

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO

PPA 210: Political Environment of Policy Making Spring, 2022

Professor Ted Lascher
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Course meeting time and place:
Wednesdays, 6-8:50
Office hours: Wed., 4-6 and
by appointment

OVERVIEW

Policy choices are made in the political arena. Decision makers and activists commonly hold different values and interests about policy matters, and attempt to advance them through a variety of means (e.g., deployment of resources, advantageous issue framing). Outcomes frequently reflect participants' skills, clout, match with the public mood, etc. Timing matters a lot and the role of policy entrepreneurs is critical. Ultimately politics heavily influences what choices are possible and how decisions are implemented. Accordingly, it is crucial that MPPA students gain an understanding of the political arena.

This course has two broad aims along with specific learning goals. The first is to enhance your effectiveness in the political arena. To that end we consider political features and skills that practitioners in general should appreciate. The course's second broad aim is to enhance your understanding of what people *should* do in the political arena. We consider both what individual practitioners need to consider to act in an ethically defensible way and what constitute ethically desirable policy goals.

PPA 210 focuses especially on the development stage of the policy process, and particularly efforts to secure enactment of legislation. I find legislative battles especially useful for illustrating key analytical points. However, and more than in past years, this version of the course will offer considerable attention to policy implementation and how political battles continue after laws are enacted.

LEARNING GOALS

The PPA faculty members have established a set of learning goals for the program as a whole, and have identified particular ones that are relevant to PPA 210. Following are the ones that are primary for the course (we also have secondary goals) and how they are to be met in the course.

Primary MPPA Program learning objectives covered for PPA 210	What we expect students to learn in PPA 210
Diagnose, map, and analyze decision making processes, actors, and context.	<p>Understand and apply the multiple streams approach (and its limitations) for determining how and why policies advance in the political arena,</p> <p>Recognize when windows of opportunity for policy change arise or close.</p> <p>Understand how the way a policy choice is framed affects its potential for support.</p> <p>Understand the political tools available to influence policy after legislative enactments.</p> <p>Learn a variety of analytical skills that helpful in the political arena (e.g., ability to choose the right venue for action).</p>
Analyze systems and practices to surface systemic biases, including structural racism, that advance or impede a more just and equitable society.	Understand how differences in resources and ability to gain attention advantage some actors and hurt others.
Effectively communicate with different audiences to build understanding of public problems and policy and administration strategies.	Learn the different styles of communication most appropriate for the advocate, analyst, and advisor in the political arena.
Understand obligations to advance public value consistent with rule of law and an enduring search for reasonable and just action.	Draw from unit on ethics to develop an understanding of different approaches to advance public value.
Consider ethical dimensions of choices in public policy and administration.	Develop an appreciation of the choices inherent in both policy decisions and how policy makers carry them out.
Understand differences between analysis and advocacy including insider and outsider roles.	Understood the differences between the advocate and analyst roles.

Recognize professional role and responsibility/duty of care to your organization.	Appreciate the obligations and limitations that follow from an understanding of role ethics.
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CONDUCT OF THE SEMINAR

The term "seminar" is accurate. While I will offer mini-lectures on key concepts, summarize points, and draw lessons, the bulk of class time will be devoted to exchange about course topics, in-class exercises, etc. Student participation is therefore not a luxury: it is essential to course success. I expect that students will come to class consistently, be prepared to discuss the week's readings as well as other materials, and be prepared to accept special in-class assignments such as leading a critique of a particular argument from the literature.

READINGS

One book is required for the course: Leah Cardamore Stokes, *Short Circuiting Policy: Interest Groups and the Battle Over Clean Energy and Climate Policy in the American States* (Oxford University Press, 2020). This paperback book is available at the Hornet Bookstore and through various online venues.

Additionally, I have assigned articles, case studies, and other materials that will be available on Canvas. As well, I have assigned videos and podcasts for you to review prior to class. These materials will be available on Canvas or otherwise easily accessed without cost. I aim to limit the number of pages you need to read each week, recognizing your professional obligations and work required for other PPA courses. However, this makes it especially critical that you keep up with the material that I assign.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Your assignments include two short reading summary reaction papers, three longer written assignments, and a take home final examination. Due dates are specified in the syllabus.

Course grades will be determined in accordance with the following weights:

Short reading summary 1	5%
Short reading summary 2	5%
Agenda setting memo	20%
Bill proposal	15%
Ethics paper	20%
Take home final examination	25%
Class participation	10%

IN-PERSON AND ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

Unless enrolled in the online Zoom section (2) of PPA 210, I expect you to attend meetings in person. I realize, however, that we all end up with periodic scheduling challenges related to professional and personal obligations. Therefore, everyone may choose to attend one class online during the semester without any participation penalty—please provide me with advance notice. Of course, you may always contact me about shifting to online participation if you are ill or experiencing an emergency.

As an instructor, I will be conscious of audio and visual issues. I will use multiple microphones in the class. I will also try to make sure that all students can be seen by people participating in class and via Zoom. However, it is possible that I may miss problems that arise as I concentrate on overseeing class discussions, etc. You are welcome and encouraged to note difficulties students may be having with the audio or visuals. Note also that I will *not* regularly monitor the chat function in Zoom because of the difficulty of doing so while also leading class activities.

As an online participant, I expect that you will keep your camera on if possible and remain engaged throughout the class session. Also, please remember not to send instructors or colleagues private messages with sensitive information via Zoom.

SPECIAL NEEDS RELATED TO DISABILITIES

Should you need assistance with portions of class due to disabilities, please let me know as soon as possible. The University offers services to student with disabilities and I would be glad to refer you to the appropriate campus unit.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

I take issues of academic honesty (including avoiding plagiarism) seriously and you should as well. If you are unfamiliar with the specifics of University policy in this area I recommend you review the appropriate section of the on-line University Policy Manual: <http://www.csus.edu/umannual/AcademicHonestyPolicyandProcedures.htm>.

DISTRACTIONS

Please do not use cell phones or surf the Web during class unless I instruct you to do so.

MAKE-UP ASSIGNMENTS AND MISSED CLASSES

Late assignments will not be accepted. At my discretion, a student who misses a deadline *may* be given a make-up assignment. Whether or not a penalty will be assessed depends on the reason (e.g., a family emergency constitutes a good reason; a competing requirement for another course does not).

You should inform me prior to the session if you must miss class on a specific day. Except under very unusual circumstances, a student who misses three classes will be penalized one entire grade (e.g., a B+ for the course will become a C+), and a student who misses more than three classes will receive a failing grade.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Part I: Overview of the Politics of Policy Making

1. January 26. How to View the Policy Making Process as a Whole, Part One

Read: 1) “From Research to Policy,” case study, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University; 2) Rebekah L. Craig et al., “Public Health Professionals as Policy Entrepreneurs: Arkansas's Childhood Obesity Policy Experience,” *American Journal of Public Health*, 2010

2. February 2. How to View the Policy Making Process as a Whole, Part Two

Watch before class: Heath Brown, “What Are Policy Focusing Events and Policy Entrepreneurs?,” YouTube video

Read: Rebecca Miller, “Prescribed Burns in California: A Historical Case Study of the Integration of Scientific Research and Policy,” *Fire*, 2020

3. February 9. How to View the Policy Making Process as a Whole, Part Three

Agenda setting memo due

Read: Michael D. Jones et. al., “A River Runs through It: A Multiple Streams Meta-Review,” *The Policy Studies Journal*, 2016 (skim for important themes)

4. February 16. Deeper into Achieving Success as a Policy Entrepreneur (and the Dark Side of Success)

Read: 1) Sara E. Abiola et. al., “The Politics of HPV Vaccination Policy Formation in the United States,” *Journal of Health Policy, Politics and Law*, 2013; 2) Paul Cairney, “Three Habits of Successful Policy Entrepreneurs,” *Policy & Politics* 2018; 3) Reid J. Epstein, “Where Facts Were No Match for Fear,” *New York Times*, October 24, 2021

5. February 23. Beware of the Potential for Blowback in the Implementation Stage

Short reading reaction paper 1 due

Watch before class: “Dark Money” documentary (selection)

Read: Stokes, *Short Circuiting Policy*, chapters 1 and 2

Part II: Deeper into Strategic Choices and Tactics

6. March 2. Moving from an Idea to Legislation

Read: California State Senate, “The Legislative Process: A Citizen’s Guide to Participation”

7. March 9. Framing Issues for Success

Read: 1) Susanne C. Moser and Lisa Dilling, “Communicating Climate Change: Closing the Science-Action Gap,” 2014; 2) “Language and the Melting Pot,” Kennedy School of Government Case; 3) Ezra Markowitz and Lucia Graves, “After 2020, We Need to Talk about How We Talk about Catastrophe,” *Washington Post*, 2020

8. March 16. Choosing the Right Venue

Bill Proposal Due

Read: 1) Joshua J. Dyck and Edward L. Lascher, Jr., *Initiatives without Engagement: A Realistic Appraisal of Direct Democracy’s Secondary Effects*, 2019, selection; 2) Barry Rabe, “Political Impediments to a Tobacco Endgame,” *Tobacco Control*, 2013

9. March 30 (No class March 23rd: spring break). Understanding the Constraints Posed by Political Partisanship and Polarization

Listen before class: 1) John Hibbing segment, “More Divided Than Ever? Excavating the Roots of Our Political Landscape,” Hidden Brain, NPR, May 27, 2019; 2) Lilliana Mason, “What If We Don’t Need to Fix Polarization,” The NPR Politics Podcast, March 26, 2021

Read: 1) Eli J. Finkel, et. al. “Political Sectarianism in America,” *Science*, October 30, 2020; 2) Boris Shor, “How U.S. state legislatures are polarized and getting more polarized (in two graphs),” *The Washington Post*, January 14, 2014; 3) Christopher Ingraham, “A stunning visualization of our divided Congress,” *The Washington Post*, April 23, 2015

10. April 6. Understanding the Tactics that Undergird Group Power

Watch prior to class: PBS Frontline Documentary, “Gunned Down: The Power of the NRA,” 2015

11. April 13. Choosing an “Insider” or “Outsider” Strategy to Influence Legislation (or both)

Watch prior to class: “Crip Camp,” 2020 documentary movie

Read: “Against All Odds,” Kennedy School of Government case study

12. April 20. Thinking about Implementation

Short reading reaction paper 2 due

Read: Stokes, *Short Circuiting Policy*, chapters 3, 4, 5, and 9; skim the remainder

Part III: Individual and Policy Ethics

13. April 27. Role Ethics

Read: 1) Arthur Applbaum, “Professional Detachment: The Executioner of Paris,” *Harvard Law Review*, Vol. 109 (December, 1995), pp. 458-486;
2) Anonymous, “I Am Part of the Resistance Inside the Trump Administration,” *New York Times* op-ed, 2018

14. May 4. The Ethics of Policy Choices, Part One

Watch prior to class: “Justice with Michael Sandel” (selections)

15. May 11. The Ethics of Policy Choices, Part Two

Ethics Paper Due

Watch prior to class: “Justice with Michael Sandel” (selections)

Read: “Matters of Life and Death: Defunding Organ Transplants in the State of Arizona,” Kennedy School of Government case study

Take home final examination due at 5:00 p.m. on May 20