Course Description:
This course explores issues in American public policy. First, students will study the role of each major governing institution in the policymaking process. We will analyze the tools available to each institutional actor to shape policy as well as the constraints on their use. Throughout, we will discuss how institutional design shapes policy outcomes. Then the course considers the role of citizens and interest groups in the policy process. The class asks what citizens know about politics and policy, who participates, and whether political leaders are responsive to the public. Finally, we consider the role of organized interests in policymaking, including the collective action problem, the role of moneyed interests, and lobbying.

Course Objectives:

1. To understand the politics of the policy process
2. To understand the tools available to different political actors to shape policy and the constraints on their use
3. To understand the effect of the structure of governing institutions on policy
4. To understand the role of citizens and organized interests in the policy process

Materials and Assignments:

Materials and assignments will be posted to the NYU Classes with some exceptions. First, you will need to purchase the Kennedy School of Government case studies (see below). Case studies not labeled ‘KSG’ will be posted to Classes with the other readings. Second, if a reading has a URL on the syllabus, you may access the reading directly online.
To access the Kennedy Schools cases, you will need to click on the following link:
https://case.hks.harvard.edu/content/cases/. From the Kennedy School's website, you may search for each of the assigned cases and purchase them.

- KSG Case Study 2039.0, “Man on a Wire: Bart Stupak Walks a Tight Line Between Obamacare & Abortion”
- KSG Case Study 180.0, “Shelley Metzenbaum and Improving Federal Government Performance”
- KSG Case Study 2060.0: “Fixing Our Politics, One Vote at a Time: Public Policy Graduates Aim to Boost Turnout with TurboVote”

Course assignments will be a combination of short written assignments and in class exams.

- **Exam 1 (20%)**: In-class exam that assesses student knowledge of course concepts from readings and lecture from the first class to this date. Exam will consist primarily of short answer questions.
- **Exam 2 (20%)**: In-class exam that assesses student knowledge of course concepts from readings and lecture from the after the first exam until the date of the second exam. Exam will consist primarily of short answer questions.
- **Case Analyses (30%)**: Students will write three short case analyses throughout the semester. Each analysis is worth 10% of your final grade. Instructions will be provided in class.
- **Final Exam (25%)**: The final exam will be a series of take-home essay questions that you will answer over the course of a week.
- **Participation and In Class Activities (5%)**: Participation is an important part of the course. I expect students to attend and actively engage in discussion and in-class activities.

**Classroom Policies:**

*Electronic Devices*: There will be no electronic devices permitted during lecture. Students will be expected to take written notes during lecture. Slides will be posted online after class. Electronic devices may be used during group work to consult the readings. Any other use of electronic devices during group work is not permitted. Cell phones must be turned off and stowed in students’ bags during class. There will be no cell phones on desks or used during the class period.

*Late Policy*: For exams, students are only permitted to take a make-up exam if they have a prior arrangement with me or supply a note from a doctor or university dean excusing their
absence due to serious illness or another family problem. Travel or conflict with another activity or job is not an acceptable excuse for missing exams. Case analyses will not be accepted following their due date.

*Academic Integrity:* Academic integrity is taken seriously at NYU. Students should not take another’s work either verbatim or slightly rewritten and present it as their own. Collaboration is encouraged, but each student should submit work that is their own and cite when appropriate. Students should familiarize themselves with Wagner’s academic code: [http://wagner.nyu.edu/students/policies/academic-code](http://wagner.nyu.edu/students/policies/academic-code). I expect every student in the course will abide by the academic code and report any violations to me. If you are ever uncertain about what constitutes a violation of the code, request clarification.

*Policy Regarding Disability Services and Programs:* Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities, 726 Broadway, 2nd Floor, (212-998-4980). Reasonable accommodations can be made for students with qualified disabilities. Student must register with the Moses Center and provide me with documentation from that office. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me in the first week of the term.

**Course Schedule**

September 6: Introduction

**Governing Institutions**

September 13: Separation of Powers and Federalism
Federalist 10, 51, & 57 ([http://www.constitution.org/fed.htm](http://www.constitution.org/fed.htm))
Derthick, Keeping the Compound Republic, Selection
Case Study: Drinking Water Safety

September 20: Congress
Olezek, *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process*, Chapter 1 “Congress and Lawmaking”
Binder, “The Senate, the Power of the Minority, and the Nuclear Option”, [http://brook.gs/2lHGKHF](http://brook.gs/2lHGKHF)
Case Study: Republicans the Challenges of Repealing Obamacare

September 27: Congress Case Study
KSG Case Study 2039.0, “Man on a Wire: Bart Stupak Walks a Tight Line Between Obamacare & Abortion”

**Case Analysis Due**

October 4: President
Howell, *Thinking About the Presidency*, Chapter 2 “Bearing Witness”
Case Study: Executive Action on DACA

October 11: Executive Branch
Gormley and Balla, Bureaucracy and Democracy: Accountability and Performance, “The Bureaucracy’s Bosses”
Moore, Creating Public Value, Selection.
HKS Case Study 180.0, “Shelley Metzenbaum and Improving Federal Government Performance”
**Case Analysis Due**

October 18: Courts
Epstein and Knight, The Choices Justices Make, Chapter 1 and 2
Case Study: Campaign Finance

October 25: **Quiz 1**

November 1: No Class

**Influences on Policy**

November 8: Polarization
Thomas Mann, It’s Even Worse Than It Looks, Selection.
Nolan McCarty, “The Policy Effects of Partisan Polarization”
Sarah Binder, “Polarized We Govern?”
Case Study: Immigration Reform

November 15: Citizens in the Policy Process
Lupia, Informed, Selection.
Christopher Achen and Larry Bartels, 2016, Democracy for Realists. Selection.
Gilens and Page, “Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens”

November 29: Organized Interests and Collective Action Problems
Kernell, Jacobson, Kousser and Vavrek, “Interest Groups”
Berry and Arons, “A Voice for Nonprofits”
KSG Case Study 2060.0: “Fixing Our Politics, One Vote at a Time: Public Policy Graduates Aim to Boost Turnout with TurboVote”
**Case Analysis Due**

December 6: Lobbying and Semester Wrap-Up
Kaiser, So Much Damn Money, Selection.
Hall and Deardorff, “Lobbying as Legislative Subsidy” American Political Science Review 2006
December 13: Quiz 2