

PSC 403k/603k: Institutional Analysis and Public Problem Solving

“Problems in American Public Policy”

Class Time: Tuesday and Thursday, 5:30-6:45, Room FA 301

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Description

This course is fundamentally about solving public problems. We will examine the ideas proposed by some of the most creative thinkers today about how to design solutions for the biggest policy issues facing the United States. The work presented attempts to move beyond the standard political and ideological debates about the relative merits of markets and government, and toward policy solutions based on the idea of designing appropriate and effective *governance* institutions. We will cover fundamental theoretical principles of policy analysis and institutional design. The substantive areas examined include Iraq and foreign policy, environmental policy, social welfare, entitlements and governance arrangements in the digital age; however the concepts and theory covered are appropriate for addressing any public policy problem. This is an upper division course, and while there are no prerequisites and all students are welcome, it will be taught at a very high level of intellectual discourse and discussion. You are expected to stay engaged and reflective about the material throughout the class, be active in class discussions, and freely express your ideas and thoughts about the material. If you are not accustomed to speaking in class, have a habit of falling behind on readings, or would prefer a more standard textbook and lecture approach, then this is not the class for you.

Essentially, we will examine how groups of people are able to design and maintain the institutions necessary for providing and producing public goods. The course is designed as a mix of theory and application. While fundamentally a course on policy analysis, it takes a specific theoretical approach and examines how institutions can be created to address public problems. Traditionally, the study of public policy has focused on the politics underlying the regulatory and legal process. However, the actions of formal government are only part of the story and the focus on government has gradually been supplanted by the broader concept of *governance* in order to incorporate the full range of mechanisms of social choice that society uses to address public problems. Governance can be defined as the exercise of decision-making toward solving common problems and comprises the complex array of mechanisms, processes, relationships and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate interests, obligations and rights. This includes government, but also civil society, the private sector and individual citizens. It explicitly examines the ability of individuals, communities and both informal and formal organizations to self-govern and solve a variety of public good dilemmas.

Course Material

There are eight books required for this course as well as various individual readings posted to WebCT. Many of the books are written for a general audience, so are more accessible and often better written than academic texts. It is your responsibility to read each assignment before the date a reading has been assigned and come prepared to discuss the material.

- Ackerman, Bruce & Anne Alstott. 1999. The Stakeholder Society. ISBN: 0-300-08260-6. [referred to as **Ackerman** in schedule].
- Brunner, Ronald, Christine Colburn, Christina Cromley, Roberta Klein, & Elizabeth Olson. 2002. Finding Common Ground: Governance and Natural Resources in the American West. ISBN: 0300091451. [referred to as **Brunner** in schedule].
- Fukuyama, Francis. 2006. America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy. ISBN: 0-300-11399-4. [referred to as **Fukuyama** in schedule].
- Miller, Matt. 2003. The 2% Solution: Fixing America's Problems in Ways Liberals and Conservatives Can Love. ISBN: 1-58648-289-0. [referred to as **Miller** in schedule].
- Ostrom, Elinor. 1994. Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action. ISBN: 0521405998. [referred to as **Ostrom** in schedule].
- Sunstein, Cass. 2006. Infotopia / How many minds produce knowledge. ISBN: 0-19-518928-0. [referred to as **Sunstein** in schedule].
- Schuck, Peter & Richard Zeckhauser. 2006. Targeting in Social Programs: Avoiding Bad Bets, Removing Bad Apples. ISBN: 0-8157-7880-5. [referred to as **Schuck** in schedule].
- The Iraq Study Group Report: The Way Forward – A New Approach. 2006. ISBN: 0307386562. [referred to as **Iraq** in schedule].

Most of the readings for this course will be in the required texts. Additional readings can be found online in WebCT. I recommend printing course material from WebCT well in advance of due dates, since there are often technical problems with the server that prevent accessing material at the last minute. WebCT is an important component of the class, and will generally be used to communicate with other students and post grades.

Requirements

Class Participation and Attendance (25%): Class participation is critical to your success in this course. There are numerous in-class activities that require attendance and the class is designed as a mix of lecture and discussion. It is important that you are vocal and raise interesting questions throughout the class. You activity earn your participation credit throughout the course and all students begin with zero participation points. Periodically check your participation score in WebCT to determine your status.

Attendance will be taken using in-class exercises. There are no make-ups for in-class assignments if you are late or miss a class. You are allowed to miss up to 3 classes without penalty. Every additional absence will count as 3% of your grade. Excused absences are only allowed for exceptional circumstances, with full document, and prior approval from the instructor, so please use your three absences wisely and plan for contingencies.

Essays (50%): You will write three short essay assignments during the class. These are designed as a way to focus on specific aspects of each reading, highlight the important ideas, and organize your own perspectives prior to class meetings. They are mini-research papers and should be written with the same care you would give an essay assignment. They must be submitted to the instructor via email by 4 pm the day prior to when we will be covering a reading in class so require early preparation and planning on your part. Late assignments will not be accepted under any circumstances. Early submissions are always welcome. The format of the essay is a maximum of 5 double-space pages in 12-point font with one inch margins. Each student must select one in each of the alphabetic categories (A, B, C) as indicated on the syllabus.

Final Exam (25%): There will be one comprehensive exam at the end of class.

Course Policies

All assignments are due at the beginning of the class period when they are due unless otherwise stated. If you cannot turn in an assignment on time, it is your responsibility to contact the instructor at least two days before the deadline. If you have an emergency situation, please leave a message at the office. Late assignments will only be accepted under exceptional circumstances, with advanced permission from the instructor, and may receive a 10% reduction per day.

I expect all students to treat the class as a professional event. This means extending common courtesy to classmates and providing work in a timely and acceptable manner. Class work should be of the same quality you would submit to an employer. All assignments should be stapled, typed, have standard one-inch margins and use 12-point font. Sloppy, handwritten, unstapled assignments may not be accepted, and at a minimum will receive a 10% reduction. If you disagree with a grade you have received, you may discuss it with the instructor during office hours only. Email messages requesting grade changes will not receive a reply.

There is an extremely strict policy against plagiarism in this course. You must submit your own written work. If you have any doubt what constitutes plagiarism, please check with the campus writing center or the instructor. You are responsible for knowing the guidelines. Plagiarized work will receive a failing grade for the course and be reported as academic misconduct for further disciplinary action with expulsion recommended.

Students with documented disabilities should contact the instructor as soon as possible in order to ensure adequate accommodations.

Course Schedule

Date	Subject / • Required Reading / ► Assignment Due
T 8/28	<p><i>Introduction to the Course</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class Syllabus <p>► Student Information Sheet</p>
Th 8/30	<p><i>An Introduction to Social Dilemmas – The Prisoner's Dilemma</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hardin, Garrett. (1968). The Tragedy of the Commons. Science, 162: 1243-1248. <p>*** Class meets in E.L. Computer Lab, Library ***</p> <p>► Turn in Private Farm Optimization</p>
T 9/4	<p><i>The Traditional Approach – The Role of Government</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miller, Chapters 1-6
Th 9/6	<p><i>Introduction to Public Policy – Markets and Market Failures</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miller, Chapters 7-11
T 9/11	<p><i>Introduction to Public Policy – Government and State Failures</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miller, Chapters 12-14 and Postscript <p>► Essay 1A Due</p>
Th 9/13	<p><i>Re-thinking the relationship between citizenship and government</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schwartz, “Unnatural Selection”, 2007, NYTimes Editorial. • Sunstein and Thaler, Libertarian Paternalism is Not an Oxymoron, University of Chicago Law School, May, 2003. <p>► Essay 2A Due</p>
T 9/18	<p><i>Beyond Government – Provision and Production</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ostrom, E., The Comparative Study of Public Economies, American Economist, 42(1).
Th 9/20	<p><i>Governance from a public administration perspective</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kettl, Donald, 2000, The Transformation of Governance: Globalization, Devolution, and the Role of Government, Public Administration Review, 60(6).

T 9/25	<p><i>ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE & POLICY</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brunner, Ch. 1, "Problems of Governance" • Ostrom, Ch. 1, "Reflections on the Commons" <p>► Essay 3A Due</p>
Th 9/27	<p><i>The Institutional Approach</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ostrom, Ch. 2, "An Institutional Approach to the Study of Self-Organization and Self-governance in CPR Situations". • Ostrom, Ch. 3, "Analyzing Long-enduring, Self-organized, and Self-governed CPRs"
T 10/2	<p><i>Institutional Change & Institutional Failures</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ostrom, Ch. 4, "Analyzing Institutional Change" • Ostrom, Ch. 5, "Analyzing Institutional Failures and Fragilities"
Th 10/4	<p><i>Western Environmental Policy Issues</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brunner, Ch. 2, "Water Management and the Upper Clark Fork Steering Committee," & Ch. 3, "Wolf Recovery in the Northern Rockies" & Ch. 4, "Bison Management in Greater Yellowstone"
T 10/9	<p><i>Analyzing Institutional Arrangements</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ostrom, Ch. 6, "A Framework for Analysis of Self-organizing & Self-governing CPRs" • Brunner, Ch. 6, "Harvesting Experience" <p>► Essay 1B Due</p>
Th 10/11	<p><i>SOCIAL POLICY – Intervening in Private Decisions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schuck, Ch. 1-3
T 10/16	<p><i>Goals of Social Programs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schuck, C. 4-5
Th 10/18	<p><i>Targeting Programs and Good Policy Design</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schuck, Ch. 6-7 <p>► Essay 2B Due</p>
T 10/23	<p><i>ENTITLEMENTS</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ackerman, Part 1

Th 10/25	<i>Redefining the Role of Government</i> • Schuck, Part II
T 10/30	<i>Towards a Stakeholder Society</i> • Schuck, Part III ▶ Essay 3B Due
Th 11/1	<i>FOREIGN POLICY AND IRAQ</i> <i>Intellectual History of US Foreign Policy</i> • Fukuyama, Ch. 1-2
T 11/6	<i>The Role of the US in International Affairs</i> • Fukuyama, Ch. 3-5
Th 11/8	<i>The Future of American Foreign Policy (?)</i> • Fukuyama, Ch. 6-7 ▶ Essay 1C Due
T 11/13	<i>An Introduction to Iraq</i> • A short introduction to the long and complex history of Iraq (http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17722026) • Film: <i>No End in Sight</i>
Th 11/15	<i>American Policy and Iraq</i> • Diamond, Larry, et. al., 2006, “What to Do in Iraq: A Roundtable”, Foreign Affairs • The Iraq Study Group Report (<i>all</i>) ▶ Essay 2C Due
T 11/20	*** <i>No Class</i> ***
T 11/27	*** <i>No Class</i> ***
Th 11/29	<i>GOVERNANCE IN THE DIGITAL AGE</i> • Sunstein, Ch. 1-3
T 12/4	<i>Governance in the information age</i> • Sunstein, Ch. 4-6, & Conclusions ▶ Essay 3C Due
Th 12/6	Conclusions and Review for final exam
T 12/11	Final Exam

Note: This syllabus is a work in progress, thus I reserve the right to make modifications as appropriate. Changes will be announced in class and posted online.