

POLS6312 Survey of American Institutions and Public Policy

Mondays-Fridays 9:00 AM-Noon
University of Houston
Department of Political Science
Zoom ID: 7919619091
Passcode: 021987

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Instructor

Ling Zhu
The Pauline Yelderman Endowed Chair and
Associate Professor
Department of Political Science
Email: lzhu4@central.uh.edu
Phone: 713-743-2649
Office Hours: Mondays, 2:00-4:00, or by appointment.

Course Description

Public policy is a unique field in the political science discipline. On the one hand, the substantive topics of policy study overlap with those in many other fields of political science, such as American politics, comparative politics, political economy, etc. On the other hand, policy study has both scientific and applied aspects. It has generated numerous theories of its own and knowledge about the policymaking process. One of the major challenges confronting political scientists is how to appropriately define the scope and nature of public policy research. Perhaps, the even more fundamental challenge is to develop an integrated view about what are the key research questions in the field of public policy. The purpose of this course is to introduce students to different and sometimes diffused theoretical ideas in the field of public policy. In particular, this course serves as an introductory/survey course in public policy. This course introduces students to political institutions and pivotal actors in the policymaking process. It also introduces students the meaning of public policy and political science approaches to it, focusing major theoretical frameworks for studying the policy process. This course is designed for masters and doctoral students in political science, although it may meet the needs of other students who are interested in studying the policy process. This course proceeds with a brief introduction to the history and background of public policy study. We then will focus on seven theoretical frameworks of the policymaking process: (1) agenda-setting and the punctuated equilibrium theory, (2) advocacy coalition framework (ACF) and policy networks, (3) theories of policy diffusion and innovation, (4) the theory of representative bureaucracy, (5) policy feedback theory, (6) the theory of administrative burden, and (7) comparative public policy research. We will conclude this course by discussing how to advance policy research in the comparative context.

Learning Objectives

1. To become familiar with major theories in the field of public policy.
2. To identify key research questions in the field of public policy.
3. To learn different research designs and best practices for applying each of the different theories discussed in this course.
4. To learn how to write a critical review essay.
5. To learn how to develop a viable research proposal.

Required Books and Additional Readings

1. Smith, Kevin B. and Christopher W. Larimer. 2017. *The Public Policy Theory Primer*. Third Edition, Routledge.
2. Weible, Christopher M. and Paul A. Sabatier. 2018. *Theories of the Policy Process*. Fourth Edition, Routledge.
3. There are additional readings listed by daily topics.

Course Requirements

1. Class attendance and participation in class discussion.
2. Read the assigned readings prior to each class meeting.
3. Daily Discussion Question. Each student is required to submit a discussion question on required readings each day. Daily discussion question is due by **8:00pm each day on Blackboard Learn**, and will be used in the subsequent class to facilitate our in-class discussion of readings.
4. Discussion Leader. Each student will take turns to serve as a discussion leader, who will summarize the required readings and moderate the in-class discussions for the group.
5. Literature Review Essay. Students are required to choose a theoretical framework in public policy and write a critical literature review essay on that chosen topic. The literature review essay should be no-longer than five pages. The literature review essay is due by **Noon, May the 25th on Blackboard Learn**.
6. Mini-Research Prospectus. Building on the critical literature review essays, students are required to turn in a three-page mini-research prospectus. The prospectus should include a brief description of the research topic, a brief discussion on which theoretical framework learned from this class is suitable for addressing the proposed research topic, and a short list of existing data sources that can make the proposed research feasible. The research prospectus is due by **Noon, June the 2nd on Blackboard Learn**.

Grading

1. Participation, 10%
2. Daily Discussion Question, 20%
3. Discussion Leader, 10%.
4. Literature Review Essay, 30%
5. Mini-Research Prospectus, 30%
6. Final Grades
 - A = 100-95 (Excellent)
 - A- = 94-90
 - B+ = 89-87 (Good)
 - B = 86-84
 - B- = 83-80 (Poor)
 - C+ = 79-77
 - C = 76-74
 - C- = 73-70
 - D+ = 69-67
 - D = 66-64
 - D- = 63-60
 - F = 59-0 (Failing)

Late Submission

Late work will only be accepted without penalty if students have university-accepted excuses. Unexcused late submission will be penalized by one letter grade per day. For example, an A-paper turned in one day late will become a B-paper.

Academic Integrity

As commonly defined, presenting the words or works of others' as your own is plagiarism. Plagiarism is one of the worst academic sins, because it destroys the trust among colleagues, without which research cannot be safely communicated. Plagiarism is also a violation of the UH Academic Honesty Policy. If you are uncertain of what constitutes academic dishonesty, you should contact me prior to submitting the assignment and/or check the UH Academic Honesty Policy from the university website: http://www.uh.edu/provost/policies/honesty/_documents-honesty/academic-honesty-policy.pdf. Students are expected to adhere to the UH Academic Honesty Policy. Cheating or plagiarism in course assignments, exams, and the final paper will lead to a grade of F.

University of Houston CAPS Statement

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) can help students who are having difficulties managing stress, adjusting to college, or feeling sad and hopeless. You can reach CAPS

(<https://www.uh.edu/caps/>) by calling 713-743-5454 during and after business hours for routine appointments or if you or someone you know is in crisis.

Reasonable Academic Adjustments/Auxiliary Aids

The University of Houston complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, pertaining to the provision of reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids for disabled students. In accordance with Section 504 and ADA guidelines, UH strives to provide reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids to students who request and require them. If you believe that you have a disability requiring an academic adjustments/auxiliary aid, please contact the Justin Dart Jr. Student Accessibility Center (formerly the Justin Dart, Jr. Center for Students with DisABILITIES).

Face Covering Policy

To reduce the spread of COVID-19, the University strongly encourages everyone (vaccinated or not) to wear face coverings indoors on campus including classrooms for both faculty and students.

COVID-19 Information

Students are encouraged to visit the University's COVID-19 website for important information including on-campus testing, vaccines, diagnosis and symptom protocols, campus cleaning and safety practices, report forms, and positive cases on campus. Please check the website throughout the semester for updates.

Vaccinations

Data suggests that vaccination remains the best intervention for reliable protection against COVID-19. Students are asked to familiarize themselves with pertinent vaccine information, consult with their health care provider. The University strongly encourages all students, faculty and staff to be vaccinated.

Excused Absence Policy

Regular class attendance, participation, and engagement in coursework are important factors contributing to student success. Absences may be excused as provided in the University of Houston Undergraduate Excused Absence Policy and Graduate Excused Absence Policy for reasons including: medical illness of student or close relative, death of a close family member, legal or government proceeding that a student is obligated to attend, recognized professional and educational activities where the student is presenting, and University-sponsored activity or athletic competition. Under these policies, students with excused absences will be provided with an opportunity to make up any quiz, exam or other work that contributes to the course grade or a satisfactory alternative. Please read the full policy for details regarding reasons for excused absences, the approval process, and extended absences. Additional policies address absences related to military service, religious holy days, pregnancy and related conditions, and disability.

Synchronous Online Course

This course is being offered in the Synchronous Online format. Synchronous online class meetings will take place according to the class schedule. There is no face-to-face component to this course. In between synchronous class meetings, there may also be asynchronous activities to complete (e.g., one-on-one office hour meetings via Zoom).

Recording of Class

Students may not record all or part of class, livestream all or part of class, or make/distribute screen captures, without advanced written consent of the instructor. If you have or think you may have a disability such that you need to record class-related activities, please contact the Center for Students with DisABILITIES. If you have an accommodation to record class-related activities, those recordings may not be shared with any other student, whether in this course or not, or with any other person or on any other platform. Classes may be recorded by the instructor. Students may use instructor's recordings for their own studying and note-taking. Instructor's recordings are not authorized to be shared with anyone without the prior written approval of the instructor. Failure to comply with requirements regarding recordings will result in a disciplinary referral to the Dean of Students Office and may result in disciplinary action.

Resources for Online Learning

The University of Houston is committed to student success and provides information to optimize the online learning experience through our Power-On website. Please visit this website for a comprehensive set of resources, tools, and tips including: obtaining access to the internet, AccessUH, and Blackboard; requesting a laptop through the Laptop Loaner Program; using your smartphone as a webcam; and downloading Microsoft Office 365 at no cost. For questions or assistance contact UHOnline@uh.edu.

UH Email

Email communications related to this course will be sent to your Exchange email account which each University of Houston student receives. The Exchange mail server can be accessed via Outlook, which provides a single location for organizing and managing day-to-day information, from email and calendars to contacts and task lists. Exchange email accounts can be accessed by logging into Office 365 with your CougarNet credentials or through Access UH. Additional assistance can be found at the UH Get Help page.

Course Calendar

1. *May 16: Course Introduction: Public Policy as a Field*

Resources: [The University of Houston Libraries](#).

Readings:

- Smith and Larimer, Chapter 1.
- Weible and Sabatier, Chapter 1.

- Meier, Kenneth J. 2009. “Policy Theory, Policy Theory Everywhere: Ravings of a Deranged Policy Scholar.” *Policy Studies Journal*, 37(1): 5-11.
- Petridou, Evangelia. 2014. “Theories of the Policy Process: Contemporary Scholarship and Future Directions.” *Policy Studies Journal*, 42(S1): S12-S32.

2. **May 17-18: Agenda Setting and the Punctuated Equilibrium Theory**

Resources: [The Comparative Agendas Project](#).

Readings on May 17 (Theory):

- Weible and Sabatier, Chapter 2.
- Givel, Michel. 2010. “The Evolution of the Theoretical Foundations of Punctuated Equilibrium Theory in Public Policy.” *Review of Policy Research*, 27(2): 187-198.

Readings on May 18 (Empirical Application):

- Kuhlmann, Johanna and Jeroen van der Heijden. 2018. “What Is Known about Punctuated Equilibrium Theory? And What Does That Tell Us about the Construction, Validation, and Replication of Knowledge in the Policy Sciences?” *Review of Policy Research*, 35(2): 326-347.
- Barberá, Pablo, Andreu Casas, Jonathan Nagler, Patrick J. Egan, Richard Bonneau, John T. Jost, and Joshua A. Tucker. 2019. “Who Leads? Who Follows? Measuring Issue Attention and Agenda Setting by Legislators and the Mass Public Using Social Media Data.” *American Political Science Review*, 113(4): 883-901.
- Klüver, Heike. 2020. “Setting the Party Agenda: Interest Groups, Voters, and Issue Attention.” *British Journal of Political Science*, 50(3): 979-1000.

3. **May 19-20: Policy Networks, Policy Entrepreneurship, and ACF**

Readings on May 19 (Theory):

- Weible and Sabatier, Chapter 4.
- Mintrom, Michel and Phillipa Norman. 2009. “Policy Entrepreneurship and Policy Change.” *Policy Studies Journal*, 37(4): 649-667.

Readings on May 20 (Empirical Application):

- Lubell, Mark, John Scholz, Ramiro Berardo, and Garry Robins. 2012. “Testing Policy Theory with Statistical Models of Networks.” *Policy Studies Journal*, 40(3): 351-374.
- Gronow, Antti, Keiichi Satoh, Tuomas Ylä-Anttila, Christopher M. Weible. 2022. “Of Devils, Angels, and Brokers: How Social Network Positions Affect Misperceptions of Political Influence.” *Journal of European Public Policy*, Online first.

4. **May 23-24: Innovation and Diffusion Models in Policy Research**

Resources: [SPID: State Policy Innovation and Diffusion Database](#)

Readings on May 23 (Theory):

- Weible and Sabatier, Chapter 7

- Graham, Erin R., Charles R. Shipen and Craig Volden. 2013. “The Diffusion of Policy Diffusion Research in Political Science.” *British Journal of Political Science*, 43(3): 673-701.
- Mallison, Daniel J. 2021. “Growth and Gaps: A Meta-Review of Policy Diffusion Studies in the American States.” *Politics & Policy*, 49(3): 369-389.

Readings on May 24 (Empirical Application):

- Butler, Daniel M., Craig Volden, Adam M. Dynes and Boris Shor. 2015. “Ideology, Learning and Policy Diffusion: Experimental Evidence.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 61(1): 37-49.
- Gilardi, Fabrizio, Charles R. Shipan, and Bruno Wüest. 2021. “Policy Diffusion: The Issue Definition Stage.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 65(1): 21-35.

5. **May 25-26: Theory of Representative Bureaucracy**

Resources: [Representative Bureaucracy Bibliography](#)

Readings on May 25 (Theory):

- Riccucci, Norma M. and Gregg G. Van Ryzin. 2017. “Representative Bureaucracy: A Lever to Enhance Social Equity, Coproduction, and Democracy.” *Public Administration Review*, 77(1): 21-30.
- Meier, Ken. 2019. “Theoretical Frontiers in Representative Bureaucracy: New Directions for Research.” *Perspectives on Public Management and Governance*,
- Meier, Ken 1975. “Representative Bureaucracy: An Empirical Analysis.” *American Political Science Review*, 69(2): 526-542. (This article is not required, but just for fun as an example of how one can turn a dissertation research agenda into decades of contributions to the field.)

Readings on May 26 (Empirical Application):

- Shoub, Kelsey, Katelyn E. Stauffer and Miyeon Song. 2021. “Do Female Officers Police Differently? Evidence from Traffic Stops.” *American Journal of Political Science*, Onlinefirst.
- Meier, Kenneth J. and Anita Dhillon. 2022. “Gender and the State Politics of Policy Implementation in Education: The Interaction of Bureaucratic and Legislative Representation in India.” *State Politics & Policy Quarterly*. Online first.
- Yu, Helen H. 2022. “Racial Diversity in Policing: Do We Need More Asian American Police Officers in Response to the # StopAsianHate Movement?.” *Public Personnel Management*, Online first.

6. **May 27-31: Policy Feedback Theory**

Readings on May 27 (Theory):

- Weible and Sabatier, Chapter 3
- Campbell, Andrea. 2012. “Policy Makes Mass Politics.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 15:333-351.

- Larsen, Erik Gahner. 2018. “Policy Feedback Effects on Mass Public: A Quantitative Review.” *Policy Studies Journal*, 47(2): 372-394.

May 30, Memorial Day Holiday, no class

Readings on May 31 (Empirical Application)

- Sances, Michael W. and Joshua D. Clinton. 2021. “Policy Effects, Partisanship, and Elections: How Medicaid Expansion Affected Public Opinion toward the Affordable Care Act.” *Journal of Politics*, 83(2): 498-514.
- Mettler, Suzanne, Ling Zhu, and Lawrence R. Jacobs. 2022. “Policy Threat, Partisanship, and the Case of the Affordable Care Act.” *American Political Science Review*, forthcoming.

7. *June 1-June 2: Administrative Burden*

Readings on June 1 (Theory):

- Herd, Pamela and Donald P. Moynihan. 2019. *Administrative Burden: Policymaking by Other Means*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation. Introduction & Chapter 1.
- Baekgaard. Martin, Donald P. Moynihan and Mette Kjærgaard Thomsen. 2021. “Why Do Policymakers Support Administrative Burdens? The Roles of Deservingness, Political Ideology, and Personal Experience.” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 31(1): 184-200. (Focus on the theoretical half of the paper, especially for the concept of burden tolerance).

Readings on June 2 (Empirical Application):

- Moynihan, Donald, Pamela Herd, and Hope Harvey. 2015. “Administrative Burden: Learning, Psychological, and Compliance Costs in Citizen-State Interactions.” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 25(1): 43-69.
- Heinrich, Carolyn. 2016. “The Bite of Administrative Burden: A Theoretical and Empirical Investigation.” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 26(3): 403-420.
- Keiser, Lael R. and Susan Miller. 2020. “Does Administrative Burden Influence Public Support for Government Programs? Evidence from a Survey Experiment.” *Public Administration Review*, 80(1): 137-150.

8. *Advancing Policy Research in Comparative Contexts*

Readings on June 3

- Weible and Sabatier, Chapter 9.
- Discuss mini-research prospectus