Objective

There is no profession more noble than public service, and no arena more exciting than New York. Our objective is to gain insight into how our city and state governments make decisions, informed by a foundational and wide-ranging understanding of the forces at work and issues that face policymakers today. I am teaching this class because of my longstanding—and ever-expanding—interest in the practice of public policy and a deeply held belief that the effectiveness of our government depends on the quality of those who serve in it.

In the first half of the semester, we will examine the structures of New York City and State government and the recent historical and political context in which they operate. This background will be used in the second half of the semester to explore a range of public policy debates in areas such as economic development, transportation and infrastructure, public education, public safety and housing and homelessness. Emphasis throughout will be placed on the practicalities of decision-making and the messy, politicized and conflict-rich environment in which public policy is hammered out. We will be joined by a number of guest speakers from the worlds of journalism, government, business and advocacy.

Expectations

- A class like this only works if everyone regularly attends, arrives on time, and completes the week’s readings in advance. Each class will, therefore, begin promptly with a brief quiz that will serve to track attendance and assess completion and comprehension of required readings. (The point of the quiz is not to be punitive, but rather to ensure that no one is “freeriding” off of others’ efforts. As discussed below, the scoring will allow for two quizzes’ worth of points to, in effect, be dropped.)

- You will be expected to regularly contribute to your colleagues’ understanding by vigorously questioning and contributing during each class.

- Use of laptops, tablets and recording devices is not permitted. Same goes for checking phones and text messages during class.

- Class discussions—including but not limited to presentations by guest speakers—are strictly “off the record,” and not for publication or reporting, including on social media. (It goes without saying, but any views I represent in class are mine only and do not represent those of the Office of the Attorney General.)
• Writing clearly and persuasively is a critical skill in the public policy arena, and will be factored into the grading of assignments and quizzes. Please avail yourself, as needed, of services and assistance that NYU provides in this area, outlined here:
  http://wagner.nyu.edu/students/services/tutoring

• All assignments will be subject to computerized review in order to identify instances of plagiarism. Any plagiarized assignment will receive a failing grade and, depending on the severity of the incident (and at my sole discretion), may spur a failing grade for the class and/or a referral to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. Plagiarism is not limited to the wholesale reproduction of another author’s prose, and I encourage you to review NYU’s Academic Integrity Policy: http://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines/compliance/policies-and-guidelines/academic-integrity-for-students-at-nyu.html

• You may expect me to respond within 48 hours to emails you send to me between Monday and Thursday. I will respond to emails you send between Friday and Sunday by the following Tuesday. If—and only if—an inquiry necessitates a faster reply, include “URGENT” in the subject line.

Required Readings

A set of readings has been assigned for each class, drawn from books, white papers, newspapers and magazines. Over the course of the semester, you will be exposed to a range of writing by some of the great observers of—and, by definition, participants in—New York government and politics.

Each class’s readings are listed in the order that I would recommend tackling them. For many classes, readings from required books (listed below) are interspersed with readings from other sources, which are available as weekly reading packets in the course’s “Resources” folder on the NYUClasses web portal. In the syllabus, I have placed asterisks next to readings from required books so that they are not overlooked. (The asterisks do not connote any elevated importance.)

Required books:


Grades and Assignments

Grading will be formulaic and, unlike most public policy matters, not subject to negotiation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Total Points Available</th>
<th>Maximum Points Awarded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Term: Due October 8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term Paper Topic: Due October 22</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term Paper: Due December 3</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Quizzes:** Each class (except the first and one other during the semester) will begin with a brief quiz, which will receive a grade between zero and three points. An aggregate 36 points will be available from quizzes over the course of the semester. If you miss a given quiz because of lateness or absence, you will receive zero points for that quiz, with no opportunity for makeup and without exception. Up to thirty points from quizzes will count toward your final grade, allowing for the loss of up to six points without impact.

- **Mid-Term:** A mid-term take-home examination will be distributed September 24 and due October 8, and will count for up to 25 points of your grade. In-class material—not just assigned reading—may be covered by the mid-term.

  The assessment of any mid-term submitted after the conclusion of class on October 8 will be reduced by one full grade level (for example, from a B+ to a C+) and by an additional grade level if it is submitted after October 15. Any mid-term that has not been submitted by the conclusion of class on October 22 will not be accepted and will receive zero points, which may result in a failing grade for the class.

- **Term Paper:** A final term paper (approximately 3,000 words) will be due December 3 and will count for up to 45 points of your grade. You must select and describe a statistic that quantifies a public policy issue or trend in New York City or State, and which has been updated at least annually since 2000 or earlier. The heart of the paper should be devoted to analyzing policy changes over time that are captured by the statistic; what policymakers working in the space can learn from the data’s relationships to those changes as an historical matter; and what implications they have for open public policy questions and competing proposed solutions. You should relate this analysis to key themes and readings we discuss during the semester.

  In analyzing the data, make sure to provide relevant context and apply a critical eye, including but not limited to exploring any weaknesses inherent in underlying data or methodology; methodological changes over time that may have created inconsistencies in the data; and what parts of the story the statistics do not tell.

  You will be required to submit a proposed topic for the term paper, including the relevant data set, to me by October 22 for feedback and/or approval.

  The assessment of any term paper submitted after the conclusion of class on December 3 will be reduced by one full grade level (for example, from a B+ to a C+) and by an additional grade level if is submitted after the conclusion of our final class on December 10. Any term paper that has not been received by me by December 12 will not be accepted and will receive zero points, which will result in a failing grade for the class.
Course Outline

Week 1 | September 3
“More problems than solutions”: An Introduction


Week 2 | September 10
Structure and Budget of City Government


Week 3 | September 17
City Hall: From the Fiscal Crisis Forward


Week 4 | September 24
The Ways and Means of Albany

**Week 5 | October 1**

The Special Interests of New York


**Week 6 | October 8 | MID-TERM DUE**

The Media as a Force in New York’s Public Policy Environment


NO CLASS | October 15

Week 7 | October 22 | TERM PAPER TOPIC DUE
Case Study: Outer Borough Taxis


Week 8 | October 29
Land Use and Economic Development


Week 9 | November 5
Case Studies: Seward Park Urban Renewal Area and Brooklyn Bridge Park


**Week 10 | November 12**  
**Transportation and Infrastructure**

**Week 11 | November 19**

**Public Education**


**Week 12 | November 26**

**Public Safety**


Week 13 | December 3 | FINAL PAPER DUE
Housing, Homelessness and Social Welfare


Week 14 | December 10
Closing Session
Readings to Be Assigned