

POSC XXX: Introduction to Public Policy

Department of Political Science

Instructor: Nick Jenkins

Fall 2020

Office Location: Sproul Hall 2228

Classroom: CHASS 1020

Office Hours: W: 4-5pm; TH: 1:30-3:30pm

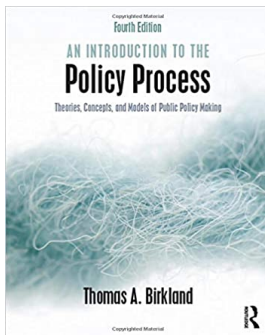
Class Times: MWF: 9 - 10:15am

Email: nicholas.jenkins@email.ucr.edu

Course Description

Why is it so difficult to pass public policy in the U.S.? What happens after a bill becomes law? In this class, we will explore how public policy is made from its formulation to its implementation and evaluation. We will learn how different groups affect the details of policy, how policies are enforced, and how effective policies are at meeting their intended outcomes. The goal of this class is to build your skills as a policy expert and train you to evaluate policy programs in a critical and professional fashion.

Required Materials



There are a lot of textbooks on the policymaking process, but I selected one that will give you the tools you need to understand and critically evaluate policy solutions without “breaking the bank!” Here is the book we will be using: [An Introduction to the Policy Process \(Fourth Edition\)](#). We will cover all of the material in this text and you can get a copy of the fourth edition used on Amazon for around \$25. Older versions ([here](#)) and newer versions ([here](#)) will also work just fine.

In addition to the textbook, we will also read through the [guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#) on how to conduct a successful policy evaluation project. This will give you an opportunity to practice being a policy analyst and use your skills to evaluate the efficacy of a policy program that aims to address an important societal issue.

Course Promises

In this course, I will make the following promises to you. By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

1. Describe the process by which policy is made in the US.
2. Examine policy issues through the lens of a policy expert.
3. Identify strategies to evaluate the measure the success of public policy.
4. Research, prepare, and deliver a professional policy report that provides valuable information to your colleagues, and that sparks and holds their interest.

Course Expectations

This course will only fulfill these promises if you promise the following in return:

1. **To attend class.** I have designed this class for the readings and lectures to complement one another. As a result, attending lecture will be an essential component for your to develop a mastery of the course material.
2. **To read the assigned materials.** Similar to the lectures, the readings will provide additional details on each topic that may not be covered in lecture. They will also give you an opportunity to practice applying your knowledge of American government to understand real world decisions that have been made.
3. **To be attentive and participate in class.** Participation does not only mean speaking aloud in class. Students should participate by actively following class discussions and engaging with lecture activities.
4. **To complete the required assignments in a timely fashion.** The assignments in this course are designed for you, and me, to measure your progress on meeting the course promises. Each assignment will give you practice at mastering these promises and I will give feedback to help guide you in your journey. Providing feedback is time consuming, however, so you will get the most useful feedback, and therefore the most use out of each assignment, only if you turn in your work on time.

Assignments and Evaluation

The assignments in the class are designed to help you develop your skill as a policy maker and analyst. This means that they will require you to sharpen your communication skills (written and oral), critically evaluate policy proposals and programs, and design new policies to address existing issues. Here is a description of all course assignments:

1. **Mini-Case Studies (3):** Throughout the semester, you will have 3 mini-case study projects that will require you to use your skills as a policy analyst to evaluate various policy issues that I assign. For each assignment, you will write 1-2 single spaced pages. These assignments are designed to give you practice evaluating policy solutions and prepare you to produce a high-quality evaluation project at the end of the semester. Here are the questions that you will need to answer for each case:

(a) Mini-Case Study 1: [Boston's Job Training Programs](#).

- Who are the stakeholders in this issue?
- What is the focus of the issue or program?
- What is the problem that needs to be solved?
- What policy solutions have been used to try to fix the problem?
- Why have these attempts failed?

This is due on September 30th.

(b) Mini-Case Study 2: [Traffic Congestion](#).

- Who are the stakeholders in this issue?
- What is the focus of the issue or program?
- What is the problem that needs to be solved?
- What policy solutions have been used to try to fix the problem?
- What is the best way to evaluate this problem?

This is due on October 21st.

(c) Mini-Case Study 3: [Humanitarian Cash Transfer Program](#)

- Who are the stakeholders in this issue?
- What is the focus of the issue or program?
- What is the problem that needs to be solved?
- What policy solutions have been used to try to fix the problem?
- What method(s) would you propose to evaluate this program? Why?

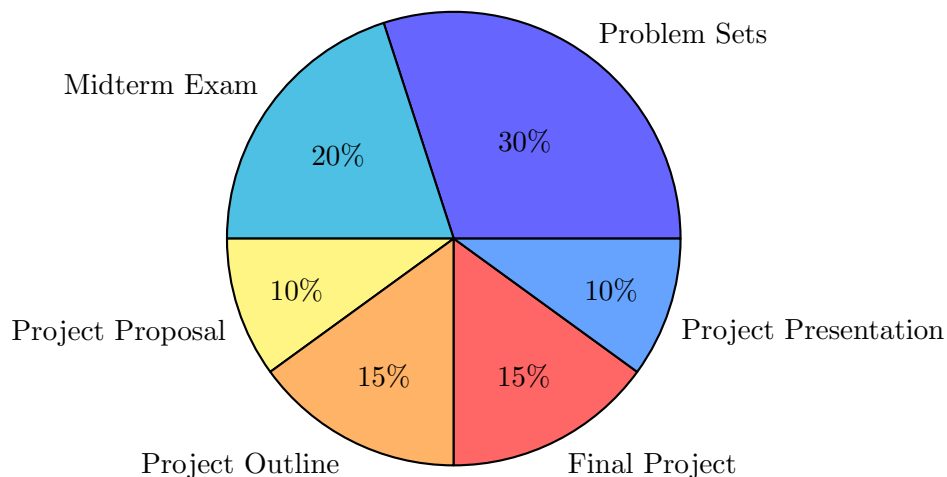
This is due on November 18th.

2. **Case Study Project:** The final project in the class will be an evaluation of an existing policy or set of policies aimed at solving a particular issue. In this project, we will use the [guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#) for conducting a policy evaluation project. Using this guide will help you create a high-quality professional policy evaluation project and prepare you for a career in policymaking and evaluation. During the semester we will work through this guide and you will complete your project in stages with a final presentation held in the last week of the semester. Here are the descriptions of each component of the project and their due dates:

- Project Proposal: you will submit a project proposal that explains what policy program you will evaluate in **about 250-500 words**. You will need to identify (1) the issue the program is attempting to solve, (2) how the program attempts to solve the issue, and (3) what the results of the program were. **This is due in-class on November 9th.**
- Project Outline: In a **maximum of 2 double-spaced page**, you will create an outline of your project. This outline should (1) identify the stakeholders, (2) describe the program, (3) describe the evaluation method you would use, (4) how you would gather evidence, (5) what your evaluation would teach us about the efficacy of the program, and (6) what you, the policy analyst, recommend as the next step. **Your project proposal will be submitted via iLearn on November 30th**
- Final Project: Following the project evaluation guidelines, write your complete report in a **maximum of 6 double-spaced pages**. If you have done the previous stages correctly, this will involve transforming your outline into a complete paper. **The final paper will be submitted via iLearn on December 16th.**

3. **Midterm Exam:** For the midterm, you will be asked to answer two essay questions that will require you to demonstrate your knowledge of the policy process and ability to evaluate a policy program. **The midterm will be held on November 2nd.**

These assignments will constitute your grade in the course and the weight of each of assignment are as follows:



The letter grades will be assigned according to these percentages:

A+	97-100%	B+	87-89%	C+	77-79%	D+	67-69%	F	0-59%
A	93-96%	B	83-86%	C	73-76%	D	63-66%		
A-	90-92%	B-	80-82%	C-	70-72%	D-	60-62%		

Classroom Decorum and Academic Discourse

For everyone to have the best possible learning experience, we will strive to create a classroom environment that supports respectful, critical inquiry through the free exchange of ideas. As part of learning, it is essential to discuss topics with individual who have different viewpoints than your own and the only way we can better understand one another is if we can carry on a collegial discussion of the topic. Remember, the goal is to become better critical thinkers. To do so we must learn to listen to others and articulate our views in respectful ways. As such, the following principles will guide our discussions:

- Treat every member of the class with respect, even if you disagree with their opinion;
- Bring light, not heat;
- Reasonable minds can differ on any number of perspectives, opinions, and conclusions;
- Because constructive disagreement sharpens thinking, deepens understanding, and reveals novel insights, it is not just encouraged, it is expected;
- No ideas are immune from scrutiny and debate;
- You will not be graded on your opinions;

- Arguments and evidence should be judged *independently* of who offers such arguments and evidence.

Additionally, to build a classroom environment that maximizes everyone's ability to master the course material please be mindful to not distract your fellow learners with your phone, tablet, or computer. It's perfectly fine if you would like to use these devices to take notes during class, but don't use them to distract yourself or your peers! Similarly, if you come late (or must leave early) please to enter/depart the classroom in the least disruptive manner possible. This includes sitting near the door if you anticipate leaving early or taking a seat as near to the door as possible if you arrive late.

Academic Honesty

I expect that all work you produce for this course will be your own. If you plagiarize any material from outside sources for your written work or presentation in this course, or on the final exam, **it will result in a failure of the entire course.** There are no exceptions to this, and no second chances. Please refer to the university's [Academic Integrity Policies & Procedures](#) if you have questions about these standards.

Special Accommodations

If you need particular accommodations to help you succeed in mastering this course's material, please contact the [Student Disability Resource Center](#) on campus in Costo Hall 125 to get a personalized accommodation plan.

Course Outline

This syllabus is a working document. I reserve the right to make changes to the assigned readings (additions or deletions) or to the order of topics we cover as I deem necessary. Announcements regarding schedule changes will be made in class, in discussion sections, or on iLearn.

Also note that this schedule lists the topics of discussion for each class. To master the course material, you should finish each meeting's readings before we discuss them in class. This schedule also indicates which course promise(s) each class contributes to. They are listed as **CP** followed by the specific promise's number (listed above).

Tentative Schedule:

MONDAY		WEDNESDAY	
Aug 31st	1	Sep 2nd	2
CP 1 Course Introduction; Intro to the Policy Process Ch. 1: What is public policy and how is it made?		CP 1 & 2 Intro to the Policy Process Ch. 1: Why study public policy? Why do we need arguments and evidence?	
7th		9th	3
Labor Day - No Class :(CP 1 & 2 Policy Evaluation Project Guide Executive Summary, Intro, and Step 1	
14th	4	16th	5
CP 1 Intro to the Policy Process Ch. 2: What is the process of policy formation?		CP 1 & 2 Intro to the Policy Process Ch. 2: What factors shape policy?	
21st	6	23rd	7
CP 1 Intro to the Policy Process Ch. 3: Policy formation and the constitution		CP 1 & 3 Intro to the Policy Process Ch. 3: Political ideals and policy formation Policy Evaluation Project Guide Step 2	
28th	8	30th	9
CP 1 Intro to the Policy Process Ch. 4: How does Congress shape public policy?		CP 1, 2, 3, & 4 Mini-Case 1 Due. Intro to the Policy Process Ch. 4: How do the president and the courts shape public policy?	
Oct 5th	10	7th	11
CP 1 Intro to the Policy Process Ch. 5: How do interest groups and political parties shape public policy?		CP 1 & 3 Intro to the Policy Process Ch. 5: How do think tanks, media outlets, and subgovernments shape public policy? Policy Evaluation Project Guide Step 3	

MONDAY	WEDNESDAY
12th 12 CP 1 Intro to the Policy Process Ch. 6: Getting issues on the table; How can we change the agenda?	14th 13 CP 1, 2, 3, & 4 Mini-Case 2 Due. Intro to the Policy Process Ch. 6: The social construction of policy issues
19th 14 CP 1 Intro to the Policy Process Ch. 7: What types of policies are there?	21st 15 CP 1 Intro to the Policy Process Ch. 7: Policy types continued
26th 16 CP 2 & 3 Intro to the Policy Process Ch. 8: How do we know if a policy worked?	28th 17 CP 1, 2, & 3 Intro to the Policy Process Ch. 8: Ways to evaluate policy outcomes Policy Evaluation Project Guide Step 4 <i>Last day of midterm content</i>
Nov 2nd 18 Midterm Essay (CP 1, 2, & 3)	4th 19 CP 2 & 3 Policy Evaluation Project Guide Steps 5 & 6
9th 20 Project Proposal Due In-class CP 2 & 3 Intro to the Policy Process Ch. 9: What are the elements of policy design?	11th 21 CP 2 & 3 Intro to the Policy Process Ch. 9: What do we need theory for and what tools will we need to use?
16th 22 CP 1 Intro to the Policy Process Ch 10: How is policy implemented?	18th 23 CP 2, 3, & 4 Mini-Case 2 Due. Intro to the Policy Process Ch. 10: Learning and improving public policy
23rd Thanksgiving! - No Class :(25th Thanksgiving! - No Class :(

MONDAY		WEDNESDAY	
30th	24	Dec 2nd	25
CP 1 Project Outline Due Intro to the Policy Process Ch. 11: Modern theories of policy formation		CP 1 Intro to the Policy Process Ch. 11: Frameworks for studying public policy	
7th	26	9th	27
CP 2 & 4 Project Presentations		CP 2 & 4 Project Presentations	
14th	28	16th	29
		Policy Evaluation Project Due on iLearn)	