

**University of Florida
Department of Political Science
Fall 2025**

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Current Controversies in Public Policy (PUP 3002)

Course Description

Framework to understand the formation, adoption, budgeting, implementation and evaluation of public policy. This framework provides a basis for detailed discussions and debates about current policy issues

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students will be able to identify and interpret policy debates on several current events. In addition, students will be able to assess policies that are part of the public spectrum and recommend possible alternatives. And finally, students will learn to think critically, write concisely, and to use textual evidence as part of their writing and class discussions.

About the Syllabus

Based on the composition of the class, our progress discussing these issues, elements beyond our control, and student needs, this syllabus is flexible and may change. Throughout the semester, you will be notified of any changes that might emerge. During the first day of class the professor will read and explain this syllabus at length. It is the student's responsibility to understand the requirements for this class and asking all the appropriate questions about this document to the professor. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at <https://catalogue.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance>.

Readings

Required readings will be available in our Canvas page identified by a C. This syllabus is a living document, and in case of changes in the readings students will be properly notified.

Assigned Texts

Mariana Mazzucato and Rosie Collington. (2023). *The Big Con*. Penguin.

Michael Hill and Frédéric Varone. (2021). *The Public Policy Process* (8th edition). Routledge.

Brett Christophers. (2023). *Our Lives in their Portfolios*. Verso.

Writing Requirements and Grade

The grade will be based on reaction papers (10 points), first short paper (20 points), a mid-term examination (20 points), second short paper (20 points), second examination (20 points), attendance (5 points), participation (5 points).

Reaction Papers (10 points)

Class members will be asked to submit via Canvas 490-500 words, single spaced- reaction paper. A two-page document will be submitted, the first page will include the student's name, email, and word count for the assignment. The second page should only include 490-500 words addressing the readings for every Monday and Friday of every week. The professor will randomly select six reaction papers out of which five papers will be graded and will be used to calculate your grade. The reaction paper should not be a summary of the readings, but instead it should: *ask probing questions, propose what might come next, compare or contrast this reading or concepts to another paper or concepts we have discussed in class, highlight important implications of the work for understanding public policy*. The grade scale for this assignment is 0 points for papers that were not submitted, 1 point for a satisfactory submission and 2 points for a remarkable submission. Papers that are not submitted through Canvas will be penalized. Please familiarize yourself with Canvas.

Two Four Page Papers (20 + 20= 40 points)

Students will read one of the books (see above) and address the question offered by the professor. This a four-page doubled space paper with a cover page. The assignment will rely only on the selected book as a source.

Exams (20+20=40 points)

The mid-term and final examinations will be either taken in class or take home.

Participation (5 points)

Students are expected to be active components of the class and discussion. It is expected that by the end of the semester all students have participated by offering quality contributions. The rubric for participation will be posted on our Canvas page. If you do not feel comfortable by participating in class, feel free to send me an email with your thoughts to casuarez@ufl.edu.

Attendance (5 points)

The professor will take attendance by Canvas at the end of each class. Students are therefore allowed three absences from days of class without penalty. Any absence after the third one will be penalized by taking three points per missed class. A student who leaves the class before it is over will not be considered as present in terms of attendance. Written evidence will be required to justify absences. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of their number of absences during the semester. If a student has any questions about their attendance on a particular day, this issue should be brought up in writing no later than the following class. Students that are late will be marked as such, three recorded late arrivals will be counted as one absence.

Students are expected to attend and be active components of the class and discussion. It is expected that by the end of the semester all students have participated by offering quality contributions. The rubric for participation will be posted on our Canvas page. Participation in

our class is fundamental since improving oral conversation skills is a key objective of the course.

Grade scale

A	94 and above
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D+	67-69
D	64-66
D-	60-63
E	59 and below

Canvas

The Canvas grade book will be updated as class assignments are graded. Please note that the grade book does not include the grades for Participation and Attendance. Also, Canvas calculates attendance throughout the semester in a way that does not reflect your final attendance grade.

Timeliness

Students are expected to turn in their assigned work on time through Canvas, not email. If students cannot turn in their work on time through Canvas they will have offer written evidence to justify the tardiness. If said evidence is not produced one letter grade will be deducted per day after due date.

Rubric

Will be available on our Canvas page.

Academic Honesty

An important component in academic work is recognizing one's work as well as others. During this course, Chat GPT will not be permitted for any work. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are not allowed. **Any violations of the academic honesty policy will be vigorously pursued. All students are expected to adhere scrupulously to the University policy concerning academic honesty.** To respect this principle students are expected to abide by the Academic Honesty Policy. A copy of the Academic Honesty Policy can be found in the following link, <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conducthonor-code/>. It is the student's responsibility to read and understand the policy. Following these guidelines will assure that original academic work will be recognized and celebrated.

In Class Recording

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. Th only allowable purposes are (1) for

personal education use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and deliver by an instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentation such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or guest lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless, of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third-party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

Incompletes

Students who have not completed the required class work will only be evaluated by the work that was turned in by the day it was due. Incompletes will only be awarded under exceptional circumstances. Incompletes will be given when students comply with the following conditions, (1) notifying the professor two weeks prior to the last day of class, (2) providing written evidence for the medical condition, or situation that has prompted the student to request an incomplete. The student and professor should agree upon a proper arrangement on how the missing work will be submitted. The student will have the following semester as the time period to complete the missing work; failure to do so will result in an E.

Accessibility

Testing accommodations and other needs will be addressed for students with proper documentation. Please make sure to inform me of these needs in writing during the first week of class. Retroactive accommodations will not be considered. In case of questions about Disability Resource Center feel free to contact them at <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

Classroom interaction

Respect is always required. Textual evidence is crucial when engaging in intelligent academic debates. Please make use of this tool when elaborating your arguments in the classroom. Refrain from comments that are not related to class discussion. The topics we discuss in this course may be controversial and may touch upon deeply held positions or beliefs held by you or your classmates. While I want to encourage open discussion, I also encourage you to consider how your interventions affect others. How we say something is often even more important than what we say;

if you are struggling with how to articulate your questions or reactions to the readings please inform the professor.

Course evaluation

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those policies and for resources for students, please see [this link](#)

Course Outline

I. Introduction

Review course syllabus.

II. Understanding Public Policy (8/25-9/5)

Readings: Hill and Varone. *Chapters 1, 2 and 3*.

Questions for discussion: What is public policy? Are these principles of public policy universal?

Reading: Easton, David. *An Approach to the Analysis of Political Systems*. C

Questions for discussion: Why is Easton proposing a systems approach to understanding politics? Do you understand this way of understanding politics as sound?

Reading: Hill and Varone, *Chapter 6*.

Questions for discussion: What are the most recent theoretical contributions to the field?

First Short Paper Prompt will be distributed (9/3)

III. Agenda Setting (9/8)

Reading: Hill and Varone. *Chapter 8*.

Questions for discussion: How important is the agenda setting stage? How is policy agenda established?

IV. Policy Formulation (9/10)

Reading: Hill and Varone. *Chapter 9*.

Questions for discussion: What are the key elements of the formulation process?

V. Policy Implementation (9/12)

Reading: Hill and Varone. *Chapter 10*.

Questions for discussion: What are the main theories behind policy implementation? How does policy implementation work?

VI. Bureaucracy (9/15)

Reading: Hill and Varone. *Chapter 11.*

Questions for discussion: How crucial is the bureaucratic structure to the policy process?

VII. The Unwritten (9/17)

Readings: Hill and Varone. Chapters 12

Questions for discussion: What type of factors are usually present in the policy process that are not “written”?

First Short Paper Due (9/19)

VIII. Policy Evaluation (9/19)

Reading: Hill and Varone. Chapter 14.

Questions for discussion: Is there a system or model that can be used to evaluate policy? What kind of changes can be set in place to change policies that are deemed as problematic?

IX. Policy Change and Politics (9/22)

Reading: Caughey and Warshaw. *Policy Preferences and Policy Change. C*

Questions for discussion: What drives policy change? Does state policy making respond to mass policy preferences?

X. The Neoliberal State and its values (9/24-9/26)

Reading: Harvey, David. *The Neoliberal State. C*

Questions for discussion: What are the basic elements of the Neoliberal State? What are the tensions that exist there according to Harvey?

Reading: Thorsen, Dag Einar. *The Neoliberal Challenge. C*

Questions for discussion: What was the logic behind the expansive role of the Neoliberal State? Do we live in a neoliberal age?

XI. Neoliberalism and Surveillance (9/29-10/1)

Reading: Wacquant, Loïc. *The Criminalization of Poverty in the Post Civil-Rights Era. C*

Questions for discussion: What types of policies have brought a change to prison systems in the US under the logic of neoliberalism? How has poverty become a significant component to what happens in American jails?

Reading: Roberts, Dorothy. *Prison Foster Care and Black Mothers. C*

Questions for discussion: What are the precise policies that lead to the punishment of black mothers? How does Neoliberalism play a significant role in the author’s argument?

XII. Housing Policy (10/3-10/6)

Reading: Pader, Ellen. *Space of Hate. C*

Questions for discussion: How can housing codes impact everyday life? Do housing codes respond to a particular cultural notion? Why are occupancy standards a culturally contested dynamic?

Reading: Larsen, Redden, et.al, *Historic Town-Gown*.

Questions for discussion: How did the creation of land grant institutions have impacted race and power dynamics? What lessons can be taken from this case study?

Mid Term Exam (10/8)

XIII. Gerrymandering (10/10-10/13)

Reading: Alexeev and Mixon, *Partisan Gerrymandering with Geographically Compact Districts*. C

Questions for discussion: How can geography impact gerrymandering? Does the shape of the district might enhance its gerrymandering capacity?

Reading: Sarra, Gianni. *Fighting Fire with Fire*. C

Questions for discussion: What is retaliatory gerrymandering? What is the “Dirty Hands” practice?

Second Short Paper prompt will be distributed (10/20)

XIV. Health Care Policy (10/15-10/20)

Reading: West, Emily. *Consumer subjectivity and US Health Care Reform*. C

Questions for discussion: How significant is the use of the term "consumer" as part of the health care policy debate in the US? Can the words use and the framing that is presented has a significant impact on Public Policy?

Reading: Jacobs and Mettler. *When and How New Policy Creates New Politics: Examining the Feedback Effect of the ACA on Public Opinion*. C

Questions for discussion: How have past policies impacted new policies? Are there any considerations to consider since ACA has been subject to significant debate?

XV. Immigration Policy (10/22-10/24)

Reading: Fymer, Paul. *A Rush and a Push and the Land is Ours*. C

Questions for discussion: What are the main challenges that states face today in terms of immigration policy? Is this a challenge that is only national in nature?

Reading: Brown, Wendy. *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*. C

Questions for discussion: Why have we seen an increase of walls in our lives? What do these walls have to do with sovereignty?

Second Short Paper Due (10/31)

XVI. Artificial Intelligence (11/3-11/5)

Reading: *Politics and Policy of AI*. C

Questions for discussion: Why does AI have a political implication? What are the linkages between technology and politics?

Reading: Yar et.al. *Governing with intelligence*. C

Questions for discussion: How has AI impacted the practices of public policy development? What lessons can we derive out of this experience?

XVII. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (11/7-11/10)

Reading: Harper, *Leveraging Research* C

Questions for discussion: How moving from one state to other be thought as a form of freedom? What type of impact does this movement has on the nation as a whole?

Reading: Gundermir, et.al., *Beneath the Surface*. C

Questions for discussion: What have been the arguments against DEI policies? What types of covert and overt efforts were documented by the authors?

XIX. Academic Freedom (11/12-11/14)

Reading: Park. *A Matter of Public Concern*. C

Questions for discussion: How has the Supreme Court defined academic freedom? When controversies come up who prevails, institutions or individual academics?

Reading: Blell, Liu and Verma. *A One-Sided View of the world*. C

Questions for discussion: Is there a need for academic freedom in the 21st century? What leads to the efforts for academic freedom presented in the UK?

XX. Gun Control (11/17-11/19)

Reading: Coates and Pearson-Merkowitz. *Policy Spillover and Gun Migration: The Interstate Dynamics of State Gun Control Policies*. C

Questions for discussion: How can different state policies on guns impact the gun control debate? How does federalism facilitate or makes the debate of gun control more difficult?

Reading: Kruis (et. al.) *Firearm Ownership, Defensive Gun Usage, and Support for Gun Control*. C

Questions for discussion: What is the gun control attitudes of gun owners? Do they share similar views?

XXI. The Woke (11/21-12/1)

Reading: Zavattaro and Bearfield. *Weaponization of Wokeness*. C

Questions for discussion: How has wokeness become a weapon? What are some of the policy implications on wokeness?

Reading: Davies and MacRae. *An Anatomy of the British War on Woke*. C

Questions for discussion: What are the origins on the war on woke? What are some of the policy implications of the war on woke?

Second Exam TBA