

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

UPADM – GP 101

The Politics of Public Policy

Spring 2024

Instructor Information

Jamie Levine Daniel, PhD (Dr. Levine Daniel or Dr. JLD)

- Email: jamie.levine.daniel@nyu.edu
- Office: Puck Building #3058¹
- Student Hours: Tuesdays/Thursdays, 1:45-2:45 PM in person. Zoom/Phone appointments available via email.

Class Information

Course Name/Number: UPADM-GP 101

Section: 002

Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:30-4:45 PM

Location: 238 Thompson St (GCASL) Room 261 (Washington Square)

Syllabus Links

Looking for specific information in this document? Use the links below.

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Course Description

One of the greatest and often dispiriting challenges that many students of public policy face when they enter public service is that their aspirations for what policy can achieve seem so readily thwarted by the political process. This class will use a series of case studies from all levels of government to explore this challenge, and to try to provide students with an intellectual framework for thinking about the dynamic relationship between politics and public policy in order to understand how politics shapes, determines and sometimes warps the policy making process. We'll study the structures of American government, the importance of interest groups, the impact of public opinion, the role of the media, the challenge of fiscal constraints, the authority of expertise, the impact of personalities, and other factors that often lead policies to be altered and negotiated as they move from proposal to practice. The real-world case studies we focus on will both help us to understand why public policy outcomes so often deviate from what might be described as best practices, and provide us with the opportunity to consider how we might, as potential policy makers ourselves, improve the policy making process.

¹ I acknowledge with gratitude and humility that we are gathered on the sacred homelands of the Lenape people, who are the original stewards of this land. I also believe in the importance of raising awareness of the exclusion and erasure of Indigenous nations and am committed to continuing my learning on this important history. (Adapted from the Tisch and Department of History's statements and Prof. Pryor-Ramirez's syllabus.)

Course Objectives

1. To understand the processes by which public policy is developed, negotiated, and implemented in the United States
2. To understand the role of various institutional actors in that process, including but not limited to:
 - The three branches of the Federal government
 - States and localities o Organized interest groups
 - The media
 - Independent experts
 - Public policy professionals
 - Voters
3. To develop a familiarity with major critiques of the process of policy making in the United States
4. To learn certain techniques of policy advocacy

Learning Assessment Table

Course Learning Objective Covered	Corresponding Assignment Title
1, 2, 3, 4	Facilitation Activity
1, 3, 4	Civic Engagement
1, 4	Case Competition
1, 2, 3, 4	Process Journals/Reflection

Course Materials and Assignments

1. Dahl, R. (2015). On Democracy. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. ISBN-13: . (Other editions ok but you are responsible for the material if different from the 2015 edition.) The NYU Library has hard copies and e-books available.
2. Krutz, G. & Waskiewicz, S. (2021). [American Government 3e](#).
3. CQ Researcher – NYU Library [permalink](#)
4. Additional materials will be posted on Brightspace in the weekly modules. If you are not comfortable with Brightspace, please see the [resources available here](#).

NOTE: The assigned materials are intended to provide a basic level of knowledge for you and to introduce you to the week's topic. This knowledge will be further expanded during the weekly meetings, both by the instructor and by your fellow classmates. As such, you will be assumed to have familiarized yourself with each week's assigned materials prior to attending class.

Engagement

Engagement comprises two aspects: class engagement and civic engagement.

Class Engagement

Engagement can take several forms, including but not limited to: regular attendance, reading/reviewing assigned materials before class, [annotating the syllabus](#), contributing to discussions in class and/or on social media, participating in small-group exercises, facilitation activity* "You get out of this class what you put into it" is a cliché, but the cliché stands. Availing yourself of these opportunities will help you achieve your goals for the course.

*Facilitation Activity

You will work with some of your colleagues to introduce to your fellow classmates the topic of the week. The schedule for this will be determined by the second week of class. During the designated session, you

will have 15-20 minutes to present an interactive exercise (e.g.: case study, skit, or other creative pursuit) to illustrate the concepts in question. NOTE: This is not to be a summary of the readings.

Civic Engagement²

Complete an array of activities from the list below – one per due date listed. You are not expected to complete all of these activities, but each activity will only be counted no more than 2 times (e.g.: even if you post every week about relevant material, only two different posts/threads will count). Suggestions:

- Talk/text/communicate someone (friend, family member, stranger...) about something connected to class
 - Describe or screenshot the conversation.
- Post on social media:
 - Relate to something we have studied in class
 - Include 1-2 sentence commentary connecting the post to class material.
 - Include # UPADMGP101
 - Post link or screenshot on Brightspace
- Write to a public official or agency (find your state and federal representatives [here](#))
 - Include a link if you are commenting on a proposed [federal](#) policy
 - Include the text or screenshot of your communication
- Register to vote, make a voting plan, or explain why you are ineligible
- Volunteer as a poll worker
- Describe a personal experience or protest or public engagement
- Attend a meeting of a governing body, e.g., city-county council, school board, undergraduate student government...)
 - Describe the governing body, note any observations that relate to class material, and include an agenda if available
- Start a petition on campus or online - post a link or description
- Learn about a civil rights organization
 - Post a summary of their work, and how it connects to civil rights and/or the core class material
- Volunteer for a nonprofit organization.
- researching candidates/ballot initiatives before an election
- Other.: if you carry out an activity that reflects civic engagement but is not listed, post a description and why it meets the brief for this assignment.

Process Journal³

You will have a private journal on Brightspace – only you and I will be able to see what you write. The entries in this journal provide an opportunity to consider how the course is going for you: what assignments have you done so far, what you have learned (about both the class and how to learn), where you are struggling, what success in class looks like **to you**, and an overall grade based on work and learning to date. The syllabus includes **three (3)** required journal entries.

Note: In addition to the required journal submissions, you may use the journal in an **ad-hoc** manner as often as you need/like to check in with me/share feedback about the class/material/group dynamics, etc. I will monitor the journals for ad-hoc entries and respond as needed.

Group Project: Case Competition

Part I

The group project in this class will take the form of a case competition addressing a contemporary public issue. At its core, public service is an expression of social values, whether those values are expressed through Constitutional mandates, judicial decisions, or legislative statutes. A student of public service understands and is able to identify these values and their representations in government.

² Assignment inspired by Dr. Jennifer N. Victor (George Mason University)

³ Thank you, Dr. Jeanine Love (Roosevelt University), for this assignment description, and for suggestions and language on how to frame grading.

As a group, you will identify a public issue relevant to NYU. Memos and presentations are due during week 8 – we will discuss details closer to the week they are due.

Part II

As a group, you will propose a solution to the previously identified public issue. You will propose this solution to the class during week 15. Your presentation will be accompanied by a **memo** not to exceed 2 pages (excluding appendices and references).

We will discuss this project in more detail, including the format your final presentations will take, in class. This will give us flexibility to consider issues that may arise during the first round of presentations.

Final Reflection

The goal of this assignment is to give you the opportunity to reflect on your overall experience with this class, as well as to inform my approach to future iterations of this class. You have the opportunity to think about the course overall and submit your final grade recommendation.

Course Policies Communication

Email is the best way to reach me. I typically answer emails within one (1) business day. I do not check emails from Friday night through Saturday, and only rarely on Sundays. I am always happy to schedule a meeting (in-person, phone call or Zoom). You can add a meeting to my calendar by clicking [here](#).

Syllabus Adjustments

I reserve the right to adjust and alter this syllabus as needed in response to current events and the ongoing needs of the class. I also invite you to [annotate the syllabus](#).

Conference Grading

This class follows a conference style methodology, aka consultation style. Each assignment submission receives a grade of “complete”, “incomplete (needs improvement)”, or “missing” (if nothing is submitted). Each assignment receives feedback from me.

I don't get it. What's wrong with points, percentages, and letters? Excellent question. Grading is a sorting mechanism that incentivizes “product over process”, prioritizes what the teacher thinks (not you, the student), and is ultimately subjective⁴, arbitrary, and inconsistent.⁵ Grades do not actually convey what you have learned.⁶

So how does this conference thing work? Another great question. On its surface, this class looks like any other with assignments and due dates. However, instead of assigning a score, I will give you feedback highlighting strengths and providing suggestions for improvement. In some cases, you will also receive feedback from your peers. The assignments are designed to be iterative so you can incorporate feedback into subsequent assignments.

Ok, but I need a letter grade of some sort for my transcript. How does that get assigned? I get it, you want to know the mechanics. You will submit a recommendation for your final grade⁷, based on an honest assessment of your work that takes into account the feedback you receive from me and your classmates

⁴ Jesse Stommel, “How to Ungrade”, *Ungrading: Why Rating students undermines learning (and what to do instead)* (Morgantown: West Virginia Press, 2020) 25-41.

⁵ Susan Blum, “Ungrading and its necessary accompaniments”, *Ungrading: Why Rating students undermines learning (and what to do instead)* (Morgantown: West Virginia Press, 2020) 25-41.63-73.

⁶ Aaron Blackwelder, “Going gradeless and doing the actual work”, *Ungrading: Why Rating students undermines learning (and what to do instead)* (Morgantown: West Virginia Press, 2020) 42-52..

⁷ I reserve the right to make adjustments to this recommendation.

The class comprises three types of assignments (as described above):

- Engagement (class and civic)
- Self assessment (process journals, final reflection)
- Peer assessment (peer evaluation, case competition feedback)

Figuring out your grade

This whole process may feel intimidating. I provide a suggested breakdown of assignment weights below to help guide your reflections. In the event someone does not submit a final reflection, I will use this breakdown to calculate their final grade.

- Engagement 40%
 - Class 20%
 - Civic 20%
- Group Project 30%
- Process Journal 20%
- Final Reflection 10%

TI; dr – I grade assignment submissions based on completion. I (and in some cases, your peers) give feedback based on content. You ultimately recommend your final course grade.

Course Schedule

	Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments
1	T 1/23	Course Foundations	Declaration of Independence, Constitution; Hannah-Jones; Fact v. Opinion	Intro Survey (Brightspace); Assessment (in class)
	Th 1/25			
2	T 1/30	Introduction to Public Policy and Principles of Democracy	Social Contract; Dahl 1-4, KF 1 (8-16); Bai	Journal #1
	Th 2/1			
3	T 2/6	Public Policymaking Overview	AG 16;; Herd and Moynihan Chp 1; Kahn (rec)	Civ. Eng. #1
	Th 2/8			
4	T 2/13	Who counts? Ideal Democracy and Political Equality	Dahl 5-7, Verba; Singh and Carter ; Baum et al ; Hamer (rec.)	FA #1
	Th 2/15			
5	T 2/20	Growth of Govmt 1/Large Scale Democracy	Dahl 8-9, AG 1.1; AG 3	FA #2 Civ. Eng. #2
	Th 2/22			

	Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments
6	T 2/27	Growth of Gvmt 2/Public Administration	AG 1.2; (rec) SKIM AG 11-14/ CrashCourse videos (rec)	FA #3
	Th 2/29		Case: Federal-State Relations	Journal #2
7	T 3/5	Informal Actors	JVN/trash; SKIM AG 8, 9, 10;; rec: Price's Podcasts	FA #4
	Th 3/7			Civ. Eng. #3
8	T 3/12	Problem Identification		Group Task #1 Memo/Presentations
	Th 3/14			
9	T 3/19	Spring Break		
	Th 3/21			
10	T 3/26	Policy Analysis: Enabling A Shared Sense of Common Good	KF 6; CDC Policy Analysis	FA #5
	Th 3/28		CQ Researcher Hot Topic: Immigration	Civ. Eng #4
11	T 4/2	Democracy, Markets, and Public Goods	Dahl 12-14, Stiglitz	FA #6
	Th 4/4		Case: The Federal Reserve (Connor)	Journal #3
12	T 4/9	Regulation and Accountability: A Two-Way Street	AG 15; About the GAO ; Vibe Check	FA #7
	Th 4/11		Cases: Supreme Court (Lyons) & Congressional Investigations (Hawkings)	Civ. Eng. #5
13	T 4/16	The Local Angle	Case: Barriers to Home Ownership (Larson)	FA #8
	Th 4/18		State of the city (SKIM); Brand and Jeffrey-Wilensky ; Hitchcock et al ; Zaveri ; Simone	
14	T 4/23	After Democracy	No class	FA #9
	Th 4/25		Dahl 15-17; Bouie ; Torcello ; A More Perfect Union	
15	T 4/30	Policy Proposals		Group Task #2 Memo, Presentations
	Th 5/2			Civ. Eng. #6

Commented [1]: Add in trust/erosion of trust (per Ava)

	Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments
FINAL	Th 5/9	Final Reflection Due at 4:45 PM		

Still with me? Stephen King has published novels under the name Richard Bachman. Stacey Abrams has published under the name Selena Montgomery. Dean Koontz has over 10 pen names. If you were to write under a pseudonym, what pen name would you use, and for what genre of book? Tell me in the week 1 Brightspace survey.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a vital component of Wagner and NYU. As a Wagner student enrolled in this class, you 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 you are unsure about what is expected of you and how to abide by the academic code, you should consult with me.

Ethical uses of ChatGPT, Bard, and other generative AI tools are permitted but [require acknowledgment](#). Failure to cite this usage will be considered a violation of the school's norms and you will be held to the guidance outlined in [Wagner's Academic Code](#). Please talk with me if you have questions about appropriate use of these tools.

Campus Resources

NYU Writing Center

NYU's general writing support center is a place where one-on-one teaching and learning occurs, and where the work always focuses on writing. Experienced consultants assist NYU students, faculty, and staff with their work at any stage in the writing process. They work with individuals on essays, lab reports, personal statements, poems, stories, and other written texts. Writers may schedule one appointment per week, up to two weeks ahead of time, using their online scheduling system.

Appointments normally are 45 minutes in length. The Writing Center is located at 411 Lafayette, 3rd floor. For more information or to schedule an appointment, please go to [NYU Writing Center's website](#).

Library Resources

There are comprehensive resources to complete assignments on the NYU Libraries website. Visit the [public and nonprofit management research guide page](#).

If you are unclear about how to properly attribute research or ideas you are using in your work, please consult the visit the [NYU Libraries Citation Style Guide](#) or [Ask a librarian](#). For this class, any citation style is acceptable as long as you are consistent. As an example, Harvard Business School has a comprehensive [guide to Chicago Style](#). Also commonly used in the public service field is the [APA style](#).

Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at NYU

I want everyone to do their best work in this course and reach their goals. If you need formal accommodations, please visit the [Moses Center for Students with Disabilities \(CSD\) website](#), call 212- 998-4980, or email mosescsd@nyu.edu for information. If you do not need formal accommodations but have learning needs I should know about, please let me know.