

PLCY 220 Politics of Public Policy

Instructor: Jae Yeon Kim

Spring 2026

Instructor Information

- **Name: Jae Yeon Kim**
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- **Office Hours: By appointment**

Meeting Times

- **Days: TBA**
- **Time: TBA**
- **Location: TBA**

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines policy implementation as a political process shaped by power, institutions, organized interests, and social groups. It explores how states build capacity and deliver policies, how bureaucracies perform, how citizens experience government, and how those experiences feed back into politics and public policy. A central theme is decision-making. We analyze how politicians, bureaucrats, and citizens make choices based on their institutional environments, objectives, information, incentives, and constraints. Because research on the politics of public policy is interdisciplinary, we read both foundational and cutting-edge work from political science, economics, sociology, public law, and public administration.

The course also intentionally exposes students to a wide range of cases. It primarily engages American politics and public policy, but also examines European, Latin American, South Asian, and East Asian cases because, as Seymour M. Lipset (1922-2006) noted, “a person who knows only one country knows no countries.” Substantively, we cover a wide range of policy domains, including safety net programs, criminal justice, housing, and international development, with topics ranging from how state institutions have historically evolved to how to make government use of artificial intelligence more accountable.

The course's readings, in-class activities, and assignments are designed to help students understand that normative, theoretical, empirical, methodological, and practical elements are all essential for producing research, generating evidence, and improving practice in this area.

It equips students to grasp the political dimensions of policy implementation and to analyze institutional terrain, organizational challenges, key actors, and strategic choices. It also helps students design policy innovations that encounter less resistance, build broader coalitions, and not only get adopted, but also sustain and scale.

COURSE FORMAT

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

COURSE POLICIES

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: The Policy-centric Politics (and Political Science)

- Brady, David. 2023. "Poverty, Not the Poor." *Science Advances* 9 (34).
- Farr, James, Jacob S. Hacker, and Nicole Kazee. 2006. "The Policy Scientist of Democracy: The Discipline of Harold D. Lasswell." *American Political Science Review* 100 (4): 579–87.
- Hacker, Jacob S., and Paul Pierson. 2014. "After the 'Master Theory': Downs, Schattschneider, and the Rebirth of Policy-Focused Analysis." *Perspectives on Politics* 12 (3): 643–62.
- Hertel-Fernandez, Alexander, Jacob S. Hacker, Paul Pierson, and Kathleen Thelen. 2022. "The American Political Economy: A Framework and an Agenda for Research." In: *The American Political Economy: Politics, Markets and Power*, eds. Alexander Hertel-Fernandez, Jacob S. Hacker, Paul Pierson, and Kathleen Thelen. Cambridge University Press.

Week 2: The Politics of Policy Implementation

- Mangla, Akshay, and Jae Yeon Kim, "Reconstructing Implementation as Politics," Working Paper.
- Wildavsky, Aaron. 1973. "If Planning Is Everything, Maybe It's Nothing." *Policy Sciences* 4 (2): 127–153.
- Lipsky, Michael. 1971. "Street-Level Bureaucracy and the Analysis of Urban Reform." *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 6 (4): 391–409.
- Patashnik, Eric. 2003. "After the Public Interest Prevails: The Political Sustainability of Policy Reform." *Governance* 16 (2): 203–234.

Week 3: Political Legitimacy and Policy Delivery

- Lipset, Seymour Martin. 1959. "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy." *American Political Science Review* 53 (1): 69–105.
- Levi, Margaret. 2022. "Trustworthy Government: The Obligations of Government and the Responsibilities of the Governed." *Daedalus* 151 (Fall): 215–233.
- Lerman, Amy E. 2020. "The Public Reputation as a Self-Fulfilling Prophecy." In: *Good Enough for Government Work: The Public Reputation Crisis in America (And What We Can Do to Fix It)*. University of Chicago Press.
- Fukuyama, Francis, Christopher Dann, and Beatriz Magaloni. 2025. "Delivering for Democracy: Why Results Matter." *Journal of Democracy* 36 (2): 5–19.

Week 4: The Origins and Varieties of State Capacity

- Grzymala-Busse, Anna. 2024. "Tilly Goes to Church: The Religious and Medieval Roots of European State Fragmentation." *American Political Science Review* 118 (1): 88–107.
- Kapur, Devesh. 2020. "Why Does the Indian State Both Fail and Succeed?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 34(1): 31–54.
- Lee, Melissa M., and Nan Zhang. 2017. "Legibility and the Informational Foundations of State Capacity." *The Journal of Politics* 79 (1): 118–132.
- Zhang, Simone, and Rebecca A. Johnson. 2023. "Hierarchies in the Decentralized Welfare State: Prioritization in the Housing Choice Voucher Program." *American Sociological Review* 88 (1): 114–153.

Week 5: Institutional Designs, Variations, and Outcomes

- Tsebelis, George. 2000. "Veto Players and Institutional Analysis." *Governance* 13 (4): 441–474.
- Lacey, Nicola, and David Soskice. 2015. "Crime, Punishment, and Segregation in the United States: The Paradox of Local Democracy." *Punishment & Society* 17 (4): 454–481.
- Anzia, Sarah F. 2022. "Interest Groups and Public Policy in US Local Government." In *Local Interests: Politics, Policy, and Interest Groups in US City Governments*. University of Chicago Press.
- Grumbach, Jacob, and Jamila Michener. 2022. "American Federalism, Political Inequality, and Democratic Erosion." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 699 (1): 143–155.

Week 6: Bureaucratic Performance, Expertise, and Reputation

- Williams, Martin J. 2021. "Beyond State Capacity: Bureaucratic Performance, Policy Implementation and Reform." *Journal of Institutional Economics* 17(2): 339–57.
- Auerbach, Adam Michael, Shikhar Singh, and Tariq Thachil. 2025. "Who Knows How To Govern? Procedural Knowledge in India's Small-Town Councils." *American Political Science Review* 119 (2): 708–726.
- Ang, Yuen Yuen. 2017. "Beyond Weber: Conceptualizing an Alternative Ideal Type of Bureaucracy in Developing Contexts." *Regulation & Governance* 11 (3): 282–298.
- Carpenter, Daniel P. 2000. "State Building Through Reputation Building: Coalitions of Esteem and Program Innovation in the National Postal System, 1883–1913." *Studies in American Political Development* 14 (2): 121–155.

Week 7: Administrative Burden and Policy Feedback

- Moynihan, Donald, Pamela Herd, and Hope Harvey. 2015. Administrative Burden: Learning, Psychological, and Compliance Costs in Citizen–State Interactions. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 25 (1): 43–69.
- Mettler, Suzanne. 2010. “Reconstituting the Submerged State: The Challenges of Social Policy Reform in the Obama Era.” *Perspectives on Politics* 8(3):803-824.
- Soss, Joe, and Vesla Weaver. 2017. “Police Are Our Government: Politics, Political Science, And the Policing of Race–Class Subjugated Communities.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 20: 565–591.
- Michener, Jamila, Mallory SoRelle, and Chloe Thurston. 2022. “From the Margins to the Center: A Bottom-Up Approach To Welfare State Scholarship.” *Perspectives on Politics* 20 (1): 154–169.

Week 8: The Contracting State

- Kettl, Donald F. 1988. “Performance and Accountability: The Challenge of Government by Proxy for Public Administration.” *The American Review of Public Administration* 18 (1): 9–28.
- Salamon, Lester M. 1987. “Of Market Failure, Voluntary Failure, and Third-Party Government: Toward a Theory of Government-Nonprofit Relations in the Modern Welfare State.” *Journal of Voluntary Action Research*, 16(1-2), 29-49.
- Dooling, Bridget C. E., and Rachel A. Potter. 2022. “Rulemaking by Contract.” *Administrative Law Review* 74: 703.
- James, Oliver, Sebastian Jilke, Carolyn Petersen, and Steven Van de Walle. 2016. “Citizens' Blame of Politicians for Public Service Failure: Experimental Evidence about Blame Reduction through Delegation and Contracting.” *Public Administration Review* 76 (1): 83–93.

Week 9: The State and Social Embeddedness

- Collier, Ruth Berins, and David Collier. 1979. “Inducements Versus Constraints: Disaggregating Corporatism.” *American Political Science Review* 73 (4): 967–986.
- Mangla, Akshay. 2022. “Bureaucratic Norms: A Theory of Implementation.” In: *Making Bureaucracy Work: Norms, Education and Public Service Delivery in Rural India*. Cambridge Studies in the Comparative Politics of Education. Cambridge University Press.
- Brooks, Leah, and Zachary Liscow. 2023. “Infrastructure Costs.” *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 15 (2): 1–30.

- Xu, Alice. 2024. "Segregation and the Spatial Externalities of Inequality: A Theory of Interdependence and Public Goods in Cities." *American Political Science Review* 118 (3): 1431–1448.

Week 10: Credit-Taking, Blame-Shifting, and Claim-Making

- Holland, Alisha C. 2016. "Forbearance." *American Political Science Review*. 110(2): 232–246.
- Dasgupta, Aditya, and Devesh Kapur. 2020. "The Political Economy of Bureaucratic Overload: Evidence from Rural Development Officials in India." *American Political Science Review* 114 (4): 1316–1334.
- Toral, Guillermo. 2024. "Turnover: How Lame-duck Governments Disrupt the Bureaucracy and Service Delivery Before Leaving Office." *The Journal of Politics* 86 (4): 1348–1367.
- Silva, Fernando, Irene Bloemraad, and Kim Voss. 2025. "Frame Backfire: The Trouble with Civil Rights Appeals in the Contemporary United States." *American Sociological Review* 90 (3): 349–386.

Week 11: Civil Society, Collective Action, and Policy Change

- Cohen, Joshua, and Archon Fung. 2004. "Radical Democracy." *Swiss Journal of Political Science* 10 (4): 23–34.
- de Vries, Milan, Jae Yeon Kim, and Hahrie Han. 2024. "The Unequal Landscape of Civic Opportunity in America." *Nature Human Behaviour* 8 (2): 256–263.
- Parthasarathy, Ramya, Vijayendra Rao, and Nethra Palaniswamy. 2019. "Deliberative Democracy in an Unequal World: A Text-As-Data Study of South India's Village Assemblies." *American Political Science Review* 113 (3): 623–640.
- Gause, LaGina. 2022. "The Advantage of Disadvantage: Black Protest and Policy Responsiveness." *British Journal of Political Science* 52 (1): 259–279.

Week 12: Challenges to the Administrative State

- Coglianese, Cary. 2022. "Administrative Law: Governing Economic and Social Governance." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Economics and Finance*. Available at SSRN: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4005524
- Bagley, Nicholas. 2019. "The Procedure Fetish." *Michigan Law Review*. 118(3): 345–401.
- Howell, William G., and Terry M. Moe. 2023. "The Strongman Presidency and the Two Logics of Presidential Power." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 53 (2): 145–168.

- Carpenter, Daniel, Dagonel, Angelo, Judge-Lord, Devin, Kenny, Christopher, Libgober, Brian, Rashin, Steven, Waggoner, Jacob, and Yackee, Susan Webb. 2022. “Inequality in Administrative Democracy: Large-Sample Evidence from American Financial Regulation” Available at SSRN. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4770520

Week 13: Policy Evidence, Reflexivity, and Research Methods

- Burawoy, Michael. 1998. “The Extended Case Method.” *Sociological Theory* 16 (1): 4–33.
- Rao, Vijayendra. 2022. “Can Economics Become More Reflexive?” *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper* 9918.
- Bergman, Peter, Raj Chetty, Stefanie DeLuca, Nathaniel Hendren, Lawrence F. Katz, and Christopher Palmer. 2024. “Creating Moves to Opportunity: Experimental Evidence on Barriers to Neighborhood Choice.” *American Economic Review* 114 (5): 1281–1337.
- Kim, Jae Yeon, Pamela Herd, Sebastian Jilke, Donald Moynihan, and Krista Rodden. 2025. “Administrative Checkpoints, Burdens, and Human-Centered Design: Increasing Interview Access to Raise SNAP Participation.” *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*.

Week 14: Artificial Intelligence, Politics, Administration, and Society

- Engstrom, David Freeman, and Daniel E. Ho. 2020. “Algorithmic Accountability in the Administrative State.” *Yale Journal on Regulation* 37: 800–854.
- Alon-Barkat, Saar, Madalina Busuioc, Kayla Schwoerer, and Kristina S. Weißmüller. 2025. “Algorithmic Discrimination in Public Service Provision: Understanding Citizens’ Attribution of Responsibility for Human Versus Algorithmic Discriminatory Outcomes.” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 35 (4): 469–488.
- Raviv, Shir. Forthcoming. “When Do Citizens Resist the Use of AI Algorithms in Public Policy? Theory And Evidence.” *Journal of Politics*.
- Davis, Jenny L., and Mona Sloane. 2025. “AI’s Sociological Era.” *Social Science Computer Review*.