

POSC 201 Lobbyists, Wonks and Social Media: Public Policy-Making Fall 2015 Syllabus

Course Themes: What factors enable interest groups to affect the policy process? Money, size of membership, organization, leadership, expertise – are there other factors, and what is the relative importance of each of these? Do corporate interests have an advantage in the policy process, and if so, is this a sign of corruption? Why are certain policy ideas that seem to have broad support not passed into law? If such policy ideas finally do become law, what explains the timing? What about the role of political culture and political institutions in policymaking? How do the unorganized become organized? What has been the impact of new social media like Twitter on the policy process? How does policy-making at the Street Level, by police, teachers, welfare agency staff, and public school teachers differ from what occurs in capitols? Why are certain policies magnets for contention and political struggle and others draw little attention?

Course Goals: This course presents theoretical explanations for public policy outcomes in the United States that will enable students to offer systematic answers to these questions. By the end of the term, students will have a variety of analytic tools for understanding why certain legislation is advanced and what tools advocates use to fight battles in the policy making arena. As well, students will get an introduction to a number of policy and issue arenas, any of which could be a topic for an independent study or comps project.

Course Materials: The two books for the course are available at the bookstore. All other readings are on e-reserve or the Moodle course page. There are no prerequisites for this course but students lacking familiarity with American politics since the New Deal may be unfamiliar with social and economic policy debates that may be the focus of discussion. The instructor can supply additional materials for background purposes. As well, there are quite a few readings in E-Reserve and Closed Reserve that are not assigned. They are available as supplements to understanding and catalysts for deeper exploration.

Student Evaluation: The following grading schema is subject to change depending on the instructor's decision about the best way to assess students and provide incentives for learning.

Frequent written homework assignments and in-class quizzes will comprise 50 percent of the grade. These should be written in a formal, scholarly writing style (proofread; full citations) and the student's goal should be to demonstrate understanding of the material and to illustrate connections to other parts of the course scholarship and other examples within political life. High grades in the course will be earned by first demonstrating complete comprehension of the material and by using this understanding to go beyond our literature with your insights and synthesis. Late submissions will be heavily penalized. Class Participation (10 percent) will be graded on substance and frequency; non-medical absences preempt class participation. There will be a Midterm Exam (15 percent) and a Second Exam at the end of the term (25 percent). A narrow range of research topics will be offered in lieu of the Second Exam.

My grading standards are as follows:

A= excellent quality work that goes beyond the material as presented with original ideas that synthesize across the course.

B= good quality work, complete comprehension of all materials, not merely in their constituent parts but in a holistic manner. Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are flawless.

C= fair quality work, an ability to regurgitate some important aspects of some materials covered in the course but unfamiliarity with other equally important parts.

D= poor quality work, little demonstration of understanding of the material as evidenced by inaccurate and confused discussions of the subject and an incomplete approach.

Any evidence of cheating or plagiarism will be grounds for failure.

Cell phones should be OFF during class. Checking your email while peers are talking is very disrespectful (and impedes your ability to participate) and **I reserve the right to look at the screen of any student using a laptop to insure that this affront is not taking place.**

If you have questions about the readings, the lectures, and especially the research project, please come to my office. My office is 417 Willis, office hours will be Mondays 11-12 and Wednesdays and Fridays 3:30-4:30 and on those days I will often be available at other times; no appointments are necessary during office hours. This is your time, just drop in. For meetings at other times, I am glad to make an appointment on Tuesdays; Thursdays I will not be available. My office phone is 222-4122, and my e-mail is rkeiser@carleton.edu.

The Writing Center, located in 420 4th Libe, has peer writing consultants who can work with you during any stage of the writing process (brainstorming to final proofreading). Hours and more information can be found on the [writing center website](#). You can reserve specific times for conferences in 420 4th Libe by using their [online appointment system](#). Walk-ins are welcome, though writers with appointments have priority.

Carleton College is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodations should contact the Coordinator of Disability Services, Andy Christensen, at 222-4464 or anchrist@carleton.edu, to begin the process. Carleton faculty are strongly encouraged to wait for official notification of accommodations before modifying course requirements for students.

PLURALIST AND ELITIST APPROACHES TO POLICYMAKING OUTCOMES

Collective Action Theory and Interest Group Policymaking

1= Monday. Pluralism's Madisonian Roots

2=Wednesday. Wright, *Interest Groups and Congress*, ch. 2.

Assignment due at start of class (must be printed and handed in, printer problems are not a valid excuse): A) What happens to a group of couch potatoes that transforms them into interest group members, according to the Disturbance Theory (2-3 sentences)? B) Even with Disturbance Theory, there is a "natural proclivity" for rational people (as opposed to what/whom,

retirees?) to not form an interest group. Why is it rational, in terms of cost in money and time, to not join a group that is dedicated to making policy that will likely improve your life (3 sentences)? C) If you were a leader, or a political entrepreneur, what tactics could you use to persuade people to alter their calculation of rationality? D) Why is the patron relevant to these tactics? E) Who is the scholar most associated with this Paradox of Collective Action, i.e., that free-ridership is the logical response to a Disturbance? F) Why are large groups with lots of latent (opposite of manifest) supporters more vulnerable to this Logic of Collective Action than small groups (7-10 sentences)?

Be Ready to Discuss in class:

If a group has 1000 interested people seeking a collective benefit and 80 percent of them are logical in their cost-benefit analysis for participation in group activities, then what are the chances of them defeating a group of only 300 people in which every member receives selective incentives or concentrated benefits?

Students with no previous background in the formal study of American Politics should read the Moe article (E-reserve) at the same time as the Wright chapter and pay particular attention to the ideal of collective action problems and the logic of behaving as a free-rider. As well, chapter 1 of Ripley and Franklin (see E-Reserve) is useful for those with minimal background. Reading an Introductory textbook's discussion of Interest Groups on American Government would also be helpful.

3=Friday. Hudson, *Democracy in Peril*, ch. 5, "The 'Privileged Position' of Business." This is the Elitist Approach to describing the quality of democracy in the US.

E. Lipton, "A GOP leader tightly bound to lobbyists," *New York Times* (9/12/10).

E. Lipton and K. Sack, "Fiscal footnote: Big Senate gift to Drug Maker." *New York Times* (1/20/13).

Be Ready to Discuss in class:

How might the ideas presented by Wright on collective action offer an alternative explanation for the economic elite domination presented by Hudson?

Week 2

4. J. Q. Wilson, *Political Organizations*, ch. 16. The four quadrants of policy described in the Wilson article are a model that we will return to throughout

the course. You need to become adept at recalling and defining the four categories of policy.

Be Ready to Discuss or Write as a Quiz in class:

Where would Social Security policy fit? Where would Defense Policy, like building weapons, fit? Where would TANF fit? Tax Credits for College Tuition? Tax credits for parochial/private high school tuition? Corporate subsidies to attract a headquarters to Minneapolis? Subsidy to build a new professional football stadium for the Minnesota Vikings? Obamacare?

5) TBA

6) Wright, ch. 6. "Consequences of Interest Group Politics."

Be Ready to Discuss everything from the article. Today will be a test of how well we can do without guidance.

Week 3

PROCESSES OF POLICY MAKING

Kingdon's Model – Agendas, Alternatives, Garbage Cans, Streams, and Windows in the Capitol

7) Kingdon, Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policy, ch. 6. This is the most respected text on national policy making in the scholarly literature. If you are a novice to Political Science, it would be a good idea to quickly read the rest of the text.

8) Kingdon, Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policy, ch. 9

Assignment due at start of class (1-2 pages): Choose one, use your favorite encyclopedic tool, summarize the topic and consider in light of Kingdon's research: a) Sputnik's impact on US policy; b) "A Nation at Risk" and Education Policy; c) Shooting of James Brady and Gun Policy; d) Publication of Charles Murray's *Losing Ground* and Welfare Policy.

9) Kingdon, more discussion.

Week 4

THE ROLE OF THE MASS PUBLIC

10) Read either of the two articles:

Sharp, "Public Policy and Public Opinion."

Page and Shapiro, "The Effects of Public Opinion on Policy."

Assignment due at start of class: Is public opinion *typically* a driver of public policy? What does the article say? (One paragraph, specific quotes with page citations are a good idea)

Be Ready to Discuss: Does the Disturbance Theory posit that citizens are often inattentive and unaware? Is citizen awareness a key variable in Olson's theory?

11) D. Stone, *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making*. This text is also widely respected and ubiquitous on the syllabi of universities across the US. Reading the entire text would be highly rewarding for even an advanced student and the material is accessible at any level. Ch. 6 (E-R).

Be ready to discuss some of your own examples of these concepts that are not drawn from the text.

12) Stone, *Policy Paradox*, ch. 7 (E-R).

S. Lipka, "Do Crime Statistics Keep Students Safe?" *Chronicle of Higher Education* 60 (1/30/09), 1, 15-17.

Week 5

13) Cobb and Ross, "Denying Agenda Access: Strategic Considerations." (E-Reserve)

Hackey, *Symbolic Politics and Health Care Reform in the 1940s and 1990s*."

14) Barkan, "Strategic, Tactical, and Organizational Dilemmas of the Protest Movement Against Nuclear Power."

Plein, "Strategies of Agenda Denial: Issue Definition and the case of bST."

Discuss: Why would the label "extra-institutional" fit the case discussed in the Barkan article? How does this article engage in dialogue with the views about collective action problems associated with Olson? [1 page]

Be ready to discuss: Think about a comparison of these two articles in terms of Wilson's 4 quadrant framework.

15) Steinmo and Watts, "It's the Institutions, Stupid!"

Week 6

Bureaucratic Efficiency vs. Democratic Accountability at the Street Level

16) MID TERM BREAK (begin reading Lipsky?)

17) No Reading

18) Exam One Due

Week 7

19) Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy*, chs. Preface and 1-4. Keep your mind open to examples from your own experience with Teachers, your imagined experience with social workers, perhaps in welfare offices, and police officers in major cities with racial and economic inequalities.

Assignment due at start of class: There are 10 prompts below: Choose at least 4, specify which you have selected, and submit a written response.

+ 4: “mediate aspects of the constitutional relationship of citizens to the state.” What other actors typically play this role, particularly discussed earlier in the course?

+9-11: Teachers are suggested to be agents of Social Control. Have your teachers socialized you “to the economic order and the likely opportunities for different strata of the population,” not just through the substance of texts but via the process of how you are treated? Explain with some detail and examples.

+14: Regarding Professionals. Is there a difference if I grade your paper vs. if I have a senior who received an “A” in the class do the grading? Is this relevant for Charter Schools, TFA, Welfare services, or Policing and the call for body cameras? Thoughtful answers required.

+14: Counter-intuitively, making more rules increases discretion. How? How might a law like “3 Strikes and you’re in Prison” produce Mass Incarceration of African Americans?

+15: How does the “maintenance of discretion contribute to the legitimacy of the welfare-service state?” Do laws like 3 Strikes and the anti-marijuana Drug War contribute to governmental legitimacy?

If Carleton College adopted a policy of expulsion of students for a first offense in (a) plagiarism, would you support it? (b) sexual assault? Justify the similarity or difference in your answer.

+17: Discussion of noncompliance when lower-level workers' interests differ from the interests of those at higher levels. Explanation of Grade Inflation? Explanation of Scandals of Cheating on Standardized Tests in High Schools?

+22: Think about the fact that cities that increase drug arrests get more money from the Federal War on Drugs. Mass Incarceration as a product of something other than Racism?

+29-30: Can you think of examples of how high case loads and the constant press of time and decisions shape outcomes far more than the circumstances of the case for teachers, cops and welfare agency staff?

+41-45: What are the multiple goals in Public Education or Policing or Transportation Policy and are they in conflict?

+51-52: How can we measure performance under such conditions? What is Blau's insight? How does this discussion relate to Stone's *Policy Paradox* chapter?

20) Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy*, chs. 7-8, and 11. We are skipping a few chapters here.

Come prepared to discuss, particularly Rationing and Bias in your experiences in education. Try to produce some non-racial illustrations.

21) Thomas, Jim. 1984. "Some Aspects of Negotiated Order, Loose Coupling, and Mesostructure in Maximum Security Prisons." *Symbolic Interaction* 7:2, 213-31.

Week 8

22) D. Smith and C. Tolbert, *Educated By Initiative* (Michigan 2004), chs. 1-3.

Assignment due at start of class: Respond to at least 3 of the 5 prompts.

+ch. 1: what environmental circumstances are most conducive to the creation of the institutions of Direct Democracy?

+ch 2: Is an increase in Electoral Turnout Positive? How do you read the evidence? What constitutes evidence?

+ch. 2: What is the relevance of this discussion for Wilson's discussion of the 4 quadrants?

+ch. 3: What claims are associated with scholars Barber, Pateman and Ackerman, in which texts? What is Lupia's contribution to this discussion?

+ch. 3: What Hypothesis is being tested in this chapter? What is the relevance for our discussion of collective action problems?

23) Smith and Tolbert, *Educated By Initiative*, chs. 4-5.

+ch. 4: The scholarship of Barber, Pateman, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse focuses on what and the authors differ how?

+ch. 4: Can Direct Democracy be a tool to weaken state capacity, reduce confidence in government, or amplify the voices of the rich? What is the alternative – what system does not run the risk of translating economic inequality into political inequality?

+ch. 4: What is the Hypothesis of this chapter? What is the dependent variable? What are the findings?

+ch. 5: Why is a Heterogeneous interest group world (a) seen as a change from something else, (b) viewed as a positive?

+ch. 5: What are the findings associated with Boehmke?

+ch. 5: Are there likely to be significant differences in the power of interest groups at the state level vs. the local level?

24) C. Stangler, "Energy Companies are Spending Millions to Fight Local Fracking bans," *New Republic* (10/27/14).

"Texas city bans fracking in its birthplace," *New York Times* (11/5/14).

D. Luzzader, "Colorado voters to test ballot reform," *Stateline.org* (10/28/08).

Gray-Barkan, "Southern California's Walmart Wars," *Social Policy* (E-R).

Week 9

Social Media and Public Policy: Is there anything new under the sun?

25) E. Morozov. "Iran: Downside to the Twitter Revolution," *Dissent* 56: 10-14.

D. Murthy, "Twitter: Microphone for the Masses?" *Media, Culture and Society* 33:5 (2011), 779-789. What other cases could you investigate more deeply? Keep a list throughout the readings in case you decide to pursue the topic.

C. Shirky, "The Political Power of Social Media: Technology, the Public Sphere, and Political Change." *Foreign Affairs* 90:1 (Jan/Feb 2011): 28-41.

Be ready to discuss: Strengthening the private sphere and the public sphere are alternatively posited as variables. In which equations? What do these terms mean?

Assignment due at start of class: What are your thoughts, based on aspects of these articles that you specify and cite, of the relevance of social media for overcoming Olson's Collective Action problems and the disorganization of latent distributed beneficiaries or cost-payers (2 pages)?

26) O. Williams, "How Jon Stewart and Lady Gaga Made Congress Less Lame: The Impact of Social Media on the Passage of Bills Through the 'Lame Duck' Session of the 111th Congress and Beyond." *Indiana Law Journal* 87:5, Article 2 (2012).

B. Etling, R. Faris, and J. Palfrey, "Political Change in the Digital Age: The Fragility and Promise of Online Organizing," *SAIS Review* 30:2 (Dec. 2010), 37-49.

27) A. Segerberg and W. L. Bennett, "Social Media and the Organization of Collective Action: Using Twitter to Explore the Ecologies of Two Climate Change Protests," *The Communication Review* 14 (2011), 197-215.

Y. Theocharis, W. Lowe, J. W. van Deth, and G. Garcia-Albacete, "Using Twitter to mobilize protest action: online mobilization patterns and action repertoires in the Occupy Wall Street, Indignados and Aganaktismenoi movements," *Information, Communication & Society* (2015) 12:2, 202-220.

Week 10

28) T. Swann, "Social Media and Movements: Is the Love Affair Really Over?" http://roarmag.org/2015/07/social-media-organization-movements/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+roarmag+%28ROAR+Magazine%29