Politics of Public Policy: City, Nation, Globe  
NYU P11.0022, Spring 2011

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The critical issues facing the U.S. and other nations involve profound political and moral choices. “Politics of Public Policy” is a signature NYU course because here those choices—and the core values of public service and good governance informing them—are confronted directly.

Our attention to the values and choices central in democratic policymaking will proceed in four stages. The initial weeks comprise an overview of public policy in a constitutional democracy—primarily as practiced in the current U.S., but with reference to other places and times. The second segment takes up the nature of policymaking, addressing how complex systems of governance actually function. Third, we’ll explore New York (State and NYC) policy concerns. Our final weeks place these themes and processes in broader contexts, including ethical, global, and behavioral, in order to trace some of the principal tensions in democratic public policymaking.

Course Requirements: Attendance at all classes is essential: if you must be absent, let your TA know in advance. Grading is as follows: two short writing assignments (30%); a midterm exam (30%); and a final exam (40%). You may also submit up to two extra-credit assignments before each exam. We’re a large group, but we’ll hold class-wide discussions whenever possible; please arrive in class prepared to discuss readings and (especially) case studies.

Course Readings: One required book, Deborah Stone’s Policy Paradox (Norton, 2002 ed.), is available at the NYU Bookstore. All other readings are available on the course Blackboard site. A copy of Stone’s book will be on reserve at Bobst Library, with a 2-hour reserve time.

Late Assignment Policy: Extensions will be granted only in case of emergency, out of respect to those who abide by deadlines despite equally hectic schedules. Late submissions without extensions will be penalized ½ letter grade per day (B+ to B, e.g.)

Students with Disabilities: Any students requiring accommodations should contact me to make proper arrangements. Please be prepared to share your documentation from the NYU disabilities office regarding appropriate accommodations.

Plagiarism: As a student enrolled in a NYU Wagner School undergraduate course, you are required to abide by Wagner’s Academic Code, at the URL below. All incidences of plagiarism and related violations will result in penalties ranging from course failure to expulsion. To read the code, see http://wagner.nyu.edu/current/policies/.
Note: **readings from Stone book you buy; others on Blackboard.

I. Ideas/Goals

Jan. 25-27  “Public Policy”: Introduction


Feb. 1-3  Democratic Policymaking ( Mostly American-Style): An Overview


Feb. 8-10  Markets, Non-Profits, & Public Policy


II. Making Public Policy

Feb. 15-17  Framing/Agenda-Setting

Readings: **D. Stone, Part III intro. (pp. 131-35), chs. 6 (“Symbols”), 8 (“Causes”).  

First Writing Assignment: Due by 5 PM, Fri., Feb. 18.

Feb. 22-24  Institutions, I: Executives, Legislatures & Policymaking

[Review Heilemann piece on Obama, posted with Week I readings]
II. *Making Public Policy* (con’t.)

Mar. 1-3 *Interests: Interest Groups & Policymaking*

Readings: **D. Stone, *Policy Paradox*, ch. 9 (“Interests”).**

Mar. 8-10 *Institutions, II: Courts*


_March 15-17: No Class (Spring Break)_

III. *New York Policy & Politics: An Introduction*

Mar. 22 *Governing New York: State and City*

*Will add updated articles on NYC/NYS politics (2011).*

_Midterm Exam: Thurs., March 24 (in-class)_

Mar. 29-31 *City of the Past, City of the Future: From Moses to PlaNYC 2030*

S. Ospina, “New York Immigration Coalition” [Case Study]

IV. *Contemporary Issues & Tensions in Public Policy*

Apr. 5-7 *Implementing & Evaluating Government Performance*

IV. Contemporary Issues & Tensions (continued)

Apr. 12-14  Ethics, Accountability & Public Policymaking

A. Day, “Donald Rumsfeld-Abu Ghraib” (2007) [Case Study]
D. Cole, “What to Do About the Torturers?” (2009)

Second Writing Assignment: Due by 5 PM, Fri., April 15

Apr. 19-21  Globalization, Democracy, and Public Service

J. Bhagwati, “Banned Aid” (2010)

Apr. 26-28  Behavior, Emotion and Policymaking

Readings: **D. Stone, Policy Paradox, ch. 11 (“Inducements”).
Thaler & Sunstein, “Privatizing Marriage” (from Nudge, 2008).

May 3-5  Reforming Public Policy

P. Light, A Government Ill-Executed (2008), excerpts.
*Articles will be added on current policy-reform topics (2011).

Final Exam: Thurs., May 12, 12-2 PM [details will be discussed in class]