



# **PSCI 597: Contemporary Issues in US Public Policy**

## **COURSE SYLLABUS: Summer II 2015**

**Instructor:** Dr. Chad M. King

**Office Location:** SS-162

**Virtual Office Hours:** Mondays 9-10 AM

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## **COURSE INFORMATION**

### **Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings**

#### **Textbook(s) Required**

- Anderson, James E. 2005. Public Policymaking: An Introduction, Boston: Cengage Learning.
- Kingdon, John. 2010. Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies, Update Edition, with an Epilogue on Health Care. Pearson.
- Sabatier, Paul (ed). 2007. Theories of the Policy Process. 2nd Edition Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

#### **Course Description**

This course considers the various theoretical and empirical explanations for federal public policy making in the United States. In the first part of the course we focus on the important scholarly theories of how public policy is defined, constructed, implemented, and evaluated. In the second part of the course we consider the specific roles of important political actors and institutions in the policy-making process.

## **Student Learning Outcomes**

1. Students will understand and employ significant theoretical and analytical approaches to understanding American public policy.
2. Students will understand the role of political actors and institutions in the policy making process.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### **Instructional / Methods / Activities Assessments**

The primary method of instruction in this class will be student self-directed readings, supplemented with interaction with classmates in discussion assignments as well as the instructor when needed. This course is note self-paced, but rather students are expected to meet assignment-specific deadlines as well as complete assigned readings in a timely manner.

## **GRADING**

Course grades will be based upon the following 3 components.

### **1. Discussion Assignments**

Students will participate in a series of discussion assignments through eCollege. Collectively these assignments are worth 40% of the final grade.

The topics will open each week at noon on Sunday and there will be two separate topics/prompt each week. For each prompt, students will make two types of posts:

- a. Students will make initial posts in which they respond directly to the question(s) framed in the prompt for the week. This post should be at least 350 words long and consist of a thoughtful and analytic response to the prompt. Students should include a word count in parentheses at the end of every post. Students must make their initial post by 12 PM (noon) on Thursday of each week, though I would strongly suggest beginning sooner. Students who do not complete their initial posts by then will receive a 0 for the

- assignment. Please note that you will be unable to see other student's responses until you make your initial post.
- b. Students will write at least two response posts to the initial posts of their classmates. These posts should be about 250 words and refer to the original poster by name. Students will have until Saturday at noon to complete their response posts.
  - c. Because the term ends on a Thursday (8/13/15), students will need to complete all of their posts by 11:59 PM on that day during the final week of the term.

### *Formatting*

All posts should be well written and well organized. Avoid using slang, abbreviations, shorthand and "text speak"/emoticons. Use proper punctuation, capitalization, and unusual fonts. Posts should be proofread/edited to remove spelling and writing mistakes.

### *Grading Criteria*

Students will be graded upon two criteria. First, students are expected to make the minimum number of posts described above with the minimum number of words. Second, students are expected to respond to the posts of other students in their discussion group. Students should engage in conversation with their group members in a thoughtful discussion about the topic as well as their individual responses to the topic.

Students will receive a grade of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5, with 5 being the highest, on each discussion assignment. (Students who do not participate fully, that is make all of the required posts of required length, will receive a 0) Grades will be based both upon the quality of the content of a student's posts, as well as the student's engagement with other students by responding to posts in the student's group. Posts that do not fully answer the questions or do not respond posted will not receive full credit.

All content submitted for discussion assignments must be a student's original submission. Any material taken from another source, including the textbook, should include a proper citation. Material which is copied or pasted from any source will be considered plagiarism as discussed above in the Course Policies and Procedures section.

## **2. Midterm Exam**

There will be one midterm exam. The exam will open at 12 PM (noon) on 7/31/15 and is no later than 5 PM on 8/2/15 and will submit an electronic copy to the instructor via the drop box in the course site. The exam will feature 3-4 "qualifying exam" type questions for which students must prepare well-written responses. The instructor will provide more information about the exam as the date grows closer. The midterm exam is worth 35% of the final grade.

### **3. Research Paper**

Students will prepare an original research paper that describes and analyzes an important policy topic of their choosing. Students will receive the guidelines for this assignment during the first week of the semester. The paper will be worth 25% of the final grade.

## **TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS**

- To fully participate in online courses, you will need to use a current, Flash enabled browser. For PC users, the suggested browser is Internet Explorer 9.0 or 10. For Mac users, the most current update of Firefox is suggested.
- You will need regular access to a computer with a broadband Internet connection. The minimum computer requirements are:
  - 512 MB of RAM, 1 GB or more preferred
  - Broadband connection required courses are heavily video intensive
  - Video display capable of high-color 16-bit display 1024 x 768 or higher resolution
- You must have a:
  - sound card, which is usually integrated into your desktop or laptop computer
  - speakers or headphones.
- Depending on your course, you might also need a:
  - webcam
  - microphone

For courses where interactive tools are used, like VoiceThread or ClassLive Pro, headphones are suggested for use with recording and playback. We recommend a webcam with an integrated microphone, such

as the Microsoft LifeCam Cinema. All devices should be installed and configured before class begins.

- Both versions of Java (32 bit and 64 bit) must be installed and up to date on your machine. Java can be downloaded at: <http://www.java.com/en/download/manual.jsp>
- Current anti-virus software must be installed and kept up to date.
- You will need some additional free software for enhanced web browsing. Ensure that you download the free versions of the following software:
  - Adobe Reader
  - Adobe Flash Player
- At a minimum, you must have Microsoft Office 2013, 2010, 2007 or Open Office. Microsoft Office is the standard office productivity software utilized by faculty, students, and staff. Microsoft Word is the standard word processing software, Microsoft Excel is the standard spreadsheet software, and Microsoft PowerPoint is the standard presentation software. Copying and pasting, along with attaching/uploading documents for assignment submission, will also be required. If you do not have Microsoft Office, you can check with the bookstore to see if they have any student copies.
- For additional information about system requirements, please see: <https://secure.ecollege.com/tamuc/index.learn?action=technical>

## ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

### **Pearson LearningStudio (eCollege) Access and Log in Information**

This course will be facilitated using Pearson LearningStudio, the learning management system used by Texas A&M University-Commerce. To get started with the course, go to: <http://www.tamuc.edu/myleo.aspx>.

**You will need your CWID and password to log in to the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact Technology Services at 903.468.6000 or [helpdesk@tamuc.edu](mailto:helpdesk@tamuc.edu).**

It is strongly recommended that you perform a "Browser Test" prior to the start of your course. To launch a browser test, login to Pearson LearningStudio, click on the 'myCourses' tab, and then select the "Browser Test" link under Support Services.

## Pearson LearningStudio Student Technical Support

Texas A&M University-Commerce provides students technical support in the use of Pearson LearningStudio.

Technical assistance is available 24 hours a day/ 7 days a week.

If at any time you experience technical problems (e.g., you can't log in to the course, you can't see certain material, etc.) please contact the Pearson LearningStudio Help Desk, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The student help desk may be reached by the following means 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

- **Chat Support:** Click on '*Live Support*' on the tool bar within your course to chat with a Pearson LearningStudio Representative.
- **Phone:** 1-866-656-5511 (Toll Free) to speak with Pearson LearningStudio Technical Support Representative.
- **Email:** [helpdesk@online.tamuc.org](mailto:helpdesk@online.tamuc.org) to initiate a support request with Pearson LearningStudio Technical Support Representative.

**Accessing Help from within Your Course:** Click on the '*Tech Support*' icon on the upper left side of the screen inside the course. You will then be able to get assistance via online chat, email or by phone by calling the Help Desk number noted below.

**Note:** Personal computer problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, an Internet cafe, or a bookstore, such as Barnes & Noble, etc.

## Policy for Reporting Problems with Pearson LearningStudio

Should students encounter Pearson LearningStudio based problems while submitting assignments/discussions/comments/exams, the following procedure **MUST** be followed.

1. Students must report the problem to the help desk. You may reach the helpdesk at [helpdesk@online.tamuc.org](mailto:helpdesk@online.tamuc.org) or 1-866-656-5511
2. Students **MUST** file their problem with the helpdesk and obtain a helpdesk ticket number

3. Once a helpdesk ticket number is in your possession, students should email me to advise me of the problem and to provide me with the helpdesk ticket number
4. At that time, I will call the helpdesk to confirm your problem and follow up with you

**PLEASE NOTE:** Your personal computer/access problems are not a legitimate excuse for filing a ticket with the Pearson LearningStudio Help Desk. You are strongly encouraged to check for compatibility of your browser **BEFORE** the course begins and to take the Pearson LearningStudio tutorial offered for students who may require some extra assistance in navigating the Pearson LearningStudio platform. **ONLY** Pearson LearningStudio based problems are legitimate.

### **Internet Access**

An Internet connection is necessary to participate in discussions and assignments, access readings, transfer course work, and receive feedback from your professor. View the requirements as outlined in Technology Requirements above for more information.

### **myLeo Support**

Your myLeo email address is required to send and receive all student correspondence. Please email [helpdesk@tamuc.edu](mailto:helpdesk@tamuc.edu) or call us at 903-468-6000 with any questions about setting up your myLeo email account. You may also access information at <https://leo.tamuc.edu>.

### **Learner Support**

Go to the following link [One Stop Shop](#)- created to serve you by attempting to provide as many resources as possible in one location.

Go to the following link [Academic Success Center](#)- focused on providing academic resources to help you achieve academic success.

## **COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT**

### **Interaction with Instructor Statement**

Because this class is offered online, office hours will be held online. Some weeks I will be in my campus office during the posted office hours, but I will always be available virtually during the posted times. If students need to discuss an issue with me during that time, they should make arrangements by e-mail to setup a time to either use the "Live" chat option on the course page, to see if I will physically be in my office or for me to call on the telephone.

# COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

## Course Specific Procedures

All students are expected to comply with the following requirements.

1. Students are expected to complete all assigned course readings.
2. Students are expected to regularly check the course site for announcements.
3. Students are expected to take the midterm exam.
4. Students are expected to participate fully in the class discussion assignments.
5. Students are expected to respect their fellow classmates and the instructor. This includes treating everyone with courtesy and esteem in any and all correspondence for the course. For more information on this subject, please see the Student Guidebook.
6. Texas A&M University-Commerce does not tolerate plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. Conduct that violates generally accepted standards of academic honesty is defined as academic dishonesty. "Academic dishonesty" includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism (the appropriation or stealing of the ideas or words of another and passing them off as one's own), cheating on exams or other course assignments, collusion (the unauthorized collaboration with others in preparing course assignments), and abuse (destruction, defacing, or removal) of resource material. For this class, academic dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism, collusion and/or falsifying academic work. In particular, passing off work as your own that was written by someone else, without proper citation or attribution, on either exams or discussion assignments will be considered an act of plagiarism. This holds true whether material comes from the textbook, another publication, an internet source, or another student. Any act of academic dishonesty on a midterm exam will result in a score of 0 for the exam. Any act of academic dishonesty on a discussion assignment will result in a 0 for the entire semester's discussion assignment grade. Any act of academic dishonesty on the research paper will result in a 0 for the research paper grade. Any and all instances of academic dishonesty will be referred to the appropriate offices on campus and may result in significant administrative penalties.
7. Failure to complete more than 2 discussion assignments will result in an automatic F for the term.
8. Students will comply with any and all eCollege technical requirements in terms of training, computer access, & Internet access.
9. Make-up exam: If a student misses an exam, that student will receive a grade of 0 for the exam. Make-up exams will only be granted at the discretion of the instructor. Any request for a make-up exam must be made



in writing and include documentation explaining why the absence was legitimate. Such a request must be received within 3 calendar days of the missed exam date, unless the student is physically unable to submit such a request. Legitimate reasons may include illness severe enough to require professional treatment, death in the immediate family, participation in University activities, and legal obligations. Technical problems with accessing the course will not be considered a valid excuse for missing an exam unless it can be shown that the problem is the fault of the eCollege platform. Students who miss any exam because they forgot about the exam dates/times or because they did not have access to a computer/Internet will not receive a make-up exam. Please note, these reasons do not guarantee that a make-up exam will be given.

10. Incompletes will be granted completely at the discretion of the instructor and only be granted in the case of serious medical illness or other serious, unavoidable circumstances and only if the student has completed at least 50% of the course work. Incompletes must be made up within two weeks of the end of the semester as students only have access to their eCollege course for two weeks following the final day of the term.

## **University Specific Procedures**

### **ADA Statement**

#### **Students with Disabilities**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

#### **Office of Student Disability Resources and Services**

Texas A&M University-Commerce  
Gee Library- Room 132  
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835  
Fax (903) 468-8148  
[StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu](mailto:StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu)

#### **Student Conduct**

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See *Code of Student Conduct from Student Guide Handbook*). Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum: <http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html>

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

## COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

Below are the reading assignments for each week. The three tests are referred to as "Sabatier" followed by Chapter number, "Anderson" and "Kingdon". For all other readings, either a web link or a link to a .pdf file is provided.

### *Methodological readings*

Because of the varied background and training that members of the class may have prior to starting this course, I would strongly suggest that you review the following readings in advance of the term. They will help you understand several of the research approaches/methodologies that several of the course readings employ this term.

- Powner, Leann. 2007. "Reading and Understanding Political Science" Available at <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~lpowner/tchdocs/readingsps.pdf>
- Sykes, Alan. 1992. "1992 Coase: Alan Sykes, "An Introduction to Regression Analysis." Available at <http://www.law.uchicago.edu/node/1309>
- Dizikes, Peter. "Explained: Regression Analysis. Available at <http://web.mit.edu/newsoffice/2010/explained-reg-analysis-0316.html>
- Buchanan, James. 2003. Public Choice: The Origins and Development of a Research Program. Fairfax, Va.: Center for Study of Public Choice, George Mason University. Available here [.pdf](#)
- Thomas, George. 2005. "The Qualitative Foundations of Political Science Methodology." *Perspectives on Politics* 3(4): 855-866. [link](#)
- Knopf, Jeffrey. 2006. Doing a Literature Review. PS Online: 123-132. [link](#)

- Iain McMenamin. 2006. Process and Text: Teaching Students to Review the Literature. PS Online: 133-135. [link](#)

## **Week 1 Introduction to the study of public policy**

- Bobrow, Davis, Heinz Eulau, Martin Landau, Charles O. Jones and Robert Axelrod. 1975. "The Place of Policy Analysis in Political Science: Five Perspectives." *American Journal of Political Science* 21 (2): 415-433. [link](#)
- Brewer, Garry D. 1974. "The Policy Sciences Emerge: To Nurture and Structure a Discipline." *Policy Sciences* 5 (3): 239-244. [link](#)
- Meier, Kenneth. 2009. "Policy Theory, Policy Theory Everywhere: Ravings of a Deranged Policy Scholar." *Policy Studies Journal*. 37 (1): 5-11. [link](#)
- Sabatier-1 "The Need for Better Theories.
- Anderson. Chapters 1-3

## **Week 2 Theories of the Policy Process I**

- Kingdon, Chapters 1-10
- Sabatier-3, Zahariadis, "The Multiple Streams Framework: Structure, Limitations, Prospects."

## **Week 3 Theories of the Policy Process II**

- Sabatier-6. True et al. "Punctuated Equilibrium Theory"
- Sabatier, Paul. 1988. "An Advocacy Coalition Model of Policy Change and the Role of Policy-Oriented Learning Therein." *Policy Sciences* 21: 129-68. [link](#)
- Sabatier-7. Sabatier and Weible, "The Advocacy Coalition Framework: Innovations and Clarifications
- Anderson, 4-7

## **Week 4 Political Institutions & Public Policy**

## Congress

- Carmines, Edward and James Stimson. 1986. "On the Structure and Sequence of Issue Evolution." *The American Political Science Review* 80, (September): 901-920. [link](#)
- Smith, Richard. 1995. "Interest Group Influence in the U. S. Congress". *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 20 (1): 89-139. [link](#)
- Binder, Sarah. 1999. "The Dynamics of Legislative Gridlock. *The American Political Science Review* 93 (3): 519-533. [link](#)

## Bureaucracy

- McCubbins, Noll, and Weingast. 1987. "Administrative Procedures as Instruments of Political Control." *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization*. 3(2): 243-277. [link](#)
- Wood, B. Dan, and Richard W Waterman. 1991. "The Dynamics of Political Control of the Bureaucracy." *American Political Science Review*. 85 (3): 801-805. [link](#)
- Warshaw, Shirley. 1995. "White House Control of Domestic Policymaking: The Reagan Years." *Public Administration Review*. 55 (3): 247-253. [link](#)

## Week 5 Political Actors & Influences

### Interest Groups

- Hamm, Keith. 1986. "The Role of "Subgovernments" in U.S. State Policy Making: An Exploratory Analysis." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* XI 3(August): 321-51. [link](#)
- Hojnacki, Marie and David C. Kimball. 1998. "Organized Interests and the Decision of Whom to Lobby in Congress." *American Political Science Review* 92(December): 775-790. [link](#)

### Public Opinion

- Page, Benjamin and Robert Shapiro. 1983. "Effects of Public Opinion on Policy." *American Political Science Review* 77: 175-90. [link](#)

- Page, Benjamin. 1994. "Democratic Responsiveness? Untangling the Links Between Public Opinion and Policy." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 27(1): 25-29. [link](#)
- Burstein, Paul. 2003. "The Impact of Public Opinion on Public Policy: A Review and an Agenda." *Political Research Quarterly* 56(1): 29-40. [link](#)