

GVPT 859A—Fall 2011
M 12:30-3:15
Office hours: M 10-11, W 10-11:30 and by appointment

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Syllabus for GVPT 859A, Special Topics in Public Policy: American Public Policy¹

Course Purpose and Description:

This course is a seminar on public policymaking in the American context. While we will focus on recent scholarship on the policymaking process, we will also read several “classics” that deal with the relationship between the policy process and policy outcomes. Our study of policymaking will be based on the proposition that a rigorous understanding of policymaking depends upon a sophisticated understanding of institutions and political behavior. Many of the scholars we will read built their professional reputations in one or more of the traditional subfields in American politics (Congress, voting, public opinion, interest groups, etc.) and their conceptualizations of policy processes and outcomes are explicitly based on their understandings of these more traditional subfields. Though we will not ignore the details of the policymaking process, we will make a concerted effort to understand the impact of broad societal forces on policy development, choice, implementation and evaluation. We will spend a significant amount of time discussing examples from specific substantive policy areas, but this is probably not a course for students whose interests are limited to a single policy area. Students who have no formal background in American politics (i.e. are not taking or have not taken either of the core classes) should meet with me before enrolling in the course.

The course objectives are straightforward. At the end of the course, each student should be able to:

1. Identify distinct interpretations of democracy and their implications for our understanding of public policymaking.
2. Describe and discuss the significance of various categories of public policy and explain the pros and cons of prominent policy typologies.
3. Identify and discuss various theoretical orientations towards public policymaking and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the various approaches.
4. Explain the fundamental characteristics of and the political dynamics associated with the various stages in the policy process.
5. Discuss techniques and demonstrate the ability to implement techniques for estimating policy impacts and evaluating policy effectiveness.
6. Prepare an article-length, publishable-quality manuscript on a topic related to public policy.

To develop the knowledge and competencies required to satisfy these objectives, it will be very important for you to prepare carefully for class and to participate fully in class activities. You will also need to spend time *thinking* about the issues we raise in class. Discussing these issues with your colleagues will also aid in your understanding.

Course Requirements: The course includes four graded components: an original research design, a set of short assignments, class participation, and your final exam. Your final grade will be based on your performance on these components. The weights of the various graded components for the determination of your final grade are as follows:

Research paper	40%
Short assignments	20%

¹ I reserve the right to modify the syllabus as changes become necessary.

Class participation	20%
Final exam	20%

I will provide the short assignment topics in the near future. Grades are based on a 10-point scale, unless I deem a curve necessary. I expect assignments to be submitted on time. I do not—as a general rule—give Incompletes.

Required Texts:

1. Mills, C. Wright. 1956. *The Power Elite*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2. Dahl, Robert A. 1961. *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
3. Sabatier, Paul A., ed. 2007. *Theories of the Policy Process*. 2nd edition. New York: Longman.
4. Canes-Wrone, Brandice. 2006. *Who Leads Whom? Presidents, Policy, and the Public*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
5. Baumgartner, Frank R., et al. 2009. *Lobbying and Policy Change: Who Wins, Who Loses, and Why..* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
6. Lowi, Theodore. 1979. *The End of Liberalism: The Second Republic of the United States*. 2nd edition. New York: W.W. Norton.
7. Bardach, Eugene. 2009. *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Effective Path to More Effective Problem Solving*. 3rd edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press.
8. Bartels, Larry M. 2008. *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

I will identify useful supplemental readings in class.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Any student who, because of a disabling condition, may require some special arrangements in order to meet course requirements should contact me as soon as possible to make necessary accommodations. I am more than willing to make the necessary accommodations. Please contact me by February 5th, 2009 so that we can discuss these accommodations. A written request for accommodation is required. If you have questions or concerns regarding University of Maryland disability documentation, you may wish to contact Disability Support Services at 314-7682.

Academic Integrity: All members of the academic community at the University of Maryland are required to abide by the *Code of Academic Integrity* (<http://www.inform.umd.edu/jpo/>). Any member of the campus community may report allegations of code violations directly to the Honor Council (314-8206).

Religious Observances: I will make every reasonable effort to accommodate students' requests to make up tests or other assignments missed due to attendance of religious observances. It is, however, your responsibility to inform me, *in advance*, of expected absences. This is particularly true if the observance of a religious holiday will result in your missing the final exam.

Course Evaluations: I take course evaluations very seriously. I use these evaluations to revise course content (including reading lists), course assignments, and the structure and content of exams. I am interested in your feedback, and I want to encourage everyone to participate in the online evaluation at the end of the semester.

CourseEvalUM will be open to students to submit their evaluations for Fall 2011 courses by Tuesday, November 29, 2011. You may go directly to the **CourseEvalUM** website (www.courseevalum.umd.edu) to complete your evaluations.

General Course Outline: Students are expected to have the readings listed for each class completed prior to class. Readings may be modified as necessary.

9/12 – Democracy and Public Policy, Part 1: Elitism

--*The Power Elite*

--Domhoff, G. William. 2006. "Mills's The Power Elite 50 Years Later." *Contemporary Sociology*. 35: 547-550.

--Domhoff, G. William. 2007. "C. Wright Mills, Power Structure Research, and the Failures of Mainstream Political Science." *New Political Science*. 29: 97-114.

9/19 – Democracy and Public Policy, Part 2: Pluralism

--*Who Governs?*

--Miller, Nicholas. 1983. "Pluralism and Social Choice." *American Political Science Review*. 77:734-747.

--McFarland, A.S. 2007. "Neopluralism." *Annual Review of Political Science*. 10: 45-66.

9/26 – Democracy and Public Policy, Part 3: Responses to Pluralism

--*The End of Liberalism*

--"A Twenty-Year Retrospective on *The End of Liberalism*." 1990. *PS: Political Science & Politics*. XXIII:563-579.

10/3 – Democracy and Public Policy, Part 4: Elitism *Redux?* (**first short assignment due**)

--*Unequal Democracy*

--McCall, Leslie and Lane Kenworthy. 2009. "Americans' Social Policy Preferences in the Era of Rising Inequality." *Perspectives on Politics*. 3:459-484.

--Kelly, Nathan J. and Peter K. Enns. 2010. "Inequality and the Dynamics of Public Opinion: The Self-Reinforcing Link Between Economic Inequality and Mass Preferences." *American Journal of Political Science*. 54:855-870.

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10/10 – Theories of the Policy Process—Part 1

--*Theories of the Policy Process* (Chs. 1-4)

--Coase, Ronald H. 1960. "The Problem of Social Cost." *Journal of Law and Economics*. October:1-44.

--Hardin, Russell. 1969. "The Tragedy of the Commons." *Science*. December:1243-1248.

--Stigler, George. 1971. "The Theory of Economic Regulation." *Bell Journal of Economics and Management Science*. 2:3-21.

--March, James G. and Johan P. Olson. 1984. "The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life." *American Political Science Review*. 78:734-749.

10/17 – Theories of the Policy Process—Part 2

--*Theories of the Policy Process* (Chs. 5-7, 8, 10, and 11)

--Leach, William D. and Paul A. Sabatier. 2005. "To Trust an Adversary: Integrating Rational and Psychological Models in Collaborative Policymaking." *American Political Science Review*. 99:491-504.

--Weimer, David L. 2008. "Theories of and in the Policy Process." *Policy Studies Journal*. 36: 489-496.

--Nowlin, Matthew C. "Theories of the Policy Process: State of the Research and Emerging Trends." *Policy Studies Journal*. 39: 41-60.

10/24 -- Policy Types

--Lowi, Theodore J. 1964. "American Business, Public Policy Case Studies and Political Theory." *World Politics*. Xvi: 677-718.

- Lowi, Theodore J. 1972. "Four Systems of Policy, Politics and Choice." *Public Administration Review*. July-August.
- Heckathorn, Douglas D. and Steven M. Maser. 1990. "The Conceptual Architecture of Public Policy: A Critical Reconstruction of Lowi's Typology." *Journal of Politics*. 52:1101-1123.
- Smith, Kevin B. 2002. "Typologies, Taxonomies, and the Benefits of Policy Classification." *Policy Studies Journal*. 30:379-395.
- Lowry, William R. 2005. "Policy Reversal and Changing Politics: State Governments and Dam Removals." *State Politics & Policy Quarterly*. 5: 394-419.

10/31 – Problem Formulation and Agenda Setting (**second short assignment due**)

- Mooney, Christopher Z. and Mei-Hsien Lee. 2000. "The Influence of Values on Consensus and the Contentious Morality Policy: U.S. Death Penalty Reform, 1956-1982." *Journal of Politics*. 62:223-239.
- Wood, B. Dan and Alesha Doan. 2003. "The Politics of Problem Definition: Applying and Testing Threshold Models." *American Journal of Political Science*. 47:640-653.
- Soss, Joe and Sanford F. Schram. 2007. "A Public Transformed? Welfare Reform as Policy Feedback." *American Political Science Review*. 101: 111-127.
- Wood, B. Dan and A. Vedlitz. 2007. "Issue Definition, Information Processing, and the Politics of Global Warming." *American Journal of Political Science*. 51: 552-568.

11/7 – Policy Choice—Organized Interests

--*Lobbying and Policy Change*

11/14 – Policy Choice—Executive-Legislative Relations

- Who Leads Whom: Presidents, Policy, and the Public*
- Binder, Sarah. 1999. "The Dynamics of Legislative Gridlock." *American Political Science Review*. 93:519-534.
- Richman, Jesse. 2011. "Parties, Pivots, and Policies: The Status Quo Test." *American Political Science Review*. 105:151-165.

11/21 – Implementation—Administration and Oversight (**third short assignment due**)

- Balla, Steven J. 1998. "Administrative Procedures and Political Control of the Bureaucracy." *American Political Science Review*. 92:663-674.
- Miller, Gary J. 2005. "The Political Evolution of Principal-Agent Models." *Annual Review of Political Science*. 8: 203-225.
- Whitford, A. B. 2005. "The Pursuit of Political Control by Multiple Principals." *Journal of Politics*. 67:29-49.
- MacDonald, J.A. 2007. "The U.S. Congress and the Institutional Design of Agencies." *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. 32: 395-420.
- Schneider, Anne and Helen Ingram. 1993. "Social Construction of Target Populations: Implications for Politics and Policy." *American Political Science Review*. 87:334-347.
- Nicholson-Crotty, Jill, Jason A. Grissom, and Sean Nicholson-Crotty. 2011. "Bureaucratic Representation, Distributional Equity, and Democratic Values in the Administration of Public Programs." *Journal of Politics*. 73:582-596.

11/28 – Research Day

12/5 – Policy Analysis

- A Practical Guide to Policy Analysis*
- Lindblom, Charles E. 1959. "The Science of Muddling Through." *Public Administration Review*.
- Lindblom, Charles E. 1979. "Still Muddling, Not Yet Through." *Public Administration Review*. November-December:517-526.

12/12 – Policy Outcomes and Impact Evaluation (**fourth short assignment due**)

- Robinson, Gregory, John E. McNulty, and Jonathan S. Krasno. 2009. "Observing the Counterfactual? The Search for Political Experiments in Nature." *Political Analysis*. 17:341-357.
- Hood, M.V. and Grant W. Neeley. 2000. "Packin' in the Hood?: Examining Assumptions of Concealed-handgun Research." *Social Science Quarterly*. 81:523-537.
- Rodgers, Harrell R., Jr. and Lee Payne. 2007. "Child Poverty in the American States: The Impact of Welfare Reform, Economics, and Demographics." *Policy Studies Journal*. 35: 1-22.
- Fording, Richard C. and William D. Berry. 2007. "The Historical Impact of Welfare Programs on Poverty: Evidence from the American States." *Policy Studies Journal*. 35: 37-60.
- Stein, Robert M. and G. Vonnahme. 2008. "Engaging the Unengaged Voter: Vote Centers and Voter Turnout." *Journal of Politics*. 70: 487-497.
- McGuire, Kevin T. 2009. "Public Schools, Religious Establishments, and the U.S. Supreme Court: An Examination of Policy Compliance." *American Politics Research*. 37: 50-74.

Tuesday, December 20, 2011 (1:30-3:30) – Final Exam