



NYU

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

UPADM-GP 101

The Politics of Public Policy

Spring 2023

Instructor Information

- Christy Duré
- Email: cd133@nyu.edu
- Office Address: Zoom or GCASL, Room 261
- Office Hours: Wednesday (before lecture) or By Appointment

Course Information

- Class Meeting Times: Wednesday, 1/23/23 – 5/8/23, 6:20 – 8:50pm
- Class Location: GCASL, Room 261

Course Description

This course explores issues and structures in American public policy. First, students will study the role of each major governing institution in the policymaking process. We will analyze the tools available to each institutional actor to shape policy as well as the constraints on their use. Throughout, we will discuss how institutional design shapes, influences and guides policy outcomes. The course considers the role of citizens and interest groups in the policy process. The class asks what citizens know about politics and policy, who participates, and whether political leaders are responsive to the public. We consider the role of organized interests in policymaking, including the collective action problem, the role of moneyed interests, and lobbying.

Course and Learning Objectives

1. To understand the politics of the policy process
2. To understand the tools available to different political actors to shape policy and the constraints on their use
3. To understand the effect of the structure of governing institutions on policy
4. To understand the role of citizens and organized interests in the policy process

Learning Assessment Table

Course Learning Objective Covered	Corresponding Assignment Title
#1, 3	Op-ed
#1, 2, 3	Midterm exam
#1, 2	Policy memo
#1, 3, 4	Final exam
#1, 2, 4	Participation and discussion

Materials and Assignments

You are expected to be prepared for class discussions and to participate fully. You are encouraged to share your lived experiences relevant to the topics and cases being explored. The required book for this course (Okrent) is below, and will also be available on reserve with Bobst Library.

Okrent, Daniel. (2010). Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition. New York: Scribner.

Most of the readings listed on the syllabus are found either online (typically hyperlinked in the syllabus) or they will be posted on NYU Brightspace. The only real exception is the article mentioned above.

Course assignments will be a combination of short written assignments and exams. Course assignments must be submitted on NYU BrightSpace by 11:55 pm ET (not by class time) on the day they are due.

- **Op-Ed (20%):** Students will write an op-ed on a policy topic. **Due: February 15th (week 4) via NYU BrightSpace by 11:55 pm ET**
- **Midterm (20%):** Take home exam covering the material up to this date. **Date: March 8th (week 7) via NYU BrightSpace by 11:55 pm ET**
- **Policy Memo Assignment (25%):** Students will write a memo to their Congressman or woman on a policy issue area. **Due: April 12th (week 12) via NYU BrightSpace by 11:55 pm ET**
- **Final Exam (20%):** The final exam will take place during finals period. It will be cumulative, but focused on the second half of the course. **Final exam date: May 10th via NYU BrightSpace by 11:55 pm ET**
- **Participation, Discussion, and in Class Activities (15%):** Not attending class and failing to participate will hurt your participation grade. In addition to participating in class, you must write a weekly discussion post and respond to one of your classmates' posts.

Your weekly discussion post is due each week on Saturday, and your response is due on Monday. The weekly discussion posts can be found on NYU **BrightSpace** under the forums tab in the “weekly discussion post” section.

Classroom Policies

Late Policy:

Please email me with any accommodations, requests and events that may delay the submission of your work. I will make determinations on a case by case basis and will provide complete transparency to any deductions regarding lateness.

Syllabus Modification:

I reserve the right to modify the syllabus based on analysis, class pace, course modality and other factors as the term progresses.

NYU Brightspace:

All announcements will be delivered through NYU **BrightSpace**, so please check the website. I may modify assignments, due dates, readings, and other things, so please do check periodically. Our discussion boards will also be hosted on NYU **BrightSpace**, and you're expected to participate!

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 me. 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 me.

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) 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. Please notify me in advance of religious holidays that might coincide with exams to schedule mutually acceptable alternatives.

NYU/Wagner Grading Policy

Per the Wagner grading policy, students will receive grades according to the Wagner grading scale. This information is [posted here](#).

Course Schedule

****Please check readings/media on Brightspace as they may be updated****

Week 1: Wednesday January 25: Introduction to Policy, Separation of Powers, Congress, the Executive Branch, and the Judiciary

Learning Objective:

- This week delves into the role of the main policymaking body of the United States - the legislative branch. We also take a look at factors that have complicated how the legislative branch functions, particularly the rise of political parties and increasing polarization. We will also analyze the executive branch's impact on the policymaking process. Historically the executive has had a limited policymaking role, but that dynamic has shifted since the Kennedy administration. This week also examines the role of the judiciary in policymaking. What is judicial activism? How does it play a role in our policy process?

Readings:

- The Federalist Papers number 9, 10, and 51. Retrieved [here](#).
- Haeder, Simon F. and Susan Webb Yackee. (24 August 2018). The Trump administration might be deregulating more than you know (or could know). Washington Post. Retrieved [here](#).
- Raso, Connor. (29 June 2018). Where and why has agency rulemaking declined under Trump? Brookings Institution. Retrieved [here](#).
- WNYC. (9 October 2015). Plaintiff shopping. On the Media. WNYC. Retrieved [here](#).
- Ball, Molly. (1 July 2015). How gay marriage became a constitutional right. The Atlantic. Retrieved [here](#).
- Dunn, Joshua. (23 September 2008). The perils of judicial policymaking: the practical case for separation of powers. The Heritage Foundation. Retrieved [here](#).
- Zengerle, Jason. (22 August 2018). How the Trump administration is remaking the courts. New York Times. Retrieved [here](#).
- Bazelon, Emily. (22 August 2018). When the Supreme Court lurches right. New York Times Magazine. Retrieved [here](#).

Week 2: Wednesday February 1: Policymaking in the States, Federalism, Interest Groups, and Lobbying

Learning Objective:

- This week we will evaluate the impact of federalism on our policy process. We analyze several important examples of policy initiated at the state level, including minimum wage laws and marijuana policy. We will also analyze the role of interest groups, lobbyists, and outside influences on the policymaking process. And, we'll examine the impact of one of the most successful lobbying groups in the modern era – the NRA – and examine how interest groups and outside stakeholders are able to be heard.

Readings:

- Peterson, Paul E. The price of federalism. (1995). Brookings Institute Press. Chapters 1, 2, and 4. You may have to “rent” a copy of this article, but see if you can see it on NYU Brightspace for free first.
- Sacco, Lisa N., Erin Bagalman, Kristin Finklea, and Sean Lowry. (10 March 2017). The marijuana policy gap and the path forward. Congressional Research Service. Retrieved [here](#). (Please read the summary and pages 1-30)
- Drutman, Lee. (20 April 2015). How corporate lobbyists conquered American democracy. The Atlantic. Retrieved [here](#).
- Berman, Russell. (1 May 2018). An exodus from congress tests the lure of lobbying. The Atlantic. Retrieved [here](#).
- Achenbach, Joel, Scott Higham, and Sari Horwitz. (12 January 2013). How NRA’s true believers converted a marksmanship group into a mighty gun lobby. Washington Post. Retrieved [here](#).
- Lipton, Eric and Alexander Burns. (24 February 2018). The true source of the NRA’s clout: mobilization, not donations. New York Times. Retrieved [here](#).

Week 3: Wednesday February 8: Education Policy

Learning Objective:

- This week we will look at the history of education in the United States, and the laws and policies that underpin our current system. We will also look at the difference between state and federal funding, as well as examine the role of states and the US Department of Education. We will cover some of the more recent topics that have roiled higher ed, including admissions, cost, free speech on campus, collegiate athletics, and whether everyone should go to college.

Readings:

- Zelizer, Julian E. (10 April 2015). How education policy went astray. The Atlantic. Retrieved [here](#).
- Nelson, Libby. (23 July 2015). The common core, explained. Vox. Retrieved [here](#).
- Ripley, Amanda. (11 September 2018). Why is college in America so expensive? The Atlantic. Retrieved [here](#).
- Hubler, Shawn. (21 May 2020). University of California will end use of ACT/SAT in admissions. Retrieved [here](#).

Week 4: Wednesday February 15: Civil Rights Policy and Discrimination

Learning Objective:

- This week looks at the way in which people do or don’t receive equal treatment, and looks at the laws and policies that either help or hinder an individual’s access to education, employment, housing, lending, voting, and more.

Readings:

- Hamilton, Isobel Asher (10 July 2020). Instagram is banning all content promoting LGBT conversion therapy. Business Insider. Retrieved [here](#).
- Baker, Carrie N. (14 July 2020). Feminists File Amicus Brief Demanding Recognition of the ERA. Ms. Magazine. Retrieved [here](#).
- Farrow, Ronan. (10 October 2017). From aggressive overtures to sexual assault: Harvey Weinstein accusers tell their stories. The New Yorker. Retrieved [here](#).

- Semuels, Alana and Malcolm Burnley. (22 August 2019). Low wages, sexual harassment, and unreliable tips: This is life in America's booming service industry. TIME. Retrieved [here](#).
- (3 November 2019). Voting machines: Last Week Tonight with John Oliver. Last Week Tonight. Retrieved [here](#).
- Laskas, Jeanne Marie (18 August 2018). Dear Mr. President. The Guardian. Retrieved [here](#).
- Cohen, Alex and Wilfred U Codrington III. (23 January 2020). The Equal Rights Amendment explained. Brennan Center for Justice. Retrieved [here](#).

Week 5: Wednesday February 22: Healthcare Reform

Learning Objective:

- This week reviews recent health care initiatives including the Clinton health care efforts in the 1990s, the ACA, and the AHCA effort and provides practical examples of policy development, and the impact of politics on policy.

Readings:

- Sanger-Katz, Margot. (19 February 2019). The difference between a 'public option' and Medicare for all? Let's define our terms. New York Times. Retrieved [here](#).
- Kliff, Sarah. (10 April 2019). Bernie Sanders's Medicare for all plan, explained. Vox. Retrieved [here](#).
- Surowiecki, James. (19 December 2016). How doctors thwart health-care reform. The New Yorker. Retrieved [here](#).
- Stanley, Tiffany. (7 January 2019). Life, death, and insulin. Washington Post. Retrieved [here](#).
- Golshan, Tara. (22 January 2020). The answer to America's healthcare cost problem might be in Maryland. Retrieved [here](#).
- Scott, Dylan. (17 January 2020). The Netherlands has universal health insurance – and it's all private. Vox. Retrieved [here](#).
- Klein, Ezra. (28 January 2020). In the UK's health system, rationing isn't a dirty word. Vox. Retrieved [here](#).

Week 6: Wednesday March 1: Immigration Policy

Learning Objective:

- This week examines the complicated history of immigration policy in the United States, going all the way back to the 1700s. However, we will focus most of our exploration on the events that followed the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act.

Readings:

- LS and EH. (16 April 2018). The case for immigration. The Economist. Retrieved [here](#).
- Briggs, Amy. (31 October 2018). How the Founding Fathers understood US citizenship. National Geographic. Retrieved [here](#).
- Felter, Claire and Danielle Renwick. (25 July 2019). The US immigration debate. Council on Foreign Relations. Retrieved [here](#). (Please read all sections)
- Frum, David. (April 2019). If liberals won't enforce borders, fascists will. The Atlantic. Retrieved [here](#).
- Miroff, Nick. (24 October 2018). The border is tougher to cross than ever. But there's still one way into America. Washington Post. Retrieved [here](#).

Week 7: Wednesday March 8: Environmental and Energy Policy

Learning Objective:

- This week dives into conservation and environmental movements from the 1970s on. We will look at several different issues and initiatives and dilemmas related to modern-day efforts to curb climate change.

Readings:

- Rinde, Meir. (Spring 2017). Richard Nixon and the rise of American environmentalism. Science History. Retrieved [here](#).
- Meyer, Robinson. (19 March 2017). How the US protects the environment, from Nixon to Trump. The Atlantic. Retrieved [here](#).
- Frum, David. (3 December 2018). A forgotten legacy of George HW Bush. The Atlantic. Retrieved [here](#).
- Roberts, David. (13 December 2018). California's cap-and-trade system may be too weak to do its job. Vox. Retrieved [here](#).
- Haggerty, Meredith. (27 December 2019). We were all right to hate the plastic straw ban. And we need more legislation like it. Vox. Retrieved [here](#).
- Aronoff, Kate. (17 January 2020). The new US trade deal is climate sabotage. The New Republic. Retrieved [here](#).

Wednesday – March 15th Spring Break – No Classes

Week 8: Wednesday March 22: Tech Regulatory Policy

Learning Objective:

- This week explores some of the biggest policy issues brought about by the development and expansion of the internet, machine learning, and big data. We'll scratch the surface on privacy, property rights, freedom of speech, cybersecurity, and more, in an attempt to understand how technology is reshaping laws, policy, and political authority.

Readings:

- Hill, Kashmir. (18 January 2020). The secretive company that might end privacy as we know it. New York Times. Retrieved [here](#).
- Laslo, Matt. (13 August 2019). The fight over section 230 – and the internet as we know it. Wired. Retrieved [here](#).
- French, David. (24 January 2020). The growing threat to free speech online. TIME. Opinion piece. Retrieved [here](#).
- Manjoo, Farhad. (22 January 2020). The apps on my phone are stalking me. New York Times. Opinion piece. Retrieved [here](#).
- Schneier, Bruce. (20 January 2020). We're banning facial recognition. We're missing the point. New York Times. Opinion piece. Retrieved [here](#).
- Mozur, Paul and Aaron Krolik. (17 December 2019). A surveillance net blankets China's cities, giving police vast powers. New York Times. Retrieved [here](#).

Week 9: Wednesday March 29: Policy Design Options

Learning Objective:

- This week focuses on tactical decisions in policy design. 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?

Readings:

- Bardach, Eugene. (2012). A practice guide for policy analysis: The eightfold path. CQ Press. Selections from the book posted online.
- Appelbaum, Binyamin. (16 February 2011). As US agencies put more value on a life, businesses fret. New York Times. Retrieved [here](#).
- Radiolab. (23 December 2014). Worth. Radiolab Season 13 Episode 3, first segment "How would you pay for a year of life?" Retrieved [here](#).

Week 10: Wednesday April 5: Science Policy

Learning Objective:

- This week examines a broad spectrum of science-related policies, including the way in which politics impacts the science policymaking process. We will discuss topics like how to think about science policy, how neglect can lead to unforeseen policy outcomes (medico legal death investigations), the importance of good data, forensic science in our criminal courts, genetic privacy, infectious disease outbreaks, and the role of outside companies and interests.

Readings:

- Roland, Denise. (4 January 2020). Antibiotic makers struggle, hurting war on superbugs. Wall Street Journal. Retrieved [here](#).
- Kalil, Thomas. (2017). Policy entrepreneurship at the White House. Innovations. MIT Press. Volume 11 number 3/4. Retrieved [here](#).
- Molteni, Megan. (1 May 2019). The US urgently needs new genetic privacy laws. Wired. Retrieved [here](#).
- White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. (2016). Strengthening the medicolegal death investigation system: Accreditation and certification a path forward. National Science and Technological Council. Committee on Science. Medicolegal Death Investigation Working Group. Retrieved [here](#).

Week 11: Wednesday April 12: Citizens in the Policy Process

Learning Objective:

- This week explores the options available to many different types of participants in public policy – ranging from street protestors to policy analysts – to change outcomes. You probably won't become majority leader of the Senate when you graduate – so what can you do? Do individuals have any impact? Additionally, we will spend part of this lecture on the results and impact of the 2020 presidential election.

Readings:

- Achen, Christopher and Larry M. Bartels. (2016). Chapter 1: Democratic ideals and realities. From Democracy for Realists. Princeton University Press. Retrieved [here](#).
- Page, Benjamin I. (18 September 2014). Theories of American politics. Elites, interest groups, and average citizens. Perspectives on politics (12) 3. Retrieved [here](#).

- Illing, Sean. (9 August 2018). Intellectuals have said democracy is failing for a century. They were wrong. Vox. Retrieved [here](#).
- Lohmann, Susanne. (1994). The dynamics of informational cascades: The Monday demonstrations in Leipzig, East Germany 1989-1991. *World Politics*. 47: 42-101. (It is very long so please feel free to skim for the important key ideas)

Week 12: Wednesday April 19: Agenda Setting, Framing, and the Media

Learning Objective:

- This week explores limitations on the policy process (on systems and ordinary people) – and the consequences for policymaking. We examine how information is communicated and the frameworks through which it is understood. We also look at how our media system can exacerbate misunderstandings – and the consequences for policy as a result.

Readings:

- Jurkowitz, Mark, Amy Mitchell, Elise Shearer, and Mason Walker. (24 January 2020). US media polarization and the 2020 election: A nation divided. Pew Research Center. Retrieved [here](#).
- Berinski, Adam J. and Donald R. Kinder. (2006). Making sense of issues through media frames: Understanding the Kosovo crisis. *Journal of Politics*. 68(3): pages 640-656.

Week 13: Wednesday April 26: Poverty and Policy

Readings: TBD

Week 14: Wednesday May 3:

Prohibition: Policy Formation + Prohibition: Policy Implementation

Learning Objective:

- This week focuses on analyzing a policy change through the lens of Prohibition. How did it happen? Did the means ruin the end? Who worked together on it? What were the coalitions? Who were the stakeholders?
- This week continues the prohibition case, a study in “what can go wrong, will go wrong.” This week also asks how can we apply these lessons to current policy debates?

Readings:

- Okrent Prohibition book. Prologue, chapters 3-7
- Okrent Prohibition book. Chapters 8-12, 17, 18