

# **POLS 6310 01**

## **THE POLICY PROCESS**

### **SPRING, 2021**

**Time:** Tuesday, 4:15 beginning February 2, 2021

**Place:** TBA

**Professor:** James F. Gilsinan

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**Office Hours:** By appointment

#### **BOOKS TO PURCHASE**

The following books are on order at the SLU Bookstore:

Flood, Joe. The Fires: How a Computer Formula, Big Ideas, and the Best of Intentions Burned Down New York City – and Determined the Future of Cities

Smith, Kevin B. and Christopher W. Larimer, The Public Policy Theory Primer, 3rd Edition

Stone, Deborah, Policy Paradox, The Art of Political Decision Making, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

#### **COURSE RATIONALE**

Otto Von Bismarck, Chancellor of Germany, once remarked: “Laws are like sausages. It is better not to see them being made.” John Kennedy was said to define governance as the choice between bad and worse. Pols 6310 will look inside the sausage-making machine to see how public policies are actually made in the United States – no matter how unappetizing it gets and no matter how much worse it could be. Pols 6310 is designed to introduce students to the literature, concepts, and theories of the policy process. Policy process focuses on how political actors get the government to focus on certain problems, form coalitions to enact policies or dismantle them, and generate support for their implementation. The emphasis in the readings will be on different concepts for studying the policy process – concepts that are applicable in diverse settings.

The central questions that organize the seminar revolve around issues of getting policy done or undone. Is the process rational? Can it be? Should it be? What, if anything can replace the rationality paradigm for understanding the policy process and how we think about it?

## **POLICY DOMAIN**

Seminar participants are required to select a policy domain to use as their case materials throughout the semester. A policy domain is a policy arena where there are coherent policy networks and ongoing debates. Examples are health policy, urban policy, or local economic development policy. The idea is for seminar participants to apply the models and concepts that we discuss in the seminar to their policy domains. To focus your analysis, you will be required to select a particular policy or decision within your policy domain. Within health policy, for example, you could focus on the ACA. What was the process of formulation and implementation? Alternatively, what is the process of trying to repeal and replace it? The policy should be at least three years old and thus be fully documented and have some track record in implementation. Students may choose a policy at the national or state or local level, but it may be preferable to pick a major national law for a number of reasons, including that national laws tend to have more secondary literature documenting the policy process.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING**

This class is a blended one consisting of weekly online assignments that students complete for in-class presentation and discussion. The professor will also provide a focused lecture in each class giving the background and tools necessary for students to complete the online assignments for the following class.

Your grade will be based on the following approximate percentages:

1. Completion of online assignments, class presentations and participation..... 50%
2. Seminar project (issue framing paper and final project) ... 30%
3. Final exam..... 20%

**Issue-framing paper:** You will be required to write an essay comparing and contrasting different ways of framing issues in your policy domain. The key to a good paper will be documenting how different groups frame the issue differently and how the framings can be viewed as part of a political strategy. This paper will have five parts:

- Introduction: A brief description of your policy domain, the specific policy you are exploring, and the importance of the problem you are addressing
- Legislative History: The problem the legislation was meant to address, the key provisions of the policy you are highlighting for analysis, and the current state of

the policy (i.e. is it firmly established or are there attempts at repeal or modification)

- The framing arguments of Key Stake Holders: Possible questions to answer in approaching this analysis are: did the issue move from episodic to thematic? Is the policy category being contested – redistributive, regulatory, etc.? What major morality tale is being appealed to? How are context, numbers, messengers, etc. being used? Is the policy branch or root?
- A policy domain map illustrating who the different players are and their connections
- A discussion of the different policy and political consequences that flow from the differing frames

The paper together with a three to five slide power point presentation displaying your domain map, a description of the key players and the different policy consequences flowing from the competing frames will be created and discussed during the March 9<sup>th</sup> and March 16<sup>th</sup> classes.

**Final products will be due no later than 5:00 P.M. on March 17<sup>th</sup>.**

**Class presentations and participation:** The success of each class depends heavily on the input students provide based on completion of the online assignments. Therefore, it is imperative that assignments are completed and posted in time for others to understand and reflect on the material.

Finally, each student will present his or her final project to the seminar at the end of the semester. The final project is a continuation of the framing paper.

### **Final seminar project:**

To demonstrate your knowledge of and facility with the class materials, you will be creating a policy campaign using power point and/or other media to convince relevant publics and legislators that your policy issue belongs on the public agenda, should be framed in a particular way, and result in legislation that will achieve a desirable policy outcome. In creating this presentation, you will need to be able to defend certain challenges such as why one problem definition over another; how the politics surrounding the issue can be managed; what model of policy process are you assuming and why? This will require you to write a policy memo to accompany your presentation. This policy memo will essentially be an expansion of your midterm domain analysis.

Presentations of your martial will begin April 27 and conclude May 4. The completed projects are due no later than **Monday, May 10, at 7:00 P.M.** The final examination is an oral exam. You may sign up for a half hour time slot beginning Weds. May 12 through Friday, May 14<sup>th</sup>.

## **COURSE OUTLINE and ASSIGNMENTS:**

**Policy Process: Tuesday, February 2, 2021: Class1** -*Seeing is Believing or is it the other way around?*

4:15 – 4:30 Orientation/Introductions/Initial Statement of Policy Domain/Specific Policy of Interest

4:30 – 4:45 Political Preference Test

4:45 – 5:25 Your Brain on Politics: RAM vs System 1 and 2

5:25 – 5:35 Discussion of Class Political Preference

5:35 – 5:45 Class structure/Assignments

### **Preparation for Class Two:**

#### **Read:**

Public Policy Theory Primer – Chapter 1

Policy Paradox – Preface and Chapter 1

#### **Watch:**

The Fog of War (rent from Amazon for approximately \$3.00 or another streaming provider)

The Pursuit of Ignorance TED talk (link provided)

#### **Post:**

#### **To Journal:**

Five bullet points summarizing your “takeaways” from the Fog of War

A paragraph comparing the view of science presented in Smith and Larimer as articulated by Harold Lasswell and the view presented in the video on the Pursuit of Ignorance

One strategy you think would be helpful in overcoming our Political Preference Narrative by achieving a state of “being consciously ignorant,” i.e. activating System 2 thinking

#### **To Discussion Board:**

Considering Stone's discussion, which of the two dominant paradigms (Market v. Polis or RAM v. Politics or System 2 v. System 1 thinking – where the first item in the pair represents the dominance of rational thought and the second the dominance of reflexive, subconscious, non-fact driven thought) best captures the policy process as it applies to your policy domain and specific policy. Why? (2 short paragraphs)

In two or three succinct sentences, comment on two of your colleagues' discussion board entries that you find intriguing, disagree with, or can expand upon.

**N.B. All required journal and discussion board entries must be posted by Monday at 7:00 P.M., the day before class.**

**Policy Process: Tuesday, February 9, 2021: Class 2 – *What's Your Problem? I don't see no problem!***

4:15 – 5:00 Class discussion of issues raised by Stone, Fog of War, the Pursuit of Ignorance, RAM v. brain science, changing narratives, and relevance to your policy domain/policy legislation

5:00 – 5:40 Myths, Problems, and the role of organizations in muddling through the policy process

5:40 – 5:45 Discussion of next assignments

**Preparation for Class Three:**

**Read:**

Public Policy Theory Primer – Chapter 2

The Fires – Chapters 1 – 6

**Post:**

**To Journal:**

One example from The Fires of an attempt to apply the RAM model

A paragraph describing your analysis of where the policy changes sought by O'Hagan and Lindsay would fall on Lowi's policy typology/where does your policy fall on the typology

Five Bullet Points describing an example from the NYFD

- Of a BHAG
- Incrementalism
- Policy in intention
- Policy in implementation
- Policy in experience

**To Discussion Board:**

A paragraph describing the Morality Tales various stake holders appeal to in advancing their case for or against Fire Department reforms. What is (are) the Morality tale(s) informing your policy?

In two or three succinct sentences, comment on two of your colleagues' discussion board entries that you find intriguing, disagree with, or can expand upon.

**N.B. All required journal and discussion board entries must be posted by Monday at 7:00 P.M., the day before class.**

**Policy Process: Monday, February 16, 2021: Class 3 – *What Does Ethics Have To Do With It: the problem of administrative evil***

4:15 – 5:00 Class discussion of how models play out in real life: applications of RAM, SOPs, BHAGs, and policy levels in the NYFD and in the policy you are focusing on

5:00 – 5:40 What does ethics have to do with it? The problem of Administrative Evil

5:40 – 8:45 Discussion of next assignment

**Preparation for Class Four:**

**Read:**

The Fires – Chapters 7 through Conclusion

The Public Policy Theory Primer – Chapter 3

**Watch:**

You Tube – Ethics unwrapped at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WU6J5E9Vzz8>

**Post:**

**To Journal:**

Three bullet points that give examples of administrative evil from the Fires

In a succinct paragraph, describe how you think RAND, a champion of System 2 thinking, became a System 1 organization causing them to proffer a plan to close busy fire houses

Chapter 3 in The Public Policy Primer again draws our attention to decision making – provide two sentences, one describing the ethical framework you think undergirds or flows from public choice theory and models like Tiebout and one describing the ethical framework informing cooperative, face to face problem solving.

**To Discussion Board:**

Examples of administrative evil that may lurk in your policy area/policy focus

In two or three succinct sentences, comment on two of your colleagues' discussion board entries that you find intriguing, disagree with, or can expand upon.

**N.B. All required journal and discussion board entries must be posted by Monday at 7:00 P.M., the day before class.**

**Policy Process: Monday, February 23, 2021: Class 4 – *This ain't our problem; or is it: Framing to get government action***

4:15 – 5:00 Class discussion – do ethics really have a place in policy discussions?  
Understanding where evil lurks when paradox remains invisible and SOPs go unexamined.

5:00 – 5:40 How moral beliefs shape our view of what government should and should not do:  
the role of Framing in the policy process

5:40 – 5:45 Discussion of next assignment

**Preparation for Class Five:**

**Read:**

Public Policy Theory Primer – Chapter 4

Policy Paradox – Chapters 2, 3, and 4

**Post:**

**To Journal:**

Focusing on a specific policy within your policy domain of interest, bullet point in brief, descriptive statements how:

- Issues of equity are framed
- Issues of efficiency are framed
- Issues of welfare are framed

**To Discussion Board:**

Briefly describe the competing policy narratives that attempt to frame the policy debate in your area and suggest one reason why one narrative seems more compelling than the other/or are they equally compelling?

In two or three succinct sentences, comment on two of your colleagues' discussion board entries that you find intriguing, disagree with, or can expand upon.

**N.B. All required journal and discussion board entries must be posted by Monday at 7:00 P.M., the day before class.**

**Policy Process: Monday, March 2, 2021: Class 5 - *Elements of Framing***

4:15 - 5:00 Class discussion - the dynamics of crafting a compelling policy narrative

5:00 - 5:40 Specific Elements of Framing

5:40 - 5:45 Discussion of next assignment

**Preparation for Class Six:**

**Read:**

Policy Paradox - Chapters 5 and 6

Online Article "Words That Change Minds," describing the FrameWorks Institute (link provided)

**Post:**

**To Journal:**

Using Stone's discussion of liberty and security, bullet point answers to the following:

In the strategy for framing your policy area, what following elements are present on each side of the debate?

- Appeal to the value of positive or negative liberty?
- Focus on a particular level of harm?
- Incentives based on libertarian paternalism?
- Articulation of security concerns at the political, psychological or scientific level or a combination of these?

### **To Discussion Board:**

The Frameworks Institute works in a wide variety of policy domains. Write a brief paragraph focused on the following questions. Does the article suggest language strategies for framing your policy issue in a way that more effectively achieves the goals you espouse? If your specific policy domain is not mentioned, based on the examples in the article are there term that might be more effective in articulating policy goals? How are those who are opposed to the policy outcomes you desire framing the issue? In two or three succinct sentences, comment on two of your colleagues' discussion board entries that you find intriguing, disagree with, or can expand upon.

### **Getting ready for Class Six:**

The first hour of class will be devoted to writing the introductory material for your issue framing paper which is due the following week (3/17/21). Review the work of your colleagues, the readings, the lecture slides, and the on-line material and class discussion and the work you've done thus far, preparing you for the in-class writing of the following sections:

- Introduction: A brief description of your policy domain, the specific policy you are exploring, and the importance of the problem you are addressing
- Legislative History: The problem the legislation was meant to address, the key provisions of the policy you are highlighting for analysis, and the current state of the policy (i.e. is it firmly established or are there attempts at repeal or modification), the key stake holders (pro and con) who are focused on the issue
- The framing arguments of Key Stake Holders: Possible questions to answer in approaching this analysis are: do any of the frames follow the rubrics suggested by the Frameworks Institute? Did the issue move from episodic to thematic? Is the policy category being contested - redistributive, regulatory, etc.? What major morality tale is being appealed to? How are context, numbers, messengers, etc. being used? Is the policy branch or root? -

The class will be structured like the writing room for Saturday Night Live - collaboration where needed will be encouraged!

**N.B. All required journal and discussion board entries must be posted by Monday at 7:00 P.M., the day before class.**

**Policy Process: Tuesday, March 9, 2021: Class 6 – *Bringing it altogether: Writing the Issue Framing Paper***

4:15 -5:15 The writing workshop

5:15 - 5:35 Creating a domain map

5:35 - 5:45 Discussion of next assignment

**Preparation for Class Seven**

**Post:**

**To the Discussion Board:**

Your three to five slide power point presentations displaying your domain map, a description of the key players and the different policy consequences flowing from the competing frames

In a brief paragraph, comment on two of your colleagues' power point presentation, noting any further questions or themes needing further elaboration.

**N.B. All required discussion board entries must be posted by Monday at 7:00 P.M., the day before class.**

Policy Process: Tuesday, March 16, 2021: Class 7 – So what did you learn?

4:15 – 5:30 Focused discussion of policy domain maps

5:30 – 5:45 How is Change Even Possible?

**Your first project including slides should be posted to the Journal no later than 5:00 P.M., March 17.**

### **Preparation for Class Eight**

#### **Read:**

Policy Paradox – Chapters 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11.

#### **Post:**

#### **To Discussion Board:**

Analyze the narrative stories defining and contesting your policy issue by describing in two or three sentence bullet points:

- The type of story it is, using Stone's story types
- The metaphors used to frame the issue
- Any use of synecdoche
- The way numbers are used
- The causal theories offered
- How the policy sorts interests and align costs and benefits
- The decision strategies of problem definition (rational analytical or polis)

In a short paragraph or two comment on your partners' story analysis – what would you like to see further elucidated?

**N.B. All required discussion board entries must be posted by Monday at 7:00 P.M., the day before class.**

### **Policy Process. Tuesday, March 23, 2021: Class 8 – The Art of Persuasion**

4:15 - 5:15      Discussion of Stone and Crafting a Persuasive Policy Argument

5:15 – 5:40      Agenda Setting and the role of policy subsystems

5:40 –5:45      Discussion of Next Assignment

### **Preparation for Class Nine:**

**Read:**

Smith and Larimer, Chapter 5

**Post:****To Discussion Board:**

Using the policy you are working with as a test case, briefly critique each of the models below noting how the model does or does not apply to the action of key players in the process:

- Advocacy coalitions
- Punctuated Equilibrium
- Muddling Through
- Multiple Streams and Windows

Your critique should take the form of four short paragraphs.

Describe one key organization in your policy subsystem. In your judgement has it contributed to or hindered activities in the current macro political system?

Briefly contrast the role played by the policy subsystem in two of your colleagues' specific policy area with how it functions in your policy domain. For example is the subsystem working to advance or slow down the implementation of the policy?

**N.B. All required discussion board entries must be posted by Monday at 7:00 P.M., the day before class.**

**Policy Process: Tuesday, March 30, 2021: Class 9 – *The use and abuse of government agencies in the policy process***

4:15 – 5:15 Discussion of Change Models and the role of Policy Subsystems

5:15 – 5:40 The Deep State: Government Bureaucrats – Enemies of the People?

5:40 – 5:45 Discussion of Next Assignments

**Preparation for Class Ten:****Read:**

Smith and Larimer, Chapter 7

Stone, Chapters 12, 13, and 14

**Post:**

**To Journal:**

An example of where a key agency in your policy domain made recommendations that were ignored by the macro political establishment.

An example of where a key agency recommendation was embraced by the macro political system.

An example of how a key agency used incentives or rules to gain compliance

**To the Discussion Board:**

A short reflection (a paragraph or two) on the meaning of the phrase, “experts should be on tap, not on top” and discuss the appropriate role of “facts” in the current policy climate.

After reviewing the work of your colleagues, briefly note whether you agree or disagree with two colleagues’ analysis of the proper role of experts and the role of facts in the current policy climate. Why or why not?

**N.B. All required journal and discussion board entries must be posted by Monday at 7:00 P.M., the day before class.**

**Policy Process: Tuesday, April 6, 2021: Class 10 – *Government and the Private Sector***

4:15 – 5:15 Discussion of government bureaucracy, the role of expertise, and incentives to gain compliance

5:15 – 5:40 Government, the private sector, and the role of partnerships

5:40 – 5:45 Discussion of next assignment

**Preparation for Class Eleven:**

**Read:**

Smith and Larimer, Chapter 8

Stone, Chapters 15 to the end

**Post:**

**To Journal:**

Suggesting that our policy/politics are in a state of churn is a bit of an understatement. Considering your policy domain and the specific policy you are focusing on, give examples of the following:

- The contested arguments that rely on different interpretations of the rights involved
- The contested arguments that rely on different definitions of rights (positive – negative)
- The power dynamics employed to change the course of the policy

**To the Discussion Board:**

A brief description (one or two paragraphs) of elements of implementation processes that have helped or hindered the advancement of your policy (top down vs. bottom up, drift in the policy goals, etc.).

After reviewing the work of your colleagues', in two short paragraphs describe what the similarities and differences in implementation processes of two posts compared to your policy issue. Do the differences account for different rates of success or acceptance?

**N.B. All required journal and discussion board entries must be posted by Monday at 7:00 P.M., the day before class.**

**Policy Process: Tuesday, April 13, 2021: Class 11 – *Money Ball – Policy in the age of Darkness***

4:15 – 5:15 Discussion of the current political/policy climate and attempts to expand/contract the rights and powers of stakeholders in particular policy domains.

5:15 – 5:40 The role of dark money in current policy debates

5:40 - 5:45 Discussion of next assignments

**Preparation for Class Twelve:**

**Read:**

Smith and Larimer, Chapter 8 to the end

**Post:**

**To Journal:**

A short paragraph describing the new directions in policy research articulated by Smith and Larimer (i.e. incorporation of brain science) that seem promising in understanding what is happening in your policy domain.

**To the Discussion Board:**

A description of the players in your policy domain that have the most influence. Are they obvious or hidden? Are their arguments appealing or repellent? Why

In two or three succinct sentences, comment on two of your colleagues' discussion board entries that you find intriguing, disagree with, or can expand upon. What is similar of dissimilar to your policy area?

**N.B. All required journal and discussion board entries must be posted by Monday at 7:00 P.M., the day before class.**

**Policy Process: Tuesday, April 20, 2021: Class 12 – *Social Media, Politics and Policy***

4:15 – 5:15 Discussion of hidden or not so hidden influences on policy and how brain science helps us understand the policy process

5:15 – 5:35 Social Media and Public Policy

5:35: - 5:45 Discussion of next assignment

**Preparation for Class Thirteen:**

**Go to:**

[https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=policy+impacts+of+social+media](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=policy+impacts+of+social+media)

**Watch:**

**[Impact of Social Media on Politics and Public Policy](#)**

[IpsosGlobalAdvisor](#)

**And**

**[How can social media impact the government? | Clay Shirky](#)**

[TED Archive](#)

**Post:**

**To Journal:**

A one paragraph reflection on Mike Colledge's assertion that because of social media, political parties will become like record labels.

A one paragraph reflection on the assertion by Clay Sharky that social media's ability to create anti-power threatens not only autocracies but also democracies.

**To Discussion Board:**

A social media clip that effectively demonstrates the use of social media in your policy area

Review the media clips of your colleagues and provide a brief critique of two of them focusing on their likely effectiveness, use of facts, and how visuals impact the message.

Definitions of your assigned terms

Any comments, need for clarification or further development of study guide terms you think are needed

Those presenting, work on presentation

**N.B. All required journal and discussion board entries must be posted by Monday at 7:00 P.M., the day before class.**

**Policy Process: Tuesday, April 27, 2021: Class 13 – *Wrapping it up/Presentations***

4:15 -5:30 Presentations

5:30 – 5:45 Discussion, clarification of study terms

**Preparation for Class Fourteen:**

Work on final project and presentation

Review the Final exam questions for your oral

**Policy Process: Tuesday, May 4, 2021: Class 14 – Presentations/Final Thoughts**

4:15 – 5:30 Presentations

5:30 – 5:45 Class evaluation

5:45 – Sign up for oral exam time

**N.B. The completed projects are due posted to the Journal no later than Monday, May 10, at 7:00 P.M.**

**Policy Process: May 12 -14**

May 12	May 13	May 14
10:00 A.M.	10:00	10:00
10:45 A.M	10:45	11:00
11:30 A.M.	11:30	
1:00 P.M	3:00	12:30
1:45 P.M	3:45	1:15
4:00 P.M	4:30	2:00
4:45 P.M	5:15	3:30
5:30 P.M	5:50	4:15
6:05 P.M		5:00