

## **II. Public Policy and Administration (Community-Based Learning Course)**

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### **I. Course Description**

This course is an introduction to public policymaking in America. The purpose of the course is to provide students with an understanding of how and why the American public policymaking process functions as it does. This process has been widely criticized by both academic and media observers and we will assess the nature of these criticisms and evaluate their accuracy. We will also explore the consequences of the contemporary character of our policymaking system for equity, efficiency, and democracy. An overview of the existing programs, institutions, and political dynamics for a variety of public policy areas will be provided. The following questions will guide the course: How do “politics” and “policy” interact? What are the different values and ideologies that inform debates over public policy? What are the strengths and weaknesses of markets, governments, and communities as societal problem solvers? What are the key characteristics of the policymaking process? How has this process changed over the course of American history? Who are the key actors involved in policymaking and what are the different kinds of influence that they deploy? How responsive are public policymakers to citizen preferences? How responsive should they be? Why are certain kinds of policies more likely to be considered/passed than others? What are the factors that influence the administration of policies once they are enacted? What are the costs and benefits of bureaucratic discretion? Which of the theoretical models of policymaking are most useful? What is the future direction of American policymaking?

This is a **Community-Based Learning course** and will require approximately 20 hours of collaborative research, service, and learning in partnership with the United Way of Northern NJ, Morris County and affiliated community organizations. About half of this work will take place off of Drew's campus. Each student will choose a project team focusing on one of the United Way's three core policy areas, which are Education, Income, and Health. Each team will research, write, and present a policy report that can help inform the United Way's education, outreach, and advocacy efforts.

### **II. Required Texts**

Eugene Bardach, *A Practical Guide to Policy Analysis*, (3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 2009)

B. Guy Peters, *American Public Policy: Promise and Performance* (8<sup>th</sup> edition, 2010)

Student resource website: <http://www.cqpress.com/cs/peters/> (chapter study guides and quizzes)

\*\*Note: Additional readings will be posted.

### **III. Communication and Feedback**

Be sure to communicate with me about your progress throughout the semester, particularly if you will have to miss class or are struggling with the course material, assignments, or community work. Also please let me know if you have any comments or suggestions about how the class is

being run—I want it to be as informative and engaging as possible for you.

#### **IV. Course Requirements and Grade Breakdown**

- 1.) Class Attendance, Participation, and Teamwork (20%)
- 2.) Three short reflection papers (20%)
- 3.) Exam (20%)
- 4.) Interview and observation summaries (10%)
- 5.) Community policy report (20%)
- 6.) Community policy report power point and presentation (10%)

**Note: All assignments must be completed in order to receive credit for this course.**

#### **Attendance, Participation, and Teamwork (20%)**

It is expected that students will attend all classes, come having read and thought about all assigned material, contribute to the class discussion, and be prepared to answer inquiries from the professor and their classmates. Class participation will be graded according to student attendance, student preparation, and the caliber of student comments and questions. *Showing up is necessary but not sufficient for earning a good participation grade!*

The study of politics and policymaking is made much more interesting and relevant through reference to the “real world.” It is thus strongly recommended that students follow current events by reading a major daily newspaper such as *The New York Times* or *Wall Street Journal*. I will often begin class with a discussion of recent developments surrounding public policy—please bring in stories that you come across as well.

I welcome your ideas, opinions, and questions at any time, and encourage you to speak freely during the class. The discussion of political issues inevitably generates controversy and disagreement among students—indeed that is what makes the study of politics interesting—and I will regularly play devil’s advocate in order to press you to consider alternative perspectives. But it is important that students feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas, so please express your opinions in a respectful manner.

Participation will be graded according to the following rubric:

- **Excellent:** frequently asks and responds to questions in ways that reflect a careful reading of assigned material; frequently contributes to class discussions in relevant and thoughtful ways; treats class members and their contributions with respect (“A”).
- **Good:** All of the above, but with less frequency and inconsistent evidence of careful reading and listening (“B” to “C”).
- **Unacceptable:** Seldom poses or responds to questions; seldom contributes to class discussion; shows little evidence of have completed assigned readings; behaves disrespectfully (“D” to “F”).

*Teamwork* is a crucial job skill that is also central to our ability to strengthen our communities. Being good team members means that we communicate clearly and proactively, accept and complete our fair share of the group’s work, recognize and respect the different work styles and strengths of team members, treat all members of the team professionally, and take a problem-solving and constructive approach to challenges faced by the team. This component of your work

will be assessed through confidential self/team evaluation forms filled out on the last day of class.

### **Reflection Papers (20%)**

Each student will write three 2-page reflection essays. These papers will reflect on class assignments, discussion and the civic engagement portion of the course. Paper due dates and topics are noted in the course calendar below.

### **Exam (20%)**

There will be one exam on the course readings and concepts.

### **Interview and Observation Summaries (10%)**

Each student will conduct an interview with a client, practitioner or policymaker working in the field, drawn from a list provided by the United Way. You will set up a time to do a 60 minute interview, and conduct and record the interview. Each student will also attend two meetings with the United Way or their community partners. Interviews and observations should be conducted during the month of March. For each interview and observation, write a one-two page (single-spaced) summary and analysis.

### **Community Policy Report (20%)**

Each project team will work over the course of the semester to produce a policy report that includes the following components: issue context/background/demographics; politics; current policy landscape (county, state, federal); organizational landscape (what public and private groups are working on this issue); diagnosis of policy problem/unmet needs; policy alternatives/proposals. The specific details and parameters for each project team's report will be worked out with their United Way liaison.

By Spring break, each team should have developed a research statement with bibliography and project timeline. What do you need to know more about and how will you learn it? What specific tasks do you need to complete, by when, and who will be responsible for each? What questions will you ask in your interviews? Be sure to look at the Appendices in the Bardach book for an example of a "real world" policy analysis report and questions to consider for interviews with governmental and organization representatives.

### **Community policy report power point and presentation (10%)**

Each project team will prepare a power point presentation that summarizes the findings of their policy report and make a public presentation in front of representatives from the United Way and their partner organizations from the community.

### Civic Engagement Learning Outcomes

Community-Based Learning Classes teach academic and discipline-based material as part of a sustained engagement and collaboration with community partners in a mutually beneficial relationship that reaches beyond campus constituencies in the service of improving our shared world. In this class, students should expect to:

- Demonstrate the ability to listen actively and reflectively in order to learn from and respond to others.

- Work effectively in teams and with diverse populations.
- Communicate effectively in visual, oral, and/or written form to diverse audiences.
- Analyze and communicate to affected parties how specific policies, cultural attitudes, and behaviors impact communities and individuals.
- Formulate and implement multiple strategies for addressing complex, real-world problems.
- Connect an individual level of analysis with structural and policy dimensions of an issue as part of an action plan.
- Reflect on in order to alter or strengthen practices for engaging community partners or their constituencies.

## **V. Course Schedule, Readings and Assignments.**

### **Part I: The Nature of Public Policy**

#### **1. Course introduction and overview**

#### **2. The Study of Public Policy**

**Reading:** *American Public Policy*, Chapter 1

#### **3. The Structure of Policymaking in American Government**

**Reading:** *American Public Policy* Chapter 2  
Exceptionalism in American Politics, Bryon Shafer

#### **4. Meeting with United Way Policy Team Leaders**

**Reading:** “Introducing ALICE,” United Way Task Force Report on the Low-Income Population in Morris County, NJ.

#### **5-6. Explaining Policy Choices**

**Reading:** *American Public Policy*, Chapter 3

**7. 1<sup>st</sup> Reflection paper due in class (2 pages):** Summarize in your own words the challenges faced by low-income citizens in Morris County as described in the United Way ALICE report. What information in the report was most surprising to you? What are the different levels of government (county, state, federal) doing to assist these citizens? Which level of government do you think should have primary responsibility for dealing with these issues and why?

### **Part II: The Making of Public Policy**

#### **8-9: Agenda Setting and Policy Formulation**

**Reading:** *American Public Policy*, Chapter 4  
Causal Stories and the Formation of Policy Agendas, Deborah Stone

#### **10-11: Legitimizing Policy Choices**

**Reading:** *American Public Policy*, Chapter 5

## **12: Organizations and Implementation**

**Reading:** *American Public Policy*, Chapter 6

## **13. Project team meetings (select team leaders)**

**Reading:** “Why Service Learning is Bad”

## **14-15. Budgeting and Evaluation**

**Reading:** *American Public Policy*, Chapters 7 and 8

## **16. EXAM**

## **17. Project team meetings**

**Reading:** *Begin Practical Guide for Policy Analysis* (Entire)

## **18-19. Policy Analysis**

**Reading:** *Finish Practical Guide for Policy Analysis* (Entire)  
*American Public Policy*, Chapter 17

**20. 2<sup>nd</sup> Reflection paper due in class (2 pages):** Summarize the initial research findings for your assigned part of team policy report. What further research needs to be done on your questions?

## **Part III: Substantive Policy Issues**

### **21. Income Maintenance**

**Reading:** *American Public Policy*, Chapter 12

### **22. Health Care**

**Reading:** *American Public Policy*, Chapter 11

**\*\*\*Interview and Observation summaries due (in class)**

### **23. Education Policy**

**Reading:** *American Public Policy*, Chapter 13

### **24. Economic and Tax Policy**

**Reading:** *American Public Policy*, Chapters 9 and 10

### **25. Energy and the Environment**

**Reading:** *American Public Policy*, Chapter 14

### **26. Defense and Law Enforcement**

**Reading:** *American Public Policy*, Chapter 15

**27. 3<sup>rd</sup> Reflection paper due in class (2 pages):** As a final reflection on your community project, respond to the following questions. In completing the work on your policy report, what did you find most surprising? Difficult? Confusing? Rewarding? What did your community

experience teach you? How would you have changed the assignment or your approach to it, if you had it to do over?

**Part IV: Policy Project Team Presentations**

**28-29. Project Team Policy Reports and power point presentations due (in class)**

Teams should email policy reports and presentations to United Way liaisons

Project teams should then refine reports and presentations on basis of feedback from classmates, professor, and United Way liaisons.

**30. \*\*\*FINAL PRESENTATION TO UNITED WAY & PARTNERS\*\*\***