

## American Public Policy and Democracy

POL 295

Fall 2007

Dionne Bensonsmith

### Contact Information

Carnegie 301

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### Office Hours

Monday: 1:15 – 2:05

Wednesday: 1:15 – 3:05

Friday: 1:15-2:05 or by  
appointment.

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### **I. Course Purpose and Objectives:**

While public policy as a subfield encompasses many disciplines and involves a number of methods of inquiry, one of the main purposes of this class is to introduce you to some of the ways in which political science approaches policy studies. To that end, I have three major objectives with this class. The first is to familiarize you with the major theories and concepts that form the subfield of public policy. Second, discuss the impact of American political institutions on public policy and the role of American politics in the policy making process. Finally, students will have the opportunity to apply some of the theories by examining specific cases focusing on the themes of the class.

### **II. Policies and Procedures**

**Attendance Policy:** Since this class meets MWF, time is of the essence, thus excessive tardiness will also have an adverse effect on your participation grade! Although this is technically a lecture class, the quality still heavily depends on you. Therefore, it is important that you attend all scheduled classes. Remember to notify me in advance of any anticipated absences (due to sports, observance of religious holidays, or a College related activity). **Please make note of the following:**

- More than 3 unexcused absences during the course of the semester *will* result in an “F” for participation. (In the interest of clarification, absences that are not “officially” sanctioned by the College or those that are not cleared with me in advance will be considered unexcused).
- 2 or more absences (for any reason other than those officially cleared by the College) *may* result in a reduction of one or more grade points from your overall participation grade.

### **Religious Holidays**

Please inform me in advance if you will miss a class, will not be able to submit a paper, or take a scheduled exam due to an official religious holiday so that we can make the necessary arrangements.

***Students with Special Needs***

I encourage students with documented disabilities, including non-visible disabilities such as chronic diseases, learning disabilities, head injury, attention deficit/hyperactive disorder, psychiatric disabilities to discuss with me, after class or during my office hours. You will also need to provide documentation of your disability to the Associate Dean and Director of Academic Advising, Joyce Stern, (x3702).

***Statement on Academic Honesty***

Before beginning work on your papers or take-home exams, I recommend that you visit the page on citation posted by the Writing Lab. The link to that site is <http://www.grinnell.edu/academic/writinglab/ethicaluse/>. If you have any questions or uncertainties about my expectations, please ask me directly.

**Note: I abide by the College’s stated policy on academic honesty and will submit all suspected cases of academic dishonesty directly to the Committee on Academic Standing.**

**III. A Word About Participation**

Active participation is an important component of your grade. In addition to your composite grade (worth a total of 10 points) your participation will play an integral role in the quality of your classroom experience. You should come to class prepared to discuss the readings to the best of your ability. This not only includes what you understand, but what you do not as well. Active participation does not mean that you have to say a lot. Quality of participation is more important than quantity.

**IV. Grading**

Your grade in the class is based on a standard point system. **Note:** the due dates for assignments are **firm**. I will subtract 3 points for each day an assignment is late.

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Due Date</i>	<i>Point Value</i>
Participation	<b>On-going</b>	10
Assignments	<b>On-going</b>	5
Midterm	<b>October 29 Due November 2</b>	15
Budget Simulation	<b>October 12 Papers due October 19</b>	10
Debates	<b>December 3 - 12</b>	20
Water Module	<b>Nov26 &amp; 30</b>	15
Clipping Thesis	<b>December 17</b>	25

## V. Required Materials

- B. Guy Peters, *American Public Policy: Promise and Performance* (7<sup>th</sup> edition). CQ Press (2007).
- CQ Press, *Issues for Debate in American Public Policy: Selections from CQ Researcher*.
- Additional readings marked with a (\*) will be available on Pioneer Web or placed on reserve at the library.

## VI. Supplementary Reading

Many of the examples that I will use during lectures are drawn from current events. Therefore, I suggest that you remain as up-to-date as possible with respect to both domestic and world politics. You can do this a number of ways: by availing yourself of the resources at Burling Library, listening to reputable news such as National Public Radio's *All Things Considered* or you can subscribe to a newsmagazine or newspaper either online or in print (both The New York Times and Washington Post offer online subscriptions for free).

You might also try the following:

- The BBC Online: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/>
- The New Republic Online: <http://www.tnr.com/>
- The New Yorker: <http://www.newyorker.com/>

**VII. Tentative Course Schedule (May change to accommodate guest presenters & student needs)**

<i><b>Date &amp; Seminar Topics</b></i>	<i><b>Assigned Reading</b></i>	<i><b>Discussion Topics</b></i>	<i><b>Plenary Groups and Assignments</b></i>
<b>Week 1</b> Introduction	No reading.	What is your interest in public policy?  What is your interest in this course?  What are your goals or expectations for this class?  What do you plan to do to help facilitate your goal(s)?	
<b>Week 2: September 9 - 7</b> Defining Public Policy	Peters: Chapter 1, <i>Defining Public Policy</i> (pp3 -13)  Peters: Chapter 1, <i>The Environment</i> (pp14-20)		Essay on important public policy issues and outlines of CQ and Peters for plenary.
<b>Week 3: September 10 - 14</b> Theories of Policy Analysis	Peters: Chapter 16  Peters: Chapter 17  *Handout “Categories of Public Policies”	What are three key elements of an “effective” policy?  What are the areas of conflict between ethical policy analysis and cost-benefit policy analysis?	Turn in a 2-paragraph description of your Clipping Thesis topic.  No plenary on Friday.
<b>Week 4: September 17 - 21</b> Theories of Policy Analysis continued...	*Christopher Simon: <i>Theories of Public Policy: How Choices Are Made</i>  *Deborah Stone: <i>Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making</i> .  *Case study: Drug Policy Controversies in American Public Policy, pp316 – 366.	Policy typologies, tools and stages in the process.	For plenary: Debate focusing on the two types of policy analysis.

<i>Date &amp; Seminar Topics</i>	<i>Assigned Reading</i>	<i>Discussion Topics</i>	<i>Plenary Groups and Assignments</i>
<b>Week 5: September 24 - 28</b> Contexts for American Public Policy	Peters: Chapter 2  *Reading on Ideology and Public policy (TBA)  Case Study: Peters, Chapter 15.		Friday Plenary:  Groups will meet to specify debate questions within their assigned topics.
<b>Week 6: October 1 - 5</b> Agenda Setting and Public Policy	Peters: Chapter 3 (pp 47 -62)  Peters: Chapter 3 (pp63 – 74)  Case Study: Stem Cell Research, “Issues for Debate” pp97 – 104.		We will watch part of “The Age of AIDS” Friday, October 5.  <b>Reaction paper on “The Age of AIDS” due on Monday October 8.</b>
<b>Week 7: October 8 - 12</b> Budgeting: Allocation and Public Policy	Peters: Chapter 6 (pp 123 – 135)  Peters: Chapter 6 (pp 136 – 147)  Peters: Chapter 8 (pp 187 – 198)		Friday we will meet in computer lab to work on our group budgeting simulation.
<b>Week 8: October 15 - 19</b> Legitimizing Policy Choices	Peters: Chapter 4  Peters: Chapter 8 ( pp 198 – 214)  *Handout on Policy Typologies and Policy Types  Case Study: Consumer Debt. “Issues for Debate” pp. 267 – 278, skim the last part of the chapter.	We will meet in plenary on Wed and Fri of this week.	Friday Plenary:  Meet and discuss essay and exam questions for midterm. Each group should submit at least two questions for the midterm. <b>Budgeting Brief due: Friday October 19.</b>
<b>October 20 – 29</b>	FALL BREAK	No Class	<b>Rest &amp; Relax</b>

<i>Date &amp; Seminar Topics</i>	<i>Assigned Reading</i>	<i>Discussion Topics</i>	<i>Plenary Groups and Assignments</i>
<b>Week 9: October 29 – November 2</b> Policy Design: Symbols, Politics and Ideology	Re-read Peters, pages 71 -74;  *Thomas Birkland, “Social Construction of Problems and Issues”  <b>Case Study TBA</b>	How are symbols employed by policy elites during the different points in the policy making process?	<b>Midterm distributed in class, Monday October 29.</b>  <b>No class on Friday— Midterm is due. Due by 5:00pm Friday November 2.</b>
<b>Week 10: November 5 - 9</b> Policy Design Part II Citizenship and Participatory Government	*Schneider and Ingram: <i>Policy Design for Democracy</i>  Handout on “Stages of Policy Development”  Case Study: The Earned Income Tax Credit and Tax Policy  Peters: Chapter 9	Can we make the policy design process more democratic?  How can we foster more participation on the part of the disenfranchised groups through our public policies?  Can we design a policy that reduces inequality?	Friday Plenary: TBA
<b>Week 11: November 12 - 14</b> Agendas & Alternatives	*John Kingdon “Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies”  *Cobb & Elder “The Dynamics of Agenda Building”  *Handout  Case Study: National Parks Under Pressure. “Issues for Debate” (pp TBA)	How do we choose between good policies and bad ones?  Who has ‘control’ over how things come to the attention of public officials and why?	<b>Think Tank Assessment Due Friday November 14.</b>
<b>Week 12: November 19&amp;21</b> Implementation and Change	Peters, Chapter 5	Why do good policies fail and what counts as success?	Plenary TBA.

<i>Date &amp; Seminar Topics</i>	<i>Assigned Reading</i>	<i>Discussion Topics</i>	<i>Plenary Groups and Assignments</i>
<b>Week 13: November 26-30</b> Bottled versus Tap	Readings for module are posted on Pioneer Web.  We will meet in the Noyce Science Center on November 26 for a joint class with CHM 211.	Who is regulating your water?	Plenary:  Bottled Water versus Tap Water, which is better?
<b>Week 14: December 3-7</b> Debates	Plenary will be held on Monday instead of Friday.  Debates on Wednesday & Friday  Reading (TBA)		Monday's Plenary: Work on Debates.
<b>Week 15: December 10-14</b> Finish Debates and Wrap-up	Debates on Monday & Wednesday Friday Wrap-up  Readings (TBA)		
<b>December 17 - 21</b> <b>FINALS WEEK</b>			<b>Clipping Thesis and Final Essay are due December 17.</b>