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PSCI 365.01: Public Policy Issues and Analysis

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Syllabus
PSCI 365 Public Policy Issues and Analysis
Prof. Jeffrey D. Greene
Summer II, 2014
June 30 – August 1, 2014
University of Montana

TEXTS: *Understanding Public Policy, 14/e*, by Thomas Dye (Main textbook)
Issues for Debate in American Public Policy, 15/e, by CQ Press (*This book contains numerous policy issues that will be discussed in the class.*)

COURSE DESCRIPTION.

Public policy is one of the most exciting areas in political science. This course examines the public policy process (i.e. formation, implementation, and evaluation) and examines a broad range of substantive public policies. The course also integrates a variety of basic techniques of analysis and the application of models to help better understand public policy.

The class will be conducted using an informal seminar format rather than a lecture-based format. The structure of the class will be to examine and discuss a major policy area out of the Dye text, which are supplemented by the CQ Reader. Normally, one day will be spent on the broader topic using the Dye text and on the following day we will focus on specific areas of the same policy using the CQ Reader. Students are expected to have read the material before class and be prepared to discuss the topic. After a short summary of the policy area, questions will be asked for class discussion. Thus, it is critical that students come prepared to talk about policy topics such as health care, welfare, immigration, etc.

Primary Objectives

Objective #1: To provide students with a general understanding of substantive public policy and policy analysis by reading and discussing classic and contemporary literature. Students will be exposed to the basic concepts, terms, and methodologies associated with policy studies. In this process, students will gain a general understanding of the history and evolution of policy studies. Students' proficiency will be measured by class discussions (essentially a series of oral exams integrated into class discussions).

Objective #2: To enhance students' ability to write concise reports pertaining to public policy and present their work as an oral presentation. This objective will be accomplished by having students write a 10-page policy summary paper and make a formal, oral presentation about their work to the entire class. Details of these projects are explained later in the syllabus. Students' proficiency will be assessed via their performance on the policy summary paper.

Upon successful completion of the course, students should be able to:

- 1). Demonstrate knowledge of the history and evolution of American public policy
- 2). Demonstrate an understanding of the fundamental models, terms, and concepts associated with public policy and policy studies.
- 3). Demonstrate proficiency at writing concise reports that deal with complex material.

- 4). Demonstrate a thorough understanding of a specific policy by writing a policy summary, which includes an understanding about how issues can be “framed” and how framing issues impacts the potential solutions.
- 5). Demonstrate the ability to make formal presentations about public policy and analysis using visual technology, such as PowerPoint or other presentation software or equipment.

REQUIREMENTS: POLICY SUMMARY PAPER and CLASS PRESENTATIONS

Exams.

There are no formal exams in this course.

Policy Summary Paper.

The policy summary paper is intended to enhance students’ ability to write concise reports and demonstrate a competent understanding of a specific policy area. Students may select any policy area. Simply stated, a policy summary is a concise overview of a real public policy area that could be used as a chapter or section in a report, or as a freestanding report that one might construct for a public agency. Policy summaries should provide an overview of the policy area, include a brief overview of the history and evolution of the policy, the pertinent issues and debates associated with the policy area, and provide alternative solutions currently being considered to solve problems associated with the policy.

Students should select a policy topic of personal interest. All topics must be approved in advance. Students should summarize and evaluate a specific policy. The papers should contain a **clear description of the policy problem, provide the major potential remedies for the policy problem, briefly evaluate the pros and cons of each remedy, and select the remedy they feel would be the best solution to the problem and provide the rationale for selecting this remedy.** Students are encouraged to use some of the models covered in the class to their papers and note "how the public policy has been framed."

Papers are graded using the following criteria: **thoroughness, sophistication of analysis, organization and logical development, clarity of expression, grammar, and overall evaluation.** The format used is a **1** through **5** scale — with **5** the highest score — for each of the criteria.

Thoroughness High quality papers address the subject with sufficient detail to demonstrate that the policy topic is fully understood.

Sophistication of analysis In high quality papers, the author does more than just explain or describe. The author shows evidence of having thought about the subject in depth. The subject is analyzed from many angles and assessed critically.

Organization and logical development High quality papers show evidence of prior planning, as if they had been outlined in advance. The paper has a purpose

that is introduced in the introduction, developed in the paper, and returned to in the conclusion. Paragraphs are well constructed and linked to each other in a logical sequence using transitional sentences. Arguments, examples, opinions, evidence, and details explain the main points and lend credibility to each point being developed.

Clarity of expression In high quality papers, words are chosen carefully and sentences are constructed purposefully so that each point the author makes is expressed as exactly, precisely, and clearly as possible.

Grammar Poor grammar, punctuation, and spelling detract from the substance of papers. High-quality papers are characterized by consistently correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Verbs agree with subjects, there are no single-sentence paragraphs, etc.

To receive an “A”, one must write an **excellent** paper. In short, **excellent** papers explicitly demonstrate an understanding of the relevant terms and concepts, utilize illuminating examples, provide penetrating analysis, are gracefully but succinctly written, and build to clear and compelling conclusions.

Note: Students must write a 10-page, double-spaced, policy summary paper. This is the same topic that will be used in the class presentations.

Class Presentations

The paper, described above, will be converted into a formal, oral presentation using software such as PowerPoint or other visual aids like transparencies, charts, or handouts. Each presentation should be about 15-20 minutes with 5 minutes left for questions. Both the paper and the presentation are required for all students. The final week of the class will be dedicated to the presentations.

GRADE WEIGHTS:

Policy Paper40%
Presentations.....40%
Participation.....20% (*Based on the quality of oral participation in class discussions*)

ATTENDANCE: Students are encouraged to attend class. Poor attendance (defined as missing more than five classes) may adversely affect one's final grade.

PROFESSOR AND CONTACT INFORMATION:

Professor: Jeffrey Greene
Office: Liberal Arts 356
Telephone: 243-6181
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Website: <http://www.cas.umt.edu/polsci>

COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS.

Week, Subject, and Assigned Readings (M = Mondays; T = Tuesdays; W = Wednesdays R = Thursdays in the outline; the class does not meet on Fridays)

Week 1 Introduction to Public Policy: Models and the Policymaking Process

M. Introduction (No readings assigned; June 30)

T. Policy Analysis: What Governments Do, Why They Do It, and What Difference it Makes.

Models of Politics: Some Help in Thinking about Public Policy.

Assigned readings Dye, Chapters 1 and 2

W. Criminal Justice: Rationality and Irrationality in Public Policy

Assigned readings Dye, Chapter 3

R. Sample Policies: “Sentencing Reform” and “Media and Violence” in the CQ Reader.

Week 2 Health & Welfare Policy and Education Policy

M. Health and Welfare: The Search for Rational Strategies

Assigned readings: Dye, Chapter 5

T. Sample Policies “Polarization in America” and “Mental Health Policy” in the CQ Reader.

W. Education Policy: The Group Struggle.

Assigned readings Dye, Chapter 6

R. Sample Policies: Either “Gay Marriage” in the CQ Reader (or a discussion about higher education).

Week 3 Economic Policy, Tax Policy, and International Trade and Immigration Policy

M. Economic Policy: Incrementalism at Work

Assigned Reading: Dye Chapter 7

T. Sample Policies: “Minimum Wage,” “Federal Reserve,” and “Government Spending” in the CQ Reader.

W. Tax Policy: Battling Special Interests

Assigned Readings: Dye, Chapter 8 (No reading in the CQ Reader)

R. International Trade and Immigration: Elite-Mass Conflict

Assigned Readings: Dye, Chapter 9 and Sample Policies: “U.S. Trade Policy” in the CQ Reader

Week 4 Environmental Policy, Civil Rights, and some aspects of Foreign Policy

M. Environmental Policy: Externalities and Interests

Assigned Readings: Dye, Chapter 10

T. Sample Policies: “Climate Change” and “Coastal Development” in the CQ Reader.

W. Civil Rights: Elite and Mass Interaction

Assigned Readings: Dye, Chapter 11.

Sample Policies: “Racial Profiling” and “Government Surveillance” in the CQ Reader.

R. Foreign Policy and Defense Policy:

Assigned Readings: Dye, Chapter 15

Sample Policies: “Border Security” and “Improving Cybersecurity” in the CQ Reader.

**Week 5 Presentations: This week will be reserved for policy presentations
Papers Due; class ends Thursday, July 31**

**Issues for Debate in American Public Policy: Selections from *CQ
Researcher*, 15th Edition**

CQ Researcher

Table of Contents for 15/e

Environment

1. Climate Change
2. Coastal Development

Business and Economy

3. The Federal Reserve
4. U.S. Trade Policy

Rights and Liberties

5. Media Violence
6. Sentencing Reform
7. Racial Profiling
8. Government Surveillance
9. Gay Marriage

Social Policy

10. Polarization in America
11. Whistleblowers
12. Minimum Wage
13. Government Spending

Health

14. Mental Health Policy

National Security and Foreign Policy

15. Border Security
16. Improving Cybersecurity