

**American Public Policy Online (POL 285:21)**  
**Spring 2008**  
**Department of Political Science**  
**Sam Houston State University**

**Office Hours (at office AB1 Room 315L)**

Tuesday – 11:00am to 12:00pm

Thursday – 11:00am to 12:30pm

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**Course description**

This course will help to understand public policies. The need for public policies, how they are formulated, implemented and evaluated. In this class, the various stages in the policy making process and the roles played by individuals, groups, politicians, bureaucrats and others in the passage and implementation of a public policy will be examined. There will be discussions and examples drawn from several public policies to emphasize the various aspects of public policies. The basic principles of public policies will be applied to examine environmental policies. Several environmental cases will be analyzed to gain understanding of the need for environmental policies, the politics involved in their passage and retention along with their impacts on the economy and on our lives.

**Course Objectives**

This course will examine the entire public policy making process. It will help students to understand the historical development of public policies, the current process of policy formulation and the various challenges encountered in the policy making process. Since policy implementation requires public funding, financial aspects of policies will also be examined. Also, the course will offer insights into policy evaluation – why we need evaluation, how is it done and impacts decisions regarding renewal or elimination of public programs in a politically charged climate.

**Required Text**

1. Davis, Edwin S. 2008. **Public Policy: The Basics, third edition.** Edsal Publishing. ISBN: 9780972197823.

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 require constant review of information posted online (powerpoint slides), reading chapters from the two textbooks, reading news articles that will be sent to you and participating in discussions using the discussion board of the Blackboard. Please **download all the powerpoint slides** for the assigned topics. They will be made available only on due dates as mentioned in the tentative course outline. *Request for early release of slides will not be entertained.* The slides will provide you with supplemental information and help to better understand the topics in the textbooks.

Powerpoint slides will be provided for all the chapters of the textbook, '**Public Policy: the Basics**' by Edwin Davis. Only two slide sets will be provided for chapters 1 and 18 for the textbook, '**The Environmental Case**' by Judith Layzer.

**Please read newspapers (local, state, and national) and newsarticles** posted at various websites (Yahoo, Aol, etc.) and you will find interesting news/facts on policy related issues. Since election campaigns have already started and candidates are discussing various policy issues, please try to keep up with your readings. They will provide food for thought and we can discuss these issues in your online discussions, which will be conducted in the form of chat sessions.

You can join the **chat session** by using the **Collaboration** feature of the Blackboard. It might require you to download a software to join the chat sessions. So, please check out the feature prior to chat sessions and not wait until the last minute. Participation in chat sessions will be counted towards your grade.

In this online class, I will communicate with you through announcements and e-mails. **Please make sure that your e- mailbox is not full.** It is your duty to keep the channels of communication open. Failure to comply with instructions in a timely manner might affect your overall grade. **Also, I reserve the right not to answer to any anonymous e-mails.**

**Participation in discussions is essential in this class.** You will be awarded points for participation in discussions. The dates for discussions will be posted on the Blackboard. In these discussion forums, you can pose questions that can be answered by any students in the class and the instructor. You do not have to send me an e- mail with your questions or comments. Please post them directly on the discussion board of the Blackboard.

In discussion sessions, I will post the initial questions, invite for responses and you can post the answers to the questions and also come up with more questions on the topic. I will be monitoring the site and keeping track of your participation in discussions. Please note that participation will help you to clarify doubts, obtain additional information and gain understanding of issues that might be of help in your written assignments.

In this course, students will be evaluated on the following:

### **Grading**

First Exam – 25 points (multiple choice, true or false, fill in the blanks and match words)  
Second Exam – 30 points (multiple choice, true or false, fill in the blanks and match words)  
Public Policy Term Paper - 20 points  
Environmental Case Presentations – 10 points  
Synopsis - 5 points  
Participation (discussions) - 10 points

Final grades will be computed on the following basis:

A = 90 points and above

B = 80 to 89 points

C = 70 to 79 points

D = 60 to 69 points

F = 59 points and below

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

### **A. Synopsis**

Every student has to write a synopsis. You can choose any environmental topic. Please inform me of your choice at your earliest convenience and I will post those topics. Once a topic has been selected by a student and posted online, it cannot be used by others.

Read a detailed article on your topic of choice. Its source can be a newspaper, website, news magazines or even a journal article. Use the regular google or the google scholar to research an article.

### **Guidelines for writing a synopsis**

1. Write a brief introductory summary introducing the topic and the problem. **The descriptive part should not exceed two small paragraphs.**
2. In the body of the synopsis, discuss the impact(s) of the problem on the society or on our lives and whether it is worthwhile to invest time and resources in dealing with this problem.
3. You may add any other issue pertaining to that topic. For example, if your topic deals with disposal of hazardous waste, after discussing the above issues you may bring up an additional issue related to your topic like environmental injustice. That is, how hazardous waste sites are sometimes found close to lower income neighborhoods and people's ignorance are exploited to store such wastes or how they are shipped overseas to poor countries, which lack technology for the proper disposal of such wastes.
4. Conclude the synopsis by expressing your personal opinion on the issue of discussion. What are your recommendations and/or criticisms in handling of the issue? What policy advice can you offer to public officials in handling that particular problem or the issue?

The synopsis should be 2-3 pages in length (excluding title page), typed and double spaced. Use Microsoft Word for typing purposes and use one inches margin. It should be typed in Times Roman font, size 12. There should be a title page with the source of the information and your name should be typed at the bottom right hand corner of the title page.

Check your work for grammatical errors and typos prior to submission. Submit the synopsis on the due date or even before the due date if you have completed it. **Use the Safe Assign feature in the Content section of the Blackboard to submit your assignment.** The delivered document will display the *date and time* of your submission. Late submission will lead to deduction of points.

## **B. Environmental Case Report**

In writing the case report, students will be assigned to groups. Each group will be assigned a case (a chapter) from the textbook, *The Environmental Case* by Judith Layzer. Group members are expected to read that chapter and understand the case using the theoretical principles discussed in this class.

First, groups will be numbered A, B, C, etc. and each group will comprise of two members. Information on group membership will be posted online after the last day for dropping the class. I will make available to each group, members e-mails to facilitate communication. Each group will write a 3 - 4 pages report using the given guidelines. I will assign to each group a chapter for writing the case report. Please post your case report in the Discussion Board in the forum titled 'Environmental Case Report' within the due date. You may even attach URL links to video clips from U Tube, CNN or any other sources, if you can find interesting materials on that particular issue.

Posting of case report will be followed by discussions. Each case report should be edited prior to posting. In typing your report, please use Times Roman font (size 12) and a one inches margin of Microsoft word software. Late submission will lead to deduction of points.

### Guidelines for Writing a Case Report

First, identify the environmental problem. What impacts did the problem have on the lives of people and how did they respond to the problem?

Second, discuss the agenda setting process. In this stage, identify the important role players and their contribution in creating political awareness for action.

Third, discuss the policy formulation stage. Can you identify any iron triangle or the presence of an issue network? Does the issue enjoy strong interest group(s) support? What are the demands of the group(s)? Have they been able to exert much influence in the policy making process?

Fourth, identify the agency responsible for implementation of the program. What types of programs have been developed to address the problem and deliver benefits to the public? Can you identify the target population and the direct benefits? Are there any spillover effects? If so, explain.

Fifth, discuss the outcomes. Was the policy subject to evaluation? What are the criticisms or weaknesses of the policy? Has any action been taken to address them? If so, what are they and if not, why have they been ignored or neglected? Sometimes direct answers as to why actions have not been taken may not be available in the book. In such situations, you are free to speculate and come up with your own explanations.

Please note, that in some cases, it may be difficult to follow the exact format of the guidelines provided to you. In such circumstances, please use your discretion and present those aspects of the case that are important.

## **C. Term Paper Assignment**

Writing the term paper will involve group effort. You will stay in the same group (A, B, C, D..) and work with your partner to produce the term paper.

Every group needs to submit a term paper on an environmental policy that is of interest to group members. It can be a policy aimed at protection of public health from insecticides used in agriculture or one calling for reduction in emissions from automobiles. The choice is yours. Please inform me of your choice of topic at your earliest convenience. You may check with me on your selected policy topic prior to writing your term paper. **You cannot choose the same topic that has already been used in writing the synopsis and the case report.**

Do some research on your choice of an **environmental** policy. Use both journal articles along with various reports in investigation of this policy. Make optimum use of resources available at your university's library – use Lexis Nexis to obtain current information from newspaper articles. Also, use Google Scholar to obtain titles of journal articles. Once you have information on journal and article titles, you can download them from the university's online journals. Seek the library staff's assistance, if you need any.

**The following guidelines need to be followed in writing the Term Paper.** Please elaborate on each item. Please feel free to add additional items in your discussion of the environmental policy.

- (a) Introduce the policy and discuss the problem that had helped to set the agenda for the policy.
- (b) Discuss the roles played by various actors in passage of the policy.
- (c) Which agency or department is responsible for implementation of the policy? Discuss its functions or explain the implementation process (describe the program used to attain the objectives of the policy).
- (d) Identify the decision making process used in policy formulation. Example, rational, incremental, mixed scanning, etc.?
- (e) Identify the presence of either an Iron Triangle or an Issue network in the policy formulation and/or implementation process. If none, explain why?
- (f) Discuss the problems or obstacles (if any) encountered in implementation of the policy.
- (g) What measures (if any) have been taken to address the problem(s)?
- (h) Use a schematic diagram to 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.
- (i) Has the policy benefited the public? If not, explain why? If yes, in what ways?
- (j) Discuss your personal opinion of the policy.
- (k) Provide your own recommendations or make suggestions to improve this policy.

The term paper must be well organized. Ideas should flow smoothly from one paragraph to another. Please use headings and subtitles if necessary to avoid abrupt transition of ideas from one paragraph to another.

**The paper must be typed using Microsoft word software.** It should be at least *10 double-spaced pages excluding table of contents, reference list, title page and appendices* (if any). The reference list should include at least ten citations. Use the MLA format in the reference section.

The typed pages should have 1" margins, the **font should be Times Roman** and the **font size should be 12 point**. **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.

Check your paper for typos and grammatical errors. If necessary, please have your paper reviewed by the staff at the SHSU Writing Center before submitting it to me. Editing service is free for students.

Please have your paper checked by Turnitin.com prior to submission. I will provide you with more instructions on that. If you need further information on instructions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Please submit the term paper on the due date. Late submission of term paper will lead to deduction of points.

### **Participation**

Every student is required to participate in chat sessions in addition to online discussions. Due to the large size of the class, I will divide the class into two groups. All those with last names A to M will be in Group 1 and those with last names P to W will be in Group 2. I will prepare the two group lists and the dates and times for chat sessions and post it online. The posting will be done by the end of January 2008. Please note that I will be constantly monitoring the discussion boards and all chat sessions will be recorded to evaluate your participation in this online class and to award you participation points.

### **A Note on Plagiarism**

Please do not copy and/or paste directly from websites, journal articles, wikipedia or books. Use proper citation procedures to cite articles, authors and other materials. A plagiarized term paper will receive 0 points and the case will be forwarded to the Dean of Students for further investigation.

## Tentative Course Outline American Public Policy Online (Spring 2008)

**Please Note:** *The instructor reserves the right to alter the syllabus, including dates for submission of required assignments and exams. These changes will appear in Blackboard announcements. It is the student's responsibility to become aware of such changes.*

<b>Posting Date</b>	<b>Slide Number/Activity/Assignment Due</b>	<b>Chapter</b>
1/17	Slide #1 Slide #2	Introduction to Public Policy Chapter 1 (Davis)
1/22	Slide #3	Chapter 2 (Davis)
1/28	Slide #4	Chapter 3 (Davis)
2/4	Slide #5	Chapter 4 (Davis)
2/11	Slide #6	Chapter 5 (Davis)
2/19	<b>**FIRST EXAM**</b> (chapters 1 to 5, Davis)	<b>At SHSU, Bldg. AB1, Room 302 (2pm – 3pm)</b>
2/25	Slide #7 <b>Submit Synopsis</b>	Chapter 6 (Davis)
3/3	Slide #8	Chapter 7 (Davis)
3/10	<b>SPRING BREAK!</b>	
3/17	Slide #9	Chapter 8 (Davis)
3/24	Slide # 10 Slide # 11	Chapter 9 (Davis) Chapter 10 (Davis)
3/31	Slide # 12	Chapter 1 (Layzer)
4/7	Slide #13	Chapter 18 (Layzer)
4/14	<b>Post Case Report</b>	<b>Send electronically</b>
4/21	<b>Post Case Report</b>	<b>Send electronically</b>
4/29	<b>**SECOND EXAM**</b> Chapters 6 to 10 (Davis) Chapters 1 and 18 (Layzer)	<b>At SHSU Bldg. AB1, Room 302 (2pm – 3pm)</b>
5/5	<b>Submit Term Paper</b> (penalty for late submission)	<b>Send electronically</b>