Seminar in Public Policy
Texas Woman's University
Government
Fall 2018

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A. General Course Information

Course Description
This undergraduate seminar is broadly concerned with political science and the American public policy process. We will explore the major theories of policy change and use those theories to help us understand eras of American public policymaking. The course will examine models of decision-making, explore the formation of public policies, and discover the drivers of policy change over time. In addition to exploring the policy making process, we will ask how institutions and policies can be designed to encourage more effective policy implementation. In short – we will explore how to go from theory to practice.

Course Objectives
1. Students will demonstrate a working knowledge of the public policy process.
2. Students will be able to identify and compare substantive policy types
3. Students will successfully use theoretical concepts to analyze substantive policy areas
4. Students will be able to critique existing policies and formulate alternative policy ideas
5. Students will develop a portfolio of professional policy writing that demonstrates their competence in the professional policy arena.

Required Texts
Thomas A. Birkland, "An Introduction to the Policy Process: Theories, Concepts, and Models of Public Policy Making."
ISBN: 978-0-7656-4662-0
Ebook ISBN: 978-1-315-71737-1

Catherine F. Smith, "Writing Public Policy: A Practical Guide to Communicating the Policy Making Process."
ISBN: 978-0-19-938857-8

B. Specific Course Requirements

This course is comprised of assigned readings, online discussions, essays, quizzes, and a final portfolio project. Canvas will be used to facilitate all course activities. No late work will be accepted. Failing to complete a module, or its components, will result in automatic course failure. No outside work for extra credit will be accepted.

Course Grading System (point system)
A = 90 – 100
B = 80 – 89.9
C = 70 – 79.9
D = 60 – 69.9
F = 0 – 59.9

Course Requirements

11 Points: 11 Reading Quizzes (1 point each)
11 Points: 11 Discussion Board Participation (1 point each)
30 Points: 10 Portfolio Components and Thought Exercises (3 points each)
8 Points: Final Reflection Essay
5 Points: Portfolio Peer Review
35 Points: Completed Portfolio
_____
Total: 100 Points

Assignment Breakdown

Course Readings and Lectures:
Each student is expected to read the assigned material as detailed in the course calendar. In addition, there is a corresponding video(s) for each chapter (approximately 30 minutes each) and other supplemental material, also posted online. Students will be held accountable for assigned material via the course assignments, discussion forums, and quizzes. Textbook readings and professor lectures create the core of the online course experience. Making appropriate use of these materials will have a significant impact on your grades.

It is vital that you manage your time and maintain a high degree of self-discipline to ensure your success in any college course, but this is particularly true of an online course. If you fall behind it is difficult to adequately address the topics or complete assignments, often leading to a snowball effect and eventual failure. Many elements of the module will close at the end of the module date, making it impossible to pass the course if you do fall behind. The pace of this course is about 1-2 chapters per week during the full length of the term, and each module will be open for two weeks.

Reading Quizzes:
Reading quizzes are open book quizzes posted on Canvas covering course reading assignments. These quizzes will assess only the readings for that module and are not cumulative. You are

allowed 2 attempts, per quiz, and the higher grade will be assigned. Quizzes are not timed. The window to complete these quizzes will be the start and end date for a given module. Each quiz must be complete within the module in which it is assigned. Late work will not be accepted.

Discussion Board Participation:
Discussion board prompts are meant to prepare you for each week's major assignment, whether it is a portfolio component or a thought exercise. I strongly recommend spending time in the discussion board, both completing the prompt and responding to others, before handing in the related writing assignment.

Important: In order to get credit for the discussion board portion of the module, you must create a post and respond to a post from at least 1 colleague. Your original posting must be completed 48 hours PRIOR to the module deadline to allow time for discussion and replies. Original postings which are late will not be graded.

Discussion Board Format, Original Posts:
Original discussion board posts must be 200 words minimum (with the exception of the introductory discussion board and the twitter post) and you must include your word count at the bottom of each posting.

Discussion Board Format, Reply Posts:
The second part of each discussion forum involves replying to an original post offered by at least one of your peers. You may choose to reply more often, but the minimum expectation is for each student to engage in a dialogue with one person in each forum. *Please rely to someone who does not have any replies, so that everyone may receive some degree of feedback.* Your reply should have some substantial academic and intellectual value. Be sure to directly address the main points made in the original post and even offer additional perspectives or sources to consider. Simply cheering on your peers with phrases like "good posting," or "I agree," will not suffice. This is an opportunity for real exchange of ideas, so make the most of the opportunity to teach and learn from your classmates. Any personal attacks are grounds for immediate removal from the course and possibly the college. The minimum writing requirement for a reply post is 100 (of your own) words (with the exception of the introductory discussion post). Provide a word count at the end of your reply.

Portfolio Components and Thought Exercises:
Each portfolio component and thought exercises is listed below, as well as in the course calendar under the appropriate module. While these assignments are all weighted equally, remember that portfolio components are essentially counted twice, since you will revise them and hand them in as part of your portfolio at the end of the semester. Thought exercises, likewise, will be used in composing your final reflection, which will ask you to tie together various elements from the course. In these assignments word count requirements are not exact; however, they are a good guideline for about how much of a response the professor expects from you. A writing assignment that is considerably under or over the suggested amount will not receive credit. For example, if the suggested word count is 250 words, a 100-word essay or a 500-word essay will not be graded. Each assignment will have its own suggested word count, listed below. Full

assignment descriptions and instructions are available in canvas, under the appropriate assignment.

1) Thought Exercise: Pre-Assessment — 100 words
2) Thought Exercise: Fiscal-Ship — 250 words
3) Portfolio Builder: Policy Trends — 500 words
4) Portfolio Component: Talking Points Memo — 250 words
5) Portfolio Component: Legislative History Project — 500 words
6) Thought Exercise: Theory Paper — 500 words
7) Thought Exercise: Policy Type and Regulatory Activity — 250 words
8) Portfolio Component: Analyze Policy — 500 words
9) Portfolio Component: Policy Letter Requesting Action — 250 words
10) Portfolio Component: Policy Learning — 250 words

Final Reflection:
Nearing the end of the semester you will be asked to write a final reflection, or approximately 750 - 1000 words. This reflection will ask you to consider: from researching to analyzing policy implantation to making recommendations – what did you learn about how policy integrates with theory and the importance of tradeoffs in policymaking? This reflection will ask you to combine elements of the various thought exercises, as well as reflect on the broader nature of the course.

Portfolio Peer Review:
You will turn in a rough draft of your portfolio in order to receive peer review feedback from one of your classmates. Peer review services several important functions. First, your classmate is unlikely to know as much about the policy area you have research as you do, therefore, they will be able to provide feedback on how clear and readable your writing is to someone who does not know your policy area in any depth. Through this process you will have the opportunity to observe how one of your peers interpreted the assignments, receive feedback beyond that provided by the professor, and improve your own communication style.

The exercise of providing feedback is similarly valuable. You will reflect on what assignment requirements are actually asking, on various writing style and techniques, and on how to provide the most constructive feedback.

Constructive feedback: Peer review feedback MUST be constructive and useful. Peer review comments that are unkind, hostile, or mean-spirited will result in failure and may result in removal from the class. You do not have to agree with your classmate's policy positions (particularly in the 'policy recommendations,' section of the portfolio), though you are encouraged to offer thoughtful feedback about their recommendations or ideas. You may offer counterpoints for consideration, if (and only if) these counterpoints are offered in the spirit of good-faith helpfulness. If you are uncertain about whether a comment meets our civility requirements (see class etiquette section of syllabus), or if you feel uncomfortable with something that a peer has written, feel free to reach out to myself or to the graduate assistant for help or advice.

C. Important Course Policies

Civility:
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, ability, sexual orientation, religion, political party affiliation or national background will not permitted. In this class I ask you to make a person commitment to learning about, understanding, and supporting your peers. Value the diversity of the class, participate actively in discussion, and ask clarifying questions when necessary. Do not minimize or devalue statements by your peers, and do not assume that others are attempting to minimize or devalue you. Do not try to embarrass or demean your peers. You may disagree with ideas and constructively challenge each other, but you may not make personal attacks. Be open and ready to be challenged and come to class ready to learn and grow. Similarly, 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. If you struggle to abide by these etiquette rules, you will be dropped from the class, and you may be removed from the university (see academic freedom statement).

Email:
Please approach all of your emails as if they were professional academic correspondence, and not text messages. You should include your name and section number in your subject line, as this makes it easier to identify students and get you the fastest and best response possible. Next, you should use the proper greeting, which includes the person's title and last name. First name basis is not appropriate when addressing your professor or the graduate assistant. The body of your text should be check for basic spelling errors, tone, and clarity. ***Please realize that I may not be able to respond to emails right away***. I will try to get to your emails within 24 to 48 hours or, at the latest, or on the next business day, should you email on the weekend. If you email me with a question that is answered in the syllabus, I will simply refer you back to this document. I may also answer through Canvas or a general email to the class, rather than writing you back personally, if your question reflects a general concern. I also encourage you to use the "General Questions and Discussion" Discussion Board to ask questions that may be appropriate to the entire class, or that your classmates may know the answer to.

Technology:
If you need immediate technological assistance, try contacting the help desk. Your faculty and Graduate Assistant team try our best to get to your emails as quickly as possible, but we are all human and responses may not be as fast as you would need them to be. Further, we are not technology experts.

Personal Requests:
I am happy to assist you with any questions you may have about the course, news, or even college life in general. However, personal requests for exemptions to course policies will not be granted unless there is a legitimate reason. Any exceptions will require documentation and will only be considered in advance of a deadline unless there is a genuine emergency.

Online Course Attendance Policy
Students are expected to log-in and use Canvas for a total of about 3 hours a week, in a regular semester. You will also need to dedicate around 6 hours a week to studying and working on assignments. Please bear in mind that this is an average, some weeks may involve less work, other weeks will involve more. As a general rule, you should login to the course and check your email at least two to three times per week.

Each module of the course will be open for exactly 2 weeks. This is to ensure that students are keeping similar pace throughout the semester and to prevent you from falling behind. Each module deadline will serve as a benchmark for your overall progress in the course. Remember that the online education environment requires a high degree of self-discipline and intrinsic motivation. I suggest that you keep a steady pace throughout the semester. Mark deadlines clearly on your calendar, remembering that discussion board deadlines are earlier than other module deadlines.

Course Email / Announcements
There will be frequent updates posted in the course announcements area and via email. This is the primary avenue of communication for this course. Each student is expected to read the information and keep current with the course. Many frequently asked questions are addressed via announcements and some may contain vital course information. These are official course communications, and you will be held accountable for the information provided via electronic communications.

Course Honor Code
Scholastic dishonesty is a violation of the TWU Student Code of Student Conduct. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on a test, plagiarism, and collusion. Students are expected to complete all course work by their own efforts and in their own words.

When you cite or paraphrase another author, you are required to properly acknowledge all sources with a parenthetical citation in the body text and provide a bibliographic listing on a works cited page, using MLA format. If you have any questions about citations, contact me immediately. Any attempt to submit work that is not a product of your own efforts will result in an automatic "F" for the assignment and the course. In addition, you may face disciplinary action by the college administration leading up to expulsion from the college.

The college uses a premier plagiarism detection program known as "Turn It In." Since all papers will be electronically submitted for review, I implore you to avoid procrastinating and begin your work as soon as possible. Time seems to be the largest factor in a student's decision to plagiarize.

D. TWU Policies

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

I reserve the right to make any changes to this syllabus and/course as the semester progresses which I see fit in order to better its progression.

Course Calendar

The listed dates indicate when each module is open. Each module is open for 2 weeks, and *all activities in the previous module must be completed before moving on to a new module*.

Aug 27 – Sept 10: Module 1: Introduction to Public Policy
    Thought Exercise: Pre-Assessment
    Readings: Birkland Chapter 1: Introducing the Policy Process
    Smith Chapter 1: Public Policy Making
    Reading Quiz: Introducing the Policy Process
    Discussion: Introduce Yourself

Sept 3 – Sept 17: Module 2: Public Policy Processes and Inputs
    Readings: Birkland Chapter 2: Elements of the Policy Making System
    Reading Quiz: Elements of the Policy Making System
    Discussion: Information, Public Opinion and Policy Debates
    Thought Exercise: FiscalShip

Sept 10 - 24: Module 3: Historical and Structural Contexts of Public Policy Making
    Reading: Brikland Chapter 3: Historical and Structural Contexts of Public Policy Making
    Smith Chapter 2: Communicating
    Reading Quiz: Historical and Structural Contexts of Public Policy Making & Communicating
    Discussion Board: Describe Master Policy Trends
    Portfolio Builder: Policy Trends

Sept 17 – Oct 1: Module 4: Official Actors and their Roles in Public Policy
    Birkland Chapter 4: Official Actors and their Roles in Public Policy
    Smith Chapter 3: Definition: Frame the Problem
    Online: How to write talking points
    Reading Quiz: Official Actors and their roles in Public Policy & Definition
    Discussion Board: #PolicyTalkingPoint
    Portfolio Component: Talking Points Memo

Sept 24 – Oct 8: Module 5: Unofficial Actors and their Roles in Public Policy
    Birkland Chapter 5: Unofficial Actors and their Roles in Public Policy
    Smith Chapter 5: Legislative History: Know the Record
    Reading Quiz: Unofficial Actors and their Roles in Public Policy & Legislative History
    Discussion Board: Writing Styles
    Portfolio Component: Legislative History Project

Oct 1 – Oct 15: Module 6: Agenda Setting, Power, and Interest Groups
    Birkland Chapter 6: Agenda Setting, Power, and Interest Groups
    Smith Chapter 6: Position Paper: Know the Arguments
    Smith Chapter 8: Briefing, Opinion, Resolution: Inform Policy Makers
    Reading Quiz: Agenda Setting, Power, and Interest Groups, Positions, and Opinions

Discussion Board: Talking Points and Interest Group Influence
Thought Exercise: Theory Paper

Oct 8 – Oct 22: Module 7: Policies and Policy Types
Birkland Chapter 7: Policies and Policy Types
Reading Quiz: Policies and Policy Types
Discussion Board: Characterize Policy Types
Thought Exercise: Policy Type and Regulatory Activity

Oct 15 – Oct 29: Module 8: Decision-Making and Policy Analysis
Birkland Chapter 8: Decision-Making and Policy Analysis
Smith Chapter 4: Evaluation: Analyze and Advise
Reading Quiz: Decision-Making and Policy Analysis, & Evaluation
Discussion Board: Analyze master policy
Portfolio Component: Analyze Policy

Oct 22 – Nov 5: Module 9: Policy Design and Policy Tools
Birkland Chapter 9: Policy Design and Policy Tools
Smith Chapter 7: Petition, Proposal, Letter: Request Action
Reading Quiz Policy Design and Policy Tools & Requesting Action
Discussion Board: Causal theories, ambiguity, and policy design
Portfolio Component: Policy Letter Requesting Action

Oct 29 - Nov 12: Module 10: Policy Implementation, Failure, and Learning
Birkland Chapter 10: Policy Implementation, Failure, and Learning
Reading Quiz: Policy Implementation, Failure, and Learning
Discussion Board: Policy Learning
Portfolio Component: Policy Learning

Nov 5 – Nov 19: Module 11: Science and Theory in the Study of Public Policy
Birkland Chapter 11: Science and Theory in the Study of Public Policy
Reading Quiz: Science and Theory in the Study of Public Policy
Discussion Board: Theory Analysis and Application
Final Essay

Nov 19 – Nov 26: Module 12: Portfolio Review and editing
Portfolio due November 19
Peer Review of Portfolio
Final Edits to Portfolio due by November 26

Dec 3: Portfolio Due