

The College of Charleston

Fall 2015

POLI 311.01 – Policymaking in State Legislatures

Tuesdays-Thursdays – 10:50 A.M. - 12:05 P.M.

Maybank Hall 307

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Course description and objectives

This course is designed to introduce students to the methods and processes by which American state legislatures achieve public policy objectives. Attention will be paid to the structure and organization of our 50 state legislatures, decision-making among competing political and public policy objectives, the development of institutional and individual legislative agendas and the increasing role of organized political interests in shaping public policy at the state level.

At the end of the semester students should be able to (a) understand and explain the complex web of constitutional mandates, political influences, public demands and policy agendas that drive the process by which state legislatures achieve public policy objectives; (b) provide competent analyses of the technical, procedural and legal processes involved in legislative policymaking; (c) understand the impact of legislative behavior on the organization and performance of public institutions and (d) understand the opportunities for citizen engagement in influencing legislative behavior.

Course Requirements

- A. Regular class attendance is required of all students and will constitute 10% of your final grade. Attendance will be recorded via a daily sign-in sheet. Absences will be excused only if they are officially validated.
- B. Expectations for class participation include reading the assignments prior to class, joining in class discussions, respecting the opinions of others and turning in assignments on time. Late assignments will incur severe grade deductions.
- C. The use of cell phones, I pads, tablets or any other electronic device during class is not permitted. Personal computers may be permitted for the exclusive purpose of taking notes and verification may be required at any time. Failure to honor this policy will result in severe grade penalties and may result in expulsion from the class.
- D. Students are strongly encouraged to utilize office hours and/or schedule appointments to discuss assignments and readings.

- E. Students who are receiving services through the Center for Disability Services, are scheduled to travel with an athletic team or will participate in a student government related or other official off-campus activity during the semester must present a letter of verification signed by the appropriate college official.
- F. Students who plan personal (i.e., non-emergency) off-campus trips prior to a scheduled exam (ex: Midterm Exam or Final) will not receive excused absences or opportunity to make-up the examination.
- G. Each student is required to select a current legislative issue for research and study during the semester from a list provided by the instructor. At the end of the semester students studying the same topic will be required to make a group presentation to the class.

Grading

The semester grade will be based on the following: a five part legislative research paper, a Midterm Examination, a Final Examination and both individual and group class participation as follows:

A. Research Paper, Part I	10%
B. Research Paper, Part II	10%
C. Research Paper, Part III	10%
D. Research Paper, Part IV	10%
E. Research Paper, part V	10%
F. Midterm Examination	15%
G. Final Examination	15%
H. Class attendance/participation (individual)	10%
I. Class participation (group)	10%

Required Readings

In lieu of a textbook, class readings and in-class assignments will be based on the following legislative sources that are key resources for state legislatures, legislators and staffs.

The National Conference of State Legislatures (www.ncsl.org)

‘Legisbrief’ –Newsletter of The National Conference of State Legislatures (www.ncsl.org)

State Legislatures – Official publication of The National Conference of State Legislatures (www.ncsl.org)

The Thicket at State Legislatures. A bipartisan blog by and for legislative junkies. (www.ncsl.typepad.com/the_thicket)

South Carolina 2015 Legislative Manual-- (<http://www.scstatehouse.gov>)

California State Assembly- [Legislative Procedure Manual](#), revised January 2015. **(Available in 114 Wentworth, Room 101)**

The Pew Center on the States.

http://ballotpedia.org/Portal:State_Legislatures

Ballotpedia – http://ballotpedia.org/State_Legislative_Tracker

Students are encouraged to utilize the **Center for Student Learning**(CSL)academic support services for assistance in study strategies and course content. The Center offers tutoring, supplemental instruction, study skills appointments and workshops. These services are available at no extra cost. You may visit the CSL website at <http://csl.cofc.edu> or call (843) 953-5635.

Fall 2015 Class Schedule

AUGUST 2015

TU 25 Introductions and class overview
Th 27 Class overview/ discussion of Research assignment

SEPTEMBER 2015

TU 1 Federalism: the U.S. Constitution and state powers (Handout)
TH 3 Profile of the modern American Legislature
TU 8 Profile of the modern American Legislature
TH 10 Legislative roles and responsibilities: the lawmaking function

Assignment # 1 due

TU 15 Legislative roles and responsibilities: lawmaking
TH 17 Legislative roles and responsibilities: Representation
TU 22 Legislative roles and responsibilities: Constituent service
TH 24 Legislative roles and responsibilities: balancing the power of the Executive Branch

Assignment # 2 due

Tu 29 Legislative organization- statutory requirements

OCTOBER 2015

TH 1 Legislative organization – Member compensation
TU 6 Legislative organization – Term limits
TH 8 The Legislative Process – The essential Rules
TU 13 **Midterm Examination**

TH 15 The Legislative process – The Legislative Calendar

TU 20 **Fall Break – No class**

TH 22 The Legislative Process – Committee Hearings

TU 27 The Legislative Process – The Amendment process

Assignment #3 due

TH 29 The Legislative Process- The Floor Debates

NOVEMBER 2015

TU 3

TH 5 The Legislative process – the Floor Debates

TU 10 The Legislative process – Voting requirements

TH 12 The role of the Executive Branch in legislation

Assignment # 4 Due

TU 17 Bill Engrossing and Enrollment

TH 19 Bill Chaptering/statutory designation

TU 24 Class presentation - Group One

Assignment # 5 due

TH 26 **THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY - NO CLASS**

DECEMBER 2015

TU 1 Class Presentation -Group 2

Th 3 Class presentation - Group 3

Tu 8 **READING DAY – NO CLASS**

TH 10 FINAL EXAMINATION

8:00 A.M. – 11:00 A.M.

REQUIRED ASSIGNMENT

This research assignment provides the opportunity to explore how full and part-time state legislatures develop policy on a specific issue of major concern to both state government and the general public. It provides an assessment of whether the organization of state legislatures has a differential effect on the issues and influences

that direct legislative priorities, the process of lawmaking, and the nature of the policy relationships between the states and the federal government in achieving public policy objectives.

Based on the organization of legislatures in the 50 states, your research will examine legislative behavior in 15 states (roughly 1/3 of all legislatures) based on their organizational classification: (a) "Green" Legislatures: California, New York and Pennsylvania; (b) "Green Lite" Legislatures: Florida, Ohio and Massachusetts (c) "Gray" Legislatures: New Jersey, Washington and South Carolina (d) "Gold Lite" Legislatures: Georgia, Vermont and West Virginia and (e) "Gold" Legislatures: New Hampshire, North Dakota and Utah.

You will select one of the following topics for your research:

1. Public Health: mandatory vaccinations and communicable diseases– Should state Legislatures require all children enrolling in public schools to be vaccinated against specific communicable diseases as a condition of enrollment ?
2. Immigration and public education – Should state Legislatures require proof of parents' legal immigration status in order for their children to enroll in public schools?
3. Public Education and the global economy- Should state legislatures adopt and fund the Common Core curriculum standards in order to ensure that American high school and college graduates will be able to compete in the global economy?

Following the selection of your topic you will be responsible for five assignments as outlined below.

Group One - Public Health – Mandatory vaccinations and communicable diseases.

- (1) Paper One According to the Centers for Disease Control there are 16 diseases that can be prevented with vaccines. Identify those that have the capacity to constitute a public health threat.
- (2) Paper Two Identify the state law on mandatory vaccinations public for school enrollment in each of the 15 states. If there are exceptions, state the conditions under which they may be approved. Identify the legislative committee in each legislature that has policy responsibility for this issue.
- (3) Paper Three Identify which state has the most stringent vaccination laws. Explain the policy goals of this law, the Committee that approved it and the state statistics that identified the problem.
- (4) Paper Four Identify those states that have a public policy on how to handle a potential health epidemic, including whether they have an adequate supply of vaccines for each of the 16 potentially communicable diseases identified by the CDC.
- (5) Paper Five Given the potential risk of school-based epidemics, should state legislatures require all children in public and private schools to be vaccinated before enrollment? Give the policy reason who you support or opposite such a policy.

Group Two – Immigration Policy and public school enrollment

- (1) Paper One The U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Plyler v. Doe* is the legal authority regarding the enrollment of children in U.S. public schools. Describe the reason this case was brought before the U.S. Supreme Court, the plaintiffs and their argument and the decision handed down.
- (2) Paper two Describe the enrollment policies approved by the Justice Department that identify the rights of children to enroll in public elementary and secondary schools.

- (3) Paper Three Describe the policies of your 15 states on whether students of undocumented persons (Dream Act students) can enroll in the state’s public colleges and universities. Provide the policy reason given for access or denial. Identify the policy committee in each legislature that has policy responsibility for this issue.
- (4) Paper Four What is the state legislature’s stated policy on whether Congress should pass or oppose the Dream Act. What is the stated position, if any, of each state on whether these students are protected under the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution?
- (5) Paper Five If you were a sitting member of a legislature how would you vote on each of the following: (1) allowing the children of undocumented parents to enroll in public elementary and secondary school; (b) All the children of undocumented parents to enroll in the state’s public institutions of higher education? (c) vote to have these students deported.

Group Three – Public Education and America’s global competitiveness

- (1) Paper One Describe the rationale of the National Governors Association and the Council of State Chief School Officers in drafting the Common Core Curriculum Standards. Identify any research and/or reports which inform their decision.
- (2) Paper Two Identify the initial position of each of the 15 states on the Common Core State Standards. State if they have changed their positions and, if so, the rationale for the change. Identify the policy committee in which this issue was heard and the Committee’s recommendations.
- (3) Paper Three Identify any changes in legislative or executive control in each of the state legislatures during the past 4 years. Determine if the Chief Education Officer of each state testified before the Legislature on the advantage or disadvantage of adopting the Common Core Standards.
- (4) Paper Four For states that change their positions on the Common Core standards identify the specific reasons given for the change. Determine if the legislature has proposed an alternative plan for creating a competitive workforce for the state as well as the nation.
- (5) Paper Five If you were a sitting member of a legislature would you agree or disagree that the Common Core standards represent a valid list of competencies that students in each grade level should be able to know or do in English or Math. Give the reasons for your position.

Each of the above topics is designed to achieve the following goals:

- a. Increase your understanding of the process by which state legislatures develop public policy priorities among competing issues;
- b. Provide an opportunity to understand the political, policy and social environments in which legislative decisions are made;
- c. Examine the policy options available to state legislators and the key factors that influence how those options are selected or rejected;
- d. Draw conclusions about the effectiveness of the solution adopted, and
- e. Based on your research, make a recommendation regarding the solution you believe to be most effective in achieving the stated policy goal.

- **PLEASE NOTE:**
- Several members of the class will be researching the same topic as you. Together you will make a presentation to the class at the end of the semester in which you (a) explain the legislative issue; (b) present the findings and (c) make a group recommendation regarding which solution selected is the most effective in alleviating or mitigating the stated problem.
- Your individual research paper should present your findings and conclusions on the topic. The group presentation will present the combined findings and the consensus on the most effective solution.
- In preparation for the group presentation you are expected to participate in at least one meeting with members of your research group. Discuss the pros and cons of each option, offer your recommendations and seek group consensus on the most effective solution to the problem. This is an exercise in listening, dialogue, friendly debate, information sharing and consensus building around a significant public problem.
- Your group will prepare a 1-2 page summary of the problem, issues and solutions to be distributed during your class presentation.

Maximum length for papers 1-4 is four pages, single spaced.

Maximum length for paper 5 is 8 pages, single spaced, excluding charts, graphs and appendices.

Citations are required for each source or authority cited. The MLA citation format is recommended for creating your Works Cited list.