

PUP 3002: CURRENT CONTROVERSIES IN PUBLIC POLICY

TUR 2349, MWF 8:30AM–9:20AM

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Office Hours:
Monday 9:30AM–11:00AM,
Tuesday 10:00AM–11:30AM,
and by appointment

Course Description

A study of the policymaking structures and processes of American governments through the lens of a selection of the most debated questions in American public policy. The course is taught in six parts: (1) “An Introduction to Public Policy Analysis and Research” covering what is public policy, how politics makes policy, and how different levels of government and institutions design, assess, and implement policy; (2) “Economic policy” examining business, economic, and tax policy; (3) “Social Welfare” covering health care and welfare programs; (4) “Education and Civil & Political Rights” examining education policy and civil rights and civil liberties; (5) “Institutional Reform” studying election, campaign, and government reform; and (6) “Political Ethics” investigating physician-assisted suicide, the death penalty, and gun control.

Public policy is responsible for defining and framing public problems, identifying and evaluating possible strategies for addressing problems, and recommending sensible solutions. The course examines existing problems in American public policy, as well as the potential solutions and rationale behind each policy. This requires an examination of the steps in the policy process, from policy development and analysis, to implementation and evaluation, as well as the study of changes characterizing American society, and an investigation of the complex role federalism plays in many policy areas. Throughout the course, we will examine specific problems and policies in a number of areas, including environmental, economic, immigration, and health care.

The course will provide students with a basic understanding of the formation, adoption, budgeting, implementation, and evaluation of public policy, and how to apply this framework to critically assess and engage controversial policy issues, as well as assessing how the government responds to current controversies in public policy. This course offers a foundation and preparation for upper-level courses in the sub-field of Public Policy.

Required Readings

Both books are available at local bookstores, online, and as e-books. Other readings will include book chapters and journal articles, and periodically I may assign news articles that are relevant to the topics we are discussing. These readings will be discussed in lecture and should be considered required reading. Announcements and links to these articles will be provided on [Canvas](#).

- CQ Researchers. *Issues for Debate in American Public Policy*. 2018, 19th Edition (CQ Press). ISBN: [9781544303970](#).
- Michael E. Kraft and Scott R. Furlong. *Public Policy: Politics, Analysis, and Alternatives*. 2017, 6th Edition (CQ Press). ISBN: [9781506358154](#).

I strongly encourage students to subscribe to *The New York Times*' "Morning Briefing" email newsletter. It is free and provides news and information on the United States, Canada, and the Americas, each weekday morning. I also recommend following a combination of major news sources (e.g., *Wall Street Journal* and *Washington Post*), political news sources (e.g., *The Hill* and *Politico*), and academic-oriented blogs (e.g., *FiveThirtyEight* and *Monkey Cage*).

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester, students enrolled in the course should be able to:

- *Understand* the formation, adoption, budgeting, implementation, and evaluation of public policy;
- *Recognize* the political context of policy analysis – remember that politics determines who gets what, when, and how;
- *Read* and understand policy research; and
- *Think critically* about how policy analysis can be used to examine and address current events and controversies.

Course Requirements

- **Participation:** Students are expected to attend all class meetings and be prepared for an in-depth discussion of the assigned course material. Note that physical attendance does not equal active participation. It is important that assigned readings are completed *before* class, allowing yourself time to critically engage arguments and themes. Participation is 20% of the overall course grade.
- **Policy Briefs:** Students will complete two policy briefs, which address real situations in which a public decision-maker must make a policy decision. Each brief is worth 10% of the overall course grade. Your job is to collect information and facts, apply your expertise, and present policy information to a decision-maker. The briefs provide an opportunity to practice analytical writing, and each is related to your Policy Memo. Briefs are due on February 8 and March 22. Please come prepared to discuss the assignments in class.
- **Policy Memo:** The policy memo is a semester-long assignment that provides students with an opportunity to apply key concepts introduced in the course: including the identification of a public policy from the class, a review of literature on this specific policy, a detailed analysis of government action (or inaction) on the topic, and an evaluation of the current state of the given policy, including possible policy alternatives. The memo is worth 30% of the grade and is due the last day of class, April 24.

- **Midterm Exam:** This exam will consist of multiple-choice questions. The exam is worth 30% of the overall course grade and will be held on March 1. Multiple choice questions will involve higher order concepts that will require students to apply concepts discussed in lecture, not simply memorize terminology.
- **Extra Credit:** Students may attend a [Gainesville City Commission](#) meeting for up to ten points (one-letter grade) added to your lowest brief or memo. For this assignment, students must: (1) attend a Commission meeting ([schedule](#)), (2) take a photo in [City Hall](#) for proof of attendance, and (3) write a reflection paper recounting a policy debate that occurred during that meeting and what the Commission decided. Extra credit assignments may be submitted at any point during the semester but no later than April 27. See instructor for alternative assignment.

Grading Rubric

Grade Distribution

The course grade will be assigned as follows:

Participation	20%
Policy Briefs	20%
Policy Memo	30%
Midterm Exam	30%
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Total	100%

Letter Grade Distribution

Letter grades will be assigned per the following numerical scales:

≥ 93	A
90 – 92	A-
87 – 89	B+
83 – 86	B
80 – 82	B-
77 – 79	C+
73 – 76	C
70 – 72	C-
67 – 69	D+
63 – 66	D
60 – 62	D-
≤ 60	E

Final course grades will be rounded up if greater than or equal to .5 (e.g., 92.5). Additional extra credit will not be provided, aside from that stipulated above.

Course Policies

- **Lecture:** Attendance is *required* and students are encouraged to participate by asking questions. Material will be covered in the lectures that is not in the course readings. Topics in any films which will be shown is also fair game for the exam.
- **Exams:** For in-class exams, students will be asked to remove hats, caps, and sunglasses, and stow cell phones, computers, tablets, and smartwatches. Initiating or receiving outside communication using an electronic device during an exam constitutes receipt of outside information and will result in failure of the exam. Absences from exams will be excused only with written and verifiable documentation of illness, death of an immediate family member, or a conflicting university or legal obligation.
- **Make-up Exams:** Make-up exams will be administered if the absence is excused according to the stipulations above. Students who miss the exam for an unauthorized reason – i.e., not an excused absence – may take an alternative exam, at the discretion of the instructor, and receive a one-letter grade penalty. Make-up exams must be completed within five school days of the original exam date unless precluded due to excused medical, family, university, or legal reasons.
- **Late Assignments:** For every day an assignment is submitted after the original due date, 10% of the maximum score will be deducted from the assignment score. No assignments will be accepted once they are five or more days late.
- **Class Demeanor:** Students are expected to arrive to class on time and behave in a manner that is respectful to the instructor and to fellow students. Please avoid the use of cell phones and restrict eating to outside of the classroom. Opinions held by other students should be respected in discussion, and conversations that do not contribute to the discussion should be held at minimum, if at all.
- **Children in Class:** For students with children, it is understandable that unforeseen disruptions can occur in childcare. While not a long-term solution, bringing a child to class with you when such disruptions in childcare occur is acceptable. In these cases, all students should work together to create a welcoming environment for both the parent and child.
- **Technology:** Laptops and tablets may be used for note-taking during lecture. The instructor retains the prerogative to limit usage if warranted.
- **Cookie Policy:** If a student's cell phone rings during class, the student must bring cookies, or a healthier treat if preferred, for the entire class, at a future date to be arranged with the instructor. This policy is enforced as part of the participation grade.
- **Course Evaluation:** Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at evaluations.ufl.edu. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at evaluations.ufl.edu/results.
- **Subject to Change:** This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor to accommodate instructional and/or student needs. Proper notification will be provided to students of relevant changes.

University Policies

- **Accommodation:** Students requesting accommodations should first register with the [Disability Resource Center \(352-392-8565\)](#) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.
- **Academic Honesty:** Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Cheating in any form undermines the integrity and mutual trust essential to a community of learning and places at a comparative disadvantage those students who respect and work by the rules of that community. It is understood that any work a student submits is indeed his/her own. Plagiarism – that is, lifting without giving credit from something someone else has written such as a published book, article, or even a student paper – is forbidden and is, in most cases, fairly easily detected. There are other, more obvious forms of academic dishonesty, such as turning in work completed by someone else, bringing inappropriate notes into an exam, and offering or receiving whispered, signaled, or other forms of assistance during an exam. Working with fellow students in exam study groups is not only acceptable but also encouraged, as long as one is refining ideas that are essentially his or her own. Included within this definition of academic integrity is the assumption that all documents and excuses provided as explanations for late or missed assignments have not been falsified. Please review the University’s policies regarding [student conduct and conflict resolution](#), available through the [Dean of Students Office](#). Any violations of the [Student Honor Code](#) will result in a failing grade for the course and referral to Student Judicial Affairs.
- **Communication Courtesy:** Per [university policy](#), all members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all messages and other electronic communications. Under Florida law ([FS 119.07](#)), GatorLink emails are public records. If you do not want your email to be released in response to a public records request, contact the instructor in person. Per university and federal policies, grades may not be discussed via e-mail or over the phone. Please allow 24-48 hours for a response.
- **Counseling and Wellness Center:** Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: [counseling.ufl.edu](#), [352-392-1575](#); and the University Police Department: [352-392-1111](#) or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Important Dates

Jan. 11	Last Day to Add a Course
Jan. 11	Last Day to Drop a Course
Apr. 12	Last Day to Drop with a “W”
Apr. 13	Course Evaluations Open
Apr. 24	Last Day of Classes
Apr. 25 & 26	Reading Days
Apr. 26	Course Evaluations Close
May 8	Final Grades Available

Course Schedule

The following outline is tentative. Weekly coverage might change depending on the progress of the class. However, you must keep up with the reading assignments. The reading assignments should be completed PRIOR to the beginning of the corresponding class. We will spend some time before each class answering any questions related to the reading.

Introduction to Public Policy Analysis and Research

Week 1, January 7-11: Course Structure and Introduction to Public Policy

- Syllabus
- *Public Policy*: Chapter 1
- “How to Read Political Science: A Guide in Four Steps” by Amelia Hoover Green (2013; Canvas)

Week 2, January 14-18: Institutions and Policymaking

- **Syllabus Quiz due January 14**
- *Public Policy*: Chapters 2 (pgs. 36-71), 3 (pgs. 76-111), and 4 (pgs. 118-36)

Week 3, January 23-25: Public Policy Analysis

- *Public Policy*: Chapters 5 (pgs. 146-66) and 6

Current Controversies in Economic Policy

Week 4, January 28-February 1: Broad Economic Policy and Immigration

- *Public Policy*: Chapter 7
- *Issues for Debate*: Chapter 1

Week 5, February 4-8: Taxes

- *Contemporary U.S. Tax Policy* by C. Eugene Steuerle (2004): Introduction (Canvas)
- “[Homer Gets a Tax Cut: Inequality and Public Policy in the American Mind](#)” by Larry Bartels in *Perspectives on Politics* (2005)
- **Policy Brief 1 due February 8**

Week 6, February 11-15: Minimum Wage and Basic Income

- *Issues for Debate*: Chapter 3
- “[What life is like on \\$7.25 per hour](#)” by Jenny Jarvie of *The Los Angeles Times* (2016)
- “[The Case for a Higher Minimum Wage](#)” by *The New York Times* Editorial Board (2014)
- “[State Minimum Wages](#),” National Conference of State Legislatures (2018)

Current Controversies in Social Welfare

Week 7, February 18-22: Health Care Policy

- *Public Policy*: Chapter 8
- *Issues for Debate*: Chapter 15
- *Boomerang: Health Care Reform and the Turn Against Government* by Theda Skocpol (1997): Chapter 5, pgs. 133-50 & 157-59 (Canvas)
- “[How one of America’s least healthy counties got so sick](#)” (video) by Julia Belluz of *Vox* (2016)

Week 8, February 25-March 1: Welfare Policy

- *Public Policy*: Chapter 9
- *Understanding American Social Politics* by Margaret Weir, Ann Shola Orloff, and Theda Skocpol (1988): Introduction, pgs. 1-9 (Canvas)
- **Midterm, March 1**

Current Controversies in Education and Civil & Political Rights

Week 9, March 11-15: Education

- *Public Policy*: Chapter 10
- *Issues for Debate*: Chapter 8
- “[Sex Discrimination in Education: Overview of Title IX](#)” by Leslie Gladstone and Gary Galemore of the Congressional Research Service (1998)

Week 10, March 18-22: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

- *Issues for Debate*: Chapter 5
- “[What To Know About Affirmative Action As The Harvard Trial Begins](#)” by Courtney Rozen of NPR (2018)
- “[The narrowing, but persistent, gender gap in pay](#)” by Nikki Graf, Anna Brown, and Eileen Patten of Pew Research Center (2018)
- “[In Masterpiece, the Bakery Wins the Battle but Loses the War](#)” by James Esseks of the ACLU (2018)
- **Policy Brief 2 due March 22**

Current Controversies in Institutional Reform

Week 11, March 25-29: Voting Rights

- *The Rise and Fall of the Voting Rights Act* by Charles S. Bullock III, Ronald K. Gaddie, and Justin J. Wert (2016): Chapters 1 and 8 (Canvas)
- “[We gave you a chance: Today’s Shelby County decision in Plain English](#)” by Amy Howe of SCOTUS Blog (2013)
- “[The State of Voting 2018](#)” by Wendy Weiser and Max Feldman of The Brennan Center for Justice (2018)
- “[Voting](#)” (video), *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* (2016)

Week 12, April 1-5: Government Reform and Transparency

- *Issues for Debate*: Chapter 13
- “Campaign Finance,” *Issues for Debate* (Canvas)
- “[Meet the Beer Bottle Dictator](#)” by Tim Mak of *The Daily Beast* (2014)
- “How American Politics Went Insane” by Jonathan Rauch of *The Atlantic* (2016): Shortened version (Canvas)
- “Strengthening Presidential Ethics Law” by Daniel I. Weiner (2017): Introduction and Understanding the Stakes, pgs. 1-6 (Canvas)

Current Controversies in Political Ethics

Week 13, April 8-12: Life and Death

- “[Physician-Assisted Suicide](#),” Clinical Decisions in *The New England Journal of Medicine* (2013)
- “[Aid-in-Dying Gains Momentum as Erstwhile Opponents Change Their Minds](#)” by Michael Ollove of Pew Charitable Trusts (2018)
- *The Death Penalty in America: Current Controversies* by Hugo A. Bedau (1997): Introduction (Canvas)
- “[The death penalty in America: expensive, racially skewed, and still popular](#)” by Dara Lind of *Vox* (2015)

Week 14, April 15-19: Firearms Policy

- *Issues for Debate*: Chapter 4
- “[Guns on Campus](#),” National Conference of State Legislatures (2018)
- “[Inside the Power of the N.R.A.](#)” by Robert Draper of *The New York Times Magazine* (2013)
- “[The N.R.A. Lobbyist Behind Florida’s Pro-Gun Policies](#)” by Mike Spies of *The New Yorker* (2018)

Politics, Political Science, and Policy Choice

Week 15, April 22-24: Review

- *Public Policy*: Chapter 13
- “[How political science conquered Washington](#)” by Ezra Klein of *Vox* (2014)
- Discussion of Policy Memos
- **Policy Memo due April 24**
- **Extra Credit (optional) due April 27**