

Introduction to Public Policy

POLI 211

FALL 2021

MAYBANK 316

2:00PM - 3:15PM MW

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🗨 Office hours: [By appointment](#) (on Zoom)

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic is still ongoing. **The College of Charleston requires that masks be worn while indoors and you must wear a mask at all times while in class.** Although vaccinations are currently not required, *I ask you to be respectful of the health and safety of others.* If you have not received the **COVID-19 vaccine, which is safe, free, and effective, please consider doing so immediately.** Information about the vaccine is available from the [SCDHEC website](#) and information about where and when to obtain a vaccine is also available on the SCDHEC website [vaccine locator page](#).

Course Description

Our responsibility is one of decision—for to govern is to choose - John F. Kennedy

As stated by President Kennedy, making choices is at the heart of governing. How do policymakers make choices regarding public policy? This course will address this question by examining the policymaking process in the United States.

Throughout this course we will explore the historical and social context in which policymaking occurs; how problems reach the agendas of policymakers and how policies are formed to address those problems; the adoption of specific policy alternatives; how policies are implemented; and, finally, how public policies are evaluated.

Course Catalog: This course examines the cultural, economic, and institutional contexts that shape U.S. public policy. The course examines the processes by which policy problems are addressed and alternate solutions are adopted. Implications for solving public problems and resolving political disagreements in a manner consistent with democratic ideas are considered.

This course will be *lecture* and *discussion* based. Being able to adequately participate requires you to come to class prepared by having done the assigned readings prior to class. In addition, you should be prepared to participate in class by asking questions and making informed comments that

add to the class discussion. **I may call on you to answer a question or discuss your policy issue.**

Laptops are allowed, but discouraged. Phones are only to be used to answer quiz questions. *I encourage you to take notes by hand, with pen and paper. You learn better that way.* I recommend taking notes using the [Cornell Method](#). Also, lecture slides will generally **not** be made available outside of class.

Course Goals and Learning Objectives

The goals for this course are to:

- Understand the public policy process in the US
- Apply various public policy models to real world policy issues
- Analyze the merits of public policy debates
- Analyze the merits of alternative policy solutions to public problems

General Social Science Education Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course students should be able to apply social science concepts, models or theories to explain human behavior, social interactions or social institutions. This will be assessed in the final exam.

Required Materials

The following materials are **required**.

- *Readings:*
 - Birkland, Thomas A. 2020. *An Introduction to the Policy Process: Theories, Concepts, and Models of Public Policy Making* 5th Edition. *4th edition is fine.*
 - Additional readings listed in the schedule will be available on [OAKS](#).
- *Poll Everywhere:* You are required to set-up an account and register your phone with Poll Everywhere.
 - *There is no cost to use Poll Everywhere for this class*
 - I encourage you to review the materials [here](#) and [here](#)

Course Prerequisites

POLI 101 or permission of instructor

Attendance Policy

Attendance will not be taken; however, a lack of attendance will result in missed quiz questions. Additionally, lecture slides will *not* be made available outside of class. **Do not come to class if you feel ill or if you have been exposed to COVID-19, regardless of how you feel. I am happy to meet with you to discuss material you missed.**

Course Requirements and Grading

Performance in this course will be evaluated on the basis of in-class quiz questions, four issue papers, a policy memo, and two exams. Points will be distributed as follows:

Assignment	Possible Points
Quiz Questions	250 points total
Mid-Term Exam	100 points
Final Exam	100 points
Issue Papers	(4 at 100 pts each) 400 points total
Policy Memo	50 points
Total	900 points

Assignments

All due dates for assignments are on the following schedule.

Quiz Questions: There will be 1 to 2 quiz questions given during each class period and the questions will be answered using Poll Everywhere on your phone. *You must be present in class to be able to answer the questions.* These questions will cover material from the readings and/or class discussion. Each question will be worth 5 points and can not be made up if you miss class. However, **I will add up to 25 points to your quiz questions grade at the end of the course.**

Mid-term: The mid-term exam will be given on **October 13** and will be **taken in OAKS**. All material from the readings, lectures, and in-class discussions are fair game for the mid-term exam. The exam will be multiple choice, short answer, and short essay.

Final Exam: **The final exam period is Saturday, December 11 from 3:30 PM to 5:30 PM** and it will also be **taken on OAKS**. The final will *NOT* be comprehensive and all material from the readings, lectures, and in-class discussions *since the mid-term* are fair game. The exam will be multiple choice, short answer, and short essay.

Issue Papers: You will pick a problem or policy issue of interest to you and you will write **four** short, 4 to 5 page, papers about various aspects of the issue. These aspects include the nature of the problem; current and past policies to address the problem; and several alternative approaches to the problem. Details for each issue paper are posted on OAKS. **Issue papers must be turned in through the Assignments folder on OAKS.**

Policy Memo: For the policy memo assignment, you will write a short, 2 page, memo about your policy problem to a specific decision maker. In the memo you will summarize your issue papers and make a recommendation to the decision maker regarding the policy problem you chose. **The policy memo must be turned in through the Assignments folder on OAKS.**

Late Work Policy Late work is subject to a 48-hour grace period, and after that will be penalized 10% each day (24 hr period) it is late, up to 3 days. After 3 days the assignment will not be accepted. For example, if an assignment is due Wednesday at 2:00 PM, the grace period ends on Friday at 2:00 PM and it is late as of 2:01 PM and you lose 10%. After Saturday at 2:01 PM you lose another 10%, after Sunday at 2:01 PM another 10%, and no work will be accepted after Monday at 2:00 PM. *No late work will accepted 72 hrs after the assignment due date and time.*

Grading Scale

There are **900** possible points for this course. Grades will be allocated based on your earned points and calculated as a percentage of **900**. A: 94 to 100%; A-: 90 to 93%; B+: 87 to 89%; B: 83 to 86%; B-: 80 to 82%; C+: 77 to 79%; C: 73 to 76%; C-: 70 to 72%; D+: 67 to 69%; D: 63 to 67%; D-: 60 to 62%; F: 59% and below

Course Schedule

Subject to Change. Changes will be announced in class.

Topics, Readings, Assignment Due Dates, and Exam Dates

Assigned readings come from the **Birkland** book and other readings mentioned below will be available on [OAKS](#), under Content -> Readings, OR through the links provided.

Birkland: Birkland, Thomas A. 2020. *An Introduction to the Policy Process: Theories, Concepts, and Models of Public Policy Making*

Aug 23: Course Introduction and Overview

- *Readings:*
 - [Policy in 500 Words: what is public policy and why does it matter?](#)

Aug 30: Democracy and Public Policy

- *Readings:*
 - Dahl, Chapter 4: *What is Democracy?*, on [OAKS](#)
 - Dahl, Chapter 5: *Why Democracy?*, on [OAKS](#)
 - Levitsky and Ziblatt, Chapter 1: *How Democracies Die: Introduction*, on [OAKS](#)
 - **SKIM** Birkland, Chapter 1

Sept 6: The Context of Policymaking

- *Readings:*
 - Birkland, Chapter 2
 - Birkland, Chapter 3

Sept 13: Policy Types

- *Readings:*
 - Birkland, Chapter 7
- *Assignments:*
 - **Issue paper 1 DUE: Sept 15**

Sept 20: Institutions

- *Readings:*
 - Dahl, Chapter 8: *What Political Institutions Does Large-Scale Democracy Require?* on [OAKS](#)
 - Birkland, Chapter 4

Sept 27: Actors and Subsystems

- *Readings:*
 - Birkland, Chapter 5

Oct 4: Agenda Setting

- *Readings:*
 - Birkland, Chapter 6
- *Assignments:*
 - **Issue paper 2 DUE: Oct 6**

Oct 11: Policy Formulation

- *Readings:*
 - Anderson: *The Formulation of Policy Proposals*, on [OAKS](#)
- **MID-TERM EXAM: Oct 13**

Oct 18: Decision-Making

- *Readings:*
 - Birkland, Chapter 8, pgs. 294-305
- **FALL BREAK: Oct 18-19**

Oct 25: Policy Analysis

- *Readings:*
 - Birkland, Chapter 8, pgs. 282-294
 - [Can technocracy be saved? An interview with Cass Sunstein](#)

Nov 1: Policy Design

- *Readings:*
 - Birkland, Chapter 9
- *Assignments:*
 - **Issue paper 3 DUE: Nov 3**

Nov 8: Policy Implementation

- *Readings:*
 - Birkland, Chapter 10

Nov 15: Public Budgeting

- *Readings:*
 - Anderson: *Budgeting and Public Policy*, on [OAKS](#)

Nov 22: Policy Evaluation

- *Readings:*
 - Anderson: *Policy Impact, Evaluation, and Change*, on [OAKS](#)
- *Assignments:*
 - **Issue paper 4 DUE: Nov 22**
- **THANKSGIVING BREAK: Nov 24-26**

Nov 29: Policy Issues

Dec 6: Conclusion

- *Assignments:*
 - **Policy memo DUE: Dec 6**

FINAL EXAM IS SATURDAY DECEMBER 11

Important Information

Academic Integrity Statement

Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when identified, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved.

Incidents where the instructor determines the student's actions are related more to a misunderstanding will be handled by the instructor. A written intervention designed to help prevent the student from repeating the error will be given to the student. The intervention, submitted by form and signed both by the instructor and the student, will be forwarded to the Dean of Students and placed in the student's file.

Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly by the instructor and/or others having knowledge of the incident to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive a XXF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This status indicator will appear on the student's transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the XX to be expunged. The F is permanent.

Students should be aware that unauthorized collaboration – working together without permission – is a form of cheating. Unless the instructor specifies that students can work together on an assignment, quiz and/or test, no collaboration during the completion of the assignment is permitted. Other forms of cheating include possessing or using an unauthorized study aid (which could include accessing information via a cell phone or computer), copying from others' exams, fabricating data, and giving unauthorized assistance.

Research conducted and/or papers written for other classes cannot be used in whole or in part for any assignment in this class without obtaining prior permission from the instructor.

Students can find the complete Honor Code and all related processes in the [Student Handbook](#)

Students with Disabilities

The College will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students should apply at the [Center for Disability Services](#) located on the first floor of the Lightsey Center, Suite 104. Students approved for accommodations are responsible for notifying me as soon as possible and for contacting me at least one week before any accommodation is needed.

Inclement Weather, Pandemic or Substantial Interruption of Instruction

If in-person classes are suspended, faculty will announce to their students a detailed plan for a change in modality to ensure the continuity of learning. All students must have access to a computer equipped with a web camera, microphone, and Internet access. Resources are available to provide students with these essential tools.

Mental and Physical Wellbeing

At the college, we take every students' mental and physical wellbeing seriously. If you find yourself experiencing physical illnesses, please reach out to student health services (843.953.5520). And if you find yourself experiencing any mental health challenges (for example, anxiety, depression, stressful life events, sleep deprivation, and/or loneliness/homesickness) please consider contacting either the Counseling Center ([professional counselors](#) or 843.953.5640 3rd Robert Scott Small Building) or the Students 4 Support (certified volunteers through texting "4support" to 839863, visit: <http://counseling.cofc.edu/cct/index.php>, or meet with them in person 3rd Floor Stern Center). These services are there for you to help you cope with difficulties you may be experiencing and to maintain optimal physical and mental health.

Food and Housing Resources

Many CofC students report experiencing food and housing insecurity. If you are facing challenges in securing food (such as not being able to afford groceries or get sufficient food to eat every day) and housing (such as lacking a safe and stable place to live), please contact the [Dean of Students](#) for support. Also, you can go to: <http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/student-food-housing-insecurity/index.php> to learn about food and housing assistance that is available to you. In addition, there are several resources on and off campus to help. You can visit the Cougar Pantry in the Stern Center (2nd floor), a student-run food pantry that provides dry-goods and hygiene products at no charge to any student in need. Please also consider reaching out to Professor ABC if you are comfortable in doing so.

Center for Student Learning

I encourage you to utilize the Center for Student Learning's (CSL) academic support services for assistance in study strategies and course content. They offer tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, study skills appointments, and workshops. Students of all abilities have become more successful using these programs throughout their academic career and the services are available to you at no additional cost. For more information regarding these services please visit the [CSL](#) or call (843) 953-5635.

I encourage you to take advantage of the Writing Lab in the Center for Student Learning (Addlestone Library, first floor). Trained writing consultants can help with writing for all courses; they offer one-to-one consultations that address everything from brainstorming and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documenting sources. For more information, please call 843.953.5635 or visit: <http://csl.cofc.edu/labs/writing-lab/>.

Religious Accommodation for Students

It is the policy of the College to excuse absences of students that result from religious observances and to provide without penalty for the rescheduling of examinations and additional required class work that may fall on religious holidays. Please see me immediately if you will need to miss class any time during this semester.