

American Public Policy Online (POL 285, sections 3 and 4)
Summer 2008
Department of Political Science
Sam Houston State University

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Course Description

This course will help to understand public policies and their impacts on our lives. It will discuss the need for public policies, how they are formulated, approved, implemented and evaluated. Along with emphasis on the various stages in the policy making process, the roles played by different individuals, politicians, bureaucrats, and organized interest groups in the making of public policies will be examined. Discussions and examples drawn from several public policies will help to understand the theoretical foundations of public policies. Also, this class will focus on environmental policies and the politics involved in regulations. Even though environmental issues are bipartisan in nature but politics play a major role in enhancing or undermining the importance of environmental policies, Knowledge of the various factors that influence the objectives and implementation of public policies will help to make better decisions about their usefulness in our lives.

Course Objectives

This course will examine the entire public policy making process. It will help students to understand the politics behind public policy making, the processes involved in policy formulation, and the various challenges encountered in the policy making process. Usually the passage of a policy is followed by its implementation and policy implementation requires allocation of scarce public resources. Hence, the financial aspects involved in securing funding for public policies will also be examined along with the need for policy evaluation, which often helps to make decisions regarding the 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. Rosenbaum, Walter A. 2008. **Environmental Politics and Policy,** CQ Press. ISBN: 9780872894402.

Class Requirements

The course will require constant review of information posted online (powerpoint slides, other pertinent information and announcements) and reading of chapters from the two textbooks. Please **download all the powerpoint slides** for the assigned topics. These slides will provide you with **supplemental information** and help to better understand the topics in the textbooks.

Please note that powerpoint slides will be provided for all the chapters of the textbook,

Please read newspapers (local, state, and national) and newsarticles posted at various websites (Yahoo, AOL, etc.). Often you will find interesting news/facts on various policy related issues, which would help you to better understand the course materials.

In this class, I will communicate with students through announcements posted on BlackBoard (BB) and by e-mails. **Please make sure that your e-mailbox is not full and check the BB daily.** It is your duty and responsibility to keep all channels of communication open when taking an online class. If messages get bounced back, you may not receive important information and instructions. This might affect your overall performance in class. **Also, I reserve the right not to answer to any anonymous e-mails.** All e-mails addressed to me should have the author's name.

Participation in online discussions is required in this class. You will be awarded ten points for participation in four discussions. I will post news articles, questions, and invite responses to those comments and questions. You will post answers to questions and please feel free to come up with additional questions and /or comments on those topics, which should be posted online. *Check the posting time period in the tentative schedule of class.* I will be constantly monitoring the site and keeping track of your participation in discussions for evaluation purposes. Further, your participation in discussions will help you to clarify doubts, obtain additional information, make you examine issues critically and thereby improve your understanding of policy related issues.

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

Grading

First Online Exam – 20 points (multiple choice, true or false, fill in the blanks and word matching)*

Second Online Exam – 30 points (multiple choice, true or false, fill in the blanks and word matching)*

Public Policy Term Paper - 25 points

Synopsis - 15 points

Discussions – 10 points

*Word bank will be provided prior to the exam.

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

There will be two online exams offered in this class. These exams will be timed and questions will be released one at a time. A time window will be provided and you can take the exam within the given time period. Each exam can be taken only once. Even if you make several attempts to take the exam, only the first attempt will be recorded and counted. Please check the dates and topics for the exams in the class schedule.

ASSIGNMENTS

A. Synopsis

First, you need to select a topic for the synopsis. I have provided a list of topics for the synopsis from the Rosenbaum book and the corresponding page numbers. In making a selection, please let me know your first and second preferences. If by coincidence, two students happen to choose the same topic, then whoever sends me the e-mail first, gets to keep the topic of their first preference. After the selection process, I will post a spreadsheet with the topic and the corresponding name of the student working on a particular policy topic.

Second, read the assigned topic. Third, follow the guidelines in writing the synopsis.

Guidelines:

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 issue and/or policy on our lives and whether it is worthwhile to invest scarce resources in addressing that particular problem.
3. Do your own research on that topic. Look at the federal policy objectives and check whether those objectives are followed strictly in the implementation of a policy at the state level. You can choose your state or any other state in the nation where this policy is implemented and comment on problems/changes, if any in implementation of the policy or in handling of the issue. Also, you can comment on actions undertaken by other countries in dealing with the issue or policy.
4. Conclude the synopsis by expressing your personal opinion on the policy issue that is, your criticisms and/or praises of that policy. Suggest your recommendations for further improvements in the implementation or changes in the policy objectives. What policy opinion/advice can you offer as an individual to your local elected and/or 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 inch 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. (1) Post your synopsis in the Environmental Policy Forum of the Discussion Board of BB. (2) Also, submit it into the Synopsis folder in the Assignment section of the BB to facilitate its grading. **Please note all assignments will be checked for plagiarism using the Turnitin software.***

B. Term Paper Assignment

You have to submit a term paper on an environmental problem and a related policy that is of interest to you. Please keep in mind that in selection of an environmental problem and a related policy, the policies used in writing synopses cannot be reused. Since there are endless environmental problems and policies, the selection of a topic should not be a problem. **Even though choice of the topic rests with you, please check with me and have it approved prior to writing your term paper.**

Do some research on your choice of an **environmental issue/policy**. Use both journal and news articles in investigation of the problem and the existing policy to address it. Make optimum use of resources available at the university's library – use Lexis Nexis to obtain current information from newspaper articles. Also, use Google Scholar to obtain journal articles. Once you have information on journals and other news articles, please do not forget to cite them in the body of your term paper and the reference section. Seek the assistance of the library and writing center, if required.

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

- (a) Discuss the environmental problem that has helped to set the agenda for an environmental policy. Introduce the essential elements of this environmental policy.
- (b) Discuss the roles played by various actors in passage of the policy and the media if any..
- (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 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(s) of this policy.
- (k) Provide your own recommendations or make suggestions to improve this policy.

The term paper must be well organized. Ideas should flow clearly and 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 and save it as a '97 –2003 document. It should be at 7- 8 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 writing the term paper.

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. Reviewing service is free for all students. **Please note that I will check all papers for plagiarism* using the Turnitin software.**

Please submit the term paper on the due date. Late submission of term paper will lead to deduction of 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. If you need help, please seek the assistance of the Writing Center. A plagiarized term paper will receive 0 points and the case will be forwarded to the Dean of Students for further investigation.

Tentative Class Schedule American Public Policy Online (Summer 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.*

| Date | Slide Number/Activity/Assignment Due | Read Chapter |
|-------------|---|---|
| 6/3 | Slide #1 | Introduction to Public Policy |
| 6/4 | Slide #2 | Chapter 1 (Davis) |
| 6/5 | Slides #3 | Chapter 2 (Davis) |
| 6/6 | Slide #4 | Chapter 3 (Davis) Chapter 2, p30 – 33 (Rosenbaum) |
| 6/9 | Discussion #1 | Check Discussion Board and post answers, comments, and/or questions until 6/12/08. |
| 6/10 | Slides # 5 | Chapter 4 (Davis) Chapter 2, p37 to 41 and p49 - 57 (Rosenbaum) Chapter 3, p81 – 84 and p97 – 100 (Rosenbaum) |
| 6/11 | Slide # 6 | Chapter 5 (Davis) |
| 6/12 | Slide #7 | Chapter 6 (Davis) |
| 6/13 | Discussion #2 Please review book chapters and slide notes for online exam | Check Discussion Board and post answers, comments, and/or questions until 6/19/08. |
| 6/16 | First Online Exam (chapters 1 to 5 of Davis book and chapter 1 of Rosenbaum book) | Time window: 10am to 3pm |
| 6/17 | Slide # 8 | Chapter 7 (Davis) |
| 6/18 | Slide # 9 | Chapter 8 (Davis) Chapter 3, p68 – 82 |
| 6/19 | Slide #10 | Chapter 9 (Davis) |
| 6/20 | Discussion #3 | Check Discussion Board and post answers, comments, and/or questions until 6/24/08. |

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|------|---|---|
| 6/23 | Slide #11 Slide # 12 | Chapter 10 (Davis) Slide notes on Environmentalism |
| 6/24 | Synopsis Due | (a) Send electronically from the Assignment section of BB (from the Synopsis folder) (b) Post it on the Discussion Board |
| 6/25 | Discussion #4 | Check Discussion Board and post answers, comments, and/or questions until 6/30/08. |
| 6/26 | Submit Term Paper (penalty for late submission) Please review book chapters and slide notes for online exam | Send electronically using the Assignment feature of BB (from the Term Paper folder) |
| 6/27 | Please review book chapters and slide notes for second online exam | |
| 6/30 | Second Online Exam (chapters 6 to 10 of Davis book, slide notes on environmentalism and chapters 2 and 3 of Rosenbaum book) | Time window: 10am to 3pm |

*** Please note that you have you submit the assignments on the due date. If you have completed an assignment prior to the due date, you may send it an earlier date. Due to the short duration of the course, extra time will not be given for submission of assigned work. *Failure to submit work on the due date will lead to reduction of points that might affect your overall grade.***

Synopsis Topics from Rosenbaum's book

1. Regulatory Economics (read p143 to 155)
2. Environmental valuation and regulation (read p155 to 170).
3. Water (read p174 to 179 and p196-214).
4. Air (read p174 to 179 and p180 to 196).
5. Toxic chemicals - phthalate (read p114 to 121 and p124 to 131))
6. Toxic chemicals – dioxin (read p118 to p131).
7. Toxic and Abandoned Waste (read p217 to 220, p227 – 229, p237 – 239 and p242 to 244).
8. Environmental injustice (read p130 to 140)
9. Fossil fuels (read p253 to p260).
10. Nuclear energy (read p260 to 279).
11. Coal based energy (read p279 to p285).
12. Public Land (read p289 to p305).
13. Forests (read p316 to p327).
14. Ozone (read p330 to 349).
15. Acid precipitation (read p330 to 346 and p349 to 351).
16. Climate change (read p330 to 346 and p353 to 359)
17. Human Cloning (will require individual research)
18. Stem cell research (will require individual research)
19. Smoking and Tobacco use (will require individual research)
20. Coastal erosion and flooding (will require individual research)