

PPOL 210: Introduction to Public Policy

Spring 2021

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Class Time and Location: Tuesday & Thursday 12:30 – 1:45pm, online via Zoom

Office Hours: I am happy to meet any time. Just email me to set up a convenient time.

Teaching Assistant: Jason Michnick, (jmichn5@uic.edu); Office hours: TBA

I. LEARNING AND COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Public policy is what government decides to do (or not do). These decisions made (or not made) impact everything from education to the environment and from national security to health care. Simply put, public policy shapes how we live. The governor and state legislators, for example, make decisions and create policies that play a role in setting your tuition rates. The President, Congress, and Department of Education help to establish the terms of your student loans, which are distributed, monitored, and collected upon by government, nonprofit, and private organizations.

Have you ever wondered how these policies are made? What institutions and decision makers play a part in the process? Who and what data or evidence influences their decisions? Whether those decisions resulted in good or poor outcomes? These are the types of questions that we explore in this course.

By the end of the semester, you will be able to identify and describe the structure and process of policymaking. You will also be able to identify opportunities to participate in the policy process as an active citizen, having already created a roadmap for solving an existing public problem. We will apply our new knowledge to real-world scenarios. We will identify a diverse set of public policy problems and map out strategies to resolve them. Ultimately, it is hoped, that you will make use of your new knowledge and skills to participate in the policymaking process and make a positive impact in your communities.

In this course, we will align the following course objectives with teaching and learning activities as well as two exams, three short quizzes, and several short assignments to get you more engaged in the policy process.

Course Objectives

- Identify and critically describe public problems
- Understand basic theories and concepts regarding the policy process
- Identify the key players in the policy process, their motivations, and preferences
- Identify and describe the structures and processes through which governments make decisions
- Examine how interest groups wield power and influence agenda setting and decision making
- Describe the role of civic society (individuals, organized groups, and nonprofit organizations) in participating to the public process
- Describe and understand the different stages of the policy process

- Develop critical skills to understand how policies are designed and evaluated
- Develop analytical skills to read, comment, and summarize policy content and information

II. COURSE POLICIES:

Academic Integrity: As an academic community, UIC is committed to providing an environment in which research, learning, and scholarship can flourish and in which all endeavors are guided by academic and professional integrity. All members of the campus community—students, staff, faculty, administrators—share the responsibility of insuring that these standards are upheld so that such an environment exists. Instances of academic misconduct by students shall be handled pursuant to the Student Disciplinary Policy. The Student Disciplinary Policy is available online at <https://dos.uic.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/262/2018/10/DOS-Student-Disciplinary-Policy-2018-2019-FINAL.pdf>.

Special Needs: UIC and the Department of Public Administration are committed to maintaining a barrier-free environment so individuals with disabilities can fully access programs, services and all activities on campus. The Office of Disability Services works to ensure the accessibility of UIC programs, classes, and services to students with disabilities. Services are available for students who have documented disabilities, including vision or hearing impairments and emotional or physical disabilities. Students with disability/access needs or questions may contact the Office of Disability Services at (312) 413-2183 (voice) or (312) 413-0123 (TTY only). Please feel free to contact me if you need any special accommodations.

Diversity and Inclusion: It is my goal that people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives be included in and served by this course, the Department of Public Administration, and the University of Illinois at Chicago. I believe that the diversity that the students bring to this class is a resource that can be used to improve student learning and perspectives. Course materials and activities are designed to be respectful of all types of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, values, and culture. It is my intent that this class be an environment where all students feel safe to express their perspectives and opinions. Please let me know if something said or done by me, the TA, guest lecturers, or other students, is troubling or causes discomfort or offense. If this occurs, please feel free to discuss the situation with me privately, to raise your concern in class, or to let me know about the issue through a trusted source (e.g., another student or faculty member or your academic advisor).

Campus Advocacy Network: Under the Title IX law you have the right to an education that is free from any form of gender-based violence and discrimination. Crimes of sexual assault, domestic violence, sexual harassment, and stalking are against the law and can be prevented. For more information or for confidential victim-services and advocacy contact UIC's Campus Advocacy Network at 312-413-1025 or visit <http://can.uic.edu/>. To make a report to UIC's Title IX office, contact Rebecca Gordon, EdD at TitleIX@uic.edu or (312) 996-5657.

Attendance: We learn from one another. Even though our learning will occur in an online classroom this semester, I will create a curriculum and opportunities that allow you to engage in dialogue with me and your classmates. Thus, you need to be present to learn from your peers and your peers need you to be present to learn from you. Attendance will count as part of your participation grade (which is 10% of your overall grade). If you need to miss a class, advance notice is appreciated (email is the best method). In these cases, students are expected to keep up with the class requirements and turn in assignments on time.

Assignments: All written assignments are expected to be turned in on time. In an attempt to be fair to students who turn assignments in on time, late assignments will be penalized 5% each day. That said, I understand that work and life circumstances (especially this semester) arise that hinder your ability to keep up with the work in

this class. If you need an extension on an assignment please let me know. Please reach out at any point so we can develop a plan to help you succeed in this course.

Assignment Formatting and Plagiarism: The standard for all written assignments is Times New Roman font, size 12 point, double-spaced, and margins of 1 on all sides. Students must cite works properly and consistently, using the American Psychological Association (APA) style <http://www.apastyle.org/index.html> or other consistent formatting technique. All work that is borrowed directly, paraphrased, or alluded to must be properly cited. Plagiarism – borrowing any idea, theory, information, or facts that are not common knowledge without acknowledging the source - is a very serious offense. Plagiarism will be detected and punished. The academic honor code applies under all conditions. See link under academic integrity above.

III. READINGS

- (1) Birkland, Thomas A. (2019). *An Introduction to the Policy Process: Theories, Concepts, and Models of Public Policy Making*. 5th Edition. Routledge. [Note the 3rd or 4th edition of this book are fine. Feel free to buy whatever version is the cheapest]
- (2) Additional readings will be posted on blackboard.
- (3) *Optional Text/Not Required:* Graham, Bob (2010). *America, the Owner's Manual: Making Government Work for You*. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Resources and other sources:

Government Websites

The Congressional Budget Office, <http://www.cbo.gov/>
The Government Accountability Office, <http://www.gao.gov>
U.S. House of Representatives, <http://www.house.gov/>
The Office of Management and Budget, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb>
Congressional Hearings, <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/collection/CHRG/>
U.S. Government Information by Topic, <https://www.usa.gov/#tpcs>
U.S. Senate, <http://www.senate.gov/>
POTUS, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/>

Newspapers & Magazines

The Economist, <http://www.economist.com/>
The Hill, <http://thehill.com/>
The New York Times, <http://www.nytimes.com/>
The Wall Street Journal, <http://online.wsj.com/home-page>
The Washington Post, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics>

Videos

PBS Frontline, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/view/>
TED: Ideas Worth Spreading, <http://www.ted.com/>

IV. REQUIREMENTS AND GRADES

Midterm Examination (20%)

A midterm exam will be given during week 9. Material will come from class lectures, discussions, and readings. It will include a number of short answer and essay questions.

Final Examination (20%)

A final exam will be given during Week 16. Material will come from class lectures, discussions, and readings. It will include a number of short answer and essay questions.

Micro-Learning Activities (MLAs) (35%)

Micro-learning activities are designed to guide your understanding of the material while allowing you to explore topics and issues that interest you. These are short assignments that will be submitted through Blackboard. There are 7 scheduled MLAs throughout the semester. These assignments should be between 350 and 550 words.

Quizzes (15%)

Three short quizzes will be given during the year. The quiz will be a mix of multiple choice and true/false questions. Quizzes are timed and you will have a set number of minutes (generally around 15 minutes) to complete them. You can take the quiz at any time on the date it is due, but you can only access the quiz once. Note that questions will be randomized across students from a larger pool of questions. Quizzes are currently scheduled for weeks 4, 7, and 14.

Participation/Attendance (10%)

Our ability to achieve the course objectives depends on your participation. Attendance is required. Being prepared (i.e. reading), contributing, and asking questions all enhance our teaching and learning activities and will be factored in to your participation grade. You will also participate in groups and teams during class. You will occasionally be asked to prepare and present information to the class informally.

V. WEEKLY SCHEDULE

***All written MLA assignments should be submitted through the assignment tool on Blackboard. See above for proper formatting of written assignments. The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; if necessary, deviations from this plan will be announced to the class and updated accordingly on Blackboard.**

Week #	Date	Topic	Primary Readings (other required readings will be posted on Blackboard; pages based on Birkland 4 th ed)	Due
1	1/12	Course overview. What is public policy?	--	
	1/14	Introduction to the policy process	Birkland Chapter 1	
2	1/19	The policy system	Birkland Chapter 2	
	1/21	The policy system cont.	none	MLA 1
3	1/26	Structure and historical context of policymaking	Birkland chapter 3	
	1/28	Policy Problems	Defining Policy Problems	MLA 2
4	2/2	Official Actors – Congress	Birkland Chapter 4 (p 107-124)	
	2/4	Official Actors – President	Birkland Chapter 4 (p 124-129)	Quiz 1
5	2/9	Official Actors – Bureaucracy	Birkland Chapter 4 (p 129-141)	
	2/11	Official Actors – Court	Birkland Chapter 4 (p 141-147)	MLA 3

6	2/16	Unofficial Actors	Birkland Chapter 5 (p 153-168)	
	2/18	Unofficial Actors cont.	Birkland Chapter 5 (p 169-195)	MLA 4
7	2/23	Special Topic: Gun Violence	CQ Researcher Article	
	2/25	A View from Inside Washington	none	Quiz 2
8	3/2	Agenda Setting and Power	Birkland Chapter 6 (p 199-211)	
	3/4	Interest Groups	Birkland Chapter 6 (p 211-235)	
9	3/9	MIDTERM		
	3/11			
10	3/16	Policy types	Birkland Chapter 7	
	3/18	Policy types cont.	Case Study	
11	3/23	SPRING BREAK		
	3/25			
12	3/30	Decision making	Birkland chapter 8 (p 287-296)	
	4/1	Decision making cont.	Atlantic Article	MLA 5
13	4/6	Policy design and tools	Birkland Chapter 9	
	4/8	Policy design and tools	none	MLA 6
14	4/13	Policy implementation	Birkland Chapter 10	
	4/15	Policy implementation cont.	Case Study	Quiz 3
15	4/20	Policy evaluation	Wheelan Chapter 13 (on BB)	
	4/22	Policy evaluation cont.	none	MLA 7
16	4/27	FINAL		
	4/29			
		Have a Great Summer!		