

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO
PPA 210: Political Environment of Policy Making
Spring, 2025

Professor: Dr. Shane Nordyke
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Class meeting time: Mondays or Wednesday
6-8:50 p.m., Sacramento State Downtown
Room 104/105 (Mon) or Room 108/109 (Wed)

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Sacramento State Downtown, Room 226

Email is my preferred form of contact, but feel free to text or call me as needed

Course Description: Assists students in learning to identify the political factors impinging on the policy process and in learning to cope with them. With special emphasis on the California political environment and issues, employs case studies, structured role-playing, and including politically feasible policy alternatives and advice to hypothetical clients. The goal is to equip students to work effectively as politically aware policy analysts.

Prerequisite(s): [PPA 200](#) or instructor permission

Statement of Respect & Inclusion

This course provides an opportunity for us all to learn from each other. We must strive to affirm and value each individual's beliefs, backgrounds, and experiences. This is a course about politics, we will inevitably find points of disagreement and discomfort, however every member of this learning community must be treated with dignity and respect.

Land Acknowledgment

Sacramento State is proud to recognize the California Native Nations, communities, and peoples throughout the state and acknowledge the diverse Indigenous peoples connected to this territory.

Our campus operates on the traditional and ancestral homelands of the Miwok, Wintu, Maidu, Nisenan (Southern Maidu), and Patwin Native peoples.

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, appropriate choice of decision venue). Ultimately, politics heavily influences what public policy 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 three broad aims along with specific learning goals. The first broad aim is to improve your understanding of, and perhaps enhance your effectiveness in, the political arena. The course's second broad aim is to enhance your understanding of what people *should* do in the political arena. We consider both individual ethical obligations and the ethics of policy choices. The third aim of the course is to provide you with the opportunity to reflect on and articulate your own values, strengths, and role in the policy process.

PPA 210 focuses especially on the development stage of the policy process, and particularly efforts to secure enactment of legislation. However, we will also devote 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 primary goals for the course (we also have secondary goals) and how they are to be met in PPA 210.

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 theoretical approaches to policy (and their limitations) for determining how and why policies advance in the political arena.</p> <p>Recognize when windows of opportunity for policy arise, change, 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>

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 the importance of and develop skills in communicating across partisan differences.
Understand obligations to advance public value consistent with rule of law and an enduring search for reasonable and just action.	Develop an understanding of different approaches to advance public value. Articulate your own values as they relate to public service.
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.	Understand the differences between the advocate and analyst roles. Understand and articulate your own strengths within those 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.

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: *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together* by Heather McGhee. (ISBN 978-0-525-50956). This paperback book is available at the Hornet Bookstore and through various online venues.

Additionally, I have assigned articles, case studies, and other reading materials not in book form. I have also assigned videos and podcasts for you to review prior to class. These materials will be available on Canvas or otherwise easily accessed without cost. It is essential that you keep up with the material that I assign.

GUEST SPEAKERS AND TWEAKING CLASS SCHEDULE

We will draw from a variety of guest speakers for the course. Because of busy schedules and life events, this may require me to tweak class schedules and topics for particular days. If appropriate, I will share a revised syllabus in Canvas.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING WEIGHTS

You will complete a variety of written assignments of varying complexity. Due dates are specified in the syllabus; guidelines for each assignment including grading rubrics will be forthcoming. You will also be evaluated on the quality of your class participation, with consideration given to attendance and participation in in-class activities and simulations. Grading weights are as follows:

Reading reflection posts	15%
Personal role reflection paper	15%
Ethics paper	10%
Stakeholder analysis	10%
<u>The Sum of Us</u> Reaction Paper	15%
Class participation	15%
Take home final examination	20%

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/umanual/AcademicHonestyPolicyandProcedures.htm>.

All of your submitted written work in this course is expected to be your own. For the purpose of this course, you may use AI resources for initial source queries and basic grammar support, but may not use AI to generate ideas, outlines, or initial content of your assignments.

DISTRACTIONS

Please do not use cell phones or engage in distracting online activities during class unless I instruct you to do so. Regular distracting or inattentive behavior will have a negative impact on your participation grade.

MAKE-UP ASSIGNMENTS AND MISSED CLASSES

Assignment deadlines are to be taken seriously. At my discretion, a student who misses a deadline *may* be able to submit a late or make-up assignment. Whether this will be allowed, and whether a penalty will still be assessed, depends on the reason for missing a deadline (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 (subject to revisions)

All readings are available on Canvas or in your assigned text.

All readings and assignments are to be completed BEFORE the class period for which they are scheduled.

Week 1: January 27/29 Conocimiento, Selfcare, and Introduction to the Course

Read before class:

1. Syllabus
2. "From Research to Policy," case study, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University
3. Gormley, 2007, "Public Policy Analysis: Ideas and Impacts"

Submit:

1. "Getting to Know You" survey in Canvas

Week 2: February 3/5 The Rules of the Game (in theory) - Part 1

Read before class:

1. Weible, 2023, Chapters 1, 3 & 4
2. Mathis Ebbinghaus, et al., 2021, "Defended or defunded? Local and state outcomes of the 2020 Black Lives Matter" protests."

Submit:

2. Reflection question answers for each assigned reading

Week 3: February 10/12. The Rules of the Game (in theory) – Part 2

Read:

1. Soss 2007, Chapter 1
2. Weible 2023, Chapter 5
3. Schneider and Sidney, 2009, "What is Next for Policy Design and Social Construction Theory.

Submit:

3. Reflection question answers for each assigned reading

Week 4: February 17/19. Developing and Understanding Your Role

Read:

1. Weimer and Vining, Chapter 2
2. Cairney, 2018, "Three Habits of Successful Policy Entrepreneurs"
3. Social Change Ecosystem Map and Roles
4. Arts of Democracy

Submit:

1. Your ecosystem reflection question answers

Week 5: February 24/26. The importance of Identity in Politics

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. McGhee – Chapters 1 & 2
2. Finkel et al, 2020, "Political Sectarianism in America."

Submit:

1. Reflection question answers for each assigned reading

Week 6: March 3/5. Understanding Stakeholders

Listen before class:

1. "The Gender Election" on The Daily, October 23, 2024

Read:

1. McGhee – Chapters 3 & 4
2. Clemons and McBeth, Chapter 7
3. Elgin and Weible, 2013, A Stakeholder Analysis of Colorado Climate and Energy Issues Using Policy Analytical Capacity and the Advocacy Coalition Framework.
4. Bryson, 2004, "What To Do When Stakeholders Matter."

Submit:

1. Reflection question answers for each assigned reading

Week 7: March 10/12 Telling the Policy Story

Read:

1. McGhee, Chapters 5 & 6
2. Stone, Chapters 1, 2, & 7
3. Susanne C. Moser and Lisa Dilling, 2014, "Communicating Climate Change: Closing the Science-Action Gap."

Submit:

1. Personal Role Reflection Paper

Week 8: March 17/19 The Ethics of Policy Choices

Read:

1. Weimer and Vining, Chapter 3
2. Applebaum, Executioner of Paris
3. NYTimes, 2018, "I Am Part of the Resistance Inside the Trump Administration."
4. Erica D. Smith and Anita Chabria, 2022 "California Spends Billions Rebuilding Burned Towns. The Case for Calling it Quits," *Los Angeles Times*;
6. Sarah E. Roberts, 1999, "The Kankakee Wetlands: A Case Study in Ethics and Public Policy."

Submit:

1. Stakeholder Analysis

Week 9: March 24/26 Making Change through Legislatures

Watch Before Class:

1. Introduction to the California Legislature

Read:

1. Strachan, Chapter 6
2. Richard Johnson and Lisa L. Miller, 2022, "The Conservative Policy Bias of US Senate Malapportionment."
3. Nanko and Coan, (2024). "Defeating Cap-and-trade: How the Fossil Fuel Industry and Climate Change Counter Movement Obstruct US Climate Change Legislation"
4. Pauly, Madison, 2023. "Inside the Secret Working Group that Helped Push Anti-Trans Laws Across the Country."
5. Rouse et al. 2024. "In the Interest of Millennials? Exploring Generational Representation in US State Legislatures."

Submit:

1. Reflection question answers for each assigned reading

No class March 31st or April 2nd for spring break.

Week 10: April 7/9. Making Change through the Courts and Bureaucracy

Listen before class:

1. The Uncertain Hour, Season 2, Episodes 1-3: "The Peanut Butter Wars"

Read:

1. OAL Rule Making Process
2. Gerald Rosenberg, 2023, The Hollow Hope, Selected Chapters

Submit:

1. Ethics Paper

Week 11: April 14/16. Making Change through Social Movements and the Ballot

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. "Against All Odds," Kennedy School of Government case study
3. Strachan et al, 2020, Chapter 9
4. Mathis Ebbinghaus, et al., 2021, "Defended or defunded? Local and state outcomes of the 2020 Black Lives Matter" protests"
5. Timothy Callaghan and Steven Sylvester, 2019, "Private Citizens as Policy Entrepreneurs: Evidence from Autism Mandates and Parental Political Mobilization."

Submit:

1. Reflection question answers for each assigned reading

Week 12: April 21/23. Making Change through Local Governments

Read:

1. McGhee, Chapter 7
2. Scott Girard, 2022, "An Impossible Situation: Members Leaving School Boards Amid Politicization, Divisiveness."
3. California Collaborative on District Reform, 2024, "Keeping the Main Thing the Main Thing."
4. Civic Pulse and Carnegie Corporation, 2024, "Polarization in America: Survey of Local Government."

Submit:

1. Reflection question answers for each assigned reading

Week 13: April 28/30. Making Change through the Market

Read:

1. McGhee, Chapters 8 & 9
2. Surana et al. 2023, "The Role of Corporate Investment in Start-Ups for Climate-Teach Innovation.
3. Callender et al. 2024, "The Dynamics of a Policy Outcome: Market Response and Bureaucratic Enforcement of a Policy Change.

Submit:

1. Nothing this week

Week 14: May 5/7. Making Democracy Work for Everyone, including you!

Read:

1. McGhee, Chapter 10

Submit:

1. The Sum of Us Reaction Paper

Take home final examination due at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 14th

Student Services Information and Links

1. [Services to Students with Disability \(SSWD\)](#)
“Sacramento State is committed to ensuring an accessible learning environment where the course or instructional content is usable by all students and faculty. If you believe that you require disability-related academic adjustments for this class, please immediately contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD) to discuss eligibility. A current accommodation letter from SSWD is required before any modifications, above and beyond what is otherwise available for all other students in this class will be provided.”
2. [Student Health and Counseling Services](#)
“Your physical and mental health are important to your success as a college student. Student Health and Counseling Services (SHCS) in The WELL offers medical, counseling, and wellness services to help you get and stay healthy during your time at Sac State. SHCS offers Primary Care medical services, including sexual and reproductive healthcare, transgender care, and immunizations; urgent care for acute illness, injuries, and urgent counseling needs; pharmacy for prescriptions and over-the-counter products; mental health counseling, including individual sessions, group counseling, support groups, mindfulness training, and peer counseling; athletic training for sports injury rehabilitation; wellness services, including nutrition counseling, peer-led health education, and wellness workshops, and free safer sex supplies; violence and sexual assault support services. Most services are covered by the Health Services fee and available at no additional cost.”
3. [Crisis Assistance & Resource Education Support \(CARES\)](#)
“If you are experiencing challenges with food, housing, financial or other unique circumstances that are impacting your education, help is just a phone call or email away. The CARES office provides case management support for any enrolled student
4. [Drop and Withdrawal Policy](#)
5. [Information Resources and Technology](#)
6. [Support Centers and Programs](#)
7. [Reading & Writing Center](#)