

**PAD 680**  
**Public Policy**  
Dr. Gregory Saxton

Class Hours: Thurs. 5:30 – 8:30pm, Metro Center  
Instructor's Office: Faculty Office Building, Room 241  
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### **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 & definition—how an issue becomes part of the policy agenda.
- The identification and design of policy options and programs.
- The pre-decision assessment of policy options 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*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Chatham.
- *Designing Evaluations*. GAO. March 1991. May be ordered free of charge via [www.gao.gov](http://www.gao.gov) (enter document number GAO/PEMD-10.1.4). Alternatively, you may download the entire document through the class reading list web page.
- [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 one test in total—an in-class mid-term on October 10<sup>th</sup>.

#### *Case Study Presentation*

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.

**Policy Memorandum (Exercise 1: Gauging Support for Social Security Reform)**

For all of the memoranda the assumption is that you are employed as a policy analyst in a public organization of your choosing. In this first exercise, in your capacity as analyst you are asked to conduct a rapid examination of the myriad Social Security reform proposals. Your employer wants to know, in 2 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 15 public policy sites on the Internet. Due September 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Policy Memorandum (Exercise 2: Local Policymaking Meeting Summary)**

In this exercise, your employer wants you to attend a local public policy-making meeting and report on the activities of this meeting in a 2-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 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Group Policy Analysis**

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 December 5<sup>th</sup>.

10%	Case Presentation	
20%	Class Participation	
25%	Mid-Term Exam	(October 10 <sup>th</sup> )
10%	Policy Memo #1	(September 26 <sup>th</sup> )
10%	Policy Memo #2	(Due anytime before November 14 <sup>th</sup> )
25%	Group Policy Analysis	(December 5 <sup>th</sup> )

**Grading Scale**

- 95% - 100% = A
- 90% - 94.9% = A-
- 85% - 89.9% = B+
- 80% - 84.9% = B
- 70% - 79.9% = C
- Below 70% = 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. 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

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.

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## Schedule of Topics

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### August 29: Introduction to Public Policy

- Introduction to the course and to each other. Review the syllabus, schedule of assignments, and course expectations.
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## —PART (A): Understanding Public Policymaking—

### September 5: What is Public Policy? Reasons for and Goals of Public Policies

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

#### Required Readings:

- Peters, Preface and Chapters 1-2.
  - Deborah Stone. 1997. [\*Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making\*](#). Chapter 2: "Equity." [Class web page]
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### September 12: 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.
- We will also look at the important role *context* plays in determining public policies

Required Readings:

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

Suggested Reading:

- “[How to Write 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:

- “[Puget Sound Water Quality Authority](#)” [Class web page]
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September 19: The Policy Process: Issue Identification, Agenda-Setting & Formulation

- These three stages of the process establish the parameters for any additional consideration of a policy. If an issue cannot be placed on the agenda, it cannot be considered and nothing further will happen.

Required Readings:

- Peters, Chapter 3.
- 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]

CASE:

- “[William D. Ruckelshaus and the EPA](#).” [Class web page]
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September 26: The Policy Process: Legitimation, Adoption & Budgeting; Implementation

- 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.
- Policies designed in Washington, DC often fail in, say, Rochester. Why is this so? We will examine some of the most important obstacles that policy-makers and administrators face while attempting to implement public policies.
- **Memo #1 is due today at the beginning of class.**

Required Readings:

- Peters, Chapters 4-6.

CASE:

- Implementing a New Drug & Alcohol Treatment Model in Sacramento County [Class web page]
    - [Part \(A\)](#)
    - [Part \(B\)](#)
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## —PART (B): Policy Analysis and Evaluation—

### October 3: Evaluation and Termination

- After being implemented, 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.
- General Accounting Office. March 1991. [Designing Evaluations](#). Chapters 1, 2, 4. [Class web page] May also be ordered free of charge via [www.gao.gov](http://www.gao.gov) (enter document number GAO/PEMD-10.1.4).

CASE:

- [The Marine Resources Division And The Shrimp Baiting Controversy](#) [Class web page]
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### October 10: **Mid-Term Exam** (In-Class)

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### October 17: Practical Policy Analysis: Types of Responses and Analytical Tools

- A continued look at conducting practical policy analysis
- An introduction to cost-benefit analysis and other requisite tools of policy analysis.

Required Readings:

- Peters, Chapter 15
- Bardach, Eugene. [Policy Analysis: A Handbook for Action](#) Attachments 1-2 (pp. 35-43) [Class web page]

Supplemental Reading:

- Arnold J. Meltsner. 1986. [“The Seven Deadly Sins of Policy Analysts.”](#) [Class web page]

CASE:

- [“Policy Dilemmas at the Seattle Solid Waste Utility.”](#) [Class web page]
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## October 24: Policy Analysis: Applied Ethics and Cost-Benefit Analysis

- Applications of cost-benefit analysis; an introduction to ethics

### Required Readings:

- Peters, Chapters 16.
- [“The Economics of Recycling: Is it Worth the Effort?”](#) *Congressional Quarterly Researcher* 8 (12): 265-88. [Class web page]
- Bardach, Eugene. [Policy Analysis: A Handbook for Action](#) pp. 1-34 [Class web page]
- Weimer & Veining, Chapter 9: “A Stylized Analysis: Canadian Airport Deregulation.” 323-335. [Class Handout: Sample policy analysis paper]

### CASE:

- “Should we recycle more?” Student examination of merits of a recycling program.
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## October 31: 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 14<sup>th</sup>.
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## November 7: Environmental Policy

- Here we will look at environmental issues through an in-class simulation.

### Required Readings:

- Peters, Chapter 13.
  - [“Operation Wilderness: An Exercise In Negotiating Natural Resource Issues”](#) [Class web page]
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## November 14: Economic Policy

- With the President's highly contested tax rebate, the disappearance of the surplus and the recent economic downturn, understanding the federal government's economic policy-making takes on a special importance in today's policy environment.
- **Memo #2 due at the beginning of class.**

### Required Readings:

- Peters, Chapters 8.
- [“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 leading economic indicators. [Start your search at the [Economic Policy](#) page of the class web site and expand your search to other sources]

## November 21: Foreign and Defense Policy

- The politics and bureaucracy of foreign and defense policy.

Required Readings:

- Peters, Chapter 14 (pp. 384-404).
- [“Rumsfeld's Rules”](#) Guide to surviving—and thriving—in the cabinet.
- “Thirteen Days.” Watch the movie before class.

CASE:

- “Cuban Missile Crisis.” Student analysis of the crisis.

## November 28: **Thanksgiving Break—Classes Cancelled**

## December 5: 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.
- **Group Policy Analysis due at beginning of class.**

Required Readings:

- Peters, Chapter 11.
- [“Saving Social Security: Will the System Go Broke?”](#) *Congressional Quarterly Researcher* 8 (37): 857-80. [Class web page]