They are expected to be imperfect — drafts leading to a final product. The final paper and the presentation, as those final products, are graded on a “completed” standard and are expected to be polished and the culmination of your semester’s work.

**Integrity**: Remember your academic integrity. Abide by the Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity. Your submitted work should be your own. All required papers may be subject to review by Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site.

**Message From Student Disability Services**: Students with Disabilities: Your access in this course is important to me. Please request your accommodation letter early in the semester, or as soon as you become registered with SDS, so that we have adequate time to arrange your approved academic accommodations.

* Once SDS approves your accommodation letter, it will be emailed to both you and me. Please follow up with [me, TA, etc.] to discuss the necessary logistics of your accommodations.
* If you are approved for exam accommodations, please consult with me at least two weeks before the scheduled exam date to confirm the testing arrangements.
* If you experience any access barriers in this course, such as with printed content, graphics, online materials, or any communication barriers; reach out to me or your SDS counselor right away.

If you need an immediate accommodation, please speak with me after class or send an email message to me and SDS at sds\_cu@cornell.edu.

If you have, or think you may have a disability, please contact Student Disability Services for a confidential discussion: sds\_cu@cornell.edu, 607-254-4545, sds.cornell.edu.

**Class Schedule**:

**EACH WEEK’S READINGS & RESEARCH LOG ARE AVAILABLE IN CANVAS.**

**August 27**: Introductory Class. *Topics. Reverse Engineering a Policy.* **Research Log**: Set up a shared Google doc with your tutor and write up an extended paragraph about your topic.

**September 3**: Asking the Question, Figuring out the Problem*: Causes, Effects, Stake-holders and Decision-makers. Research and Evidence.* **Class Prep**: Reading in Canvas. **Research Log:** Frame your topic as a research question; create an annotated bibliography of 10 sources for your project.

**September 10:** Defining the Problem: *Process, Jargon, Public & Private, Advocacy and Analysis, So What?* **Class Prep:** Reading in Canvas. **Research Log:** Specify each part of your project (problem, goal, causes, stake-holders, decision-maker, timeline) with a single sentence (or more for the problem). Add another 10 sources to your bibliography.

**September 17:** Research and Writing: *Evidence, Qualitative and Quantitative, Primary and Secondary. Writing.* **Class Prep**: Reading in Canvas. **Research Log:** Outline your first paper, allocating to each section the sources you will use as evidence.

**September 24:***First Paper Workshop* **Class Prep:** Bring the outline you created of your first paper. **Research Log:** Inventory three things you need to do to improve your first paper.

*September 26: Issues Paper Due*

**October 1:** Responding to a Problem: *Policies & Politics. Effectiveness & Feasibility*. **Class Prep:** Reading in Canvas. **Research Log:** Describe two policy responses to your problem.

**October 8:** Evaluations: *Does the Response Work?* **Class Prep:** Reading in Canvas. **Research Log:** Describe how you will measure the effectiveness of your policy response and explain why that will show whether a policy response moves the situation towards your goal.

**October 15**: Evaluations: Is the Response Feasible? *Politics & Implementation, Economics, Social, and Ethics and Equity*. **Class Prep**: Reading in Canvas. **Research Log**: Describe potential issues with feasibility that your responses might have.

**October 22:** *Second Paper Workshop*. **Class Prep:** Outline your paper and bring it with you. **Research Log:** Inventory three things you need to do to improve your second paper.

*October 24: Policy Response Paper Due*

**October 29:** Planning for the Rough Draft. **Class Prep:** Reading in Canvas. **Research Log:** Identify what you need to do to put together your first and second paper to make it a coherent rough draft.

**November 5:** Research and Revision. **Class Prep:** Reading in Canvas. **Research Log:** What kind of sources and evidence work best for your particular issue? Why?

**November 12:** Approaching the Presentation. **Class Prep**: Reading in Canvas. **Research Log**: Outline your presentation, including identifying a good hook and conclusion.

**November 19:** *Rough Draft Workshop*. **Class Prep:** Print off a copy of your rough draft and bring it to class. **Research Log:** Inventory three things that you need to improve in the rough draft.

*November 21: Rough Draft Due*

**November 26:** *No class — Thanksgiving*.

**Dec 3:** *Student Conference*

*December 13: Final Paper Due*