

Political Science 3413
POLITICS AND PUBLIC POLICYMAKING

Trinity University
Department of Political Science
Spring 2021

Instructor:	Jesse M. Crosson	Class Time:	Tues./Thurs., 12:45 to 2:00 PM
Office:	Storch 105	Class Location:	Storch 103 / Zoom
Email:	jcrosson@trinity.edu	Office Hours:	Wed. 9-12:00, 2-5:00; & by appt.

Course Description:

Among the most fundamental purposes of a government is to establish policies to structure the public activities of citizens. As one philosopher has famously argued, public life would be “nasty, brutish, and short” without public rules and dictates by which all must abide. However, because public policy is, well, *public*—meaning that it affects *all* citizens (though not necessarily equally)—it is no small feat or minor task to craft new policies. Indeed, every policy creates winners and losers, making conflict all but guaranteed within the policymaking process. As a result, while public policy attracts some of the most brilliant minds in economics, public health, geoscience, psychology, sociology, and many other fields, it is ultimately *politics*—the study of power—which explains which policies become law, and which merely sound nice on paper.

This course will equip you to analyze and understand the political realities of public policymaking in the United States. The first portion of the semester will equip you with a basic framework for understanding the politics of American policymaking, and it will give you a sense about how to identify relevant “players” in a given policy fight. With these tools, we will next learn about the agenda-setting process, investigating how “problems” are identified, which problems receive attention (and why), and how media and publicity complicate both problem identification and problem attention. Finally, we will delve deeply into the policymaking process, examining how different institutional structures, political motivations, levels of public scrutiny, and monetary resources influence how policy is made, when it changes, and why it changes.

In addition to providing you with important knowledge about the policymaking process, my aim is that our class will hone your analytical skills and sharpen your instincts. As a result, our course materials have been carefully selected from a variety of sources, including textbooks, original research, current events, and more. Additionally, as you’ll see, this course features 5 “pauses,” wherein you will *practice* the principles you have learned in class. Through a series of practicums, you will gain experience applying the lessons learned in class, deepening both your knowledge and skill in political practice.

I am excited for what I believe will be an engaging and enjoyable semester for all of us. However, I wish to make two points clear. First, this is NOT a class that will cover the specifics of individual policies, or that will assess the relative pros and cons of particular policy interests. I am not an expert on environmental, health, climate, social, or transportation policy. I am, however, an expert on politics and *policy making*, and I intend on engaging you in that subject material! If you are interested in policy specifics, that is perfectly fine and necessary; however, other professors (and departments) are likely going to be better-suited to provide that subject material. Second, this class is, in many ways, uncommonly diverse in the student body it attracts. Some of you are political science majors, some are environmental policy majors, others study international affairs, and still others major in urban studies. Consequently, I have designed this course to be applicable to as many policymaking bodies as possible, at least within the United States. The vast majority of the lessons we learn will apply at all levels of government. Moreover, as you think through policymaking strategy, my hope is that you will learn to harness America’s federal system as a *tool* for achieving your policy aims.

Required Texts:

None!

Course Pages:

All course materials, including all readings, can be found on this course’s TLearn site. Please check the site regularly, as I will be provided announcements and updates via that channel.

Prerequisites: Introduction to American Politics, or an equivalent course, is preferred but not required.

Grades and Assessment:

Class Participation and Attendance	15%
Midterm Exam	15%
Policymaking Practicums (x4)	10%
Primary Policymaking Practicum	15%
Final Exam	15%

Attendance and Participation

You are expected to come to class every day. However, I understand that life happens (especially in the current climate!), so I will grant **two** no-questions-asked absences this semester. After that, students lose .5% from their participation/attendance grade for each additional absence. If you have a legitimate reason to miss more than two classes (such as a sickness), you will need written documentation. To protect community health, Trinity is urging students to request an excused absence by informing instructors of the illness via email. Students must adhere to University health and wellness procedures for self-evaluation, follow-up, and quarantine as necessary. Please note that untruthful student claims about illness may be regarded as a violation of the Academic Honor Code, which prohibits “falsification of academic records.” In cases *other* than sickness, I will require written documentation from someone other than the absent student. Please feel free to send any questions you may have about this policy.

Beyond attendance, your attendance/participation grade is governed by how active and involved you are in class. First and foremost, *you are expected to come to class prepared!* This means that you have done all of the readings and written down any questions you are hoping to have answered. If everyone does this, our in-class discussions will prove much more enjoyable, engaging, and informative. In my intro courses, I incentivize preparedness via reading quizzes. Since most/all of you have ample experience in college, however, I do not believe that is necessary for this course. Nevertheless, if it appears that a large portion of the class consistently underprepares, I always have quizzes at the ready! In that event, reading quizzes will constitute one-half of your participation/attendance grade.

In order to receive full participation credit, each student must make *an average of one well-formulated, considerate contribution (answer to a question, posing a good question, etc.) per class*. At the midpoint of the semester, I will inform you of where you stand regarding attendance/participation. At that time, if you appear to be falling behind, we may speak about strategies to generate opportunities for easy participation. I recognize that speaking in front of your peers and instructor may seem intimidating, and I have a wide variety of strategies for aiding students who struggle in this regard. Even if I do not seek out a meeting with you specifically, you should *always* feel free to discuss these strategies with me during office hours!

Midterm Exam

This exam will cover material presented in class from Module 1 to Module 6. It will be a mix of multiple choice questions and one long-form essay. Some of the questions will test basic factual recall, but most of

the questions will require you to understand the mechanics of a theory or feature of legislative politics and apply it to a new situation.

I will organize an optional midterm exam study session before the exam date (TBD). Prior to that study session, I will circulate a list of course concepts that could appear on the exam. Your job is study the concepts on that document *ahead of time* and come prepared to ask specific questions about those concepts. Consequently, the review session is as useful as you make it: the more work you put in ahead of time, the greater benefit it will provide!

Policymaking Practicums

A major goal of this course is to give you practical skills in strategically formulating and advocating for real public policies. This requires you to engaging experientially with the theoretical frameworks, empirical regularities, and practical political considerations we will discuss in class. Consequently, a key feature of this course will be a series of practicums, which will give you practice interacting with various portions of the policymaking process. The first three of these assignments will be done individually. For these projects, you will write out your response in essay form. Additionally, we will be selecting a random sample of 10 students to **present** their responses and answer questions from your peers. By the end of the semester, *every student will have to have presented their work at least once*. You will not be graded on the presentation component; however, you will automatically be granted participation credit for that class period.

For our practicum series, you will be role-playing: that is, you'll be playing the part of a lobbyist for some interest/group who is trying to encourage (or discourage) some kind of policy change at the local, state, or federal levels of government. The policy area will be up to you: there are truly no limits to what you can choose, provided that it is actually an issue over which the government has jurisdiction. However, choose your issue area wisely, as you must stay committed to it for at least the first three practicums.

Practicum 1: Understanding Issue Politics

One of the first political/analytical tools you'll learn this semester is called the "interest group matrix." This simple-but-useful tool enables an analyst to get a handle on what "kind" of politics s/he should expect to encounter on a political issue. We will discuss this tool at length in class, and in the following class, you will apply that tool to your chosen issue in Practicum 1. In 1,000 words, you'll introduce your chosen policy change, identify the type of politics you plan to encounter, detail who your supporters and opponents will be likely to be, and speculate on which politics you could most realistically switch to.

Come to class prepared to defend your answers. In class, the randomly selected 10 students will spend roughly 2 minutes introducing their topic to the class and 2 minutes presenting their political assessment. Finally, students will spend 2 minutes answering questions from the class about their issue and, more importantly, their political assessment.

Practicum 2: Publicity/Traceability

For this practicum, you will develop a 750-word press release related to your topic. In this case, you'll be writing the release for a politician whom you've convinced to take up your issue. In writing the press release, you'll consider the member's reelection aims, the positive and negative aspects of your issue (with respect to "optics"), and perhaps most importantly, the level of traceability you want to achieve for the policy. On this last point, you will weigh the benefits and costs of publicity, as well as strategize about how best to achieve the publicity you hope to achieve. An important part of these considerations will be the *level of government* that you believe to be most appropriate for your issue area. Not only is this important from a legal/jurisdictional perspective, but it also will affect the "natural" level of salience and traceability your policy change is likely to engender.

In class, the 10 selected students will present their press release in the style of an opening statement for a press conference. Thus, the other students in the class will be acting as political journalists, asking probing questions of the presenter. Here again, this presentation is not part of your grade for the assignment, and you will receive participation credit for presenting.

Practicum 3: Coalition-Building

As we will learn in class, support (and opposition) coalitions are vital to the success and failure of policy initiatives. For this practicum, in 750 words, you will detail a plan identifying who you hope to bring into your policy coalition, why you have chosen these interests, how you will go about convincing them, and how you will balance message clarity with coalitional unity.

In class, the 10 selected students will again act as a lobbyist, but this time in front of a board of partners at our collective lobbying firm. Just as partners would do, the class's job will be to interrogate the presenter's proposed strategy. Same grading/participation rules apply.

Practicum 4: Negotiation

Sometimes, or most of the time, we lack the institutional or formal power necessary to compel others to serve our goals. In these situations, we must rely on informal means for power-sharing, such as negotiation, in order to achieve our ends. After learning basic principles of negotiation in class, you will practice your negotiation skills in a 750 word assignment, which will require you to spell out a negotiation plan relating to some stage of the policymaking process (most likely toward the end of the process). This plan will not only include your planned actions, but it will also detail how you anticipate that your adversary will respond.

As usual, 10 students will be selected to present their plans in class. The rest of the class will constructively critique the plan by sharing how they might respond if the tactic were used on them. Same grading/participation rules apply.

Final Practicum: Mock Committee Hearing

For the final practicum of the class, you will pair off, based on the similarity of your chosen policy topics. Then, after settling on a revised topic (some combination of both partners' topics), you will put together a plan for making your policy a reality. In particular, you will settle on a plan and make a presentation to the class, designed at convincing the class to pass your policy into law. Depending on your targeted level of government, the class will play the part of a key set of relevant political actors: a city council, a state legislative committee, a committee in the U.S. Congress, or a board of regulators in an executive branch. Each pair will prepare a 6-minute video presentation that lays out the policy and political advantages of your proposed policy. You will then field 5 minutes of questions from your peers (and me). At the end of the five minutes, your classmates will offer an assessment of your performance, which will be factored into your final assignment grade.

I will have MANY more details about this when the time comes, but be thinking about the assignment as the semester progresses!

Final Exam

The final exam will be identical in format to the midterm exam, and it will not be cumulative. I will again circulate a study sheet of key terms, and we will hold a study session during the reading days.

Schedule and weekly learning goals

The schedule is tentative and subject to change. Please note that **all readings listed with each date should be completed by the date under which they are listed!** To guide your reading, please refer to the reflection questions posted at the beginning of the week.

As you'll see, the semester is segmented into three main units: the basics of policy, politics, and policymaking, problem definition and agenda-setting, and the policymaking process. The course is designed to build an analytical foundation for you at the outset, and then guide you through the policymaking process with that foundation. In the first portion of the course, you'll learn the differences between good policy and good politics, how institutions lay the foundation for politics, and how interest group politics render issue battles systematically different. In short, you'll learn how to analyze the political landscape surrounding a policy—hopefully to your strategic advantage in the latter portions of the course. In these portions, you'll learn about the challenges of policymaking, including how to get one's idea onto the “agenda,” the power of framing, and the constraints that institutional realities place on a policy's feasibility. The course will conclude with a deep dive into the actual policymaking process—including processes at all levels of government.

Each unit is organized into a series of “modules”—some of which last a week, others longer. These will be split into separate topics, and the readings will be a mix of textbook-style readings (to give a ‘lay of the land’), as well as actual research on the topic, and/or a current event story that is relevant to the topic at hand. Regardless of the individual readings we discuss, class discussion will be crucial for deep engagement with the course material. Please come prepared, as class will always be more enjoyable when it involves lively conversation.

Unit 1: The Basics of Politics and Policymaking

Module 1: What is public policy? What is policymaking?

What are public goods, and how do they differ from private goods? To what goals should public policy aspire? What main factors drive the politics of the policymaking process?

Tuesday, January 26: Course Intro and Basics of Policy

- **Assignment:** Pick a policy topic before next Tuesday (February 2).

Thursday, January 28: Basics of Policymaking

- Stone, *Policy Paradox*, pp. 1-9, 19-22
- Cameron, *The Political Analyst's Toolkit*, Chapter 2.

Module 2: Political Fundamentals

What fundamental features of American politics shape public policymaking? How and why do politics differ from issue to issue? What is an interest group, and why are they so central to public policy? What are the fundamental motivations of politicians?

Tuesday, February 2: Issue Politics

- Cameron, Chapter 3
- Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (Excerpt)

*Thursday, February 4: **Practicum on Issue Politics***

Tuesday, February 9: Institutions in American Politics

- U.S. Constitution (skim)
- Texas State Constitution (skim... the Table of Contents!)
- City Charter of San Antonio (skim)
- *Federalist* No. 39
- *Federalist* No. 51
- Donovan et al., *State & Local Politics*, pp. 1-33

Unit 2: Problem Definition and Agenda-Setting

Module 3: Problem Definition: How are policy problems identified?

Which societal challenges are identified as “problems?” Why? Why are they considered ‘problematic?’ How can ordinary citizens contribute to problem identification?

Thursday, February 11: Mobilization – Who is politically active?

- Cameron, Chapter 4 (pp. 2-11, 24-34)
- Wasow, “Agenda Seeding,” *American Political Science Review*.

Tuesday, February 16: Representation and Problem Definition

- Carnes, *Cash Ceiling*, Chapter 1
- Mansbridge, “Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women?” *Journal of Politics*.

Module 4 Information and the Agenda: What Gets Talked About?

Once problems are identified, which are “talked about” and why? What role do the media and other elites play? Why is framing an important part of agenda-setting? Under what conditions is attention or publicity good versus bad for the policy entrepreneur?

Thursday, February 18: Elites and Framing

- Cameron, Chapter 9.
- DiAlto, “From ‘Problem’ Minority to ‘Model’ Minority.”
- Schattschneider, *Semisovereign People*, pp. 1-19, 60-73.

Thursday, February 25: Identity and the Power of Framing and Priming

- Achen and Bartels, *Democracy for Realists*, Chapter 9.
- Pride, “How Activists and Media Frame Social Problems.”
- Rogers, “Accountability in American Legislatures.”
- Arnold, *The Logic of Congressional Action*, Chapter 5.

*Tuesday, March 2: **Practicum on Publicity***

Module 5 Institutions and the Agenda: What Gets Acted Upon?

Which ideas ultimately receive real policymaking attention and action? What role do institutional structures play in this process? What role do parties and interest groups play? How might these factors differ within different levels of government?

Thursday, March 4: Institutional Realities and Talk versus Action

- Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, Chapter 5.
- Sulkin, *Issue Politics in Congress*, Chapter 5.
- Cox, Kousser, and McCubbins, “Party Power or Preferences?”

Tuesday, March 9: Extra-Institutional Drivers of Agenda Attention

- Baumgartner et al., *Lobbying and Policy Change*, Chapter 4.
- Lorenz, “Prioritized Interests,” *Journal of Politics*.
- Gerber, “Pressuring Legislatures through the Use of Initiatives.”

Thursday, March 11: Practicum on Coalition-Building

- Leavitt and McKeown, Introduction and Chapter 1
- Cameron, Chapter 10

Unit 3: Making Policy in the U.S.

Module 6 Where is policy made?

When new policies are created, who does the work of writing them? How does America’s federal system complicate policymaking responsibility? How do the forces of expertise and specialization coexist and clash with modern patterns of partisan warfare and ideological polarization?

Tuesday, March 16: Specialization and Policy Jurisdiction

- Donovan et al., pp. 45-63
- Hall and Deardorff, “Lobbying as Legislative Subsidy,” *American Political Science Review*.
- Hall, *Participation in Congress*, Excerpt TBD.

Thursday, March 18: Party Competition, Polarization and Policymaking

- Curry, *Legislating in the Dark*, Chapter 2.
- Mason, “I Disrespectfully Agree,” *American Journal of Political Science*.
- Rogers, “National Forces in State Legislative Elections.”

Midterm Exam: Tuesday, March 23 (in class)

Module 7 When Does Policy Change?

What is a “policy window,” and when does it open? What factors govern the feasibility of individual policy changes, and why is policy change so difficult in American politics?

Thursday, March 25: Policy Windows, Veto Players, and Institutional Features

- Kingdon, Chapters 8 and 9
- Tsebelis, *Veto Players*, Chapter 7
- Crosson, “Stalemate in the States,” *Legislative Studies Quarterly*.

Tuesday, March 30: Interest Groups and Policy Change

- Baumgartner et al., Chapter 10
- Richter et al., “Lobbying and Taxes.”

Module 8 From Where Do Policy Ideas Come?

How and where do policy solutions originate? How does the status quo affect what is believed to be possible and impossible? What role to interest groups play?

Thursday, April 1: Path Dependence

- Peters and King, “The Politics of Path Dependency.”
- Jones et al., “Policy Punctuations in American Political Institutions.”
- Adler and Wilkerson, *Congress and the Politics of Problem-Solving*, Chapter 8.

Tuesday, April 6: Idea Creation

- Stone, pp. 271-279, 291-300, 305-307.
- Furnas, “Biasing Their Bosses.”
- Ball, “The Fall of the Heritage Foundation,” *The Atlantic*.

Module 9 Implementation and Public Administration

Once policy is changed, how is it implemented? How does politics affect this process? What motivates those who implement policy, even when they are unelected?

Thursday, April 8: The Basics of Bureaucracy

- Cameron, Chapter 13
- Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, pp. 113-136, 75-83 (read in this order)

Tuesday, April 13: Strategies for Legislative-Executive Interplay

- Huber and Shipan, *Deliberate Discretion*, Excerpt TBD.
- Cameron, Chapter 12

Module 10 Management and Negotiation

How do political actors in management positions encourage those around them to execute policies faithfully?

Tuesday, April 20: Public Management

- Wilson, pp. 154-171, 202-205
- Roberts, *The Modern Firm*, pp. 1-30.

Thursday, April 22: Principles of Negotiation

- *Negotiation Genius*, Chapter 1.
- Princeton School of Public Policy, “Taking on a Pharmaceutical Giant”

*Tuesday, April 27: **Negotiation Practicum***

Semester Wrap-up

Thursday, April 29: Catch-up and Hearing Preparation

*Tuesday/Thursday, May 1-3, **Final Practicum: Mock Committee Hearings***

Late Policy

Late papers will be penalized one letter grade every day they are late. Papers will *not* be accepted more than 3 days late.

Classroom Environment

Please note that the classroom is a space where participation of all students is welcome, protected, and expected, regardless of differences in race, sex, gender, nationality, disability, religion, ideology, or otherwise. Students will be respectful of each other both during section and while completing any assignment outside of class that requires group interaction. As noted above, I recognize that political science is a discipline in which we discuss ideologies, viewpoints, and situations about which reasonable people may passionately disagree. Being the case, I ask that you display the utmost respect for fellow peers and their ideas during class. If at any point you fail to treat one another with such respect, I reserve the right to deduct from your daily participation grade.

Please let me know if you feel the classroom lose such a level of respect at any time, so that we can address your concerns. Additionally, if you feel that your views are being disrespected in outside-the-classroom interactions related to this course, please do not hesitate to speak with me.

Cell Phones and Laptops

To limit disruptions, please turn off your cell phone when you come to class. If your cell phone does ring, I will ask you to turn it off and put it away. Repeated issues with cell phones will result in decreases in your participation grade. In fairness, if my cellphone goes off during class, I will bring doughnuts from Dom's Bakery in Ypsilanti to the following session. If you are expecting an important phone call during section, please get in touch with me before class and we can arrange something. Text messaging is not permitted.

I have no problem with you using your laptop to take notes. However, if you do choose to use your computer, I ask that you please sit towards the front of the classroom and refrain from browsing Facebook / other social media, or otherwise distracting yourself with your computer. Doing so may affect your participation grade.

University Policies

Honor Code

All students are covered by a policy that prohibits dishonesty in academic work. Under the Honor Code, a faculty member will (or a student may) report an alleged violation to the Academic Honor Council. It is the task of the Council to investigate, adjudicate, and assign a punishment within certain guidelines if a violation has been verified. Students are required to pledge all written work that is submitted for a grade: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received any unauthorized assistance on this work" and their signature. The pledge may be abbreviated "pledge" with a signature.

Title IX/Sexual Misconduct Reporting

As a Responsible Employee who is committed to creating an environment where every member of our community can thrive, I want to let you know that I am a Mandatory Reporter. What that means is that I am required to report any instances of sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment, non-consensual sexual intercourse, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual exploitation, intimate partner violence, stalking, and related retaliation that I am aware of to the Title IX Coordinator. So, if you share information with me about any incidents that implicate the Sexual Misconduct or Anti-Harassment Policies, I am required to report all information to the Title IX Coordinator to make sure you have information about support resources and complaint resolution options. My report does not initiate the complaint process, and you are in control over how you choose to engage with our Title IX Coordinator. If you or someone you know

has experienced sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment, I encourage you to share this information directly with the Title IX Coordinator or one of the individuals who has been designated as a confidential resource on campus. Information about reporting is available here: [Reporting](#).

Electronic Recordings of Classroom Instruction

The COVID-19 pandemic requires the delivery of online instruction. For this reason, please be aware that all classroom instruction, including student participation in classroom activities, is subject to recording and dissemination on the University's secure course management system (T-Learn). The recordings will be made available only to students enrolled in the course to facilitate online learning and review. Students are expressly prohibited from capturing or copying classroom recordings by any means; violations will be subject to disciplinary action. Instructors who wish to use a recording outside of class must obtain the written consent of any students who are personally identifiable in the recording.

Required Video Sharing/Online Proctoring

As part of this course, you will be required to use Respondus Monitor or a similar tool on your computer while taking exams. This software allows for online proctoring by monitoring individuals on their computer webcam, as well as video analytics to identify potential cheating. Any recordings will be treated as an education record subject to FERPA protections.

Contacting Me

My office, office hours, and e-mail can be located at the top of the syllabus. The best way to contact me is to come to office hours (or by scheduling an appointment if necessary). Office hours are intended as a resource for you; they are a time where we can discuss questions about the material, assignments, or your experience in class. You can also contact me through e-mail. I will respond to e-mails within 24 hours on a weekday and within 48 hours on the weekend and holidays. As you might expect, an e-mail sent during school hours will have a faster turnaround than an e-mail sent at 2 a.m. the night before an exam. If you wish to contact me this way, please include "PLSI 3405" in the subject line of the e-mail.