

## POLITICS AND THE POLICY PROCESS

PLCY 220

Fall 2008

Mondays and Wednesdays, 3:30 to 4:45 pm

Room 0008, O. Max Gardner Hall

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**Professor:** John C. Scott, Ph.D.

Office: 211 Abernethy Hall

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:00 – 3:00 pm, or by appointment

Phone: 962-0649

E-mail: [jcscott@email.unc.edu](mailto:jcscott@email.unc.edu)

**Teaching Assistant:** Shoshana Agus-Kleinman

Office: 206 Abernethy Hall

Office Hours: TBA

Email: [seak@email.unc.edu](mailto:seak@email.unc.edu)

### OBJECTIVES

This course focuses on politics as an integral component of the policy analysis process and analyzes the role of politics in making public policy. We will discuss the ways in which politics influences how, if at all, problems reach the policy agenda, which solution to a current policy problem is chosen, and how policies are enacted and implemented. We will analyze the motivations and incentives of policy actors to change policies and the way in which political institutions shape such efforts in the policymaking process. We will explore different institutions of government and political activity at different levels.

In addition to developing your knowledge of the role of politics in policy analysis and substantive public policy issues, this course aims to improve your ability to effectively write and speak publicly. Clear, concise writing and argumentation are essential for success in all public policy (and, indeed, all) careers.

In summary, my goals for you at the end of this course are that you will be able to:

- Identify the political institutions and actors that shape the policy process;
- Explain basic processes and theories of politics and apply these to policymaking;
- Analyze the political dimensions of selected policy topics and cases; and
- Exhibit effective communication skills – oral and written – for a variety of contexts.

The assignments in this class, discussed below, ask you to apply the knowledge you will acquire in this class. These exercises are designed to force you to “think politically” and to strengthen the basic skills of political action, which are clear, concise, and effective communication.

## REQUIRED READINGS

- *Policy Paradox*, by Deborah Stone, 2002, WW Norton.
- *All Roads Lead to Congress*, by Costas Panagopolous and Joshua Schank, 2008, CQ Press.
- *The Nine*, by Jeffrey Toobin, 2007, Random House. (**Note:** In order to save you some money, I have ordered the paperback version of this book, but the paperback may not be on the shelves when the semester starts. We will not cover the material in this book until you have a chance to purchase the book.)
- Case Studies: Almost all of the case studies will come from the Kennedy School of Government, and you can purchase and download them as a course pack from [www.xanedu.com](http://www.xanedu.com). You will have to register with a login and password if you do not have one already. The course pack title is “UNC PLCY 220 Fall 08” and the course pack id is 287649. Blackboard has more details on logging in and ordering.
- Other required readings as listed in this syllabus are on the course website on Blackboard (<http://blackboard.unc.edu/>). **Note:** Readings may change (deleted and/or added so check the announcements page.
- Selections from the U.S. Constitution can be accessed most anywhere, but here is one: <http://www.usconstitution.net/>
- As appropriate, I may hand out or post additional readings and materials during the semester. There’s a lot going on so be ready!

## ASSIGNMENTS

### Course Readings

There is a fair amount of reading for this course. While some of the reading provides theoretical background regarding politics and the policy process, other readings provide particular case studies that will be referred to throughout the course. These case studies are used to contextualize the knowledge provided during the lectures and in other readings. In reading these cases, you should focus on what they suggest about the political process of policy making, the role of formal policy analysis in that process, and the interactions between key actors in the policy making process. **For all of the readings in this course, read strategically!!** First, skim through the reading and focus on the conclusions in order to get a sense of the reading. Based on the conclusions, form some questions. Then, go back through the article to get answers to your questions, identify main points, and understand the arguments that the author used to come to his or her conclusion. Don’t blindly accept all the author’s arguments or assumptions. When you read, think of yourself as engaging in a discussion with the author. Then, we can continue that discussion in class and in your assignments.

### Class Participation and Discussion

Class meetings will typically combine lecture with class discussion. Your punctual class attendance will be critical, as there is a substantial amount of material to cover in this course. You will be expected to complete all reading assignments prior to the class meeting.

Your class discussion grade will be based on attendance, class behavior, active engagement in class discussions, and discussions you engage in with me via e-mail or during office hours outside of class. If you know you will be unable to make one of these classes, please contact me BEFORE the class period to ask for an approved absence and to make special arrangements to make up the material. Approved absences and special arrangements are NOT automatic. **A pattern of repeated absences will hurt your class discussion grade.**

I am fully aware that speaking among a group of strangers is the most anxiety producing experience each of us fears. However, **each student WILL be called upon to contribute to the learning process through discussion. No one will be allowed the luxury of passive anonymity.** I want to assure you, therefore, that your thoughts and opinions will always be treated with respect. You will primarily be asked to share your views and thoughts with other students on topics which you have had time to think about in advance or have had an opportunity to organize in writing.

If you wish clarification of anything that you read, hear in class, or see in a documentary but do not wish to publicly ask a question, write out your question, leave it on the desk at the end of class and I will respond to it the following class session. Alternatively, you may e-mail me the question and I will respond to you.

### **Tests**

There are three kinds of tests in this course. There will be a weekly quiz that will be short in nature. The purpose of the weekly quiz is to reinforce the central points in the prior week's lectures and readings. There will be a mid-term theory exam that will ask you to identify and apply basic political theories and mechanisms and their critiques, which have been presented in class and in the readings. The final exam will be in class, and it will provide you with a factual situation to analyze using the tools and perspectives that you have obtained in this course.

### **Case Studies**

An important part of this course will be in reading, analyzing, and discussing case studies. While the whole class will discuss each case study, each of you will be assigned randomly to a group for a particular case study (But note that the first case study, Rural Democracy, will not be a group exercise but a class-wide exercise). Your group will be responsible for leading the class discussion, facilitated by my questioning. Your group will also produce a group paper that summarizes the case, identifies important actors and their motivations, and analyzes the decisions those actors made. Your grade will depend the quality of your written and oral presentation.

### **Assignments**

There are four assignments in addition to work described above. These assignments will be produced outside of class, are relatively short, and are focused in nature. The first assignment will be a worksheet that explores the 'prisoners' dilemma' in terms of the effects of changing incentives on behavior. The second assignment is to write a 600 word newspaper editorial or op-ed piece on an aspect of the current presidential election campaign. The third assignment is

a 'one-pager' that is often used by lobbyists in advocating for a position. You will be assigned the choice of two positions on the question of foreign aid to Israel. For both the op-ed and the one-pager, you will receive feedback and will be required to rewrite the assignments. The fourth assignment is to brief a Supreme Court case as would be done in a law school class. More detailed directions will be provided when the assignments are distributed.

## EVALUATION

### How the Final Grade Is Calculated

Your final grade will be based on the following assignments/exams:

Case Study Discussion and Analysis	15%
Weekly Quizzes	15%
Theory Exam	10%
Class Discussion	10%
Assignment 1: Prisoners' Dilemma	5%
Assignment 2: Op-Ed	10%
Assignment 3: Israel One-Pager	10%
Assignment 4: Legal Brief	10%
Final Exam	<u>15%</u>
	100%

Letter grades are assigned as follows:

A (100-94)	B+ (89-86)	C+ (79-76)	D+ (69-66)
A- (93-90)	B (85-83)	C (75-73)	D (65-63)
B- (82-80)	C- (72-70)	D- (62-60)	F (let's not go here)

### Evaluation of Written Assignments

Writing a good essay is a skill that takes years of practice, patience, and constant editing. It is one of the most important skills you need to be successful regardless of the career you choose to pursue. If you cannot write well by the time you graduate from UNC, you will have wasted your time and your parents' money.

There are several different styles of writing (e.g. creative, technical, scientific). This course will focus on persuasive writing and will give you ample opportunity to develop your writing abilities. It will also require that you demonstrate mastery of that skill. **Improvement and effort will be considered in your final participation grade.**

Papers should be double-spaced with 1" margins on all sides and 12 pt font. Citations should be indicated using the APA author, date format. For more information on this format, see <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/apa.html>. A cover sheet should be included with your name, course number, date, assignment title, and a signed Honor's pledge. **Please do not**

**include your name on any other page or use colored ink.** Staple these pages together. **After one warning, points will be deducted for incorrect formatting.** The required formatting helps to ensure anonymity and fairness during grading.

Papers will be graded based on the following basic guidelines (More specific guidelines are provided with each written assignment.).

- **Content:** Responds to the assignment's questions. Develops and supports a central thesis. Provides a focused argument throughout the essay/talk.
- **Clarity and Presentation:** Writes/speaks clearly by developing a coherent, well-organized paper; arranging sentences in a logical and coherent manner; using correct punctuation, spelling, and grammar; and providing correct citations.
- **Comprehensiveness:** Has reviewed the relevant literature and material, shows an in-depth understanding of the topic, and is able to critique differing points of view on the topic.
- **Creativity:** Draws the reader/listener in and engages him/her in the topic. Makes an original contribution to the topic. Presents material in an interesting and unique way.
- **Accuracy:** The paper has no obvious errors. All facts are derived from assigned readings or materials or cited if from another source.

If you experience any difficulties in writing your papers, I encourage you to take drafts of your essay to the Writing Center (<http://www.unc.edu/depts/acadserv/wc.html>). You will also find it helpful to discuss your ideas and analysis with me in person during my office hours, or via e-mail. If you are worried about your writing and analysis, or simply have questions about the readings and assignment, the best way to improve your grade is to discuss these issues with me well before the due date of the assignment. Discussing your ideas with a fellow student, the TA, or me can often help you focus your thoughts before writing.

Finally, good writing is about developing the habit of re-reading and revising drafts. Among many others, one tip may be useful: Re-read a draft of written work three times. The first time, re-read for overall flow of the argument and narrative. Does the flow and order make sense to what you want to achieve? The second time you re-read a draft focus on each section and paragraph for style and grammatical consistency. For example, do you consistently use the past tense throughout a paragraph? For the third time, re-read the draft backwards. That is, start with the last sentence and work back through the document. Look at each sentence individually in terms of grammar and style. In this way, you can focus on each sentence without being influenced prior sentences. The writing assignments in this course are pretty short so give this a try.

### **Grade Appeal Policy**

I take the evaluation and grading of your exams very seriously because I know that most of you take the preparation and writing of your exams very seriously. I read each paper and exam several times before I assign a grade to it. In arriving at a grade for a particular essay, I first assess whether it meets the basic criteria defined in the guidelines above. An evaluation sheet

will be attached to your paper indicating your performance with respect to these criteria. I then compare your essay to those essays that I believe represent excellence, both in the content and the presentation of that content. These essays will be posted on-line.

If you think you deserve a higher grade on your paper, you may write a letter and explain why you would like to appeal the grade. Before making an appeal, you should review your evaluation sheet and re-read your paper with these comments in mind. Please see me if you have questions. You should then read the model essay posted on-line. After I receive your letter, I will re-read your paper within 1-2 class periods. Depending on my re-reading, your grade may stay the same, be raised, or be lowered. This system is designed to minimize frivolous grade appeals and to ensure that you have carefully examined and reflected on the quality of your work before deciding to initiate a grade appeal.

### **Late Assignments**

I expect you to turn in all assignments on time. **Assignments not turned in on time will be marked down by 20 percent for each day they are late.** You are welcome to turn papers in early if you expect to be absent on the due date. You should plan your schedules accordingly. This policy is based on fairness and learning. In fairness to other students who may have wanted extra time for their papers, no exceptions will be made.

### **HONOR CODE AND BEHAVIOR**

In general, your behavior is governed by the University Honor Code (which can be found at <http://honor.unc.edu/honor/index.html>). Please note that the Honor Code prohibits “engaging in conduct within a University classroom that substantially disrupts the academic environment.” All kinds of activities come within this prohibition, and I reserve the right to set specific rules for this class in order to ensure a proper learning environment.

In terms of individual versus group work, you are encouraged to form study groups to review the reading material and questions posed for the discussion papers. **Topics to be covered in the exams or assignments may be discussed PRIOR to the date that the exam or assignment is handed out.** Once an assignment has been distributed, you should treat it like an in-class exam and NOT discuss questions with anyone other than the instructor unless the assignment expressly calls for group work. Unless otherwise instructed, you are expected to undertake the actual writing of the papers and exams entirely independently. Any two papers or exams that are submitted containing the same sentences will be considered a breach of the honor code. In written work (including overheads or handouts used in presentations) words drawn from others should be indicated by quotation marks or other established style and ideas drawn from others should refer to their source. If you are unsure about what needs to be cited, please talk with me, the TA, or ask for assistance from the writing center. Please be aware that your work may be scanned for plagiarism using web-based resources provided to college faculty.

## CLASS SCHEDULE

**Date**   **Class topic**

**Required readings**

**Assignment**

8/20   Welcome and Introduction

“I like power and I like to use it.” – Sam Rayburn

Read: N/A (**Note** that you should review the syllabus before engaging in the readings – I will expect you to be familiar with the requirements of this course).

8/25   Politics: Continuing from the last class, what is politics? Are there ‘new’ or ‘old’ politics? Is there a difference in terms of its relationship to public policy? Do certain politics lead to certain policies, and vice-versa?

“All politics is local.” – Tip O’Neill

Read: Sen. Barack Obama’s speech in Des Moines, IA, 12/27/07, found at, ([http://www.barackobama.com/2007/12/27/remarks\\_of\\_senator\\_barack\\_obam\\_38.php](http://www.barackobama.com/2007/12/27/remarks_of_senator_barack_obam_38.php)) (Also on Blackboard)

Estill, “Governing Ourselves” from *Small is Possible* (Blackboard)

Stone: Chapter 10

Note: We will be watching in class, “For Jonathon, A Law”, which you can find at [www.1000voicesarchives.org](http://www.1000voicesarchives.org) along with a number of other mini-documentaries.

8/27   This being a social science, can we explain politics in a systematic way? Can we make predictions? How do we construct theories? What is rational choice? How does rational choice relate to studying politics?

“I’m just a bill.

Yes, I’m only a bill.

And I’m sitting here on Capitol Hill...” – from *Schoolhouse Rock*

Read: Shepsle and Bonchek, “Rationality: The Model of Choice.” (Blackboard)

Hedstrom and Swedberg, “Social Mechanisms: An Introductory Essay.”

(Blackboard)

Stone, Chapter 1

**Distributed: Assignment 1:** Prisoners’ Dilemma worksheet (due 9/3)

9/1   **LABOR DAY HOLIDAY – NO CLASS**

9/3 How do people cooperate to get policy made? What prevents or helps cooperation and acting collectively?

“To get along, you have to go along.” – Sam Rayburn

Read: Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action* (selections) (Blackboard)  
Wagner, Review of *The Logic of Collective Action* (Blackboard)  
Stone, Chapter 9 (Interests)

**Due:** Assignment 1

9/8 Agendas, Networks, Diffusion: How do political actors and policy issues move across time and space? Can we think of mechanisms that cause policies to diffuse over space and time?

“It’s not what you know, it’s who you know.” - Unknown

Read: Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies* (selections) (Blackboard)  
Heclo, “Issue Networks and the Executive Establishment” (selections) (Blackboard)  
Keck and Sikkink, “Transnational Advocacy Networks in a Movement Society” (Blackboard)

9/10 What is the role or effect of time in politics? Is history useful or a hindrance to political analysis? Why do we often see little change in policies over time except for very infrequent and seemingly random large shifts?

“A week is a long time in politics.” - Harold Wilson

Read: Pierson, “Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics.” (Blackboard)  
Baumgartner and Jones, *The Politics of Attention* (selections)(Blackboard)

9/15 Critiques and Alternatives: How valid are the assumptions underlying the models we have read? Can we fully explain politics using so-called rational models? What are criticisms of these models?

“Rationality Will Not Save Us.” – Robert McNamara

Read: Stone, Chapters 2 and 3

9/17 More Critiques and Alternatives. Also, who gets to decide these issues?

Read: Stone, Chapters 4, 5 and 15  
**Case study:** Rural Democracy (Blackboard)

9/22 Summary of Mechanisms – Can we reconcile competing theories and perspectives?

Read: Stone, Chapters 6 through 8

9/24 Mid-Term Exam: “We have nothing to fear but fear itself.” - Franklin Delano Roosevelt

9/29 Framing problems and goals

“Don’t say [print/email/post] anything that you wouldn’t want to see on the front page of the newspaper.” - A Washington Truism

Read: **KSG case study** – Jesse Helms v. Harvey Gantt: Race, Culture, and Campaign Strategy in the 1990 Senate Battle (Xanadu coursepack)

**Distributed: Assignment 2:** Op-Ed Writing Assignment (due 10/6)

10/1 The Congress: How is this institution structured? Who are the actors? What does this institutional structure mean for politics? For policy development?

Read: Constitution, Art. I, secs. 1-3, 5, 7-9

Stone: Chapters 11 and 12 (Inducements and Rules)

Panagopoulos and Schank, *All Roads Lead to Congress*, pp. 1-41

10/6 The Congress (continued)

Read: Panagopoulos and Schank, pp. 43-110

**Due:** Assignment 2

10/8 The Congress (continued)

“Politicians are the same all over. They promise to build a bridge even where there is no river.” ~Nikita Khrushchev

Read: Panagopoulos and Schank, pp. 111-195

10/13 The Presidency: We often think of the president as the most powerful person in the world, but what powers are available? What are the constraints on executive power?

"All the president is, is a glorified public relations man who spends his time flattering, kissing, and kicking people to get them to do what they are supposed to do anyway."

- Harry S. Truman

Read: Constitution, Art. II, secs 1-2

**KSG case study:** The Coming of the Cold War (Xanedu.com coursepack)

**Distributed: Assignment 2a:** Rewrite of Op-Ed (due 10/20)

10/15 States and Federalism: How does our system of government affect politics and policy? What are the tensions in this system?

Read: Constitution, Amendment 10

**KSG case study:** Low Emission Vehicles: the Pursuit of a Regional Program (Xanedu.com coursepack)

10/20 So, you want to be a lobbyist...What is lobbying? Where does it come from? Is the US unique?

"But I had a client come up to me. I was talking about, I gave a little speech about lobbying reform and how it's not getting done. It's pretty unbelievable it's not getting done given what happened earlier this year. And the guy came up to me afterwards and said - now I represent his association - he said to me, 'I guess since you represent our association, I assume you are one of the good lobbyists, not one of the scum lobbyists.' I said, 'Yeah, that's me.' 'And why aren't people like you lobbying to get lobbying reformed?' And I almost had to say, 'Because no one's paying me to do lobbying reform.'" – Anonymous Lobbyist

Read: The Constitution, Amendment 1

Wolpe and Levine, *Lobbying Congress* [selections] (Blackboard)

**Due:** Assignment 2a

10/22 Do lobbyists representing powerful interests dominate politics? Who represents the weak?

“1. If you agree with the aims of the group, it is a “crusader in the public interest,” a “voice of the people,” or a “force for good.” 2. If you’re indifferent to its cause, it is a “special interest group.” 3. If you disagree with its position, it’s a ‘lobby.’” - Kiplinger and Kiplinger

Read: Bentley, *The Process of Government* (selections)(Blackboard)  
Truman, *The Governmental Process* (selections)(Blackboard)  
Mills, *The Power Elite* (selections)(Blackboard)  
Domhoff, *Who Rules America?* (selections)(Blackboard)  
Frank, *The Wrecking Crew* (selections)(Blackboard)

**Distributed: Assignment 3:** One-pager on foreign aid to Israel (due 10/27)

10/27 How influential are interest groups? How are they influential? Do we know influence when we see it? Is it all about money or is there something else?

“The key to successful leadership today is influence, not authority.”  
- Kenneth Blanchard

Read: Mearsheimer and Walt, “The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy” (Blackboard)  
Dershowitz, “Debunking the Newest – and Oldest – Jewish Conspiracy: A Reply to the Mearsheimer-Walt ‘Working Paper’” (Blackboard)

**Due:** Assignment 3

10/29 Politics of Public Discourse: Media and Public Opinion

“Americans continue to suffer from a notoriously short attention span. They get mad as hell with reasonable frequency, but quickly return to their families and sitcoms. Meanwhile, the corporate lobbies stay right where they are, outlasting all the populist hysteria.” - Eric Alterman

Read: Constitution, Amendment 1  
Adamic & Glance, “The political blogosphere and the 2004 U.S. election: divided they blog” (Blackboard)

**KSG case study:** “Big Media” Meets the “Bloggers”: Coverage of Trent Lott’s Remarks at Strom Thurmond’s Birthday Party (Xanedu.com course pack)

11/3 The Courts: Why do courts matter? How do politics and the courts mix and in which direction?

Read: Constitution, Art. III, sec. 1

Stone: Chapter 14

Toobin, *The Nine*: Prologue through Chapter 5

**Distributed: Assignment 3a** – Rewrite of one pager on aid to Israel (due 11/10)

11/5 Election Post-Mortem: Who won? By how much? Why? How? What does it mean?

**Distributed: Assignment 4**: Legal brief (if time permits, I will cover some basics on briefing legal cases)(due 11/12)

11/10 The Courts

Read: Toobin: Chapters 6 through 13, 16 through 17

**Due:** Assignment 3a – Rewrite of one pager on aid to Israel

11/12 The Courts

Read: Toobin: Chapters 19 through 24

Stone, "Policy Paradox in Action."

*Grutter v. Bollinger* (Blackboard)

**Due:** Assignment 4

11/17 Health care politics preview

Read: TBA

11/19 Case study in health care politics: When doing the right thing goes wrong?

Read: **KSG case study**: Catastrophic Health Insurance for the Elderly (Xanedu.com course pack)

11/24 Case study in health care politics: How to do the right thing the wrong way?

Read: **KSG case study**: Clinton Healthcare Reform (Xanedu.com coursepack)

11/26 **THANKSGIVING RECESS – NO CLASS**

12/1 Case study in health care politics: The wrong motives and the wrong result?

Read: **KSG Case study**: Keeping a Campaign Promise: George W. Bush and Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage (Xanedu.com coursepack)

12/3 Policy and Politics: How is policy analysis used in politics? How should it be used?

“There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics.” - Benjamin Disraeli

Read: Stone: Chapter 13

**KSG case study**: From Research to Policy: Cigarette Excise Taxes (Xanedu.com coursepack)

**Assignment:** Background materials for Final Exam

Date to be determined: **In Class Final Exam**