

Policy Formation

Spring 2017

Syllabus

Time: Wednesday 4:55-6:35pm

Location: 45 W 4th Street, Room B02

Washington Square

Dates: January 25th to May 3rd, 2017

Professor

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212-992-8702

Office hours: By appointment

Course Summary

This course is about how policy is made. How is a policy idea born? What factors influence policy design? Why do some policies succeed and others – even “good” policies – fail? How do these processes relate to power in democratic policy-making? We will focus on the variety of actors at play in the policy formation process. Understanding the incentives and constraints placed upon each of them will be invaluable as you join the policy-making world after Wagner, whether as a policy leader, field practitioner, organization manager, or researcher. If Introduction to Public Policy gave an overall theoretical framework for understanding the policy process, this course delves deeper into the politics of the input stage, where policy-making begins.

Learning Objectives

The goal of this course is to give you an understanding about the real context in which policy is made. By the end, given a policy context, you should be able to identify all the relevant actors and their respective interests. You should also be able to make theory-based predictions about how those interests will align or compete, whether or not they will be constrained by certain institutional factors, and ultimately, how they will influence the actors’ abilities to push forward their desired policy goals. Through the assignments, you will also sharpen an important toolkit for policy practitioners – the ability to analyze, summarize, and effectively communicate a policy landscape and offer actionable solutions.

Assignments and Grading

Participation (10%)

This is a lecture course with open class discussion. Showing up *ready* will be key to your own learning and also that of your fellow students. It is essential that you have not only read the required readings before class, but also spent some time thinking about them. Please know that cold calling is widely used in graduate-level seminars as a way to make sure everyone comes prepared. If you foresee an absence due to personal emergency or religious observance, please notify me beforehand via email.

Discussant (15%)

In the first class, you will sign up for a week in which you will be in charge of facilitating class discussion. Depending on the size of the course, we will have 1-2 discussants per session. As a discussant, your job is to come up with 3 questions for the class to discuss that you should post on NYU Classes at least 24 hours before class. These questions should be more than about summarizing the readings. Instead, they should bring up connections between readings of that week or to weeks prior. Alternatively, they can urge the class to think about how the readings connect to current policy debates.

Op-ed (15%): Due February 22nd

A short opinion piece regarding a current policy negotiation or event where you make the case for a specific policy change (or creation). You are free to take on the voice of an ordinary citizen, a non-profit or interest organization, legislator, journalist, or other relevant party. The key is to be able to communicate your policy goals clearly and offer concrete evidence or reasoning to justify them. Since the policy of your choosing will guide the rest of the memos in the course, make sure to choose an area or topic in which you have real interest.

Stakeholders Analysis Memo (25%): Due April 19th

In this memo, you will identify all of the relevant actors in the policy-making process of your chosen topic. The memo should discuss who they are, what their incentives or “stakes” are in the policy change, what resources they have to push forward their desired changes, and finally, what constraints they face.

Policy Advisor Presentation (10%): May 3rd

In the last class, you will give a brief presentation of the talking points that will go into your final memo. This will make sure that you get started on a draft early on and also give you the opportunity to receive feedback from your classmates before turning in your final memo. You will be graded on the professional nature of the presentation – how clearly and succinctly you communicate your points, as well as how well you handle feedback from your classmates.

Final Policy Advisor Memo (25%): Due May 10th

In lieu of a final exam, this final memo will bring all of your prior memos together. You will write a professional policy memo advising a stakeholder of your choice on three things: 1) the landscape of competing interests in the policy-making process, 2) your theory-based projection about how those competing interests will play out, and 3) a set of specific recommendations to ensure that your stakeholder's goals have the best chance of being made into real policy.

Academic Integrity

Intellectual honesty is taken very seriously in this class. The Wagner School's academic code is available here: <https://wagner.nyu.edu/portal/students/policies/code>. If anything is unclear or you experience an incidence of violation of the code, it is your responsibility to bring it to my immediate attention.

Administrative Details

All announcements regarding assignments and other changes will be posted to the course website on NYU Classes, which you should check regularly.

All written assignments should be submitted in printed form (12 pt. font, 1.5 spaced, double-sided) in the beginning of the class on the date it is due (except for the final memo, which should be emailed to me before 5pm on May 10th).

Late assignments will be penalized by a half grade for each day that they are past deadline.

Anyone with disabilities who require special accommodations should see me in the first week of class with a letter from the Moses Center.

Course Schedule

January 25th: Introduction to Policy Formation

Introductions and overview of the course and requirements. No assigned reading, but come ready to share the following:

- 1) Why you became interested in policy-making
- 2) Your policy area of interest or expertise
- 3) Any recent changes, developments, or debates in that area

February 1st: Assumptions and Frameworks about Policy-making

- Lukes, Steven. 2005. *Power: A Radical View*. Palgrave MacMillan. Chapter 1, p. 14-48.
- Achen, Christopher and Larry Bartels. 2016. *Democracy for Realists*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 1 (p. 1-12) and Chapter 2.
- Gilens, Martin and Benjamin Page. 2014. "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens." *Perspectives on Politics* 12(3): 564-581.

February 8th: Nature of Public Opinion

- Zaller, John. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 3
- Taber, Charles and Milton Lodge. 2006. "Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs." *American Journal of Political Science* 50(3): 755-769.
- Feldman, Stanley and John Zaller. 1992. "The Political Culture of Ambivalence: Ideological Responses to the Welfare State." *American Journal of Political Science*. 36(1): 268-307.
- Bartels, Larry. 2002. "Beyond the Running Tally: Partisan Bias in Political Perceptions." *Political Behavior* 24(2): 117-150.

February 15th: Citizen Inputs to Policy – On Getting to Inputs

- Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady. 1995. *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Chapter 9.

- Blais, Andre. 2000. *To Vote or Not to Vote*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press. Chapter 5.
- Miller, Arthur H., Patricia Gurian, Gerald Gurian, and Oksana Malanchuk. 1981. "Group Consciousness and Political Participation." *American Journal of Political Science* 25: 494-511.
- Read: "27 Million Potential Hispanic Votes, but What Will They Really Add Up To?"

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/18/magazine/27-million-potential-hispanic-votes-but-what-will-they-really-add-up-to.html>

February 22nd: Citizen Inputs to Policy – On the Quality of Inputs

- Lupia, Arthur. 1994. "Shortcuts versus Encyclopedias: Information and Voting Behavior in California Insurance Reform Elections." *American Political Science Review* 88(1): 63-76.
- Bartels, Larry. 1996. "Uninformed Votes: Information Effects in Presidential Elections." *American Journal of Political Science* 40(1): 194-230.
- Bartels, Larry. 2008. *Unequal Democracy*. Russell Sage Foundation. Chapter 4.
- Achen, Christopher and Larry Bartels. 2016. *Democracy for Realists*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 5.

March 1st: Legislators – Incentives and Constraints

- Arnold, Douglas. 1990. *The Logic of Congressional Action*. Yale University Press. Chapters 1 and 6.
- Aldrich, John. 1995. *Why Parties?* University of Chicago Press. Chapter 2.
- Fenno, Richard. 1977. "U.S. House Members in their Constituencies: An Exploration." *American Political Science Review* 71(3): 883-917.
- Barber, Michael. 2016. "Representing the Preferences of Donors, Partisans, and Voters in the U.S. Senate." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 80: 225-249.

March 8th: Legislator Behavior (Or, They are Just like Us)

- Carnes, Nicholas. 2013. *White-Collar Government*. University of Chicago Press. Chapter 3.
- Broockman, David. 2013. “Black Politicians are More Intrinsically Motivated to Advance Blacks’ Interests: A Field Experiment Manipulating Political Incentives.” *American Journal of Political Science* 57(3): 521-536.
- Broockman, David and Timothy Ryan. 2016. “Preaching to the Choir: Americans Prefer Communicating to Copartisan Elected Officials.” *American Journal of Political Science* 60(4): 1093-1107.
- Read: “Women Actually Do Govern Differently”
<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/10/upshot/women-actually-do-govern-differently.html>

March 15th: Spring Break

March 22nd: The Powers and Limits of the Media

- McCombs, Maxwell and Donald Shaw. 1972. “The Agenda-Setting function of the Mass Media.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36(2): 176-187.
- Iyengar, Shanto. 1990. “Framing Responsibility for Political Issues: The Case of Poverty.” *Political Behavior* 12(1): 19-40.
- John Zaller. 2003. “A New Standard of News Quality: Burglar Alarms for the Monitorial Citizen.” *Political Communication* 20(2): 109-130.
- Prior, Markus. 2005. “News vs. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge and Turnout.” *American Journal of Political Science* 49(3): 577-592.

March 29th: Activists and Social Movements

- Lipsky, Michael. 1968. “Protest as a Political Resource.” *American Political Science Review* 62(4): 1144-1158.
- Chong, Dennis. 1991. *Collective Action and the Civil Rights Movement*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 5

- Beissinger, Mark R. "The Semblance of Democratic Revolution: Coalitions in Ukraine's Orange Revolution." *American Political Science Review* 107.03 (2013): 574-592.
- Read: "Will Black Lives Matter be a Movement that Persuades?"
<http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/09/will-black-lives-matter-be-a-movement-that-persuades/407017/>
- Read: "The Failure of Occupy Wall Street"
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/andy-ostroy/the-failure-of-occupy-wal_b_1558787.html

April 5th: Lobbyists and their Strategies

- Austen-Smith, David and John Wright. 1994. "Counteractive Lobbying." *American Journal of Political Science*. 38(1): 25-44.
- Hall, Richard and Alan Deardorff. 2006. "Lobbying as Legislative Subsidy." *American Political Science Review* 100(1): 69-84.
- Baumgartner, Frank and Beth Leech. 2001. "Interest Niches and Policy Bandwagons: Patterns of Interest Group Involvement in National Politics." *Journal of Politics* 63(4): 1191-1213.

April 12th: Donors and the Politics of Money

- Hall, Richard and Frank Wayman. 1990. "Buying Time: Moneyed Interests and the Mobilization of Bias in Congressional Committees." *American Political Science Review* 84(3): 797
- Ansolabehere, Stephen, John Figueiredo and James Snyder Jr. 2003. "Why is There so Little Money in U.S. Politics?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 17(1): 105-130.
- Kalla, Joshua and David Broockman. 2016. "Campaign Contributions Facilitate Access to Congressional Officials: A Randomized Field Experiment." *American Journal of Political Science* 60(3): 545-558.
- Page, Benjamin, Larry Bartels, and Jason Seawright. 2013. "Democracy and the Policy Preferences of Wealthy Americans." *Perspectives on Politics* 11(1): 51-73.

April 19th: Why "Good" Policies Fail

- Bartels, Larry. 2005. "Homer Gets a Tax Cut: Inequality and Public Policy in the American Mind." *Perspectives on Politics* 3(1): 15-31.

- Walsh, Katherine Cramer. 2012. "Putting Inequality in its Place: Rural Consciousness and the Power of Perspective." *American Political Science Review* 106(3): 517-532.
- Gilens, Martin. 2000. *Why Americans Hate Welfare*. University of Chicago Press. Chapter 3.
- Lieberman, Evan. 2007. "Ethnic Politics, Risk, and Policy-making: A Cross-national Statistical Analysis of Government Responsiveness to HIV/AIDS." *Comparative Political Studies* 40(12): 1407-1432.

April 26th: Policy Responsiveness and Power

- Dahl, Robert. 1974. *Who Governs?* Yale University Press. Book V, p. 271-282.
- Lax, Jeffrey and Justin Phillips. 2009. "Gay Rights in the States: Public Opinion and Policy Responsiveness." *American Political Science Review* 103(3): 367-386.
- Gilens, Martin. 2005. "Inequality and Democratic Responsiveness." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 69(5): 778-896.

- Read:

<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/10/11/us/politics/2016-presidential-election-super-pac-donors.html>

May 3rd: Presentations