The Politics of Public Policy
UPADM-GP 101

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. 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 2099.0, “Money and Morals: The Minimum Wage and the American South”

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

- **Midterm Exam (25%)**: 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.
- **Final Exam (45%)**: The final exam consists of two parts. First, an in-class exam will assess student knowledge of course concepts presented after the midterm exam. Exam will consist primarily of short answer questions. Second, there will be two take-home essays. Each component will be weighted equally.
- **Case Analyses (25%)**: 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.
- **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 an exam. 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 appropriately. Students should familiarize themselves with Wagner’s academic code: http://wagner.nyu.edu/students/policies/academic-code. I expect every student in the course to 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**

January 25: Introduction

February 1: Separation of Powers and Congress  
Federalist 10 & 51 (http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/fed.asp)  
Olezek, *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process*, Chapter 1 “Congress and Lawmaking”  
Nolan McCarty, “The Policy Effects of Partisan Polarization”

February 8: Executive Branch  
Howell, *Thinking About the Presidency*, Chapter 1 & 2  

February 15: Health Care Reform  
KSG Case Study 2039.0, “Man on a Wire: Bart Stupak Walks a Tight Line Between Obamacare & Abortion”

**Case Analysis Due**

February 22: Interest Groups & Lobbying  
Kernell, Jacobson, Kousser and Vavrek, “Interest Groups”  

March 1: Citizens in the Policy Process

March 8: Midterm Exam

**Spring Break**

March 22: Policymaking in States and Localities
Derthick, Federalism, Selection.
Sacco, et al., “The Marijuana Policy Gap and the Path Forward”
Volden and Shipan, “Policy Diffusion”

March 29: Federalism and State Minimum Wage Laws
“The Federal Minimum Wage: In Brief”
HSK Case Study “Money and Morals: Minimum Wage in the American South”

**Case Analysis Due**

April 5: No Class

April 12: Economic Inequality and Policy
Gilens and Page, “Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens”
Mettler, Chapters 1 & 2, *Degrees of Inequality*

April 19: Gender Equality and Policy-making
Lawless and Fox, “Men Rule: The Continued Underrepresentation of Women in the Legislature”
Berry and Anzia, “The Jackie and Jill Robinson Effect: Why Congresswomen Outperform Congressmen?”
Swers, “Does Electing Women have a Policy Impact?”

April 26: Policy and Civic Engagement
Campbell, “Policy Makes Mass Politics”
Weaver, “The Only Government I Know”, *Boston Review*
“Policing”, Issues for Debate in American Public Policy

May 3: Final Exam