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PSC 468.01: Public Policy Cycle

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(Public Policy Cycle)

Public Policy Issues & Policy Analysis

PSc 468 / Spring Semester 2007

THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA / Department of Political Science

LA 337 – 11:10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. (Tue/Thu)

TEXTS: *Understanding Public Policy, 11/e*, by Dye (Main textbook)

Issues for Debate in American Public Policy, 6/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 on Tuesdays and discuss one of the readings out of the CQ Policy Reader on Thursdays. *There are some weeks where there are exceptions to this format.* Students are expected to have read the material before class and be ready 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.

This class is offered as **PSc 468**, the **Public Policy Cycle** but the primary focus of the class will be on public policy issues and policy analysis. This is a one time offering; the class will only be taught during the Spring 2007 semester. It will be replaced by a different class in the Spring 2008 semester.

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, written exams used in this class.

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. The Lester and Stewart text provides four excellent examples (the chapters on education, crime, welfare, and environmental policy) that can serve as models for your paper. In short, after reading a policy summary, the reader should have a good understanding of the specific policy area. 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. Papers will receive a separate score for each criterion.

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.

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 10 minutes with 5 minutes left for questions. Both the paper and the presentation are required for all students. The final weeks 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)*

PLUS/MINUS GRADING SYSTEM

The **University of Montana** now uses a version of the **Plus/Minus** grading system and a **Credit/No Credit** system (the CR/NCR replaces the Pass/Fail system used in the past). *All political science courses use the Plus/Minus grading system.*

To accommodate the Plus/Minus system a new grading scale will be used. In **PSc 468** grades will be assigned based on the following grading scale. This scale and system is more complex than the system used in the past but rewards As only to those students whose performance in the class is "exceptional."

Grade	Point Scale	Point Range	GPA
A	93-100	8 points	4.00
A-	90-92	3 points	3.67
B+	87-89	3 points	3.33
B	83-86	4 points	3.00
B-	80-82	3 points	2.67
C+	77-79	3 points	2.33
C	73-76	4 points	2.00
C-	70-72	3 points	1.67
D+	67-69	3 points	1.33
D	63-66	4 points	1.00
D-	60-62	3 points	.667
F	59 or lower	N/A	0.00

Point range shows the range that is associated with a particular grade. For example, the point range for an **A** is 8 points (93-100). There is not an A+ grade in the UM system. The increments are narrower for other grades.

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

Academic Misconduct Policy

The University requires that this statement be placed on all syllabuses at the University of Montana:

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University.

All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at: <http://www.umt.edu/SA/VP/SA/index.cfm/page/1321>

COURSE OUTLINE and READINGS

Week, Subject, and Assigned Readings (T = Tuesdays; R = Thursdays in the outline)

1. (January 23 and 25)

T. Introduction (No readings assigned)

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

Assigned readings
Dye, Chapter 1

2. (January 30 and February 1)

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

Assigned readings
Dye, Chapter 2

R. The Policymaking Process: Decision-Making Activities.

Assigned readings
Dye, Chapter 3
Sample Policy: "The Right to Die," from the CQ Reader, Reader # 7

3. (February 6 and 8)

T. Criminal Justice: Rationality and Irrationality in Public Policy.

Assigned readings
Dye, Chapter 4

R. Sample Policy: "Gang Crisis," from the CQ Reader, # 9

4. (February 13 and 15)

Health and Welfare: The Search for Rational Strategies.

T. Assigned readings
Dye, Chapter 5

R. Sample Policy: "Child Welfare Reform," from the CQ Reader, # 5
Sample Policy: "Social Security Reform," from the CQ Reader, # 6

5. (February 20 and February 22)

Education Policy: The Group Struggle.

T. Assigned readings
Dye, Chapter 6

R. Sample Policies in education: "No Child Left Behind" and "Rising College Costs," from the CQ Reader, # 1 and # 2

6. (February 27 and March 1) Please note there is no class on Thursday March 8

Economic Policy: Incrementalism at Work.

T. Assigned readings
Dye, Chapter 7

Sample Policy: "Big Box Stores," from the CQ Reader, # 12

R. International Trade and Immigration: Elite-Mass Conflict.

Assigned readings
Dye, Chapter 9

7. (March 6 and 8)

Tax Policy: Battling the Special Interests.

T. Assigned readings
Dye, Chapter 8

R. No class: The instructor will be attending the Annual Meeting of the Western Political

Science Association in Las Vegas, NV International Trade and Immigration: Elite-Mass Conflict.

**Assigned readings
Dye, Chapter 9**

**8. (March 13 and 15)
Environmental Policy: Externalities and Interests.**

**T. Assigned readings
Dye, Chapter 10**

R. Sample Policies: "Alternative Energy" and "Smart Growth," from the CQ Reader, # 10 and # 11

**9. (March 20 and 22)
Defense and Foreign Policy: Strategies for Serious Games.**

**T. Assigned readings
Dye, Chapter 13**

**R. Sample Policy: "International Law," from the CQ Reader, # 14
Sample Policy: "Middle East Peace," from the CQ Reader, # 15
Sample Policy: Exporting Democracy, from the CQ Reader, # 16**

10. No Class / Spring Break at UM (March 26-30)

11. (April 3 and 5)

T. Homeland Security: The War of Terrorism

**Assigned readings
Dye, Chapter 14**

R. Policy Evaluation: Finding Out What Happens After a Law Is Passed.

**Assigned readings
Dye, Chapter 15**

12. Presentations (April 10 and 12) *Three weeks are reserved for presentations*

13. Presentations (April 17 and 19)

14. Presentations (April 24 and 26)

15. Presentation (May 1 and 3)

16. All papers due during Exam Week (Thursday, May 10 by 5 p.m.)

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Visit [Public Agenda](#), which is a rich source of data and studies about public policy.