This is an advanced course on policymaking in the American federal government. Students are presumed to have some prior background in public policy, either through employment or prior study. This course is aimed mainly at graduate students planning to do policy research for their Masters projects or Ph.D. dissertations.

I have two objectives. The first is to teach, or to review, leading theories of policy analysis and the policymaking process at an advanced level. The second is to teach an approach to public policy research that connects policy analysis with political analysis. In the policy literature, these subjects are usually separate. But in my conception, one first develops a position about how best to solve some major public problem, on the merits, and then goes on to analyze why actual policy falls short of that ideal. A tension is expected between desirable policies and political and institutional constraints. Each is understood and critiqued in terms of the other. In this way, a policy perspective can yield new insights into the nature of the regime.

The readings including leading examples of policy research that make this connection. Students will write papers developing their own research topics.

Readings

The course will use these texts, in about this order. All are on sale at the book store and also on reserve at Bobst. Buy as many as you are able:


In addition, for students with a limited background in federal institutions and policy processes, I recommend:


In the course schedule below, required assignments come mostly from the above books. Some articles and selections are also assigned. These items will be on reserve at Bobst, and a copy of them may also be purchased at New University Copy and Graphics, 11 Waverly Place, phone 212-473-7369. The recommended items are not on reserve or on sale, but most of them can be found at Bobst.

**Requirements**

There will be a midterm and final examinations, which will each count 20 percent of the grade. There will also be a paper of about 20 pages, due at the end of the course, in which students work out a study design for an actual research project in public policy. The assignment will be distributed later. This paper will count 40 percent of the grade. The remaining 20 percent will be given for participation in class.

**Schedule**

The following are the dates of each session, with the subject and readings for each. Readings *must* be completed before class to profit from the discussion and contribute to it:

**Sept. 7, Introduction: The Policy Approach**: The development of the policy field. An approach to policy research stressing both policy analysis and political analysis. Contrast to other approaches:

*Required:*

Howlett and Ramesh, ch. 1.


*Recommended:*


**Sept. 14, The Economic Paradigm 1**: How economists understand the goals of government, and criticisms of this approach.

*Required:*

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Munger, *Analyzing Policy*, chs. 2-4, 8, 12.
Stone, *Policy Paradox*, chs. 1-5.

**Recommended:**

**Sept. 21, The Economic Paradigm 2:** The economic approach to the optimization of policy, and criticisms of it:

**Required:**
Stone, *Policy Paradox*, introduction, chs. 7-8, 10-14.

**Recommended:**

**Sept. 28, The Policy Process:** The stage model of policymaking, and recent criticisms of it. The critical role of political appointees. Implementation and evaluation.

**Required:**
Howlett and Ramesh, *Studying Public Policy*, chs. 3, 5-6, 8-11.

**Recommended**
Oct. 5, Policy Advocacy: How policy entrepreneurs form and sell policy solutions, the most global form of policy analysis. Experts as entrepreneurs. The case of airline deregulation.

Required:
Munger, ch. 5.
Kingdon, Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies, chs. 3, 6, 8.

Recommended:

Oct. 12, The Politics of Policy: Lowi's types of policy and other approaches to understanding the politics aroused by policymaking. The question of how easily interests can mobilize:

Required:
Stone, Policy Paradox, ch. 9.

Recommended

Oct. 19, Bureaucracy: The powerful influence of organization on policymaking:

Required:

Recommended:


Oct. 26, Midterm examination


Required:
Schick, Federal Budget, chs. 2-6, 9, 11.


Recommended:

V.O. Key, Jr., “The Lack of a Budgetary Theory,” American Political Science Review, vol. 34, no. 6 (December 1940), pp. 1137-44.


Nov. 9, Medicare: The health policy dilemma and the struggle to reform the nation’s most intractable entitlement.

Required:
Oberlander, Political Life of Medicare, chs. 2-3, 5-7.


Recommended:


Nov. 16, Governmental Performance: How to improve the performance of the federal government in several areas of domestic policy.
Required:

Recommended:


Nov. 23, Welfare Reform: The critical role of governmental capacity in the making of reform in Wisconsin and the nation. Methodological issues raised by this research.

Required:


Recommended:


Nov. 30, Student Presentations: members of the class will present summaries of their papers on the definition of public policy research topics.

Dec. 7, Student Presentations: members of the class will present summaries of their papers on the definition of public policy research topics.

Dec. 21, Final examination, 6:20-8:20 PM, 726 Broadway, room 700.

Papers due no later than the final exam.