NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE

CORE-GP 1022 – Introduction to Public Policy – Fall 2017

Lecture: Section 007: Tuesday 6:45-8:55pm, SILV 411
          J. Andrew Sinclair, j.andrew.sinclair@nyu.edu
Discussion: Section 008, Tuesday 5:35-6:35pm, 45W4 B06
           TA: Caroline Iosso, ci495@nyu.edu
Discussion: Section 009, Tuesday 9:00-10:00pm, 60FA 125
           TA: Laura Bligh, lh1436@nyu.edu

Course Description

This is a course about the public policy process and the role you – in many different capacities – can have in shaping policy outcomes. This class introduces you to analytic frameworks for thinking about various aspects of this process. We do not study a single context or policy, but, rather, seek to understand how policy actors succeed (or fail) in obtaining their objectives. You will learn to think carefully about institutions and present your analysis (in person and in writing) to policymakers. You should complete this course with a better sense of the challenges facing you and opportunities you have to make a durable impact.

Course Objectives

1. To understand core theories of the process of making public policy.
2. To understand the politics of policy arguments.
3. To understand the decisionmaking tools and strategies of policymakers.
4. To learn how to conduct an institutional analysis for a policy proposal.
5. To learn how to write a memorandum presenting an institutional analysis.

Teaching Approach

To build a sophisticated understanding of the policy process you will need to engage in all components of the course. It is expected that you will complete all required readings in advance of the session for which they are listed, take notes on the material, and be prepared to summarize and critically evaluate it. You will help guide the discussion in our class meetings; your classmates are counting on you to bring your own perspective to small-group and whole-class conversations. Classes will include both lecture and discussion components – but feel free to ask on-topic questions at any point. I encourage the expression of diverse viewpoints in class and in your writing assignments; you should work within the framework under discussion but always think for yourself.
Assignments and Evaluation

See the schedule at the end of the syllabus for specific dates. This course involves a number of integrated components, including an op-ed assignment designed by Professor Thom Blaylock (in common across all policy sections) and a presentation-skills component (featuring a workshop with a communications specialist, Professor Will Carlin, and individual presentations). While this does generate a lot of “moving parts,” it also means that you will get a lot from the course.

Individual feedback will be returned to you via NYU Classes for most of your assignments. If something seems amiss about the grading of your assignment, or you would like more information about the evaluation of your work, be sure to get in touch. Every student matters. It is important to get this right and I am always happy to talk to you.

“Op-ed.” (20% of Grade). You will write an opinion article, tackling a particular form of writing often used by participants in the policy process. You will learn about this in the TA session tied to the second week of the course and carry on the exercise into weeks three and four – attendance is required. Although the final product is due Oct. 9th, this intensive exercise will involve producing drafts of your own work and engaging in a peer-review process during this time. This assignment was developed by Professor Thom Blaylock; all of the other policy sections are using the same assignment this fall, although the dates and groups are TA section-specific.

Presentation Skills. (5%: 2.5% Workshop Attendance, 2.5% Completion of Individual Presentation). As part of the course, you will attend one of the sessions of a Presentations Workshop taught by Will Carlin, a communications specialist, and then present your own work in the time-slot held by the discussion sections. See the schedule below for dates. You are required to sign up both to attend one of Professor Carlin’s workshops and (separately) to give your presentation. The course TAs will be in touch about the sign-up procedure for individual presentations; the sign-up for the main workshops are open now: https://wagner.nyu.edu/community/events/presentation-skills-bootcamp-will-carlin-session-1-2017-10-09.

Community Participation. (5%). All of the students in the course benefit from high levels of class attendance and participation, so you are expected to prepare, attend, and engage productively. For in-person attendance, major professional obligations or personal emergencies are excusable under this policy, but you should let me know of such unavoidable absences in advance by email. Please do the same for absences due to religious observance. Provided that you are a productive and positive contributor to the term, this score is derived from one (your choice of which) detailed post on the NYU Classes Forum. There will be a separate assignment sheet about this requirement in your assignments subfolder in the resources section of the NYU Classes site; this is open starting in Lecture 2 and available to complete until Lecture 13.
Institutional Analysis Memorandum. (30% of Grade). This is an exercise modeling a commonplace work-product in policy-related fields. This assignment will be completed in two graded parts following obtaining comments on a proposal:

- Proposal (Ungraded). You must complete a questionnaire about your intended project in order to obtain a grade on Part 1 of the memo assignment.

- Part 1: (15%). You will complete a “strategic analysis” questionnaire specific to the first part of the assignment and a first draft of the memo.

- Part 2: (15%). You will turn in a second “strategic analysis” questionnaire, covering further topics, and a final version of the memo.

Note that at each stage of this Memo assignment, you are to turn in the entire packet as a single pdf file, including all prior work and feedback. This helps improve the quality of the feedback you obtain on your work.

Final Exam. (40% of Grade). This is a take-home, open-book final exam that will require you to engage broadly and in a sophisticated manner with the theoretical material from the course.

Further Assistance

If you are interested, there is an (optional; highly recommended) writing workshop on Sept. 8th, taught by Professor Blaylock: https://tinyurl.com/y7lyke4c.

Furthermore, there are additional writing resources available here:

http://wagner.nyu.edu/portal/students/academics/advisement/writing-center

Note that these resources are not infinite --- particularly if you suspect you are not an exceptionally strong English-language writer, look at the assignment due dates to figure out when you will need assistance, and get in touch with them now. Later in the term it can be very difficult to get an appointment with a writing tutor.

NYU Classes

All announcements will be delivered through NYU Classes and materials and assignments posted there. Participation in the Forum is expected, as outlined above. I may modify assignments, due dates, and other aspects of the course as we go through the term with advance notice provided as soon as possible through the course website. Nearly all the readings for the term will be posted in the Resources folder.
Academic Integrity

The students and faculty at NYU are very concerned about academic integrity. Each student should have the assurance that the rules of the game are understood by everyone and enforced equally. Students are encouraged to learn and study together. Individual assignments are just that, but mutual assistance is appropriate. The Wagner School has an academic code that is available here: http://wagner.nyu.edu/students/policies/academic-code. Every student is expected to maintain academic integrity and is expected to report violations to me. If you are unsure about what is expected of you, ask.

Additional Administrative Details / Responses to Frequently Asked Questions

• All emails regarding this course should have “Fall17 IntroPP” in the subject and a hint about the key issue in the email. Members of the faculty get an enormous volume of emails, much of which is not related to our courses – so flagging emails as from the course should help make sure I know your message is important. If you do not have a response in about 48 hours, I do not consider it rude if you re-send your email – I do want to answer your questions, and sometimes things slip past me. Emails sent directly to me should be limited to matters of a personal nature; questions about the course material or assignments that would be of more general interest should be posted on the Forum. If you are confused about something, somebody else probably is too.
• You are responsible for obtaining any materials distributed in or outside of class. If you cannot find something on NYU Classes, email me immediately or post an inquiry on the Forum.
• Please silence cell phones while in class. I understand many of you have children at home or work responsibilities that may require you to monitor your phones for incoming messages -- that is ok, just do it quietly.
• I reserve the right to revise this syllabus as the term progresses. I have made at least some changes to the syllabus in nearly every semester of every course I have taught -- so expect this. If I make changes to the syllabus, I will also use the course email system to notify you.
• The use of technology in class is generally discouraged – students seem to get the best results by taking notes by hand in class and then reviewing slides (posted after class) before engaging with the assignments. I do not post the slides in advance -- in part because I often edit and update them on the day of class to reflect current events in public policy. When you review the lecture slides later, look at the “notes” view – I often put additional information in the notes.

Policy Regarding Disability Services and Programs

Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities, 726 Broadway, 2nd Floor, (212-998-4980). Reasonable accommodations can be made for students with qualified disabilities, but only for students who have registered with the Moses Center and provide documentation from that office. Please be sure to make these arrangements in the first week of the term.
**Required Readings**

There is one book required for the course - available in print and e-book format. Note that we will not need this until the end of the term:


You can likely find very inexpensive used copies online. All other readings will be posted on NYU Classes; what I have listed on the syllabus below is subject to change with notice provided by email.

The course calendar here lists only required readings. Most weeks will have supplemental readings (often presented as part of the lecture) which will be made available on NYU Classes. Make sure to reference this document so that you know what is required and what is optional.

**Meetings of the Discussion Sections**

The schedule, below, includes information on the meetings of the TA Sections. As with everything else in the course, if I need to make adjustments to this schedule, changes will be posted via NYU Classes. Note that you need to attend your section – some weeks feature activities based on a particular number of anticipated participants. We use these sessions to run the op-ed exercise, deliver information on the memo assignments, and to keep a place on your schedule for the individual presentations.
Lecture 1 (9/5):  *Introduction to the Policy Process*

- **Objective:** Provide an overview of the study of the public policy process and the intellectual outline of the course.

- No assigned reading in advance of week 1.

- **TA Sections:** Off this week.

- Sign up for the presentation skills workshop ASAP: [https://wagner.nyu.edu/community/events/presentation-skills-bootcamp-will-carlin-session-1-2017-10-09](https://wagner.nyu.edu/community/events/presentation-skills-bootcamp-will-carlin-session-1-2017-10-09). Attending one of these sessions is a required part of the course.

- Optional: on the 8th, the writing better workshop: [https://tinyurl.com/y7lyke4c](https://tinyurl.com/y7lyke4c). This may be recorded but I would encourage attending in person if you are available.

Lecture 2 (9/12):  *Intellectual Foundations – Systems of Policymaking*

- **Objective:** Frame the intellectual inquiry into the policy process as something systematic, observable, predictable, and similar across policy domains. Answer this question: what is the relationship between policymaking and politics?


- Selection from Saul Alinsky’s *Rules for Radicals*. (The Prologue, pp. 113-125).


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TA Section: All Attend. Clinical Assistant Professor Thom Blaylock will be visiting these sections to kick off the op-ed writing assignment.

From 6-7pm in the Rudin Forum on the 13th (Wednesday). Talk by Peter Tabac on Writing and Publishing Op-eds. This will be recorded if you are unavailable but is highly recommended.

By 11:59pm on Thursday Sept. 14th, the first draft of your op-ed is due on NYU Classes. You will receive your 4-person team assignment on Friday Sept. 15th to read, mark up, and write short (200-250 word) memos of peer feedback. These must be returned by 5:35 PM on the 19th (before the first TA section of the next class).

Lecture 3 (9/19): "The Policy Machine" – The "Stages Heuristic" & "ACF"

Objective: Begin to formulate a model of policymaking by looking at two (intellectually) structured alternatives, the “stages heuristic” and the “advocacy coalition framework.” Be able to answer this question: how might I describe how policymaking works? You should be able to evaluate benefits and limitations of these concepts.


(Optional, Recommended):

TA Section: All Attend. Op-ed peer feedback is due by 5:35 pm on the 19th.

The second draft of your op-ed assignment is due by 5pm on the 22nd. Peer feedback is due before 5:35 pm on the 26th.
Lecture 4 (9/26): Computational Limits – Information Processing, Framing, Stories

- **Objective**: Explore limitations on the policy process (on systems, on ordinary people) – and the consequences (for policymaking).


- **TA Section: All Attend**. The peer review comments on the op-eds are due before 5:35 pm. This is the final session focused on the op-ed.

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**PART II: INDIVIDUALS & PURPOSEFUL BEHAVIOR**

Lecture 5 (10/3): Individual Purpose, Strategic Interaction

- **Objective**: Focus on the role of individuals and their strategic behavior. You should be able to answer questions like: what should I expect other participants to do in a particular situation? And then: how can I use that knowledge to change policy outcomes?

- Sinclair, J. Andrew and Anthony M. Bertelli. 2015. “Simple Games for Discussions of Public Policy.” Course Notes (Version I). This handout covers the following topics:
  - Equilibrium
  - Coordination and the Prisoner’s Dilemma
  - Democratically Dividing the Dollar
  - Public Goods Provision

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• (Optional). Recommend *Rules for Radicals*, “Tactics”, 126-164; Morton Davis *Game Theory* – find a copy at the library, or buy a used one; and Poundstone, *Prisoner’s Dilemma* – same, find a copy at the library, or buy a used one.

• Please note that the first (of three) Presentation Skills Bootcamp Lectures (Professor Will Carlin) is Monday, October 9, from 7-8pm (in Rudin). You will need to have signed up for one of these in advance – and, if you signed up for this one, make sure you have appropriately budgeted your time so you can be ready for class on October 10th.

• TA Section: All Attend. This week, you will cover the memo proposal & memo assignment #1.

Lecture 6 (10/10): *Institutional Analysis & Institutional Change*

• **Objective**: Explain how purposeful behavior interacts with institutions in the policy process. Revisit the question: what is the link between politics & policy? And also: why do policies change? Why don’t they?


• (Optional, Recommended): Selection from Caro’s *Master of the Senate*.

• **Op-ed final assignment is due 10/9, 5:35 pm**, along with the short note and example of your best peer review.

• **Presentation Skills Bootcamp Sessions – This Week!** Monday, October 9, 7-8pm in Rudin; Thursday, October 12, 5:30-6:30 pm in Rudin. The third and final session is 10/19. Remember that you sign up and attend one of these three.

• TA Section: Off this week.
Lecture 7 (10/17):  Policy Design Options

- **Objective:** This week focuses on tactical decisions (in policy design) to change outcomes without changing preferences. How do policy design decisions influence the politics of institutional change? If you have an opportunity to shape the formation of new institutions, what should you consider trying?


- (Optional): List, Margolis, and Osgood: [http://www.nber.org/papers/w12777](http://www.nber.org/papers/w12777). For the one-paragraph summary of the argument, see:

- **Presentation Skills Bootcamp – This Week!** This is the third and final option for the Presentation Skills Bootcamp: Thursday, October 19, 5:30-6:30 pm, currently scheduled to take place at NYU Law in Furman Hall, Room FH216. Remember that you need to sign up and attend *one* of these three sessions.

- **Memo Proposals Due By 5:35 pm, 10/17,** on NYU Classes. If you turn these in early, I will try to get you faster feedback.

- **TA Sections: Off this week.**

¹ Allocate some time for reading this paper – particularly if you don’t know much about chicken farming or horse racing. These are the obvious downsides to this paper – but the upside is the clever accumulation of types of design options not found in many other academic articles, so I have kept it on this list (after some considerable debate).
PART III: UNSATISFACTORY CONCLUSIONS

Lecture 8 (10/24):  Nonsense and Impossibilities; Diffusion, Convergence, Voting

- **Objective**: This week focuses on a couple of problems: Can incentives create long-lasting “bad” outcomes? Can unsuccessful policies spread? And can voters even sensibly express opinions about policy?


- **Memo Part #1 Due on 10/24 by 5:35 pm**, turned in via NYU Classes.

- **TA Sections**: Off this week.

Lecture 9 (10/31):  Bureaucracy, Representation, and Accountability

- **Objective**: Examine where public administration fits into the policy process. Think about organizational structures that house policy workers. What powers do the different types of participants possess? And what role is left for voters?


- TBA – reading on central banking. (I will see how the term is progressing.)

- (Optional – examples of odd cases, intelligence and policing).  *Charlie Wilson’s War*, Ch. 3, 6; *LA Noir* Ch. 6 & also pp. 290-293.

- **TA Section: All Attend**.  This week, you will cover memo assignment #2.
PART IV: INDIVIDUALS AND POLICY CHANGE

Lecture 10 (11/7): What can you do? “Policy Windows” & “Information Cascades”

- **Objective:** This week explores the options available to many different types of participants – ranging from street protestors to policy analysts – to change policy outcomes. You are not likely to be immediately made the majority leader of the United States Senate when you graduate – so what can you do?


- (Even more optional): Lynne Olson, *Those Angry Days*, Ch. 18 – although I’d encourage you to read the whole book if you have time.

- **Individual Presentations – This Week!** Times are available for individual presentations (following the presentation skills bootcamp) this week. Make sure you have signed up for *one* and only *one* time to give a presentation; they are available this week and next week.

- **TA Sections: Only Presenters.** Only show up for your scheduled block (but plan to stay for the entire period, since you both give your presentation and provide feedback to the other presenters).

Lecture 11 (11/14) How can you do it? The Policy Memo (Welfare Reform Case)

- **Objective:** Examine in detail *one* commonly used policy tool – a written memo about options for institutional change presented to a decisionmaker. We will do this using a real memorandum from the Clinton presidency. What can you learn from this example about the tool? What can you learn about the substance?

- Reading: the Clinton memo materials.

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² I used to require this paper – but it is very long, so I have moved it to “optional.” You are responsible for the content at the level we cover it in class but may wish to read the original piece.


• **Individual Presentations – This Week!** Times are available for individual presentations (following the presentation skills bootcamp) this week. Make sure you have signed up for *one* and only *one* time to give a presentation; they are available last week and this week.

• **TA Sections: Only Presenters.** Only show up for your scheduled block (but plan to stay for the entire period, since you both give your presentation and provide feedback to the other presenters).

Lecture 12 (11/21)  
“*Good Government*” and Public Policy

**Thanksgiving Week – Lecture.**

• **Objective:** Discuss the role of “moral means” for obtaining “moral ends.”


• **Memo Assignment #2 Due – 5:35 pm on 11/21**, turned in via NYU Classes.

• **TA Sections: Off this week.**
Lecture 13 (11/28): *Prohibition: Policy Formation*

- **Objective**: Analyze a policy change, prohibition. How did it happen? Did the means ruin the end?
- Selections from Okrent, *Last Call*.
- Please note that all NYU Forum Posts (for grading) must be complete by the start of lecture this week.
- **TA Sections:** All Attend. This week, you will cover the take-home final. This is your final session with the TAs.

Lecture 14 (12/5): *Prohibition: Policy Implementation*

**Note:** On Tuesday, 12/12, NYU Operates on a Monday Schedule
This is the last lecture.

- **Objective**: Continue the prohibition case, a study in “what can go wrong, will go wrong.” How can we apply these lessons to current policy debates?
- Selections from Okrent, *Last Call*.
- **TA Sections:** Off this week.