

11.002/17.30 Making Public Policy
Fall 2019

Essay #4 (20% of the grade)
Due Wednesday, December 4 by 1pm via Stellar

Folk theories of policy making often portray public policies as resulting from a process whereby powerful interests (especially those with money and other economic resources) gain the upper hand. Current policies on climate change, healthcare, the criminal justice system, and many other areas are often seen under this light. For the last essay of this course you are being asked to challenge this common assumption that money and “power” determine the outcomes of the policy making process.

Write a 5-page essay (12-point font, double spaced) in which you present and defend an argument about how *ideas and ideologies* heavily influence public policies in the United States. Discuss some of the mechanisms through which ideas operate, and their connection to different phases of the policy making process. Illustrate your argument with examples on at least two policy areas that we have covered in this class (climate change, gun control, healthcare, criminal justice reform, the racial wealth gap, and urban development).

Make sure you state your argument clearly and concisely in the introductory paragraph. Your argument should be developed through the essay, which should follow a clear and logical structure. Each paragraph should defend one distinct idea or “sub-argument” that contributes to the overall argument. The concluding paragraph should not only summarize your argument, but also discuss some of its implications (for example: what does your argument imply for advocates of social change?, or how does your argument change the way we think of politics or of the policy making process?). Make sure to cite others’ work where appropriate using the standard “(NAME YEAR)” format.