This seminar directs readings and research on public policymaking in the American federal government. It is designed to help students think analytically about the ways in which the structures, processes and actors at the heart of public policymaking interact. It examines how political institutions--the executive and legislative branches--are organized and motivated to produce policy, the politics of government organization, bureaucratic operation and survival, how the budget process drives policymaking processes, policy structures and relationships that have emerged out of custom and practice, theories and models of decision-making, concepts of rationality and choice, agenda-setting, political innovation, and judicial and interest group roles in policy formation. Specific policy areas we will engage as case studies are: economic and employment policy, healthcare policy and policy responses to terrorism, war and disaster.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance: Attendance is taken in this class and your professor takes it seriously. You are responsible for signing the attendance sheet that circulates.

Participation: Lively classroom discussion and active participation is expected. Students are to be informed in their contributions. This means all readings are required and should be read before the class for which they are assigned. Selected readings will be read by the entire class and discussed in our weekly meetings. More specifically, each student will be responsible for presentations on the readings and leading class discussion two times during the semester. That means a small group will collaborate prior to each class on the issues and questions that guide our discussion. Those assignments will be made in our first class meeting.

A 20-25 page analytical research paper on a topic of your selection is due on December 5. You are expected to consult with me prior to October 3 when a two-page statement of your proposed research paper is due. This will include a title, thesis, and overview of your argument and proposed bibliography. Research proposals submitted after the due date will receive a 2 pt grade penalty for every day they are late. All students should read Howard S. Becker’s Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book or Article, 2nd Edition, a useful text on framing appropriate research questions. It is inexpensive (about $12. in paperback; $5. electronically) and available at the Columbia Bookstore.

This course provides the opportunity for extensive seminar writing and research guidance and consultation which will be discussed in our first classes.

Your final grade is calculated on the basis of 40% for your final paper, 30% for presentations and 30% for participation and attendance.
READINGS

All readings are on reserve at Butler Library. Books are available for purchase at the Columbia University Bookstore.

REQUIRED BOOKS FOR PURCHASE


Recommended:


RESERVES


Samuel Beer, “In Search of a New Public Philosophy,” in *The New American Political System*, ed. Anthony King, ch1


Roger Cobb and Charles Elder, “The Dynamics of Agenda-Building” (1972)

Timothy Conlan and Francois Chantal, “The Rehnquist Court and Contemporary American Federalism” in *Political Science Quarterly* Vol 116 (Summer 2001) 353-275

Anthony Downs “Up and Down with Ecology: The ‘Issue Attention Cycle’” in *The Public Interest* No 28 (1972) 38-50

James Fallows, “He Was Slick Thank God,” *The Atlantic online*, February, 2001


TOPICS AND READINGS

September 5  Introduction to the Policy Process in the US

How do we approach public policy? How has the policy field developed? What are prominent theories of the policy process? What is the relationship between politics and public policy? Why can’t we seem to solve problems anymore?

The Next New Thing: “Let’s Hear Those Ideas: In America and Britain governments hope that a partnership with “social entrepreneurs” can solve some of society’s most intractable problems” The Economist” August 12, 2010 (handout)

Richard Hofstadter “The Paranoid Style of American Politics” (handout)

Recommended:


September 12  Agenda Setting and Decision-making


John W. Kingdon, Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies, 2nd Ed


Recommended:
Roger Cobb and Charles Elder, “The Dynamics of Agenda-Building” (1972)

September 19 Federalism, [D]evolution and Shared Policy Responsibility

How have patterns of US federalism affected key policy areas? How has the business/government relationship shaped public private patterns of policymaking and implementation?

Donald Kettl, Sharing Power: Public Governance and Private Markets (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1993) Chs 1, 2, 5,6,7,9
Timothy Conlan and Francois Chantal, “The Rehnquist Court and Contemporary American Federalism” in Political Science Quarterly Vol 116 (Summer 2001) 353-275

Recommended:
Timothy Conlan, From New Federalism to Devolution: Twenty-Five Years of Intergovernmental Reform (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1998) Chs 1, 7, 8,11,12,14

September 26 Institutional Arrangements: Public Servants, Policy Advisors and Politicians


October 3 The Budget Drives the Policymaking Process

The budget is the measure of our national priorities. How does the budget process reflect the trade-offs between politics and process?

Two-page research proposals due


Recommended:


October 10 Economic Policymaking: The Consequences of Economic Ideas

Can the economy be controlled? How much influence does any president have over the economy?


Recommended:


October 17 Employment Policy: The Significance of Institutional Arrangements

In a capitalist economic system, why can’t everyone who wants to work get a job?

Judith Russell. *Economics, Bureaucracy and Race: How Keynesians Misguided the War on Poverty*


“Left Behind” in *The Economist*, September 10 2011. 77-76 (handout)

**October 24 Healthcare Policy: Presidents and the Significance of Big Ideas**


Atwal Gawande, “The Cost Conundrum: What a Texas town can teach us about healthcare,” in *The New Yorker*, June 1, 2009
http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2009/06/01/090601fa_fact_gawande

**October 31 War-making**

How does war policy develop? What are the intellectual, political and policy origins and goals of the Iraq war? How do we leave? What are the limits of the executive branch in wartime? Who has responsibility for US prisoners of war? How do we define, prosecute, and carry out relations with enemy operatives at home and abroad today?


TBA Reading on Hamdan decision

Recommended:


November 7  Public Policy in Crisis and Disaster: Who Benefits? Who Pays?

All public policy is not based on rationality, efficiency, equity or reason. How do American communities cope with disaster? What is the policy responsibility of the federal government? What are the roles of the business community and/or state and local political actors?


Recommended:
http://www.academicinfo.net/katrina.html


November 14  Topic and Readings TBA

Nov. 21, 28, Dec. 5  STUDENT RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSION