

PAD 680
Public Policy
Fall 2004
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 Student Learning Outcomes

The material in this course reflects the MPA program's mission to combine the conceptual and practical application of administrative knowledge and skills (Mission element #1A); to develop an understanding of ethical behavior (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 conduct a brief 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. 2003. *American Public Policy: Promise and Performance*. 6th ed. Chatham. ISBN 1-56802-906-3.
- [Class web page] indicates that the reading is available via the course web page.

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

This page contains an electronic version of the syllabus through which electronic readings are accessible. A variety of other educational and research tools are also available at the site.

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 14th.

Case Study Presentation

During most class sessions during the semester we will examine a unique case relevant to that session's material. 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 23rd.

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 11th.

Reflective Case Study Analysis

Towards the end of the semester, each of you will begin work on a reflective case study analysis designed to tie together what you have learned in the class. In this assignment you will select a policy issue of your choice (e.g., forest policy, recycling, casino construction, school vouchers) and write a 4-6 page paper summarizing what you have learned in the course and how it applies to that particular policy issue. In your paper, you will reflectively summarize your intellectual, cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal experiences in this course. You will then conclude your reflective statement with a description of how you have applied or will apply these lessons to your work in the future. You may also wish to project forward your concerns about your future professional expectations/experiences given your experiences in the class. This 4-6 page paper is due on December 9th.

15%	Case Presentation	
20%	Class Participation	
25%	Mid-Term Exam	(October 14 th)
10%	Policy Memo #1	(September 23 rd)
10%	Policy Memo #2	(Due anytime before November 11 th)
20%	Reflective Case Study Analysis	(December 9 th)

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.

Disability Statement

Students with documented disabilities may be entitled to specific accommodations. SUNY Brockport's Office for Student with Disabilities makes this determination. Please contact the Office for Students with Disabilities at (585) 395-5409 or osdoffic@brockport.edu to inquire about obtaining an official letter to the course instructor detailing any approved accommodations. The student is responsible for providing the course instructor with an official letter. Faculty work as a team with the Office for Students with Disabilities to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

Schedule of Topics

—PART (A): Understanding Public Policymaking—

September 2: What is Public Policy? An Introduction to the Material

- Introduction: Review the syllabus, schedule of assignments, and course expectations
- What are the *raison d'être* of government actions in the social and economic marketplace? Why do we have public policies in the first place?
- Introduction to some of the "big lessons" of public policy

September 9: Foundations and 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 policymaking.
- Equity v. efficiency as goals of public policy
- The important role *context* plays in determining public policies

Required Readings:

- Peters, Preface and Chapters 1-2.
- Thomas R. Dye. 1998. *Understanding Public Policy*. Chapter 2: "[Models of Politics](#)." 13 – 38. [Class web page]

September 16: The Policy Process: Issue Identification and Agenda Setting

- A continued look at the employment of theoretical models to enhance our understanding of public policy issues and processes.
- We will also look at the first two stages of the policy process—issue identification and agenda-setting. These two stages of the process establish the parameters for any additional consideration of a policy. If an issue cannot be identified as important and placed on the policy “agenda,” it cannot be considered and nothing further will happen.

Required Reading:

- Peters, Chapter 3.
- [“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 23: The Policy Process: Formulation and Legitimation

- These two stages of the process pick up where issue identification and agenda-setting leave off. In these critical stages, alternatives for resolving public problems are identified and debated, and public support is generated.
- **Memo #1 is due today at the beginning of class.**

Required Readings:

- Peters, Chapters 4, 10
- [“Saving Social Security: Will the System Go Broke?”](#) *Congressional Quarterly Researcher* 8 (37): 857-80. [Class web page]

CASE:

- [“William D. Ruckelshaus and the EPA.”](#) [Class web page]
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September 30: The Policy Process: Adoption, Budgeting, and 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.

Required Readings:

- Peters, Chapters 5-6.
- 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:

- Implementing a New Drug & Alcohol Treatment Model in Sacramento County [Class web page]
 - [Part \(A\)](#)
 - [Part \(B\)](#)

—PART (B): Policy Analysis and Evaluation—

October 7: 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.

CASE:

- [The Marine Resources Division And The Shrimp Baiting Controversy](#) [Class web page]

October 14: **Mid-Term Exam** (In-Class)

October 21: 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]

CASE:

- "[Policy Dilemmas at the Seattle Solid Waste Utility.](#)" [Class web page]
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October 28: Policy Analysis: Applied Ethics and Cost-Benefit Analysis

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

Required Readings:

- Peters, Chapter 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]

CASE:

- “Should we recycle more?” [Student examination and debate of the merits of a local recycling program. Look for relevant materials on the web.]
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November 4: Attend Local Policy Meeting

- For this class session, you will be required to attend a meeting of the County, City, Town, Village or similar legislative body. Your assignment is a brief report on this meeting. Your memo should include details of the meeting along with your observations (see class web site for more in-depth instructions). You should also include a copy of the agenda. Due anytime, but no later than November 11th.
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November 11: Economic Policy; Public Participation in Policymaking

- With the President's tax cuts, the disappearance of the surplus and the continued economic downturn, understanding the federal government's economic policy-making takes on a special importance in today's policy environment.
- In this class, we'll also explore some of the relevant issues surrounding public participation in the policymaking process.
- **Memo #2 due at the beginning of class.**

Required Readings:

- Peters, Chapters 8-9.
- “How's the economy looking to voters? Perception, based on a few key points, sways elections,” by Susan Page, *USA Today*, May 1st 2003. [Class web page]
- Further readings TBA.

CASE:

- “Should a Walmart Supercenter come to Brockport?” [Student examination and debate of the pros and cons of the building of a new Walmart Supercenter. Look for relevant information on the web.]
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November 18: No Class Session

- This week I'll be in Los Angeles attending the annual conference of ARNOVA, the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action. In lieu of this class session, I'd like you to spend time writing your reflective case study analysis, which is due December 9th.
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November 25: Thanksgiving Recess—Classes Cancelled

December 2: Environmental Policy

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

Required Readings:

- Peters, Chapter 12.
 - [“Operation Wilderness: An Exercise In Negotiating Natural Resource Issues”](#) [Class web page]
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December 9: “The Big Picture” – Public Policy and the Public/Nonprofit Manager

- Summary of and reflections on the most important lessons of Public Policy.
- ***Reflective Case Study Analysis due at beginning of class.***