PADM-GP.2411: Policy Formation and Policy Analysis [Fall Semester 2017]

The Basics

Lecture:

T 4:55-6:35pm [Silver Center for Arts and Science (SILV) 403]

Instructor:

Mona Vakilifathi [mvakilif@nyu.edu]
Office Hours: W 4:55-6:35pm [Puck Building 3094]

Course Goals

The first goal is to provide students an overview of the political actors and institutions involved in the U.S. policymaking process, specifically within the context of lawmaking in Congress. We will reference political science research and congressional resources to introduce of the pivotal actors in the lawmaking process, the actors’ means to achieve individual and collective goals, the institutional rules to introduce and enact legislation, and the political determinants of lawmaking.

The second goal of this course is to train students to research, write, and analyze legislation. We will reference political science research and congressional resources to identify constituents’ preferences, formulate a member’s legislative agenda, introduce and publicize legislation, and analyze legislation within the context of the U.S. Congress.

Website

The course website and readings are posted on NYU Classes under the “Fall 17 – Policy Formation (Vakilifathi)” tab. The lecture slides will be uploaded the morning of each lecture. The readings will be uploaded to the website two weeks in advance.

Readings


3. Additional book chapters, government reports, journal articles, news articles, and videos [These materials are posted on the course website under the “Resources” tab and the “Readings” folder.]

If you are unfamiliar with American national politics, I highly recommend The Logic of American Politics (8th edition or earlier editions) – Sam Kernell, Gary Jacobson, Thad Kousser, and Lynn Vavreck (2017). This book is available at the Bobst Library.
Case Studies

This course will extensively review the governing strategies and legislation of Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Representative Chris Collins (R-NY), and Representative John Faso (R-NY) to apply the course concepts in both chambers of Congress. Students are expected to follow each member’s Twitter account, Facebook page, and YouTube page, constituent newsletter, and news articles. The following information provides the relevant links for each member. Using a NYU e-mail account, create a Google e-mail/RSS alert with the member’s title and name in the Google News search bar (e.g., Senator Kirsten Gillibrand) to aggregate news articles for each member. In order to complete the assignments for this course, students are expected to skim members’ social media and news articles on a weekly basis.

1. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (NY)
   
   Website: [https://www.gillibrand.senate.gov/](https://www.gillibrand.senate.gov/)
   Twitter: [https://twitter.com/SenGillibrand](https://twitter.com/SenGillibrand)
   Facebook: [https://www.facebook.com/SenKirstenGillibrand](https://www.facebook.com/SenKirstenGillibrand)
   YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/user/KirstenEGillibrand](https://www.youtube.com/user/KirstenEGillibrand)
   Newsletter sign-up: [https://www.gillibrand.senate.gov/contact/email-me](https://www.gillibrand.senate.gov/contact/email-me)

2. Representative Chris Collins (NY-27)
   
   Website: [https://chriscollins.house.gov/](https://chriscollins.house.gov/)
   Twitter: [https://twitter.com/RepChrisCollins](https://twitter.com/RepChrisCollins)
   Facebook: [https://www.facebook.com/RepChrisCollins/](https://www.facebook.com/RepChrisCollins/)
   YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/user/RepChrisCollins](https://www.youtube.com/user/RepChrisCollins)
   Newsletter sign-up: [https://chriscollins.house.gov/contact/newsletter](https://chriscollins.house.gov/contact/newsletter)

3. Representative John Faso (NY-19)
   
   Website: [https://faso.house.gov/](https://faso.house.gov/)
   Twitter: [https://twitter.com/RepJohnFaso](https://twitter.com/RepJohnFaso)
   Facebook: [https://www.facebook.com/RepJohnFaso](https://www.facebook.com/RepJohnFaso)
   YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0Uh0Ja4CxWAGpjbj9R1GYA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0Uh0Ja4CxWAGpjbj9R1GYA)
   Newsletter sign-up: [https://faso.house.gov/](https://faso.house.gov/) (Sign up on home page under “Stay Connected”)

Assignments

I provide a course calendar on course website to include every assignment’s prompt release date and due date. Assignments will be graded and returned to students within two weeks of a student’s submission.

1. **Response Paper [20%]** – Students are expected to write a two-page response paper for one of three topics during the course. The prompt will be posted on the course website two weeks in advance of the due date. (To accommodate around the legislative proposal memo, the first prompt will be posted three weeks in advance.) Students will be randomly assigned to a topic based on the first letter of their last name as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Paper Topic</th>
<th>Last Name</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization of Congress</td>
<td>Allen - da Silva</td>
<td>10/17/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative Oversight of the Bureaucracy</td>
<td>Qian - Zhu</td>
<td>12/19/2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. **Legislative Proposal Memo** [20%] – Students are expected to write a two-page memo to provide an overview of their assigned member’s constituency and a legislative proposal for the member to introduce in the 2017-2019 legislative session. The prompt will be posted on the course website two weeks in advance of the due date. This assignment is due on 10/17/2017.

3. **Press Release** [10%] – Students are expected to submit a one-page press release to publicize the introduction of an actual bill introduced by their assigned member in the 2017-2019 legislative session. The prompt will be posted on the course website two weeks in advance of the due date. This assignment is due on 10/24/2017.

4. **Interest Group Letter** [10%] – Students are expected to submit a one-page letter to declare an existing interest group’s position on an actual bill introduced by their assigned member in the 2017-2019 legislative session. The prompt will be posted on the course website two weeks in advance of the due date. This assignment is due on 10/31/2017.

5. **Committee Hearing Memo** [20%] – Students are expected to submit a two-page memo to prepare an assigned member for a committee hearing on one of the member’s bills introduced in the 2017-2019 legislative session. The memo will include the member’s testimony, a list of potential witnesses, and answers to three anticipated questions from committee members. The prompt will be posted on the course website two weeks in advance of the due date. This assignment is due on 11/14/2017.

6. **Bill Analysis Memo** [20%] – Students are expected to submit a two-page memo to analyze a bill introduced by a random member of Congress for their assigned member to vote on in one of their assigned House or Senate committees. This assignment is due on 12/5/2017.

**Class Announcements**

Check the “Announcements” section on the course website regularly regarding any changes to the syllabus, assignments, readings, or other items throughout the semester.

**E-mails**

I will respond to e-mails within twenty-four hours after an e-mail is received, excluding weekends. If you have a question about an assignment the night before its due date, please e-mail me before 5pm EST that day.

**Late Assignments**

Assignments must be submitted by the beginning of lecture on its due date through NYU Classes. Late assignments will be deducted five percent from the assignment grade per calendar day. If an assignment is submitted five minutes after the beginning of lecture, the assignment will be considered one day late.

If you have religious commitments or an unexpected family/personal emergency, please e-mail me before the assignment’s due date. The student may be asked to provide documentation to prevent the aforementioned grade penalty.
Re-grading Assignments

If a student would like a re-grade of an assignment, the student must e-mail me a one-page write-up to state their reasons for a re-grade within two weeks of receiving their grade. I will re-grade the entire assignment, which may result in a lower or higher grade than the original grade within one week of receiving the student’s write-up.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to complete the assignments on their own without the assistance of others. For more information on academic dishonesty, please refer to the NYU and Wagner policies on academic integrity. If you are unsure whether an action violates either policy on academic integrity, please feel free to e-mail me for clarification.

Wagner Writing Center

Students are strongly encouraged to e-mail me or schedule a meeting for additional feedback on their assignments throughout the semester. If you would like additional feedback or training on writing policy memos, please visit the Wagner Writing Center or the NYU Writing Center.

NYU Moses Center for Disabilities

If you are student who is requesting accommodations, please contact the NYU Moses Center for Students with Disabilities. You must be registered with the Moses Center to receive accommodations. Please be sure to make these arrangements in the first week of the term.
Course Schedule

Please complete the assigned readings before the assigned lecture.

September 5, 2017: Course Overview

September 12, 2017: How to Read, Write, and Research Legislation, Statutes, and Regulations

“Legislative Research for Congressional Staff: How to Find Documents and Other Resources” – Congressional Research Service (2015)


“Statutory Interpretation: General Principles and Recent Trends” – Congressional Research Service (2014)

Example legislation from Senator Gillibrand, Representative Collins, and Representative Faso

September 19, 2017: The Research Process


“Introduction to the Legislative Process in the U.S. Congress” – Congressional Research Service (2017)


“Making Deals in Congress” from Negotiating Agreement in Politics – Binder and Lee (2013) [skim]

September 26, 2017: What Motivates Legislators to Engage in Lawmaking?


“U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration” – Fenno (1977)

October 3, 2017: How to Formulate Your Member’s Legislative Agenda


“This is why the Republicans struggle over Obamacare” – Binder (2017)


“Candidate Positioning in U.S. House Elections” – Ansolabehere et al. (2001)

“Constituents’ Responses to Congressional Roll-Call Voting” – Ansolabehere and Jones (2010)

“Legislative Planning: Considerations for Congressional Staff” – Congressional Research Service (2017)

Example press releases from Senator Gillibrand, Representative Collins, and Representative Faso

October 10, 2017: Congressional Committees, Party Government, and Pivotal Politics

“Leaders and Parties in Congress” and “Committees: Workshops of Congress” from *Congress and Its Members* (16th edition) – Davidson et al. (2017)


“Richard Fenno’s Theory of Congressional Committees and the Partisan Polarization of the House” from *Congress Reconsidered* (10th edition) – Aldrich et al. (2013)


“Pivotal Politics and the Ideological Content of Landmark Laws” – Gray and Jenkins (working paper)

October 17, 2017: Interest Group Lobbying

“Legislators and Interest Groups: How Unorganized Interests Get Represented” – Denzau and Munger (1986)

“Contributions, Lobbying, and Committee Voting in the U.S. House of Representatives” – Wright (1990)


Interest group support/opposition letter example #1, example #2, and example #3

October 24, 2017: Presidential Lobbying


“Statements of Administration Policy” – Congressional Research Service (2016)


October 31, 2017: Committee Hearing and Markup

“The Committee System in the U.S. Congress” – Congressional Research Service (2009)


Committee hearing example #1, example #2, or example #3

Committee report example #1, example #2, and example #3

November 7, 2017: Determinants of Legislative Productivity

“Roll-Call Votes” from The Oxford Handbook of the American Congress – Theriault et al. (2013)


“The Dysfunctional Congress” – Binder (2015)


November 14, 2017: Determinants of Statutory Discretion

“Administrative Procedures as Instruments of Political Control” – McCubbins et al. (1987)

“Legislatures and Statutory Control of Bureaucracy” – Huber et al. (2001)


**November 21, 2017:** Lawmaking in an Era of Congressional Polarization and Gridlock

“Causes and Consequences of Polarization” from *Negotiating Agreement in Politics* – Barber and McCarty (2013)


“The Logic of Confrontation” from *Insecure Majorities: Congress and the Perpetual Campaign* – Lee (2016)

[Obama’s Deal](http://www.frontlinetv.org/) – Frontline (2010)


“This is why Trump’s legislative agenda is stuck in neutral” – Binder and Spindel (2017)

**November 28, 2017:** The Rulemaking Process


**December 5, 2017: Legislative Oversight of the Bureaucracy**

“Caught in the Middle: The President, Congress, and the Political-Bureaucratic System” from *The Executive Branch* – Weingast (2005)

“Congressional Oversight Manual” – Congressional Research Service (2014) [skim]

“Choosing Strategies to Control the Bureaucracy: Statutory Constraints, Oversight, and the Committee System” – Bawn (1997)


**December 12, 2017: The Federal Budget and Appropriations Process [Optional]**


