POLI 211 Introduction to Public Policy
Spring 2014
Mon/Wed 4-6:45 (Express 2) Maybank 316
Professor Philip H. Jos 26 Coming St/Rm. 202/953-5704 (ph); 953-8140 (fax); josp@cofc.edu

Office Hours/Contacting the Instructor

I will keep office hours on Mondays from 10:30-11:30 and on Wednesdays and Thursdays from 2 until 3 pm. To set up an appointment at other times email me at josp@cofc.edu.

Course Description

This class is designed to help you understand the economic, political, cultural, and institutional forces that shape policy making by a wide variety of decision-makers. Executives and legislatures at local, state, and national levels, courts, administrative agencies, corporations, and non-profit organizations all make decisions that can have profound effects on our lives and on the relative well-being of the communities, nation, and world in which we live.

This course is designed to examine these policy making domains. We will analyze: how problems come to be defined as more or less important, how issues are framed, patterns of political participation and mobilization, access to institutional agendas, characteristic relationships between private markets, governmental institutions, and the voluntary sector, current challenges to legislative policy making, and the contemporary complexities of executing policy by way of alternatives to “command and control” regulation, contracting out, and community collaboration.

Learning Outcomes

The primary objectives of the course are for students to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the various domains in which policy making occurs and the distinctive features of American political and economic institutions and social policy.
- understand and apply the concepts and processes that shape the definition of public problems, access to institutions that engage in policy making, and patterns of political mobilization.
- demonstrate the ability to assess contemporary obstacles to developing consensus on policy problems and solutions.
- demonstrate an understanding of policy execution through administrative agencies, contracts with private and for profit contractors, and community collaboration.

General Education Social Science Learning Outcome

- Students will apply social science concepts, models or theories to explain human behavior, social interactions or social institutions.

Readings and Other Class Materials

Books

Video


Websites and Online Resources

Newspapers. On line access to the New York Times and other national newspapers is available through the College of Charleston Library (“Library” then “Databases” and search by title. For state and local news see The Post and Courier (http://www.postandcourier.com/) and The State (www.thestate.com).

The National Priorities Project (http://nationalpriorities.org/). An excellent source of information regarding the federal budget, spending and revenues.

The Kaiser Family Foundation (www.kff.org) is devoted to health policy issues.

The Democratic National Committee (www.democrats.org)

The Republican National Committee (www.gop.com)


The Urban Institute (www.urban.org) focus is on economic and social policy.

Congressional Quarterly. (best accessed through CofC Library/Databases) Information on bills, committee hearings and anything else that has to do with Congress.

The Roper Center Public Opinion Archives (www.ropercenter.uconn.edu)

Course Expectations and Grading

Exam #1 ................................................................. 25%
Exam #2 ................................................................. 25%
Exam #3 ................................................................. 15%
Application Assignments (5) ...................................... 25%
Attendance/Class Participation/ .................................. 5%
Exam Bonus ............................................................. 5%

Grading Scale/Special Needs: 92 and above =A, 90-92=A minus, 88-89=B plus, 83-87=B, 80-82=B minus, 78-79=C plus, 73-77=C, 70-72=C minus, 68-69=D plus, 63-67=D, 60-62=D minus, 59 and below=F. Deadlines and expectations are subject to change but adequate notice of such changes will be given. If you are in the SNAPS program or have other special needs please let me know during the first week of class.

Examinations will consist of essay questions and more narrowly focused questions. Exams will be based on lectures, class discussions, exercises, and required readings. No one will be permitted to take an exam if they arrive more than 30 minutes late. Make-up exams will only be given if the student: notifies me of the difficulty at least an hour before class, agrees to take a make-up not later than three days after the regularly scheduled exam, and presents a written, bonafide excuse.

Concept Applications (5) These on-half to one page assignments require you to use the required readings to define and discuss a concept, locate a relevant newspaper/web story and explain how the story illustrates the concept.
These assignments are due before the class during which the relevant concepts will be discussed (they will not be accepted after class begins). Be prepared to summarize your work verbally in class. You should keep a copy of your work so you can refer to it during class discussion. The five CA papers are worth five points each for a total of 25 points. The concept application assignments are listed in the course outline. Specific assignments will be made at our first meeting of the semester.

**Attendance and Participation.** Attending class and coming prepared to discuss the readings is essential.

**Extra Credit Opportunity** Attend and write on “The South and the Midterm Elections.” A Faculty Panel Discussion being held on April 3rd.

**Honor Code and Academic Integrity**

Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when identified, are investigated. Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible for academic dishonest will receive an XF for the course, indicating failure due to academic dishonesty. Unauthorized collaboration is a form of cheating and research conducted and/or papers written for other classes cannot be used in whole or part for any assignment without obtaining prior permission from the professor. Plagiarism includes the verbatim repetition, without acknowledgement, of another’s work, borrowing without acknowledging a source, paraphrasing without acknowledgement, and allowing any other person or organization to prepare work which one then submits as his or her own. For more details see www.cofc.edu/studentaffiars/general_infor/studenthandbook.html.

**COURSE OUTLINE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS**

**SECTION ONE: PROBLEM DEFINITION AND AGENDA SETTING**

**M 10 (M) Introduction**

**M12 (W) Problem Definition**


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<thead>
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<th>Concepts and Questions</th>
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<td>Novelty</td>
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**Briefly identify and explain the characteristics of the drug issue, according to Sharp, account for its persistence on the national agenda.**

**Drawing on Elaine Sharp, explain the role that interest groups play in “keeping contending problem definitions” alive in politics. Be specific.**

**Application Assignment 1 (due before class on Wednesday Mar 12)**

Find a news story from the last two weeks that illustrates how the characteristics of the problem (is it novel? proximate? dramatic?) explain the degree to which decision makers pay attention to it. Define the chosen concepts and explain how the story illustrates the concept.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts and Questions</th>
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<td>Focusing Events</td>
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<td>Indicators</td>
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<td>Feedback</td>
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**Application Assignment 2 (due before class on Wednesday Mar 12)**

Find a news story from the last two weeks that illustrates one of the above concepts. Define the concepts you choose and explain how the story illustrates the concept.

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**M 17 (M) Shaping Problems: Symbols, Causal Stories**

**Reading:** Stone, Deborah, “Stories and Metaphors, from *Policy Paradox*, 2001 (9).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts and Questions</th>
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<tr>
<td>Causal Stories</td>
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<td>Stories (of decline)</td>
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<td>Stories (of helplessness)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Metaphors</td>
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<td>Issue Framing</td>
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**Application Assignment 3 (due before class on Monday Mar 17)**

Explain Stone’s idea of “causal stories” and find a recent example from a news source or party/campaign web site. What kind of “story” is being told? By whom? For what purpose? What might an alternative story look like?

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts and Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The “social construction approach” to target populations</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is an “issue frame” and what issue frames do Rose and Baumgartner uncover in their analysis of news stories?</td>
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<td>How have the issue frames for the poor changed over time? Does this shift have an impact on government spending?</td>
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**Application Assignment 4 (due before class on Monday Mar 17)**

Explain the concept of “issue framing.” Go the website for the Republican National Committee and the Democratic National Committee. Find an issue that both organizations address and compare and contrast the way that issue is “framed.”


**Concepts and Questions**

“domains of the policy process”  
the “scope of conflict”  
grants in aid  
Federalism  
separation of powers

**Application Assignment 5 (due before class on Monday Mar 17)**

What do Baumer and Van Horn mean by “private decision making” and the “privileged position of business” in American politics? Find a recent example from a newspaper or magazine and explain how it illustrates these ideas.

**M 19 (W) Institutional Agendas and the Scope of Conflict**


**Concepts and Questions**

Factions

Why can’t factions be eliminated, but only controlled, according to Madison? Why can’t democracy control factions? What does Madison suggest instead?

**Reading:** Baumer and Van Horn, *Politics and Public Policy*, ch. 2 “Political Culture, Economy, and Public Policy,” (stop page 53) and ch. 3: “Boardroom Politics.”

**Concepts and Questions**

Political culture  
the market paradigm  
TARP  
Privatization/contracting out

Compare and contrast the performance of the US economy in the 25 years after World War II with its performance since then.

Describe the challenges of the “Great Recession” of 2001-2009. What problems linger today?

Describe the degree of government influence over privately held firms, publicly held firms in competitive markets, and government corporations.
M 24 (M) Expanding and Controlling the Scope of Conflict


**Concepts and Questions**
Schattschneider characterizes politics as the "long-standing struggle between the conflicting tendencies toward the privatization and socialization of conflict." Explain this idea.

Reading: Baumer and Van Horn, Politics and Public Policy, ch. 6 Chief Executive Politics,” and ch. 7 “Courtroom Politics.”

**Concepts and Questions**
- Judicial activism “standing”
- Administrative Procedure Act personal v. institutional
- Presidential leadership

Why is the President particularly important when it comes to “agenda-setting? What advantages does he have over Congress in this realm?”

Why is the “power to persuade” especially important for chief executives?

Distinguish between constitutional law, statutory law, and administrative law.

Application Assignment 6 (due before class on Wednesday Mar 19)

Drawing on Baumer and Van Horn, describe the range of effects that corporate policies can have for workers, taxpayers and consumers. Find a recent news story that illustrates some of these effects.

Application Assignment 7 (due before class on Monday Mar 24)

In his recent State of the Union speech, President Obama tried to persuade Congress to take action but he also indicated that he would use his formal powers to act in ways that don’t require Congressional legislation. Review the speech and the Republican rebuttals to the speech. What actions did the President announce? What kind of power is he using? How did the Republican rebuttals react to these Presidential strategies?

M26 (W) EXAM 1

SECTION TWO: POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND POLICY MAKING

M 31 (M) US Social Policy in Comparative Perspective

Reading: Baumer and Van Horn, Politics and Public Policy, pp. 53-57.
Concepts and Questions

How does the US compare to Western European democracies when it comes to levels of taxation, spending, and the adoption of programs that assist those negatively affected by the operations of a market economy?


Concepts and Questions

Externalities

Draw on Shively to identify and explain the disadvantages of markets in providing goods and services. Give a specific, real world example of a government policy or program that is designed to address each of these disadvantages/problems with markets.


Concepts and Questions

The “theory of second best” markets

What is required, according to Kuttner, for markets to allocate goods and services efficiently? Identify and explain each of these requirements.


Concepts and Questions

Graetz and Mashaw discuss the “many reasons for social insurance.” Describe each of these reasons. Which of these do you find the most and least convincing for social insurance? Why?

A 2 (W) Policy Alternatives and the Lost Art of Compromise

Reading: Baumer and Van Horn, Politics and Public Policy, ch. 5: “Cloakroom Politics.”

Concepts and Questions

Symbolic policy incremental v. non-incremental policy change earmarks

How does the division of Congress into committees and subcommittees lead to the formation of issue networks? What advantages does this fragmentation have for powerful interests seeking to stop, or advance, a particular policy?

How does the committee system make reaching consensus on policy in Congress more difficult? How does this increase the need for effective House and Senate leadership?

Compare the explanations of “gridlock” offered by Baumer & Van Horn and Guttman & Thompson.
**Reading:** Troy, Tevi “Devaluing the Think Tank,” *National Affairs*, Winter 2012, 75-90.


**Concepts and Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Brookings Institution</th>
<th>The Hoover Institution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The American Enterprise Institute</td>
<td>The Heritage Foundation</td>
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<td>The Center for American Progress</td>
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How has the shift toward the “advocacy think tank” (or as Troy also calls it, the “do tank”) increased the pressure on policy experts conducting research. What kinds of pressures have increased, from where, and with what effect?

What has been lost in transition from older style think tanks to newer forms such as the Heritage Foundation and the Center for American Progress? What are the potential consequences for the development of policy alternatives?

**Reading:** Gutmann, Amy and Dennis Thompson. 2012. “America’s Crisis of Compromise,” *Salon*, May 9, 2012. (6)

**Concepts and Questions**

Describe American’s ambivalence about the value of compromise. What do Guttmann and Thompson mean buy the need to keep campaigns in their place?

Ap (3) Thursday “The South and the Midterm Elections.” A Faculty Panel Discussion (time and room to be announced).

**Extra Credit Assignment**

Attend and write a 1-2 page report that briefly summarizes the issues discussed and assesses their relevance for either a) the ability of Congress to compromise on legislation, or b) the outlook for the continued execution and development of the Affordable Care Act.

**A 7 (M) Legislative Policy Making: Budget Priorities and The Affordable Care Act**

**Reading:** National Priorities Project Website [www.nationalprioritiesproject.org](http://www.nationalprioritiesproject.org)

**Concepts and Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discretionary spending</th>
<th>Mandatory spending</th>
<th>entitlement programs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medicare</td>
<td>Medicaid</td>
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What is the difference between deficits and debt? Describe the trends in the In what ways is the US health care system “broken,” according to Jacobs and Skocpol. How do they explain how this happened? What changes in the private sector (insurance companies, employers) contributed to the problems?

Review Baumer and Van Horn’s chapter 6 discussion of the nature of Presidential power. Explain how these observations are illustrated by Jacobs and Skocpol’s discussion of “Obama’s Powers—And Their Limits” with respect to health care reform.

Drawing on Jacobs and Skocpol, why did Democrats and Republicans fail to agree on health care legislation? How does this compare to the explanations of “gridlock” offered by Baumer and Van Horn and Guttman and Thompson?

**Application Assignment 8 (due before class on Monday April 7)**

Go to the National Priorities Project website. Use the site to explain the difference between “discretionary” and “mandatory” spending. What proportion of the federal budget is discretionary? What proportion is mandatory? How much of the budget is devoted to health care spending?

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**A 9 (W) Post Passage Politics (the Courts, the Bureaucracy, the Citizens, and the next Congress)**

**Reading:** Jacobs, Lawrence and Theda Skocpol 2013. *Health Care Reform and American Politics* Oxford, ch. 4 (“What Did They Deliver?”)

**Concepts and Questions**

Jacobs and Skocpol lay out the benefits of the ACA that they believe will make the law ever more popular as time goes on. Drawing on news sources describe the most common objections to the law. What explains the fact that people do not agree on what constitutes a “benefit” and what constitutes a “cost.” How do these disagreements illustrate the difference between the tangible and symbolic aspects of politics noted by Murray Edelman?

**Reading:** Jacobs, Lawrence and Theda Skocpol 2013. *Health Care Reform and American Politics* Oxford, ch. 5: ‘Will Health Reform Succeed?’

**Reading:** I will add a reading or web information on developments since the publication of the Jacobs and Skocpol’s book.
** A10 (Thursday) Last Day to drop with a “W” **

** A 14 (M) EXAM 2 **

SECTION THREE: POLICY EXECUTION

A 16 (W) Administrative Policy and Management

Reading: Baumer and Van Horn, Politics and Public Policy, ch. 4: “Bureaucratic Politics.”

Concepts and Questions

On what does success of the ACA now depend, according to Jacobs and Skocpol? Be sure to describe the importance of state governments, lobbyists, and the costs of health care.

Assess Jacobs and Skocpol’s optimism in light of the disastrous roll out of the ACA website. How would you revise their “reasons for optimism” in light of these developments?

Concepts and Questions

Regulation v. service delivery “low game v. high game” policy making

Career administrators v. political appointees/agency heads

Incrementalism The Federal Register

The Government Performance and Results Act of 1993

Rulemaking v. adjudication

What sources of power do Baumer and Van Horn attribute to administrative agencies?


Concepts and Questions

Describe the “horizontal structural fragmentation” of federal agencies and the “siloh effect” it produces. Why is this so poorly suited to advancing sustainability?

Describe the “vertical structural fragmentation” described by the NRC. What are the origins and implications of this kind of fragmentation?

A 21 (W) Regulatory Politics: Commands v. Nudges

**Concepts and Questions**

How does Salamon distinguish between direct and indirect policy tools. Give examples of each.


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**Concepts and Questions**

Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) “choice architecture”

System 1 and System 2 (Kahneman)

What are the main functions of OIRA? What is it about laws passed by Congress that requires rulemaking?

What does Sunstein mean when he refers to “nudges as tools of regulation?” How does he define a “nudge.” Give an example of a nudge.

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**A 23 (W) Contracting, the Voluntary Sector, and Collaboration**


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**Concepts and Questions**

The “hollow state”

What, according to Cohen, should managers (and the elected officials to whom they report) consider when deciding whether or not to “contract out” for services?

Why is it so difficult to monitor the work of a contractor once a contract has been awarded? What advice does Cohen provide to managers?

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**Concepts and Questions**

What are the four types of nonprofit organizations identified by Salamon. Describe the size of the sector, with respect to revenues and employees.

Identify and explain the five functions served by nonprofit organizations.

Concepts and Questions

What is the “paradox of the American health care system,” according to Gray and Schlesinger.

Describe the mix of for-profit and non-profit organizations that provide health care. Why are trustworthiness and professional values especially important in providing health care? Why are these thought to be more dependably present in nonprofit health care organizations.


Concepts and Questions

How does Firehock define “community based collaboration?”


Concepts and Questions

What does Eggers mean by a “command and control” approach? What specific limitations of the command and control approach to environmental issues does he identify?

How is the collaborative partnership that emerged to clean up the Detroit River different from a command and control approach?

A 25 (F) FINAL EXAM