

PAD 680.61
Public Policy
Prof. Gregory Saxton, PhD

Class Hours: Tues. 5:30 – 8:30pm, Metro Center
Instructor's Office: Faculty Office Building, Room 241
Office Hours: One hour before and after class (and by appointment)
Office Telephone: 395-5564
E-mail: gsaxton@brockport.edu

Overview of the Course

This course is designed to introduce the MPA student to the study of public policy and the practice of policy analysis. In particular, the course examines the various methods of identifying and structuring public policy problems and issues, formulating and analyzing alternative responses, recommending policy actions for decision making, and designing and evaluating implementation plans and the means to monitor and evaluate the resulting policy outcomes.

More generally, the course focuses attention on understanding public policy and conducting analysis in a political/administrative environment. The intent is to develop an understanding and capacity to use systematic analytic tools and concepts to improve the quality of decision making in the public sector. Specifically, the course emphasizes:

- Problem identification and definition—how an issue becomes part of the policy agenda and how it is framed.
- The identification and design of policy options and programs.
- The pre-decision assessment of policy options and programs with emphasis on estimating future consequences.
- How to give advice on important policy decisions.
- The post-implementation evaluation of policies and programs.

Through this examination, you will gain an appreciation for both the complexity of the policy-making process and the powerful role that public administrators play in that process. Along the way, a number of fundamental questions are examined: What are the various rationales for public policies? What are the possibilities and limitations of government action? What are the generic instruments of public policy? What are the most important “roadblocks” to successful policy outcomes? What are the appropriate roles for policy analysts and administrators in democratic societies? In answering these questions, we seek to enhance our understanding of the most salient issues in contemporary American and international public policy and to improve our basic skills in analytical thinking, information gathering, the use of technology, and oral and written communication.

Course Objectives and Outcomes

The material in this course reflects the MPA program's mission to combine the conceptual and practical application of administrative knowledge (Mission element #1A); to develop an awareness of professional ethics, diversity and globalism (Mission element #1B); and to improve skills in information technology (Mission element #2B).

The over-riding objective of this course is to improve your problem-solving and analytical-thinking skills via a critical examination of the policymaking process. The goal is that this will both enhance understanding and strengthen administrative skills in dealing with the policy process. Students who have participated fully in the course readings and class discussions should also come away with a basic understanding of the intellectual foundations of the field, of the various roles and responsibilities of the public administrator in the policy process at the local, state and federal levels, and of the historical framework and current trends that structure and inform the field.

This course is further designed to help you augment your administrative skills in several specific ways. First and foremost, you will develop a set of analytical tools for designing and evaluating existing and potential public policies. You will also enhance skills in conducting research in public policy—especially using the library databases and the Internet to find information on pressing policy questions and contemporary policy debates. Through your research, you will also learn how to write a policy memorandum and work in a team to conduct a thorough policy analysis. Lastly, through the course assignments and class discussions, the goal is that you significantly enhance your oral and written communication skills.

Course Materials

- Peters, B. Guy. 1999. *American Public Policy: Promise and Performance*. 5th ed. Chatham.
- Readings marked with a double asterisk (“**”) are available through Electronic Reserves.
- [Class web page] indicates that the reading is available via the course web page.

Course Web Page <http://www.acs.brockport.edu/~gsaxton/pad680.htm>

This page contains an electronic version of the syllabus through which electronic readings are accessible. All updates on course material will also be available at this site. A variety of miscellaneous and research tools are also available.

Methods of Instruction

This course integrates a variety of active learning techniques into the seminar format, including case studies, group discussions, debates, student presentations and simulations.

Assignments & Grading

Participation

Active participation in the classroom is an essential element of all graduate classes. For optimal discussion to occur, it is imperative that you develop ideas and ask questions that are relevant to the subject matter. Such participation is difficult, however, unless you come to class prepared. In order to do well, you must complete all assigned readings and come to class ready to participate. Your classmates and I will evaluate your participation at the end of the semester.

Tests

There will be two tests in total—an in-class mid-term on October 9th and a take-home final due on the 11th of December.

Case Study Presentation

Each student (either individually or in groups) will be required to prepare a 15-minute presentation on one of the cases to be discussed during one of the class sessions.

Policy Memorandum (Exercise 1: Local Policymaking Meeting Summary)

For all of the policy memoranda the assumption is that you are employed as a policy analyst in any public organization of your choosing. In this first exercise, your employer wants you to attend a local public policy-making meeting and report on the activities of this meeting in a 2-3 page memorandum. You may choose from any meeting of the County, City, Town, Village or similar legislative body. Due anytime, but no later than November 20th.

Policy Memorandum (Exercise 2: Gauging Support)

In this second exercise, in your capacity as policy analyst you are asked to conduct a rapid analysis on a specific policy issue. Your employer wants to know, in 2-3 pages, both the array of different “sides” on the issue and the extent of public support for each of the various alternatives. You will base your conclusions on the evidence you gather from at least 10 public policy sites on the Internet. Due September 11th.

Policy Memorandum (Exercise 3: Giving Advice)

In this exercise, your organization is faced with growing external pressure to adopt a new policy. Your employer wants you to give advice (in 2 pages) on whether the new policy should be embraced or not. Due October 30th.

Policy Memorandum (Exercise 4: Evaluating Options & Recommendation)

Later in the semester you will be assigned to a group of 4-5 people. Each group will be given a policy problem to investigate. Your group paper will involve an analysis of at least 3 distinct policy options that could potentially solve the problem. Your goal is to explain which policy option you think offers the best and most politically feasible solution. At a minimum, this evaluation should discuss (1) the policy goals you have determined are appropriate, (2) which criteria and measures you have used to compare the alternatives, (3) an estimate of the outcomes of each policy alternative, and (4) an analysis of the stakeholders potentially impacted by each of your options. This group paper should be 12-15 pages in length. Due November 27th.

***A note on all written assignments. I expect that papers will be original work, clearly written, well organized, grammatically correct and free from typographical and spelling errors.

10%	Case Presentation	
15%	Class Participation	
20%	Mid-Term Exam	(October 9 th)
20%	Final Exam	(December 11 th)
	Policy Memo #1 — Local Policymaking Visit	(Due anytime before November 20 th)
20%	Policy Memo #2 — Internet Research	(September 11 th)
	Policy Memo #3 — Giving Advice	(October 30 th)
15%	Policy Memo #4 — Group Policy Analysis	(November 27 th)

Grading Scale

85% - 100% = A

80% - 84.9% = A-

75% - 79.9% = B+

70% - 74.9% = B

60% - 69.9% = C

Below 60% = E

Make-up Policy

Make-up exams will be given only to students with medical or personal emergencies with appropriate documentation. If an emergency arises, you need to contact me *before* the exam. I will be strict on this policy. If you fail to communicate with me (in person, via e-mail, or voice mail) prior to the exam, you will receive a grade of 0 for that exam. The make-up exam will be different and more difficult than the original, scheduled exam. There will be no make-up for in-class exercises or the class presentation.

Late Papers

Papers are due at *the start* of class on the due date. Papers that are turned in after this will receive an immediate penalty of 5%, with an additional 5% penalty per day.

Classroom Etiquette and Attendance

You are expected to attend class regularly and take notes. A large segment of the exams is taken from the mini-lectures and seminar discussions, and we will often deal with material that is not covered in the readings. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to get the notes from a classmate. It would also be a good idea to come and discuss the class material you have missed, once you have acquired the notes from one of your classmates. As an added reminder, outstanding class participation might bump you up part of a grade, while showing up late and missing classes will result in deductions from your participation grade.

Miscellaneous

As your instructor, I want to make this course accessible for everyone. I will, accordingly, strive to provide a reasonable accommodation to any individual who advises me of a physical or mental disability. If you have a limitation that requires an academic adjustment or accommodation, please arrange a meeting with me at your earliest convenience.

Case Studies

During most class sessions during the semester we will examine a unique case relevant to that session's material (normally during the second half of class). One student (or group of students) will be responsible for conducting a brief, 10-15 minute, presentation introducing the case and touching on the key questions implied by the case. The rest of the class will be responsible for reading and thinking about the case.

Schedule of Topics

August 28: Overview of Class and Introduction to Public Policy

- Introduction to the course and to each other. Review syllabus, schedule of assignments, and expectations for the course.
-

—PART (A): Understanding Public Policymaking—

September 4: What is Public Policy? Raisons d'être of Public Policies

- What are the *raisons d'être* of government actions in the social and economic marketplace? That is, why do we have public policies in the first place?
- Government and Market Failures
- Equity vs. efficiency as goals of public policy
- The *context* of public policies

Required Readings:

- Peters, Preface and Chapters 1,2: *What is Public Policy?* and *The Structure of Policymaking*
 - Deborah Stone. 1997. *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making*. Chapter 2: "Equity." [Class web page]
-

September 11: Models of Public Policy

- In this session we will look at a variety of models, analogies, lenses and frames for understanding public policies and public policy-making.
- *Memo #2* is due today at the beginning of class.

Required Readings:

** Bobrow, Davis S. and John S. Dryzek. 1987. *Policy Analysis By Design*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press. Chapter 1: "Reconsidering the Policy Field." 3-23.

- Thomas R. Dye. 1998. *Understanding Public Policy*.
 - Chapter 2: "Models of Politics." 13 – 38. [Class web page]

CASE:

- "PUGET SOUND WATER QUALITY AUTHORITY." [Class web page]
-

September 18: The Policy Process: Issue Identification, Agenda-Setting & Formulation

- These three stages of the process are vital—they effectively establish the parameters for any additional consideration of a policy. If an issue cannot be placed on the agenda, for example, it cannot be considered and nothing further will happen.
- We will also examine the most important actors involved in formulating policy.

Required Readings:

- Peters, Chapter 3: *Agenda Setting and Policy Formulation*
- Schneider, Anne and Helen Ingram. 1993. “Social Construction of Target Populations: Implications for Politics and Policy.” *American Political Science Review* 87 (2): 334-47 [Class web page]
- Portz, John. 1996. “Problem Definitions and Policy Agendas: Shaping the Educational Agenda in Boston.” *Policy Studies Journal* 24(3): 371-86. [Class web page]

CASE:

- “LEAD POISONING” [Class web page]
-

September 25: The Policy Process: Legitimation, Adoption and Budgeting

- Budgeting is one of the most complex—and crucial—components of the policy process. In order to successfully navigate this process, it is essential to understand the political elements of budgeting at all levels of governance.

Required Readings:

- Peters, Chapter 4: *Legitimizing Policy Choices*
- Peters, Chapter 6: *Budgeting*
- ** Balanoff, Howard R. and Charles W. Pinto. 2001. “What Do You Do When Your City is Looking at a Million-Dollar Deficit in the Current Fiscal Year?” [Article 21] *Annual Editions: Public Administration*. Guilford, CT: McGraw-Hill. 108-111.
- ** “What’s Wrong and What Should be Done?” [Article 22] *Annual Editions: Public Administration*. Guilford, CT: McGraw-Hill. 112-115.
- ** *National Budget Simulation* [Link on class web page]

CASE:

- SEVEN LETTERS [Class web page]
-

October 2: The Policy Process: Implementation

- Policies designed in Washington, DC often fail in, say, Rochester. Why is this so? This week we will examine some of the most important obstacles that policy-makers and administrators face while attempting to implement public policies.

Required Readings:

- Peters, Chapter 5: *Organizations and Implementation*
- Michael Lipsky. 1980. "Street-Level Bureaucracy." [Class web page]
- ** O'Toole, Laurence J., Jr. 1996. "Implementing Public Programs." *Handbook of Public Administration*. 2nd ed. James L. Perry, ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. 250-62.

Recommended Reading:

- Starling, Chapter 9: *Implementation and Evaluation*

CASE:

- IMPLEMENTING A NEW DRUG AND ALCOHOL TREATMENT MODEL IN SACRAMENTO COUNTY [Class web page]

October 9: **Mid-Term Exam** (In-Class)

October 16: Mid-Semester Break—Classes Cancelled

—PART (B): Policy Analysis and Evaluation—

October 23: Evaluation and Termination

- After being implemented, the vast majority of organizations are interested in whether the program achieved its objectives. This is where policy and program policy evaluation come into play.
- Evaluation also requires a more specific set of theoretical and methodological tools. Here you will be introduced to some of the core skills of "policy analysis."

Required Readings:

- Peters, Chapter 7: *Evaluation and Policy Change*.
- General Accounting Office. 1991. *Designing Evaluations*. [Class web page → may also be order free from www.gao.gov]
- Quinet & Nunn. 1998. "Illuminating Crime: The Impact of Street Lighting on Calls for Police Service." *Evaluation Review* 22: 751-779.

CASE:

- THE MARINE RESOURCES DIVISION AND THE SHRIMP BAITING CONTROVERSY [Class web page]
-

October 30: Policy Analysis: Types of Responses and Administrators' Roles

- A continued look at conducting policy analysis.
- *Memo #3* due at the beginning of class.

Required Readings:

- Arnold J. Meltsner. 1986. "The Seven Deadly Sins of Policy Analysts." [Class web page]
- Bardach, Eugene. *Policy Analysis: A Handbook for Action*. [Class web page]
- ** W & V, Chapter 6: "Landing on Your Feet: How to Confront Policy Problems." 179-238.

Recommended Readings:

- W & V, Chapter 9: "A Stylized Analysis: Canadian Airport Deregulation." 323-335. → example of a policy analysis paper.
- Rhoads, Steven E. 1978. "Economists and Policy Analysis." *Public Administration Review* (March/April): 112-119.
- "How to Write a Policy Memos." A collection of brief articles on the proper format for writing policy memos and writing in general. Includes sample memos. [Class web page]

CASE:

- POLITICS OF ESTABLISHING THE URBAN GROWTH AREAS IN ST. CLAIRE COUNTY. [Class web page]
-

November 6: Policy Analysis: Ethics and Tools for Policy Analysis

- An introduction to cost-benefit analysis and some of the other requisite tools of policy analysis.
- We will also explore the topic of ethics and the policy analyst

Required Readings:

- Peters, Chapter 15: *Cost-Benefit Analysis*
- Peters, Chapter 16: *Ethical Analysis of Public Policy*.
- *Electronic Hallway Case: INTERVIEW WITH AL ZUCK*. [Class web page]

CASE:

- POLICY DILEMMAS AT THE SEATTLE SOLID WASTE UTILITY [Class web page]
-

November 13: No Class Session → Attend Local Policy Meeting

- In lieu of this class session, you will be required to attend a meeting of the County, City, Town, Village or similar legislative body. Give me a brief report on this meeting. This report will include the time and date of the meeting and your observations. A copy of the agenda would be helpful. Due anytime, but no later than November 20th.

—PART (C): Substantive Policy Issue Areas—

November 20: Environmental Policy

- Here we will look at environmental issues from a variety of theoretical and ideological perspectives.

Required Readings:

- Peters, Chapter 13: *Energy and the Environment*
- “The Economics of Recycling: Is it Worth the Effort?” *Congressional Quarterly Researcher* 8 (12): 265-88. [Class web page]
- *Electronic Hallway*: “Note on the EPA under Admin. Anne Gorsuch” [Class web page]
- *Electronic Hallway*: “Surviving at the EPA: Mike Cook” [Class web page]
- *Electronic Hallway*: “Surviving at the EPA: Bill Hedeman.” [Class web page]
- Thomas R. Dye. 1998. *Understanding Public Policy*. [Class web page]
 - Chapter 7: “Environmental Policy” [public choice perspective]. 169 – 194.

CASE:

- WILLIAM D. RUCKELSHAUS AND THE EPA. [Class web page]

November 27: Economic and Tax Policy

- With the President’s highly contested tax rebate, the disappearance of the surplus and the continued economic downturn, understanding the federal government’s tax and economic policy-making takes on a special importance in today’s policy environment.
- *Policy Memo #4* due at the start of class.

Required Readings:

- Peters, Chapters 8 & 9: *Economic Policy and Tax Policy*
- “The Federal Reserve: Is the Fed too Aggressive in Fighting Inflation?” *Congressional Quarterly Researcher* 10 (29): 673-88. [Class web page]

CASE:

- “Should the Fed cut rates?” [Student examination of the Conference Board’s 10 index items]

December 4: Social Security Policy

- The future viability of Social Security is in doubt. There are a variety of options that have been proposed to “save” the program. We will examine and evaluate these options.

Required Readings:

- Peters, Chapter 11: *Income Maintenance Policies: Social Security & Welfare*
 - “Saving Social Security: Will the System Go Broke?” *Congressional Quarterly Researcher* 8 (37): 857-80. [Class web page]
 - “Integrating Housing and Social Services: Local Initiative and Federal Mandate” (*Electronic Hallway* case) [Class web page]
-

December 11: FINAL EXAM (Take Home)

- The exam will be handed out during the last class session (December 4th) and will be due in my office no later than 8:30pm on the 11th of December.
-