



**NYU**

**ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE  
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE**

## **PADM-GP.2411**

# **Policy Formation and Policy Analysis**

**Fall 2021**

### **Instructor Information**

Instructor: Mona Vaklifathi

- Email: [mvakilif@nyu.edu](mailto:mvakilif@nyu.edu) [response within 24 hours, excluding weekends]
- Office Hours: M 12-1pm [online via "Zoom" tab in class webpage]  
M after class [in-person outside of classroom]

Lecture: M 4:55-6:35pm [45 West 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Room B06]

### **Course Goals**

#### Goal 1

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 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.

#### Goal 2

The second goal of this course is to train students how to research, write, and analyze legislation and statutes. 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.

## Learning Assessment Table

Course Learning Objective	Assignment (See Below)
Goal 1	Legislative Proposal Memorandum, Press Release, Interest Group Letter, Bill Analysis Memorandum
Goal 2	Legislative Proposal Memorandum, Press Release, Interest Group Letter, Bill Analysis Memorandum

## Course Website

The course website is available on NYU Brightspace under the “Policy Formation ([SEMESTER] [YEAR])” webpage. The readings are available on the course website. The lecture slides will be uploaded at 12pm before each lecture. The assignments will be uploaded to the website two weeks in advance of its due date.

## Required Readings

1. *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) – David Mayhew (2004)
2. 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.

The “Introduction to Public Policy” course at NYU Wagner (or its equivalent) is a formal prerequisite for this course. As a result, you are expected to be familiar with American federal government at the graduate level. If you are unfamiliar with American federal government, please read the chapters regarding the executive, legislative, and judicial branches and federalism from *The Logic of American Politics* (current or earlier editions) by Sam Kernell, Gary Jacobson, Thad Kousser, and Lynn Vavreck before attending the first lecture or in the first two weeks of this course. This book is available at Bobst Library.

## Case Studies

This course will extensively apply the course concepts to the governing strategies of Senator Charles Schumer (D, NY), Representative Nydia Velázquez (D, NY-7), Representative Antonio Delgado (D, NY-19), Representative Lee Zeldin (R, NY-1), and Representative John Katko (R, NY-24). Students are expected to follow each member’s Twitter account, Facebook page, Instagram page, YouTube page, constituent newsletter, and news articles. The following information provides the relevant links for each member. Use a NYU email account to create a Google email/RSS alert with the member’s title and name in the Google News search bar (e.g., [Senator Chuck Schumer](#)) 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.

## Senator Charles Schumer (D, NY)

- **Website:** <https://www.schumer.senate.gov>
- **Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/SenSchumer>
- **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/senschumer>
- **Instagram:** <https://www.instagram.com/chuckschumer>
- **YouTube:** <https://www.youtube.com/user/SenatorSchumer>

## Representative Nydia Velázquez (D, NY-7)

- **Website:** <https://velazquez.house.gov>
- **Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/NydiaVelazquez>
- **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/RepNydiaVelazquez>
- **Instagram:** [https://www.instagram.com/rep\\_velazquez](https://www.instagram.com/rep_velazquez)
- **YouTube:** <https://www.youtube.com/user/nydiavelazquez>
- **Newsletter:** <https://velazquez.house.gov/contact/newsletter>

## Representative Antonio Delgado (D, NY-19)

- **Website:** <https://delgado.house.gov>
- **Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/repdelgado>
- **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/RepAntonioDelgado>
- **Instagram:** <https://www.instagram.com/repantoniodelgado>
- **YouTube:** <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6ZS4-c0YIjAAyqgDjIWmpQ>
- **Newsletter:** <https://delgado.house.gov/contact/newsletter-subscribe>

## Representative Lee Zeldin (R, NY-1)

- **Website:** <https://zeldin.house.gov/>
- **Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/RepLeeZeldin>
- **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/RepLeeZeldin>
- **Instagram:** <https://www.instagram.com/leezeldin/>
- **YouTube:** <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHzZuesCPDka2NhZO8icqzA>
- **Newsletter:** <https://zeldin.house.gov/contact/newsletter>

## Representative John Katko (R, NY-24)

- **Website:** <https://katko.house.gov>
- **Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/RepJohnKatko>
- **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/RepJohnKatko>
- **Instagram:** <https://www.instagram.com/repjohnkatko>
- **Newsletter:** <https://katko.house.gov/contact/newsletter>

In addition, in order to complete the assignments for this course, students are expected to watch Sunday's episodes of "[Face the Nation](#)" every week.

## Assignments

Students are required to submit the [1] Legislative Proposal Memorandum, [2] Press Release, [3] Interest Group Letter, and **either** [4A] Bill Analysis Memorandum (Committee Vote) **or** [4B] Bill Analysis Memorandum (Floor Vote).

Each assignment consists of: (1) a writing sample for potential employment as a legislative staff member or interest group lobbyist, and (2) a worksheet of two short answer questions regarding the application of relevant course readings to the content of the writing sample.

If a student completes assignments 1, 4A, and 4B, Professor Vakilifathi will drop the lowest assignment grade among these three assignments before calculating the student's final course grade. If a student does not complete assignment 1, the student is not eligible to receive credit for both assignments 4A and 4B.

This section provides every assignment's prompt release date and due date. Each assignment, the prompt and worksheet, will be posted on the course website under the "Assignments" tab two weeks in advance of its due date. All assignments are due at the beginning of lecture (Monday at 4:55pm EST). Assignments will be graded and returned to students within two weeks of a student's submission. However, the grades for the Legislative Proposal Memorandum assignment will be graded and returned one week after a student's submission, rather than two weeks, in order for the student to utilize the feedback into the Press Release assignment.

If you receive a "B" (85 percent or lower) on the first two assignments in this course, you are required to schedule an in-person appointment with Professor Vakilifathi to review your assignments' grade and feedback.

### [1] Legislative Proposal Memorandum [30%]

Students are expected to write a two-page memorandum to provide an overview of their assigned member's constituency and a legislative proposal for the member to introduce in the 2021-2023 legislative session. In addition, students must complete a worksheet of two short answer questions regarding the application of relevant course readings to this assignment. The assignment is posted during Week 5 and the assignment is due Week 7 at the beginning of lecture.

### [2] Press Release [20%]

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 2021-2023 legislative session. In addition, students must complete a worksheet of two short answer questions regarding the application of relevant course readings to this assignment. The assignment is posted during Week 7 and the assignment is due Week 9 at the beginning of lecture.

### [3] Interest Group Letter [20%]

Students are expected to submit a one-page letter to declare an existing interest group's position on an actual bill introduced by a random member of Congress in the 2021-2023 legislative session. In addition, students must complete a worksheet of two short answer questions regarding the application of relevant course readings to this assignment. The assignment is posted during Week 9 and the assignment is due Week 11 at the beginning of lecture.

### [4A] Bill Analysis Memorandum (Committee Vote) [30%]

Students are expected to submit a two-page memorandum to provide a recommendation for their assigned member to vote for, against, or abstain on a bill introduced by a random member of Congress in one of their assigned House or Senate committees. In addition, students must complete a worksheet of two short answer questions regarding the application of relevant course readings to this assignment. The assignment is posted during Week 11 and the assignment is due Week 13 at the beginning of lecture.

### [4B] Bill Analysis Memorandum (Floor Vote) [30%]

Students are expected to submit a two-page memorandum to provide a recommendation for their assigned member to vote for, against, or abstain on a bill introduced by a random member of Congress on the House or Senate floor. In addition, students must complete a worksheet of two short answer questions regarding the application of relevant course readings to this assignment. The assignment is posted during Week 13 and the assignment is due Week 15 on Monday, December 20<sup>th</sup> at 4:55pm EST.

## Late Assignments

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

If a student would like to (1) resubmit an assignment before the due date, (2) resubmit an assignment after the due date with penalty (i.e., without a university-approved reason for late submission), or (3) submit a late assignment with penalty (i.e., without a university-approved reason for late submission), email Professor Vakilifathi.

If a student would like to (1) resubmit an assignment after the due date without penalty (i.e., with a university-approved reason for late submission) or (2) submit a late assignment without penalty (i.e., with a university-approved reason for late submission), email Professor Vakilifathi with the documentation to verify your absence. Do not notify or email the documentation before the submission of a late assignment. If Professor Vakilifathi approves your documentation, she will partially or completely waive the late penalty for the assignment.

## Re-grading Assignments

If a student would like a re-grade of an assignment, the student must email Professor Vakilifathi a one-page (maximum) response stating their reasons for a re-grade within one week of receiving their grade. Professor Vakilifathi will not accept requests for a re-grade of an assignment after one week of the student receiving their initial grade, excluding clerical errors. Professor Vakilifathi will re-grade the entire assignment, which may result in a lower or higher grade than the original grade within two weeks of receiving the student's re-grade letter. The re-graded assignment grade will be the final assignment grade.

The student can appeal her or his final course grade to Professor Vakilifathi only if there is a clerical error. All other student requests to appeal the course grade, for whatever reasons, will not be considered.

## Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a vital component of Wagner and NYU. All students enrolled in this class are required to read and abide by [Wagner's Academic Code](#). All Wagner students have already read and signed the [Wagner Academic Oath](#). Plagiarism of any form will not be tolerated and students in this class are expected to report violations to Professor Vakilifathi. If any student in this class is unsure about what is expected of you and how to abide by the academic code, you should consult with Professor Vakilifathi.

## Wagner Writing Center

Students are strongly encouraged to email Professor Vakilifathi for additional feedback on their assignments throughout the semester. If you would like additional feedback or training on policy writing, please visit the [Wagner Writing Center](#) or the [NYU Writing Center](#).

## Attendance

Attendance in lecture is mandatory. Although attendance is not a part of a student's final course grade, Professor Vakilifathi may increase a student's final letter grade if (1) the student's final course grade is less than one percentage point from the next letter grade percentage range, (2) the student has attended 13 of the 14 lectures, and (4) the student regularly participates in lecture activities and discussion. If Professor Vakilifathi applies a class curve to all students' grades, Professor Vakilifathi will not further increase a student's grade based on attendance or class participation.

### Lecture Absence

If you are not able to attend lecture and your absence is not a university-approved absence (e.g. illness without a doctor's note, work), you are responsible for completing the assigned reading,

reviewing the lecture slides, accessing the lectures notes on your own. If you have specific questions about lecture, you can sign up for office hours with Professor Vakilifathi. (See “Office Hours” section below.)

If you are not able to attend lecture and your absence is a university-approved absence (e.g., illness with a doctor’s note, illness or death of a friend or family member, religious commitment), please email Professor Vakilifathi only the documentation to verify your absence and whether you would like to review the lecture materials in a 30-minute meeting (instead of a 15-minute meeting) during office hours.

## **Cell Phone Use**

Cell phone use is prohibited during lecture because it not only distracts you during class but it disrupts other students (especially during group activities.) If you need to make a phone call or send a text message during lecture, please leave the classroom and return after you completed your call or text. If you need to make multiple phone calls or text messages during lecture, please leave the classroom and return to the classroom the following week. If you repeatedly use your phone during lecture throughout the semester, Professor Vakilifathi and NYU Wagner Student Services will schedule a meeting with you to discuss your personal circumstances.

## **COVID-19 Classroom Safety**

Every member of our NYU community is [required to wear face coverings](#) when on NYU property or in NYU facilities, including our classroom. You must also follow the [COVID-19 Screener](#) requirements for campus and classroom access. See the [information safety and health protocols](#).

If a student is not wearing a face mask over the nose and mouth: First time, I will gently remind you to wear a mask or fix the mask. Second time, I will ask you to leave the classroom to wear a mask, fix the mask, or return to the classroom the following week. If the student refuses to leave the classroom, I will cancel lecture and contact NYU Wagner Student Services.

## **Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at NYU**

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please visit the [Moses Center for Students with Disabilities \(CSD\) website](#) and click on the Reasonable Accommodations and How to Register tab or call or email CSD at (212-998-4980 or [mosescsd@nyu.edu](mailto:mosescsd@nyu.edu)) for information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are strongly advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

## NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays

[NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays](#) states that members of any religious group may, without penalty, absent themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations.

As stated in the "Attendance" and "Late Assignments" sections in this syllabus:

- If you are not able to attend lecture, please email Professor Vakilifathi only the documentation to verify your absence and whether you would like to review the lecture materials in a 30-minute meeting (instead of a 15-minute meeting) during office hours.
- If a student would like to (1) resubmit an assignment after the due date without penalty or (2) submit a late assignment without penalty, email Professor Vakilifathi with the documentation to verify your absence. Do not notify or email the documentation before the submission of a late assignment. If Professor Vakilifathi approves your documentation, she will completely waive the late penalty for the assignment.

## Office Hours

You can attend office hours to ask general or individual questions about the course or career planning in public service. However, Professor Vakilifathi is not responsible for brainstorming, editing, or writing your assignments.

You can access online office hours through the "Zoom" tab and "Office Hours" link on the NYU Brightspace class website. If Professor Vakilifathi is currently meeting with a student, you will be placed in a waiting room.

If you prefer to meet in person, Professor Vakilifathi is available immediately after lecture.

In order to be fair and consistent with students, Professor Vakilifathi will only meet with students outside of office hours with a NYU class conflict. If you have a class conflict, please email Professor Vakilifathi only your NYU class schedule during Week 3 and email Professor Vakilifathi to schedule individual appointments when necessary during the semester.

# Course Schedule

Please complete the assigned readings **before** the assigned lecture.

**Note:** Due to Labor Day, there is no lecture on Monday, September 6<sup>th</sup>. Due to Legislative Day, we will meet at the same time and location on Tuesday, October 12<sup>th</sup>.

## Week 1: Course Overview [9/13/2021]

## Week 2: The Lawmaking Process [9/20/2021]

- “Introduction to the Legislative Process in the U.S. Congress” – Congressional Research Service (2017)
- “Theoretical Foundations” from *Revolving Gridlock: Politics and Policy From Jimmy Carter to George W. Bush* – Brady and Volden (2006)
- “Change We Can Believe In? Using Political Science to Predict Policy Change in the Obama Presidency” – Woon (2009)
- “Pivotal Politics and the Ideological Content of Landmark Laws” – Gray and Jenkins (2017)

## Week 3: How to Read, Write, and Research Legislation and Statutes [9/27/2021]

- “Legislative Research for Congressional Staff: How to Find Documents and Other Resources” – Congressional Research Service (2015) [skim]
- “Legal Rules” and “Reading Statutes” from *Synthesis: Legal Reading, Reasoning, and Writing* (4<sup>th</sup> edition) – Schmedemann and Kunz (2014)
- “Introduction to Legislative Drafting” - U.S. House Office of the Legislative Counsel (2015)
- Example introduced legislation from Senator Schumer, Representative Nadler, Representative Rose, Representative Reed, and Representative Katko

## Week 4: Legislators and Lawmaking (Part 1) [10/4/2021]

- *Congress: The Electoral Connection* – Mayhew (1974)
- “U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration” – Fenno (1977)
- “Which Buck Stops Here? Accountability for Policy Positions and Policy Outcomes in Congress” – Jones (2011)

## Week 5: Legislators and Lawmaking (Part 2) [10/12/2021] (Tuesday)

- “Congressional Voters” and “National Politics and Congressional Elections” from *The Politics of Congressional Elections* (9<sup>th</sup> edition) – Jacobson and Carson (2016)
- “Candidate Positioning in U.S. House Elections” – Ansolabehere et al. (2001)
- Example press releases from Senator Schumer, Representative Velázquez, Representative Delgado, Representative Zeldin, and Representative Katko

## **Week 6: Interest Groups and Lawmaking [10/18/2021]**

- “Representing the Preferences of Donors, Partisans, and Voters in the U.S. Senate” – Barber (2016)
- “Buying Time: Moneyed Interests and the Mobilization of Bias in Congressional Committees” – Hall and Wayman (1990)
- “Contributions, Lobbying, and Committee Voting in the U.S. House of Representatives” – Wright (1990)
- Example interest group letters from the American Medical Association, National Education Association, and U.S. Chamber of Commerce

## **Week 7: The President and Lawmaking [10/25/2021]**

- “The Power to Persuade” from *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan* (Revised Edition) – Neustadt (1991)
- “How Washington Has Changed” from *Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership* (4<sup>th</sup> edition) – Kernell (2006)
- “Unilateral Action and Presidential Power: A Theory” – Moe and Howell (1999)
- “The President’s Playbook: White House Strategies for Lobbying Congress” – Beckmann (2008)

## **Week 8: Class Discussion [11/1/2021]**

## **Week 9: Introducing Legislation [11/8/2021]**

- “Preliminary Legislative Action” from *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process* (10<sup>th</sup> edition) – Oleszek et al. (2016)
- Read materials for class exercise: (1) list of self-driving or automated legislation in the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress, (2) H.R. 3404 [Introduced – 7/26/2017], (3) H.R. 3388 [Introduced – 7/25/2017], (4) “All Actions” tab for H.R. 3388 (link), (5) Representative Latta’s opening statement at subcommittee hearing (2/14/2017), (6) Representative Latta’s constituent newsletter (2/21/2017), (7) Representative Latta’s op-ed (3/28/2017), and (8) Representative Latta’s press release (4/19/2017)

## **Week 10: Committee Hearing, Markup, and Report [11/15/2021]**

- “The Committee System in the U.S. Congress” – Congressional Research Service (2009)
- Read materials for class exercise: (1) H.R. 3388 [Introduced – 7/25/2017] (review), (2) Representative Latta’s opening statement at subcommittee hearing (6/27/2017), (3) Representative Latta’s press release (6/27/2017), (4) Representative Latta’s opening statement at committee hearing (7/27/2017), (5) committee hearing on H.R. 3388 (watch at least first 30 minutes of testimony), (6) Representative Latta’s press release (7/27/2017), (7) H. Rept. 115-294 [Committee Report on H.R. 3388], and (8) H.R. 3388 [Amended – 9/5/2017] (skim)

### **Week 11: Floor Debate, Amendment, and Vote [11/22/2021]**

- “Roll-Call Votes” from *The Oxford Handbook of the American Congress* – Theriault et al. (2013)
- Read materials for class exercise: (1) H.R. 3388 [Introduced – 7/25/2017] (review), (2) H. Rept. 115-294 [Committee Report on H.R. 3388] (review), (3) H.R. 3388 [Amended – 9/5/2017], (4) statutes affected by H.R. 3388 (review), (5) Representative Latta’s press release (8/15/2017), (6) Representative Latta’s floor speech (9/6/2017), (7) Congressional Record H6677 (9/6/2017), (8) Representative Latta’s press release (9/6/2017), (9) Representative Latta’s press release (9/15/2017), and (10) H.R. 3388 [Engrossed in House – 9/6/2017]

### **Week 12: Class Discussion [11/29/2021]**

### **Week 13: Political Determinants of Lawmaking [12/6/2021]**

- “The Dynamics of Legislative Gridlock, 1947-96” – Binder (1999)
- “The Logic of Confrontation” from *Insecure Majorities: Congress and the Perpetual Campaign* – Lee (2016)
- “The Politics of Bureaucratic Structure” from *Can the Government Govern?* – Moe (1989)
- “Delegation and Congressional-Executive Relations” from *Delegating Powers: A Transaction Cost Politics Approach to Policy Making under Separate Powers* – Epstein and O’Halloran (1999)

### **Week 14: Legislative Oversight of the Bureaucracy [12/13/2021]**

- “Caught in the Middle: The President, Congress, and the Political-Bureaucratic System” from *The Executive Branch* – Weingast (2005)
- “Choosing Strategies to Control the Bureaucracy: Statutory Constraints, Oversight, and the Committee System” – Bawn (1997)
- “Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols versus Fire Alarms” – McCubbins and Schwartz (1984)