

Agenda-Setting in American Politics

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY
GOVERNMENT 4903.04 / 5903.02
FALL 2017
TUESDAY 6:00 - 9:00PM
ASB 301

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Office Hours: T 11:00am – 12:30pm; Th 1:00pm – 2:30 pm and by appointment

Course Overview

This graduate seminar considers how issues get on the government agenda – that is, how an issue becomes seriously considered by policymakers. This seminar will explore the notion that individual choices, choices within governmental institutions, and public policy outputs are interconnected. We will consider how individuals in our political institutions (Congress, the presidency, and the bureaucracy) process information and make choices about what policies to pursue, and how their choices lead to change in public policy outputs. In doing this we will discover how the adaptive, but limited, nature of human cognition, and therefore of institutions, creates patterns in policy change. Students will be encouraged to explore the US Policy Agendas Project to explore patterns in agenda-setting and develop original research projects.

Course Requirements

Grades will be based on:

1. **Class Participation:** While all students are expected to fully participate in each class, every student will serve as a “class organizer” at least once during the term. The class organizer should come to class prepared with questions and be ready to help lead discussion on that week’s readings. Class organizers will make available to the class a short paper (around 2 pages, double spaced) with their analysis of the readings. 20%
2. **Research prospectus:** One page, double spaced prospectus for course paper. Prospectus should describe the research project undertaken, including the theoretical perspective, data source being used, method of analysis, and expected findings. September 26. 10%
3. **Theory and literature review:** Theory and literature review sections for course paper. Literature review should provide a theoretical background for the research, and be approximately 3-5 pages double-spaced. Theory section should explain the

- theory you're advancing in your paper – lay out hypotheses and research question, and be approximately 3-5 pages double-spaced. October 24. 10%
4. Data and design: Explain how you are engaging the question and what data you will use, lay out the model. For both qualitative and quantitative research designs you should describe the dependent and independent variables – it clarifies your thinking. This section should be around 2 pages, double-spaced. November 14. 10%
 5. Research paper: A research paper that is related to one of the theoretical perspectives on policy processes discussed in the course. I am flexible about what you address, but it is necessary to get prior approval from me for whatever you decide to study. December 9. 40%
 6. Research presentation: A brief formal presentation to the class on the research project. December 5. 10%

Class Policies:

Etiquette:

A government class will necessarily touch on topics that are sensitive, controversial, and difficult. Accordingly, I ask that above all students remain *respectful of one another*. Personal attacks and comments that discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, age, sexual orientation, religion, political party affiliation or national background will not be permitted, inside or outside of the classroom. I cannot promise that you will never perceive my political beliefs and positions; but I do promise that I will not push or force them upon you, I ask that you behave similarly. Further, in the name of fostering a respectful classroom environment, please refrain from engaging in talking or texting during class. I encourage you to participate in class discussions, ask questions, and respond when I ask you questions. However, side discussions during lecture are distracting. Similarly, please do not play video games, Tweet, Instagram, Facebook, Snap, etc. etc. during class. Laptops will be allowed, unless students report distracting behavior. If you struggle to abide by these etiquette rules, you may be asked to leave.

Communication:

Email correspondence is welcome. Please format your emails as business correspondence (with a greeting and signature), **and please realize that I may not be able to get to them right away**. I will try to get to your emails within 24 hours or, at the latest, during my next scheduled office hours, unless the answer to a question is in the syllabus or was discussed in class (in which case you should consult a classmate). I may also answer through Black Board or a general email to the class, rather than writing you back personally, if your question reflects a general concern. I am also available after class, during office hours, or by appointment if you cannot make my office hours.

Academic Accommodations:

If you anticipate the need for reasonable accommodations to meet the requirements of this course, you must register with the office of Disability Support Services (CFO 106, 940.898.3835, dss@twu.edu) in order to obtain the required official notification of your accommodation needs. Please plan to meet with me by appointment or during office hours to discuss approved accommodations and how my course requirements and activities may impact your ability to fully participate.

Academic Integrity:

Plagiarism, cheating, and other academic misconduct are serious violations of your contract as a student. Plagiarism is using someone else's language without quotations and attribution or using someone else's idea (even in different language) without attribution. Honesty in completing assignments is essential to the mission of TWU and to the development of the personal integrity of students. In submitting graded assignments, students affirm that they have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance, and that they have abided by all other provisions of the Code of Conduct in the TWU Student Handbook. Cheating, plagiarism, fabrication or other kinds of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will result in appropriate sanctions that may include failing the assignment, failing the class, or being suspended or expelled. Suspected cases of dishonesty in this course may be reported to Student Life. The specific disciplinary process for academic dishonesty is found in the TWU Student Handbook.

Tools to help you avoid plagiarism are available through the TWU Libraries at:
http://www.twu.edu/library/res/res_plagiarism.htm.

For more on academic integrity, see: <http://www.twu.edu/student-life-office/academic-integrity.asp>

Writing Specifications:

Please note that I expect all written assignments to be typed, double-spaced with one-inch margins and in a 12-point font. Please number your pages and be sure that your paper is stapled before you turn it in. The clarity of your writing will affect the strength of your argument and therefore students should proofread and spell-check their work carefully. You must cite any information and/or ideas that you take from someone else's work. Also, you should limit your use of direct quotations (someone else's words surrounded by " ") to the rare occasion when the original author stated your point perfectly and it cannot be improved. Otherwise, you are generally better off stylistically using your own words and citing the ideas and facts provided by other authors. For citations, I prefer that students use the American Psychological Association (APA). However, any citation method is acceptable as long as it is used correctly and consistently.

For additional information on APA style, visit:

- <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/> or
- <http://www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/basics-tutorial.aspx>

Late Assignments and Grading:

Deadlines are firm and late assignments will be marked down by 10 points per day. Extensions will be granted only for good cause – such as a documented medical problem – and whenever possible, must be arranged with me prior to the due date of the assignment. Unless instructed otherwise, you must turn in a hard copy of any assignments or papers to me. Last, I will not accept any papers that are not stapled or paper-clipped. Grading is subjective, and it is possible that despite my best efforts I may make a mistake. If you want to contest your grade, you must wait 24 hours before you discuss it with me. Please send me a one page (or less) email explaining why you believe your grade is inaccurate. I may re-grade your paper, but your grade may go either up or down as a result of re-grading.

Course Materials

Jones, Bryan D. and Frank R. Baumgartner. *The Politics of Attention*. Chicago. ISBN: 022640653-9

Course Schedule

Part I: Preferences, Information, and Institutions

Aug 29: Course Introduction and The Single Rational Decision Maker

- B. Jones (1997) "The Rational Decision-Making Model in Politics"

Sept 5: Preferences and Choices: Multiple Decision-Makers

- Anthony. Downs. 1957. A Theory of Political Action in a Democracy. *Journal of Political Economy* 65: 135-60.
- Elinor Ostrom. 1986. An Agenda for the Study of Institutions. *Public Choice* 48: 3-25.
- Keith Krehbiel. 2004. Legislative Organization. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 18: 113-128.
- Guide: How to Write a Proposal

Sept 12: Information and Choice in Rational Systems

- Anthony Downs. 2008. How Rational Citizens Reduce Information Costs. <http://keithoughts-kwc.blogspot.com/2008/10/how-rational-citizens-reduce.html>
- Thomas Gilligan and Keith Krehbiel. 1990. Organization of Informative Committees in a Rational Legislature. *American Journal of Political Science* 34:531-564.
- Arthur Lupia. 1994. Shortcuts Versus Encyclopedias. *American Political Science Review* 88: 63-76.
- J. Stiglitz. 2000. The Contribution of the Economics of Information to 20th Century Economics. *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 115: 1141-1478.

Part II: Bounded Rationality and Cognitive Constraints

Sept 19: Issues in Preferences

- Sen, Amartya K. "Rational Fools." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 6, no. 4 (1977): 317-344.
- Druckman, James N., and Arthur Lupia. Preference Formation. 2000. *Annual Review of Political Science*: 1-24.
- Wildavsky, Aaron. "Choosing Preferences by Constructing Institutions." *American Political Science Review* 81 (1987): 3-21.
- Bowles, Samuel. 1998. Endogenous Preferences: The Cultural Consequences of Markets and Other Economic Institutions. *Journal of Economic Literature* 36: 75-111.

Sept 26: Bounded Rationality as a Foundation

- Jon Bendor. 2003. Herbert Simon: Political Scientist. *Annual Review of Political Science*.
- B. Jones. 2003. Bounded Rationality and Political Science. *Journal of Public Administration Theory* 13: 395-412.
- John Conlisk. 1996. Why Bounded Rationality? *Journal of Economic Literature* 34: 669-700.
- Wilson, Rick. 2011. The Contribution of Behavioral Economics to Political Science. *Annual Review of Political Science* 14: 201-23.
- Jones, Bryan, Graeme Boushey, and Samuel Workman, Behavioral Rationality and the Policy Process, in Guy Peters and Jon Pierre, eds., *The Handbook of Public Policy* (2006).

Paper Prospectus Due

Oct 3: Cognitive Friction: Psychological Approaches to Choice

- Excerpts from Kahneman *Thinking Fast and Slow*
- Chris Mooney. 2011. The Science of Why We Don't Believe Science. *Mother Jones* <http://motherjones.com/politics/2011/03/denial-science-chris-mooney>
- Knopf, Jeffrey W. 2006. "Doing a Literature Review." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 39.1:127-132.
- Guide: How to Write a Paper

Oct 10: Issue-Attention, Framing, and the Media

- B. Jones. 1994. A Change of Mind or a Change of Focus? A Theory of Choice Reversals in Politics. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*. (On Blackboard)
- Chong, Dennis and James N. Druckman. 2007. Framing Theory. *Annual Review of Political Science* 10
- Frank Baumgartner, Susanna Linn, and Amber Boydstun. 2009. The Decline of the Death Penalty. (On Blackboard).
- Max Rose and Frank Baumgartner. 2011. Framing the Poor. (On Blackboard).

Oct 17: Bounded Rationality and Issue Intrusion

- Lindblom, Charles. 1959. The “Science” of Muddling Through. *Public Administration Review* 19: 79-88.
- Bryan Jones and Frank Baumgartner. 2005. *The Politics of Attention*. Chapters 1-3.
- James True, Bryan Jones, and Frank Baumgartner, “Punctuated-Equilibrium Theory: Explaining Stability and Change in American Policymaking,” Chapter 6 in *Sabatier Theories of the Policy Process*

Oct 24: Looking for Punctuated Equilibrium – Policy Agendas Website and Mid-Semester Review / catch up.

- <http://www.comparativeagendas.net/>

Theory and Literature Review Due

Part III: Policy Consequences

Oct 31: Bounded Rationality and Political Institutions

- Jones and Baumgartner, *The Politics of Attention*, Parts II and III (Chapters 5-11)

Nov 7: The Public as a Source of Policy Ideas?

- Benjamin I. Page, “Democratic Responsiveness? Untangling the Links between Public Opinion and Policy,” *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Volume 27, Number 1 (March 1994): 25-29.
- James A. Stimson, Michael B. MacKuen, and Robert Erikson, “Dynamic Representation,” *American Political Science Review*, Volume 89, Number 3 (September 1995): 543-565.
- Wlezien, Christopher. 1995. The Public as Thermostat: Dynamics of Preferences for Spending. *American Journal of Political Science*, 39.
- Taber, Charles, Information Processing and Public Opinion, in David O. Sears, *Handbook of Political Psychology* (On Blackboard)
- Bryan D. Jones, Heather Larsen-Price, and John Wilkerson. 2009. Representation and American Governing Institutions. *The Journal of Politics*, 71: 277-290.

Nov 14: The Heavy Hand of History

- Selection from Pierson *Politics in Time*
- Richard Rose, “Inheritance before Choice in Public Policy,” *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, Volume 2, Number 3 (July 1990): 263-291. (RP)
- Schrad, Lawrence. 2007. Constitutional Blemishes: American Alcohol Prohibition and Repeal as a Policy Punctuation. *Policy Studies Journal*

Data and Design Due

Nov 21: Policy Diffusion

- Walker, Jack L. 1969. “The Diffusion of Innovation among the American States.” *American Political Science Review* 63 (3): 880-889.

- Volden, Craig. 2006. "States as Policy Laboratories: Emulating Success in the Children's Health Insurance Program." *American Journal of Political Science* 50(2): 294-312.
- Karch, Andrew. 2006. "National Intervention and the Diffusion of Policy Innovations." *American Politics Research* 34(4): 403-426
- Boushey, Graeme. 2012. Punctuated Equilibrium Theory and the Diffusion of Innovations. *Policy Studies Journal*

Nov 28: Alleviating Collective Action Problems

- Elinor Ostrom, 1999. Coping with Tragedies of the Commons. *Annual Review of Political Science* 2: 493-535.
- Ostrom, Elinor. 1998. "A Behavioral Approach to the Rational Choice Theory of Collective Action." *American Political Science Review* 92: 1-22.
- Henrich, Joseph. et. al., Economic Man in Cross-Cultural Perspective. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*
- Edwards, Paul. 2004. "How to Give an Academic Talk: Changing the Culture of Public Speaking in the Humanities."

Dec 5: Paper Presentations

Dec 7: Paper due by 5pm; end of business day.