

PUAF 620 – POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AND LEADERSHIP

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Office Hours: by appointment

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This course focuses on the primary institutions of American national governance and the major value tensions operating on and within them. We are concerned with the ways institutions operate independently and interactively to forge public policy.

Four federal institutions are the main focus of reading and class discussion: Congress, the presidency, courts, and bureaucracies. Other important forces (i.e. public opinion, parties and elections, the media, interest groups) are of concern in this course mainly due to their influences on the first four. We want to use theoretical and other perspectives, data, and abundant case examples to gain practical insight into the behavior of, and challenges facing, authoritative institutional actors.

Eight paperback books are required for this course. In addition, there will be handouts in class and occasional e-mail attachments consisting of timely articles from newspapers and magazines. The reading load is demanding but accessible and often entertaining. You will be expected to have completed each week's reading before the class to which it pertains. This is important to assure fruitful discussion. *You are advised that the written examination will concentrate on this material, including any items handed out in class during the semester.!*

Final Grade Calculation: Policy Memoranda (50%); Exam (30%); Participation (20%)

Office Hours: Hours to be arranged by appointment. Because of the logistical constraints built into a course taught off-campus, it is expected that e-mail will constitute a regular means of student-instructor communication. However, whenever possible the instructor will try to make available time immediately before and after class for individual discussion.

POLICY MEMORANDA

Along with class participation and the examination on the reading, students will be graded on a series of four policy memoranda written for the course, to be submitted at fixed intervals during the semester. Each memorandum should be a two- or three-page (single-spaced) exposition written for a professional colleague or superior who needs the information or analysis. Each memorandum should succinctly address the assigned topic and be written with clarity and care.

All of any student's memoranda should deal with the same policy issue (e.g. immigration) but each should be self-contained, permitting a reader to digest it separately from all other sources. Please submit each in the assigned sequence and on the scheduled date indicated below. The issue should be currently active and prominently involve the federal government (although other levels of government will often be relevant).

It is advisable to select an issue that already interests you and about which you already have some knowledge. You must research the issue but your memoranda should not use footnotes or a formal bibliography. Where appropriate cite sources in parentheses or list them in an appendix. Use the Internet but do not lift whole chunks of the memorandum from web sites. The writing and analysis must be your own.

You must submit five items during the semester. Please turn these in using the blue folders handed out on the first day of class. The five items include the following:

- (1) *Statement of Issue Selection* – Submit a brief typed statement (one-page maximum) indicating the issue you will examine in the series of memoranda. The instructor must be able to judge from your statement whether the issue you have chosen conforms to the requirements specified for the course. ***Due September 23.***
- (2) *Memorandum #1: Issue Description and Background* – The first memorandum will describe the issue and options facing policymakers. It explains why the issue is important and where matters stand at present. The memorandum should provide relevant background information, including past developments that bear on the current status of the issue. It should preview actions or decisions that might be taken in the months ahead. Provide data that explain why the issue has become “hot.” ***Due October 7.***
- (3) *Memorandum #2: Political Analysis* – Discuss the main interest groups active in the issue. Who are they? What do they want? What are they doing to get it? What particular opportunities or constraints do these groups face? The more you can tell about (and compare) the strategies/tactics of the groups and the larger political environments they face, the stronger will be your memorandum. You may wish to examine web sites maintained by the groups, assessing the quality and effectiveness of their presentations and arguments. (If you do this, append relevant printouts to your memo.) Where does public opinion stand on the issue? ***Due October 28.***
- (4) *Memorandum #3: Institutional Analysis* - Discuss the role and actions of one or more institutions on the issue. Institutions may be executive agencies, Congress, or the courts but NOT interest groups or political parties. It may be useful to think of the memo as an answer to the following question: what difference does it make to the issue that this institution is involved? You may compare two or more institutions involved in the issue. ***Due November 18.***
- (5) *Memorandum #4: Policy Outcomes and Recommendations* – Describe and analyze what has happened to the issue during the semester. If little or no action has occurred, explain why this was so. Explain the outcome. Why did the winners win and the losers lose? The memo should present and defend a

course of action for the issue. In your judgement, what should be the preferred outcome or option? Why? What would have to happen to make your preference a reality? Support your position with argument, analysis and evidence. ***Due December 2.***

If you wish to revise a graded memo in hopes of receiving a higher grade, be advised that each student will be limited to **two** revisions throughout the semester.

REQUIRED BOOKS

Thomas A. Birkland, An Introduction to the Policy Process: Theories, Concepts, and Models of Policymaking (M.E. Sharpe, 2001), 294pp.

Rebecca K.C. Hersman, Friends and Foes: How Congress and the President Really Make Foreign Policy (Brookings Institution Press, 2000), 142pp.

James Q. Wilson, Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It (Basic Books, 1989), 433pp.

R. Douglas Arnold, The Logic of Congressional Action (Yale University Press, 1990), 282pp.

Jonathan Rauch, Government's End: Why Washington Stopped Working (Public Affairs, 1999), 295pp.

John W. Kingdon, America the Unusual (St. Martin's/WORTH, 1999), 111pp.

John W. Kingdon, Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies 2nd. Edition (HarperCollins, 1995), 253pp.

R. Kent Weaver, Ending Welfare As We Know It (Brookings Institution Press, 2000), 482 pp.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS, DISCUSSIONS, AND MEMORANDA

Week 1 (September 9): Politics – How They Differ and the Difference It Makes

Kingdon, America the Unusual, entire. (Please try to read this brief and easily digestible book *before* the first class meeting.)

Wilson, chapter 16

Week 2 (September 16): Policy Actors: An Overview

Birkland, chapters 1-4

Week 3 (September 23): Interpreting the Policy Process

Birkland, chapters 6-9

DUE: Statement of Issue Selection

Week 4 (September 30): Agenda Setting and Problem Definition

Kingdon, Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies, chapters 4-8

Birkland, chapter 5

Week 5 (October 7): Welfare Reform

Weaver, chapters 10-13

*Note that in lieu of our regular class meeting at the Ariel Rios Building we will convene at 5:30 p.m. at the American Enterprise Institute for the Bradley Lecture Series. Douglas Besharov will deliver this evening's lecture on "Post-Welfare-Reform Welfare." The lecture will take place in AEI's Wohlstetter Conference Center (located on the 12th floor, 1150 17th Street, N.W.) A fee of \$5.00 will be collected at the door. A reception will follow. Remember to bring your memo folders; **your first paper will be due!***

Week 6 (October 14): Influences on Policy -- Interest Groups

Rauch, chapters 1-4

Weaver, chapter 8

Week 7 (October 21): Influences on Policy -- Research and Public Opinion

Weaver, chapters 6 and 7

Week 8 (October 28): Legislative-Executive Relations

Hersman, entire. **DUE: Memo #2**

Week 9 (November 4): Congress as Policymaker (I) - Preferences, Calculations and Coalitions

Arnold, chapters 1-6

Week 10 (November 11): Congress as Policymaker (II) – Case Studies

Arnold, chapters 7-9

Week 11 (November 18): Courts in the Policy Process

Wilson, chapter 15 **DUE: Memo #3**
(*Handouts to be distributed*)

Week 12 (November 25): Defending and Controlling Public Agencies

Wilson, chapters 3-13

Week 13 (December 2): The President as Policymaker

Wilson, chapter 14
Weaver, chapter 9
(Handouts on “Terrorism and the Presidency”)
DUE: Memo #4

Weeks 14 (December 9): Reforming Governance and Policies

Rauch, chapters 5-10
Wilson, chapters 17-20
Arnold, chapter 10

FINAL EXAMINATION

A take home **FINAL EXAM** focused on the on the course reading will be distributed at the end of class on **December 2**. You will have ten days to answer three out of four questions. The completed exam will be due by **Thursday December 12 by 5:00 p.m.**