Introduction

This course is designed as an introduction to the study of politics and policy in the United States. The primary aims are 1) to provide students with a sufficient theoretical grounding in American politics and policy to inform their own research, and 2) to utilize the seminar to assist in the development of student research projects. The larger theoretical orientation is that, to study policymaking in the real world, one must often confront multiple actors, multiple interests, and multiple issues in the policy space. The study of policy is rewarding and challenging, because it is not encapsulated by a single theoretical approach, not can one readily point to simple two-sided debates as in many other areas in the study of American politics.

Many, though not all, of the works that we will read deal with education policy in the United States, in order to provide a common content for exploring the various approaches that we will consider. Students need not have education policy as their substantive research area in order to benefit from the course. This is not a class in education policy. Rather, we will use these policies to explore theory and method in the politics of American public policy. While the focus will be on the American context, students with interests outside of the United States may find the course useful, primarily for the theoretical perspectives that we will take up.

Seminar requirements

Class participation

Please come to class having completed and prepared to discuss the assigned readings. Regular class attendance is expected. Please notify me in advance for absences due to participation in religious observances and scheduled activities of official University student organizations. Students who are auditing the course are expected to complete all of the readings and be full participants in the course research. Each student will be asked to serve as discussion leader for 1 class session. Class participation will constitute 20% of the final grade.

Analytical Response Papers

Each participant will be asked to write two short (7-10 pp.) analytical reviews of assigned readings based on questions that will be handed out in class. Each analytical paper will count towards 20% of the final grade.
Research Prospectus

Students will be asked to write a research prospectus (8-10 pages) on a topic relevant to the study of public policy. The prospectus should identify an important question in the study of public policy, explore that question in terms of the relevant literature, and propose the methods by which you hope to investigate it, including potential sources of evidence. The prospectus is due in class Monday, December 11. Seminar participants will be asked to make a short presentation to the seminar describing the research proposal, the theoretical issues, and the proposed methods. The final class period will be devoted to these presentations, depending on the size of the seminar. The prospectus and presentation will count towards 40% of the final grade.

Required Readings

The following texts are required and have been ordered at the West Bank Bookstore.


In addition, required articles will be available at JSTOR ([www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org)) or placed in the 12th floor lounge.
Weekly Schedule

9/11: Introduction

No assigned readings.

9/18: Agendas


9/25: Markets


10/2: Politics


10/9: Inequality


APSA Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy. *American Democracy in an Age of Rising Inequality*. (http://www.apsanet.org/imgtst/taskforcereport.pdf)


10/16: Agency


10/23: Bureaucracy


10/30: Executive Policymaking


11/6: Congressional Policymaking


11/13: Judicial Policymaking


11/20: Policy Feedback


11/27: **Social Context**


12/4: **Working Session**

12/11: **Research Roundtable**