**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


February 8th: Nature of Public Opinion


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


• Read: “27 Million Potential Hispanic Votes, but What Will They Really Add Up To?”

**February 22\(^{nd}\): Citizen Inputs to Policy – On the Quality of Inputs**


**March 1\(^{st}\): Legislators – Incentives and Constraints**


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


March 15th: Spring Break

March 22nd: The Powers and Limits of the Media


March 29th: Activists and Social Movements


April 5th: Lobbyists and their Strategies


April 12th: Donors and the Politics of Money


April 19th: Why “Good” Policies Fail


**April 26th: Policy Responsiveness and Power**


**May 3rd: Presentations**