

**Politics 102: Introduction to Public Policy Analysis  
Fall 2021**

Professor: Miranda Yaver  
Email: myaver@oberlin.edu  
Class Time: Tuesday/Thursday 9:30-10:45  
Class Location: AJLC 120  
Office Hours: Wednesday 1-3 or by appointment  
Office Location: Rice Hall 209

**Course Description:**

This course is designed to provide a broad introduction to the study and practice of policy analysis with an emphasis on domestic public policy. The course explores the principles of policymaking, with concrete applications to a range of substantive policy romans. It opens by examining theoretical rationales for policy, including those premised on ideology or market failure. It proceeds to investigate institutional context and processes relevant to policymaking, using case studies. With this foundation, the course explores specific policy problems and solutions related to important problem areas including health care, education, civil rights, and the environment. Students will be encouraged to investigate policy areas of interest for case studies and papers. Students will learn to provide policy memos and will collaborate on policy analysis on problems of their choosing, building not only theoretical but also applied understandings of public policy in the United States.

**Course Requirements:**

- 5-page policy memo based on a policy report of students' choosing: 20%
- Identification of a policy problem and an annotated bibliography on the subject of that policy problem: 25%
- 20 page policy report in groups of 5, which will be presented during the final week of classes: 40%
  - Students will be organized into groups based on their identified policy interests
- Attendance and participation in class: 15%

**Final Course Grading:** The final grade for the course will be assigned based on the following scale:

A: 93+%	A-: 90-92%	B+: 87-89%
B: 83-86%	B-: 80-82%	C+: 77-79%
C: 73-76%	C-: 70-72%	D+: 67-69%
D: 63-66%	D-: 60-62%	F: > 60%

***Policy Regarding Late Assignments:*** It is imperative that students turn in work at the specified deadlines. Failure to do so will result in a third letter grade reduction per day late unless you have received an extension in advance. Work will not be accepted at all more than one week late unless said extension was granted in advance. If you have concerns regarding your ability to complete your work on time due to physical or mental health reasons, you are encouraged to seek appropriate treatment from campus services and to discuss with me *in advance* whether an extension is needed.

All members of the academic community should be able to engage fully in the academic opportunities and services provided, regardless of disability status, and to that end accommodations to this course can be made if necessary. Please feel free to discuss with me any concerns you may have.

***Statement on Academic Integrity:*** Oberlin College students are on their honor to uphold a high degree of academic integrity. All work that students submit is expected to be of their own creation and give proper credit to the ideas and work of others. Thus, plagiarism, cheating, and receiving unauthorized assistance with the work in this course will not be tolerated. Should a student violate academic integrity in this class, the matter will be reported to the college administration. If you have questions about citations of sources, ask prior to submitting the given assignment. Students are encouraged to consult Writing Center services for additional assistance on writing and citation so as to avoid plagiarism.

At the end of each academic project, students should write in full and sign the Honor Pledge: “I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment.”

## **Textbooks**

The following textbooks are required:

- *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving 6th edition*, by Eugene Bardach and Eric Patashnik
- *An Introduction to the Policy Process: Theories, Concepts, and Models of Public Policy Making, 5th edition*, by Thomas Birkland

The following textbooks are recommended:

- *Speaking Truth to Power 2nd Edition*, by Aaron Wildavsky
- *Administrative Burden: Policymaking by Other Means*, by Pamela Herd and Donald P. Moynihan
- *Reforms at Risk: What Happens After Major Policy Changes Are Enacted*, by Eric Patashnik

You may use different editions to the textbooks, but page numbers correspond to the edition listed on the syllabus. Any other readings will be made available online. Students will be expected to come to class having read the material and being prepared to engage in the arguments that they present. Students will be alerted in advance to what readings are recommended rather than required, or are skim-worthy. It is imperative that students check their email regularly, as that is how class announcements will be made.

## Course Outline:

### **Tuesday, October 5: Course Introduction**

### **Thursday, October 7: Introduction to the Concept of Public Policy and its Intersections with Politics and Economics**

- Birkland, Ch. 1

### **Tuesday, October 12: Elements of the Policy Making System**

- Birkland, Ch. 2

### **Thursday: October 14: The Contexts of Public Policy Making**

- Birkland, Ch. 3

### **Tuesday, October 19: Official Actors and Their Roles in Public Policy**

- Birkland, Ch. 4, p. 113-132
- Bardach and Patashnik, p. xv-14
- Buntin, John. 1998. *"Cleaning Up the 'Big Dirties': The Problem of Acid Rain.* Case 1514.0. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Kennedy School of Government. KSG.

### **Thursday, October 21: Official Actors and Their Roles in Public Policy, continued**

- Birkland, Ch. 4, p. 132-157
- Bardach and Patashnik, p. 14-31

### **Tuesday, October 26: Unofficial Actors in Public Policy**

- Birkland, Ch. 5

### **Thursday, October 28: Health Policy**

- Scott, Esther. 2000. *The Battle Over the Clinton Health Care Proposal.* Case 1600.0. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Kennedy School of Government. KSG.
- Hacker, Jacob S. 2010. "The Road to Somewhere: Why Health Reform Happened." *Perspectives on Politics* 8(3): 861-76. (skim)
- Bardach and Patashnik, p. 31-49

### **Tuesday, November 2: Agenda Setting, Groups, and Power**

- Birkland, Ch. 6 p. 205-216
- Bardach and Patashnik, p. 49-69

- Optional: Kingdon, John. 1984. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, Ch. 4, 8

#### **Thursday, November 4: Agenda Setting, Groups, and Power**

- Birkland, Ch. 6 p. 216-241
- Bardach and Patashnik, p. 69-77
  - Optional: Baumgartner, Frank and Bryan Jones. 1993. *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*, Ch. 5

#### **Tuesday, November 9: Policies and Policy Types**

- Birkland, Ch. 7, p. 247-258
- Bardach and Patashnik, p. 77-93
- Rosegrant, Susan. 1998. *Pushing the Boundaries: Redistricting the Kentwood Schools*. Case 1437.0. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Kennedy School of Government. KSG.
  - Optional: Arnold, R. Douglas. 1990. *The Logic of Congressional Action*, Ch. 2

#### **Thursday, November 11: Policies and Policy Types**

- Birkland, Ch. 7, p. 258-280

#### **Tuesday, November 16: Decision Making and Policy Analysis**

- Birkland Ch. 8, p. 282-294
- Wilson, Julie Boatwright. *Scared Straight: Freeport City Council Takes On Juvenile Delinquency*. Case 2069.0. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Kennedy School of Government. KSG.
- Bardach and Patashnik, p. 97-106

#### **Thursday, November 18: Decision Making and Policy Analysis**

- Birkland, Ch. 8, p. 294-303
- Bardach and Patashnik, p. 106-121
  - Optional: Wildavsky, Aaron. 1987. *Speaking Truth to Power: The Art and Craft of Policy Analysis*.

THANKSGIVING BREAK

#### **Tuesday, November 30: Analyzing Policy Choices**

- Buntin, John. 1999. *Assertive Policing, Plummeting Crime: The NYPD Takes on Crime in New York City*. Case 1530.0. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Kennedy School of Government. KSG.

- Datla, Anjani. 2013. *The Geography of Poverty: Exploring the Role of Neighborhoods in the Lives of Urban, Adolescent Poor*. Case 2007.0. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Kennedy School of Government. KSG.
- de Jong, Jorit. 2021. *Advancing Educational Opportunity Through Cross-Sector Collaboration in Louisville*. Case 2215.0. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Kennedy School of Government. KSG.

**Thursday, December 2: Policy Design and Policy Tools**

- Birkland, Ch. 9, p. 306-322
- Bardach and Patashnik, Part III

**Tuesday, December 7: Policy Design and Policy Tools**

- Birkland, Ch. 9, p. 322-339
- Bardach and Patashnik, Part IV

**Thursday, December 9: Learning from the Policy Process**

- May, Peter J. 1992. "Policy Learning and Failure." *Journal of Public Policy* 12(4): 331-54.
- *A Rising Storm: Eric Garner and the Explosive Controversy Over Race & Policing*. Case 2057.0. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Kennedy School of Government. KSG.

**Tuesday, December 14: Policy Implementation, Failure, and Learning**

- Birkland, Ch. 10, p. 342-367
- Winig, Laura. 2016. *Hacking Bureaucracy: Reimagining California's Food Stamp Program in the Digital Age*. Case 2085.0. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Kennedy School of Government. KSG.

**Thursday, December 16: Policy Feedback**

- Pierson, Paul. 1993. "When Effect Becomes Cause: Policy Feedback and Political Change." *World Politics* 45(4): 595-628.

**Tuesday, December 22: Theorizing About the Policy Process**

- Weimer, David L. 2008. "Theories of and in the Policy Process." *Policy Studies Journal* 36(4): 489-95.

WINTER BREAK

**Tuesday, January 4: Science and Theory in the Study of Public Policy**

- Birkland, Ch. 11

**Thursday, January 6: Laboratories of Democracy**

- Volden, Craig and Chuck Shipan. 2021. *Why Bad Policies Spread (and Good Ones Don't)*, p. 1-16, 29-53

**Tuesday, January 11: Class Presentations**

**Thursday, January 13: Class Presentations**