

PSC 210 - Introduction to Public Policy
 University of North Carolina at Greensboro
 Spring 2016
Monday & Wednesday 2:00 - 3:15

Professor:	Dr. Allison Bramwell	Office:	CURY 320
Email:	afbramwe@uncg.edu	Class:	CURY 237

Office Hours: MW 3:15 to 4:30 or by appointment
--

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Public problem-solving in the 21st century is complex, challenging, and highly political. This course analyzes major themes and issues in contemporary public policy and government decision making at the federal level in the United States. We explore the policy process and the ideas, interests, and institutions involved by examining the complex and cross-cutting ‘real world’ pressures that confront politicians and public administrators and animate the activism of various societal interests in some of today’s most pressing policy areas. Course meetings will be a blend of lecture, student led policy debates, class and small group discussions, and illustrative films.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Students will develop an understanding of the interests, structures, and processes in contemporary public policy making and build an appreciation of the challenges and opportunities faced by government decision makers in the United States in selected policy fields. Students will develop oral communication skills through presentations and group discussions, and analytical, research, and writing skills through the development of a Policy Brief in an issue area of their choice. The overall objective of the course is to encourage students to think critically and creatively about the relationship between policy ideas and the complex realities of 21st century governance.

IMPORTANT DATES:

Jan. 18	No Class
Feb. 3	Library session: How to research your Policy Brief
Mar. 7 – 11	Spring Break
Mar. 23	Policy Briefs due
Apr. 11	Book analysis due
Apr. 20	Exam review
Apr. 25 -26	No class
May 4	Final Exam, 12:00 – 3:00 p.m.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Mark E. Rushevsky, *Public Policy in the United States*, 5th edition.

Reich, Robert. *Locked in the Cabinet*. Knopf. 1997.

Additional required readings from CQ Researcher posted on Canvas.

COURSE GRADING:

Policy debate presentation	10 %
Policy brief	30 %
Book analysis, <i>Locked in the Cabinet</i>	15 %
Participation	15 %
Final exam	30 %

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

Taken together, the Policy Brief and Policy Debate Presentation will account for a substantial portion of your grade in this course. For this assignment you will choose a policy debate from the syllabus and will prepare both elements of the assignment based on this issue. You will sign up for your chosen policy issue in the second class of the term.

1. Policy Brief DUE March 23, 2016 (30%)

For the policy brief you will prepare a concise, carefully written and scrupulously researched document (6 single spaced pages) that advises the Cabinet on a sound policy response to your chosen issue. The Policy Brief contains **5 components** organized with **subheadings** as well as a **reference list** of the sources you consulted. These include:

- a. **Executive Summary** – One or two paragraphs to situate the reader immediately. Provides a clear and succinct overview of the brief that identifies the policy issue, states why the current approach needs to be changed, and outlines your recommendations.
- b. **Issue Context** – Describe the policy problem, what has caused it, its primary policy implications if left unaddressed, and why existing approaches are inadequate.
- c. **Policy Options** – Outline and critique the strengths and weaknesses of **three policy options** for Cabinet consideration, and their associated instruments and political/partisan implications.
- d. **Policy Recommendation** – Detail **your proposed policy recommendation** including the explicit rationale for your preferred option (based on evidence and research) and the set of specific steps or measures requiring implementation.
- e. **References and Appendices** – Proper citations of sources consulted and inclusion of supportive evidence or data.

Your policy brief will be graded on the breadth, depth and substance of your research and the level of insight into your topic as well as the quality of your writing and adherence to assignment expectations. You are expected to refer to the more detailed set of Guidelines for Writing a Policy Brief posted on Canvas to guide your final submission. You are also encouraged to research the format and content of examples of other policy briefs to guide your own analysis.

You will draw your background information and policy options, and base your recommendations on research from several sources including the academic literature (at least 4 sources), policy think tanks, and the New York Times. CQ Researcher, available online from the UNCG library and PBS Frontline are also excellent source of information. Examples of liberal think tanks that produce publicly available policy research include The Brookings Institution and the Center for American Progress, and examples of conservative ones include the American Enterprise Institute, the Cato Institute, and the Hoover Institution. The New York Times is searchable online and available in the UNCG library. A wide range of policy relevant academic journals includes (but is not limited to!): *Journal of Policy Analysis & Management*, *Journal of Policy History*, *Journal of Public Policy*, *Policy Studies Journal*, *Review of Policy Research*. In addition, please ensure that your brief meets the following formatting requirements:

- Tidy and professional appearance
- Title page that identifies you, your policy topic, the course, date, and instructor
- Page numbers in the upper right hand corner
- Type-written, **single-spaced**, subheadings, 12 font with 1" margins
- Complete and properly formatted citations (APSR format available on the UNCG library website)

2. Policy Debate Presentation DUE on date specified in syllabus (10%)

An important goal of this course is to deepen your understanding of many of this country's most pressing policy issues. Much transfer of knowledge and ideas occurs through presentation and group discussion. On the date specified in the syllabus you will provide a **short presentation** of your policy issue accompanied by well-organized and visually appealing Powerpoint slides (*no more than 8 minutes – yes, I will time you! HINT: rehearse!*). For the content of your presentation – **which will later be incorporated into your policy brief** - you will build on information drawn from the article provided in the syllabus for your particular topic, and research additional sources with particular attention to recent New York Times articles. Your presentation should include:

- A brief history of the issue
- Core challenges – why is it a difficult or complex issue?
- Overview of prevailing policies
- Current political debates over policy reforms and recent developments

3. Book Analysis DUE April 11, 2016 (15%)

Robert Reich's book, *Locked in the Cabinet* chronicles his experiences as Secretary of Labor during the first term of the Clinton administration, offering some valuable insights into the ways in which policy does – and does not – get made. To inform a detailed class discussion at the end of the course, your review of the book will explore its general usefulness for understanding the policy process and will answer the following course specific questions:

- Identify and discuss **at least three** themes and ideas emerging in the book that speak directly to issues discussed throughout the course.
- This book is almost 20 years old. In what ways does it still speak to present day policy conditions and what is it less able to account for?
- How would you describe the style and assess the effectiveness Robert Reich's leadership?

4. Participation (15%)

Because this course involves a great deal of class and small group discussion it requires your active participation, the measure of which makes up a large part of your grade. It is assumed that you will have read the material in advance and attend class ready to contribute (see **Attendance Policy** below). In addition, at the beginning of the course you will form smaller groups in which you will discuss questions based on the weekly readings for the rest of the course. You will take turns serving as a discussion leader who reports your collective findings back to the class on a revolving basis. Your participation grade will be based on a combination of my observations of your contributions to both small group and class discussions and a peer evaluation to be conducted at the end of the course. **Please bring the text book and weekly required readings to class with you for reference.**

5. Final Exam Weds. May 4, 2016 (30%)

The final exam will be cumulative of the entire term and will consist primarily of long discussion questions based on lectures, readings, and class discussion and designed to test both the depth of your knowledge and your analytical and writing abilities.

GRADING SCHEME:

A+	97-100	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69
A	93-96	B	83-86	C	73-76	D	60-66
A-	90-92	B-	80-82	C-	70-72	F	below 60

COURSE POLICIES (please read carefully...they are few in number but strictly enforced!)

Attendance: You are expected to sign an attendance roster for each class. Reasons for missing class are your own but students who miss more than 4 classes will receive **0 for their participation grade** regardless of the quality of their contributions in class. Exceptions to this policy include a lengthy illness supported by appropriate documentation or a maximum of two excused absences for religious observance (as outlined in state law).

Late Penalties: Assignments are due in **hard copy in class** on the due date. For every day that an assignment is past due it will lose a letter grade and I will not accept them after one week. Assignments submitted after class will be counted as one day late. Electronic submissions will not be accepted except in extenuating circumstances and with my permission. Excuses for missing exams or assignments will only be accepted from students who have experienced documented medical emergencies.

Etiquette: (I am a professor, not a cop...please observe these basic norms of respect. You will embarrass both of us if I have to comment on your behavior)

- Email is fine for quick messages but if you have an issue to discuss, please come and see me during office hours. **Please use proper etiquette and address me appropriately.**
- Do not use cell phones in class
- Use laptops only for note-taking. Those using laptops must sit in the first two rows.
- Don't be late, don't leave early (unless I know in advance) and don't wander in and out of class.

Make-up Exams: Make-up exams are given only in case of a genuine emergency (sudden hospitalization or the unexpected death of a family member). Should such an unlikely event occur, notify me as soon as possible by email and make arrangements with me as soon as possible after the emergency.

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism or any other form of cheating is a serious academic offense and will be dealt with according to institutional policies available at <http://sa.uncg.edu/handbook/academic-integrity-policy/>

Americans with Disabilities: If you require disabilities accommodations, please contact the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services (<http://ods.uncg.edu/about-us/>) in Suite 215 in the EUC (334-5440). I am willing to provide any accommodation you may need but please discuss your requirements with me during the first week of class.

COURSE OUTLINE & CLASS SCHEDULE

PART I PUBLIC POLICY MAKING: FRAMING THE FIELD

Week 1 What is public policy?

Jan. 11 Welcome to PSC 210
 Jan. 13 Kraft & Furlong, "Public Policy and Politics"
 Bourgon, "What is Different about Serving in the 21st Century?"

Week 2 Process & instruments

Jan. 18 NO CLASS (MLK DAY)
 Jan. 20 Chapter 1, pp. 3-20; Kraft & Furlong, "Understanding Public Policymaking", pp. 84-108

Week 3 Ideas, interests & institutions

Jan. 25 - 27 Chapter 1, pp. 20-38; Kraft & Furlong, "Government Institutions & Policy Actors"
 Sign-up for policy topics

Week 4 3 big trends

Feb. 1 CQ: Government Spending, Polarization in America, Changing Demographics
 Feb. 3 Kraft & Furlong, "Public Problems & Policy Alternatives"
 Library session with Lynda Kellam on How to Research your Policy Brief

PART II SOLVING PUBLIC PROBLEMS? AMERICAN POLICY ISSUES

Week 5 Economic Policy

Feb. 8 - 10 Chapter 2, CQ, "The Federal Reserve"

Policy Debates: U.S. Trade Policy _____
 Financial Misconduct _____
 Reviving Manufacturing _____

Film: **Homework:** PBS Frontline, "Money, Power and Wall Street", ep. 2
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/money-power-wall-street/#video-3>

Week 6 Foreign Policy & National Security

Feb. 15 - 17 Chapter 3, CQ "Foreign Aid and National Security"

Policy Debates: The Iraq War: 10 Years Later _____
 Border Security _____
 Improving Cybersecurity _____

Film: *PBS Frontline, "Mexico: Crimes at the Border" (7)*

Week 7 Social Policy

Feb. 22 - 24 Chapter 4, CQ "Wealth and Inequality"

Policy Debates: Minimum Wage _____
 Housing the Homeless _____
 Fighting Urban Poverty _____

Film: *You Tube, "Wage Crisis" (26)*

Week 8 Health Policy

Feb. 29 - Mar. 2 Chapter 5, CQ "Assessing the New Health Care Law"

Policy Debates: Food Policy Debates _____
 Mental Health Policy _____
 Preventing Disease _____

Film: **Homework:** *PBS, Frontline, "Obama's Deal" (56)*
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/obamasdeal/>

SPRING BREAK**Week 9 Environmental Policy**

Mar. 14 - 16 Chapter 6, CQ, "Climate Change"

Policy Debates: Regulating Toxic Chemicals _____
 The Fracking Controversy _____
 The Water Crisis _____

Film: *Top Documentary Films, "Fault Lines: Fracking in America" (23)*

Week 10 Criminal Justice

Mar. 21 - 23 Chapter 7, CQ, "Sentencing Reform"

Policy Debates: Police Tactics _____
 Fighting Gangs _____
 Gun Control _____

Film: *You Tube, "America's Prison Problem" (25)*

Mar. 23 POLICY BRIEFS DUE**Week 11 Education Policy**

Mar. 28 - 30 Chapter 8, CQ "Revising No Child Left Behind"

Policy Debates: Race and Education _____
 Student Debt _____
 School Reform _____

Film: PBS, "Separate and Unequal" (25)

Week 12 Equality

Apr. 4 - 6 Chapter 9, CQ "Affirmative Action"

Policy Debates: Gay Marriage _____
 Religious Freedom _____
 Youth Unemployment _____

Week 13 Reflections on policymaking in America: challenges & prospects

Apr. 11 Class Discussion of Reich, *Locked in the Cabinet*
BOOK ANALYSIS DUE

Apr. 13 Young Voters, Millennial Generation, Occupy
Peer Evaluation of Group Participation (in class)

Week 14 Course Wrap & Next Steps...

Apr. 18 Film: "Don't Panic"
 Apr. 20 Course wrap & exam review

Week 15 Apr. 25 & 26 NO CLASS

FINAL EXAM May 4, 12:00 – 3:00 p.m.