P11.1022: Introduction to Public Policy
NYU Wagner School, Fall 2011

Course Meetings: Thursday, 6:45-8:55pm (Silver 711)

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Puck Building, 3rd Floor
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The critical issues addressed in public policymaking involve political and moral choices, along with analytic and administrative aspects. Introduction to Public Policy has long been a signature course of Wagner’s MPA program in part because this is where those choices—and the core values of public service and good governance informing them—are confronted most directly.

Our attention to the values and choices central in policymaking will proceed in three stages. The initial weeks comprise an overview of public policy in a constitutional democratic capitalist system—primarily as practiced in the contemporary U.S., but with reference to other places and times. The second segment takes up the making of public policy, addressing how complex systems of governance actually function—along with explicit detail to the practice of policy analysis and evaluation. Third, we will address these themes and processes in broader contexts, including ethical and behavioral; along the way we’ll trace some of the principal tensions in democratic public policymaking.

Course Requirements: Attendance at all classes, given our limited time together, is essential: if you must be absent, let me know in advance. Grading is as follows: 2 short policy memos (30%); midterm exam (20%) and a final exam (30%); group presentation (10%); and participation (10%). We’ll hold regular class-wide conversations; please arrive in class prepared to discuss readings and (especially) case studies. Optional outside-class discussions will also be available, as will on-line forums for exchanging your ideas and opinions.

Course Readings: One book is required: Deborah Stone’s Policy Paradox (Norton, 2002 ed.). Additionally, I strongly recommend Kraft and Furlong’s Public Policy: Politics, Analysis and Alternatives (CQ Press, 2010) for any international students or others looking for an introduction to the basics of American Government. Additional readings for each week will be posted on our Blackboard course site. The readings below are subject to change but students will be notified well in advance of any proposed changes.

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.
**PART 1. PUBLIC POLICY OVERVIEW: ACTORS, INFLUENCES & MODELS**

**Week 1**

**Sept 8**

“Public Policy” Introduced

*(Please complete readings before arriving in class on the 8th).*

D. Stone, *Policy Paradox* (2002), Intro., ch. 1, Conc. (pp. 1-34, 376-83).

**Week 2**

**Sept 15**

Models of Policymaking

Readings: Smith & Larimer, “Public Policy as a Concept & Field of Study” (2009).


**Week 3**

**Sept 22**

Democratic Governance & Policymaking: Public Sector


“A Tampa Town Hall Forum Goes Awry” [Harvard Case Study]

**Week 4**

**Sept 29**

Privatization: Firms, Non-Profits, & Public Policy


“New Dehli Water and Power” [Harvard Case Study]

**PART II. MAKING PUBLIC POLICY**

**Week 5**

*Assignment 1 due by 6:30 PM, Thursday, October 6.*

**Oct 6**

Framing/Agenda-Setting/Media

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


Week 6

Oct 13  
Policy Formation: Decision Making Theory

Readings: 
“Congestion Relief in Logan Airport” [Harvard Case Study]
“Santiago’s Sewage” [Harvard Case Study]

Week 7

Oct 20  
**Midterm Exam (In class essays & IDs)**

Week 8

Oct 27  
Legislatures & Policy Decision making

Readings: 
“Note on Congressional Budget Making Process” [Optional]

Week 9

Nov 3  
Executives, Leadership & Policy Decision-making

Readings: 
“The Challenge of Adapting to Climate Change: King County Brings Local Action to a Global Threat” [Harvard Case Study] (with 3 min video)

Week 10

Nov 10  
Interest Groups & Policy Adoption.

Readings: 
D. Stone, *Policy Paradox*, ch. 9 (“Interests”).
Week 11

Nov 17  Courts & Policy Implementation

Readings:  “Inciting a Computer Revolution in Health Care: Implementing the Health Information Technology Act” [Harvard Case Study]

*Assignment 2 due by 6:30 PM, Thursday, December 1.

Week 12

Dec 1  Policy Evaluation

Readings:  J. Schlefer, “Trust and Mistrust: External Evaluators Assess Mexico’s Anti-Poverty Programs” (2003) [Harvard Case Study].

PART III: NEW DIRECTIONS IN DEMOCRATIC POLICYMAKING

Week 13

Dec 8  Emerging Frontiers: Behavior, Technology and Policymaking

Readings:  *D. Stone, Policy Paradox, ch. 11 (“Inducements”).
Foer & Scheiber, “Nudge-ocracy” (2009)

Week 14

Dec 15  Ethics, Behavior & Reform in Public Policy