

**Sam Houston State University  
Department of Political Science**

**Course Syllabus  
American Public Policy (285:12, 3 credit hours)  
Fall 2007**

Dr. Rina Majumdar  
Office: 315L Academic Building 1  
Phone: (936) 294 – 4757  
Home: (281) 261-2514  
E-mail: majumdar@shsu.edu

**Office Hours:**  
Tuesday: 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm  
Thursday: 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm  
or by appointment

Class meets: AB1, Room 306, Tuesday and Thursday 11:00 am – 12:20 pm (285:12)

**Course Description**

This course will help to understand how public policies are made, implemented and their impacts on our lives. In this class, the stages in the policy making process will be examined along with that of the roles played by individuals, groups, politicians, bureaucrats, media and others in the passage of a public policy. Also, in discussions, examples would be drawn from several public policies but the main focus will be on environmental policies. Several environmental cases will be analyzed to gain understanding of the need for environmental policies, the politics involved in passage of environmental policies and their impacts on our economy and lives.

**Course Objectives**

This course will examine the entire public policy making process. It will help students to understand the need for public policies, how they are formulated, identify the major actors in policy making and gain knowledge about the legitimization and implementation processes. Since public funding is required to support programs aimed at attainment of policy objectives, discussions on evaluation would help students to recognize the need for different types of evaluation. It will also help to understand how evaluation results influence decisions to renew or reduce funding for public programs in a politically charged climate.

**Required Text**

1. Davis, Edwin S. 2008. *Public Policy: The Basics, third edition*, Edsal Publishing. ISBN: 09780972197823.

2. Layzer, Judith A. 2006. *The Environmental Case: Translating Values into Policy*, second edition, Washington DC, CQ Press. ISBN: 1568028989.

**Class Requirements**

The course will emphasize on both lecture and discussions. You are expected to complete the reading assignments before the class and review slide notes. All assignments and examinations will focus on lectures, readings from the textbook, slide notes and other audio visual educational aids that will be used in class. At the end of the semester, please complete the course/instructor evaluation form.

Unannounced visitors to class must present a current, official SHSU identification card to be permitted into the classroom. They must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. If the visitor is not a registered student, it is at the instructor's discretion whether or not the visitor will be allowed to remain in the classroom.

### **Attendance Policy**

Students are required to attend all classes. Attendance and participation in discussions will be used in the final determination of your grade. Absences for legitimate causes will only be accepted. Students must inform of such absences prior to the class and make necessary arrangements to copy notes and turn in homework assignments. Too many absences may lead to a drop in grade.

### **Class Conduct**

Students will not talk or engage in any type of activity that might cause distraction in the class. Drinks are allowed in class but not food. Cell phones and pagers need to be turned off during class hours. Exceptions can be made only for those whose work may require them to stay connected with workplace or in emergency situations (please inform me in such cases). ***Text messaging and browsing the internet during class hours will not be allowed.***

Please email questions directly to me with your name written clearly at the bottom. ***I will not respond to any anonymous emails.***

### **Grading**

In this course, students will be evaluated on a set of three exams, environmental case presentation and oral presentation of the term paper along with class attendance. Exam topics will be announced beforehand. Students may not leave the class during examination.

Two Exams (20 points each) – 40 points  
Final Exam – 30 points  
Environmental Case Presentation – 5 points  
Term Paper and Presentation – 20 points  
Class Attendance – 5 points

Final grades will be computed on the following basis:

A = 90 points and above  
B = 80 – 89 points  
C = 70 – 79 points  
D = 60 – 69 points  
F = 59 points and below

**Please note that extra credit work will not be assigned to any student in the class.**

### **Environmental Case Presentation**

Student in this class will be assigned to a group and each group has to discuss an environmental case, which will be assigned from the Layzer textbook. Each student is expected to read that chapter, understand the case using the theoretical principles discussed in this class and present it in the form of a discussion forum. Each student will receive points for presentation that will affect their overall grade.

## Term Paper Assignment

You have to write a term paper on an environmental policy that is of interest to you. Students will be assigned into groups of two or three. The following guidelines need to be taken into account in writing this paper.

- (a) Introduce the policy and discuss the problem that helped to set the agenda for the policy
- (b) Discuss the role played by various actors in passage of this policy
- (c) Which agency or department is responsible for implementation of the policy? Discuss its functions.
- (d) Identify the decision making process used in policy formulation.
- (e) Identify the presence of either an Iron Triangle or an Issue network in the policy formulation and/or implementation process.
- (f) Using a schematic diagram link the various events in the life cycle of a policy that is, from policy formulation to implementation and the outcomes (actual and expected) from the policy.
- (g) Discuss the problems or obstacles (if any) encountered in implementation of the policy.
- (h) What measures (if any) have been taken to address the problem(s)?
- (i) Your personal opinion of the policy. How has this policy benefited the public? If not, explain why?
- (j) Was this policy evaluated and what were the outcomes?
- (k) Provide your own recommendations or suggestions to further improve this policy.

The paper must be typed using the *Microsoft Word* software. It should be at least 10 double-spaced pages excluding table of contents, diagram, reference list, title page and appendices. The reference list should include at least five citations. The pages should have 1" margins and the font should be Times Roman and the size should be 12 point. The schematic diagram should be placed on a separate page. All pages must be numbered. Include a title page with the title of the paper and your name typed at the bottom right-hand corner. Papers should be stapled in the upper left-hand corner. Do not use folders, binders, or clips.

Students are encouraged to seek the assistance of the Writing Center in writing and editing. Also, you can have your draft reviewed by me for comments and suggestions. **All papers will be checked by the Turnitin software to prevent plagiarism.**

After the paper has been written and submitted, group members will be asked to evaluate each other. Forms will be given out to each student for evaluation and they should be completed and returned to the instructor. Please note that points will be deducted if students fail to return the evaluation form.

## Oral Presentation of Term Paper

The term paper has to be presented in class. A schedule for presentation will be circulated among students and each group will be given 15 to 20 minutes for presentation. **Each member in a group has to present and will be evaluated separately.** Students **must use power point slides in their presentation.** Additional visual aids can also be used in class presentation of term paper. You may refer to your notes in presentation but *please do not read directly from the paper.* Be prepared to answer questions that might be raised by other students in the class.

## Study Tips:

There are several ways to do well in this class.

1. Try to attend all the classes and take good notes in class and review them at the end of the day to fill in information that you didn't take down. The best time to fill in your notes is when the material is fresh in your mind.
2. Make note cards for the vocabulary in the lecture, the texts, and those provided on the study guides. There are quite a few terms that you need to know, particularly in the Davis book, and "flash cards" as the best way to memorize the material.
3. A **study guide** will be provided for all 3 exams. Be sure to keep the study guides and all your study materials so you can use them for the examinations.
4. Find a study partner or two. Reviewing the material with a study partner is an excellent way to study for an exam or review your notes.
5. **Don't wait until the night before the examination to study!** Some of the terminology in the course is technical and new to you. *Spend a few minutes every day* reviewing the new concepts and terminologies introduced in class lectures.
6. Use the **Sam Houston Writing Center** for help writing your paper. This will require working on the paper ahead of time and not waiting until the last minute to write it. **Sam Houston Writing Center**, located in Wilson 114, is open from 8 a.m. until 7 p.m. Monday-Thursday, 8 a.m. until 3 p.m. Friday, and 2 p.m. until 7 p.m. Sunday. Writing tutors will work with you one-on-one to help you generate, organize, or revise a draft of any assignment. Please drop by or call 936-294-3680 to schedule an appointment

## Americans with Disabilities:

Requests for disability accommodations must be initiated by the student. A student seeking accommodations should go to the Counseling Center and Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) in a timely manner. This instructor requires documentation from the Counseling Center in order to provide accommodations.

## ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Cheating on the exams or the paper will result in administrative sanctions including being reported to the Dean of Students, failing the course, or academic expulsion. This instructor takes academic dishonesty very seriously and will penalize students who engage in it. SHSU defines "cheating" as

"1) copying from another student's test paper, laboratory report, other report, or computer files, data listings, and/or programs.

2) Using, during a test, materials not authorized by the person giving the test.

3) collaborating, without authorization, with another student during an examination or in preparing academic work.

4) knowingly, and without authorization, using, buying, selling, stealing, transporting, soliciting, copying, or possessing, in whole or in part, the contents of an unadministered test...

7) Purchasing, or otherwise acquiring and submitting as one's own work any research paper or other writing assignment prepared by an individual or firm.

5.312 "Plagiarism" means the appropriation of another's work or idea and the unacknowledged incorporation of that work or idea into one's own work offered for credit."

[Http://www.shsu.edu/administrative/faculty/sectionb.html#dishonesty](http://www.shsu.edu/administrative/faculty/sectionb.html#dishonesty)

## Tentative Course Outline – Fall 2007

**Please Note:** *The instructor reserves the right to alter the syllabus and course outline, including dates for examinations, presentations, and the due date of materials, as needed. These changes will be announced in class and will appear in Blackboard announcements. It is the student's responsibility to become aware of the changes. The date for the speaker to come and give a talk will be announced in class.*

August 21 and 23	Introduction to Public Policy	Chap. 1 and 2 (Davis)
August 28 and 30	Conceptualizing Public Policy The Major Actors in Policy Process	Chap. 3 and 4 (Davis)
September 4 and 6	Varieties of Public Policies	Chap. 5 (Davis)
September 11 and 13	Characteristics of Policy Making Agenda Setting and Implementation	Chap. 6 and 7 (Davis)
September 18	Policy Implementation	Chap. 8 (Davis)
September 20	<b>***First Exam***</b>	
September 25 and 27	Policy Evaluation Revenue, Spending and Deficits	Chap. 9 and 10 (Davis)
October 2 and 4	Defining Problems in U.S. Env'n. Policies Clean Air and Water Acts	Chap. 1 and 2 (Layzer)
October 9 and 11	Love Canal Environmental Justice	Chap. 3 and 5 (Layzer)
October 16 and 18	Oil Versus Wilderness Job vs. Environment	Chap. 6 and 8 (Layzer)
October 23 and 25	Climate Change Trade vs. Environment	Chap. 11 and 12 (Layzer)
October 30	<b>***Second Exam***</b>	
November 6 and 8	Market Based Solutions Eco Based Solutions	Chap. 14 and 15 (Layzer)
November 13 and 15	Environmental Backlash Politics, Values, Changes	Chap.13 and 18 (Layzer)
November 20	Cont'd	
November 22	<b>No Class! Thanksgiving Holiday</b>	

November 27 and 29	Paper Presentation. <b><u>Please Submit Term Paper on Nov. 29, 2007*</u></b>
December 4	Paper Presentation (cont'd)
December 6	Review for final exam
December '07	<b>Final Exam Date To Be Announced</b>

\* Please note that late submission of Term Paper will lead to deduction of points that might affect your overall grade.