American Public Policy

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1. Course Description

This course will examine the way in which the priorities of American politics are determined. Its primary themes will be organized around the question raised by political scientist Harold Lasswell many years ago: "Who gets what, when and how?" In order to attempt to answer this question, we will study the structure and processes of American national politics with the intent of assessing how decisions are made and public policy is formed. Having done this, we will turn to the general patterns in the distribution of social rewards (services, money and so on) and burdens (taxes, regulations and the like) in American life in order to understand the role that government and politics play in determining the shape of these distributions.

General Education Objectives

- To contribute to the liberal education of students by clarifying the manifold   ways government influences the quality of their lives and shapes their opportunities for self-realization.

- To prepare students for active citizenship by providing them with essential knowledge about social processes and engaging them in public issues.

- To provide a rigorous intellectual environment in which students develop analytical skills and the capacity to clearly articulate ideas and arguments.

Course Objectives

From the specific course perspective, these are the elements that I expect you to master:

- Understand and explain the major political and governing institutions of the United States and their role in the development, implementation, and evaluation of public policy.

- Have an understanding of the major elements to be considered in policy analysis and its role in public policy and be able to communicate this.

- Understand the major public policy problems discussed in class (see syllabus) and the alternatives that have been proposed to deal with these problems.

- Analyze different alternatives to solutions and how they might address the public policy problems. This includes an understanding of the major arguments in support of, and in opposition to, the alternatives.

2. Required Readings

Cochran, Mayer, Carr & Cayer. American Public Policy.
Hird.& Reese, Controversies in American Public Policy.

3. Course Outline

Topics-   Readings-

Weeks	Cochran	Hird
1) Introduction- Issues	ch.1	preface
2) Intergovernmental Relations	2	6
3) Government and Business	3	1
4) Economy and Public Finance	4	7
5) Energy and Environment	5	5
6) Crime and Social Justice	6	12, 13
7) **Mid-Term Examination**	Review readings.	

		Readings-	
Topics-			
Weeks		Cochran	Hird
8) Welfare and Inequality		7	3, 9
9) Health Care Services		8	10
10) Public Education System		9	2
11) Legal and Social Equality		10	11
12) Immigration Policy		11	6
13) Public Morality		12	8
14) **Final Examination**		13	

Roughly one week will be devoted to each of the topics and readings but changes in course assignments may be necessary.

4. Course Requirements

1) Two Examinations (50%) – Exams may include multiple-choice questions, identification, short answers and an essay. Exam dates will be announced in class.

2) Discussion (20%) - Participation in class discussions on controversies over policy alternatives. Students will be asked to be the primary participants in at least two policy debates during the semester.

3) Term Paper (30%) - Any reasonable topic covering a public policy issue related to this course from one of the ten listed choices. Topics should be cleared with the instructor and utilize a standard form of research methodology and stylistic format.

5. Paper Project Choices

1) Explore a single Federal Agency and related Public Opinion Data that impinge on the agency's functions.

2) Examine Congressional Information Centers OR The State of the Union (or State) Address and Agenda Setting.

3) Study a single Think Tank and then decipher the Think Tank's information and methods of influence.

4) Find Information on a specific Policy Issue and discuss the competing ideological positions on this policy question.

5) Assess a Policy Alternative and Risk and Making Decisions.

6) Evaluating Economic Data and perform a Budget Deficit Simulation.

7) Interpret Health Care Statistics and examine Prescription Drug Coverage under Medicare.

8) Understand the underlying social and political causes of Poverty.

9) Examine Higher Education Data and use these Statistics in an attempt to determine Education Quality.

10) Explain how to Interpret Policy Studies as a discipline.