

NATIONAL POLICY MAKING
POSC 201, SPRING 2014
Weitz 233
MW 11:10-12:20, F 12:1:00

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Office Hours: Monday 2:00-3:15
Thursday 11:00-1:00
by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Welcome to National Policymaking. The purpose of this course is twofold. First, because the policy process is complex, we will work to increase understanding of the wide array of political factors that determine the feasibility and/or desirability of a particular course of action in response to a perceived problem. Second, because the policy process depends upon knowledge and information, we will evaluate the status of various kinds of knowledge claims, including sources of credibility.

We will begin with the politics of the policy formation process. We then turn to the role of citizens in political and policy processes. As we go along we will occasionally take time to consider, discuss and incorporate fundamental but elusive political concepts such as liberty, representation, power, and democracy. The course will have an overall orientation toward democratic ideals and practices. Some history will be included, as history provides a dialogue between past and present that helps us to gain clarity about who we are, what we can do, and what we ought to do. We will, of course, discuss current events as they relate to course materials and as they unfold during the term.

TEXTS

The course will use readings excerpted from both classic and contemporary political texts. These will be posted on Moodle. In addition to these readings, we will use the following textbooks:

Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policy, updated 2nd ed. by John Kingdon
Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making, 3rd ed. by Deborah Stone

CLASSROOM POLICIES

Class policies are intended to foster a stimulating and fruitful intellectual community for everyone. Our time in class is valuable and the topics we address are important; therefore, I will enforce the following rules/expectations:

1. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns in the class. You can email, make an appointment, come to office hours, or talk to me before or after class. I am here to help you. If you have a problem or question in the course, the sooner you contact me, the more effectively it can be handled.
2. It is the nature of topics in politics to entail conflicting opinions. Even those who take the time to arrive at deeply thoughtful conclusions often disagree. Class discussion will encourage free expression for everyone and hold to a standard of respect for all class members.
3. Any student with a disability who needs to arrange accommodations should talk to me at the beginning of the semester. I will be happy to make appropriate arrangements. 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.
4. In order to nurture the classroom as a learning community for everyone, side conversations, electronics and other diversions will not be tolerated. Laptop computers are a convenience but also a tempting distraction. During class discussion and at other times I may ask that the screens be folded down.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Current events: We will frequently discuss current events as they relate to the topics we are studying. Therefore, you will be expected to read a major newspaper on a regular basis and to be familiar with the prominent political stories. Watching television news and/or Comedy Central, following a blog, or listening to the radio is not adequate.

Participation: The expectation of lively interaction is built in to each class period. You are expected to come to class ready to express your thoughts and questions about the readings as well as relevant current events. **Because engaging in thoughtful conversation about important issues in public life is an important skill in policy and politics, it is included as a small part of your grade.** We will keep track of participation using an honor system. There will be a log in class every day. When you contribute to class discussion, write your name down in the log at the end of class. You can count only one participation for each class period. Participation grades will be based on the standard that 15 contributions (2 points each) fulfills the expectations of an A in participation. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed so you can return to class prepared.

Reading: Careful, thoughtful reading followed by critical thinking is the fundamental activity of this class. The types of readings assigned will vary widely, from narratives that read like a story to dense and abstract writings on aspects of public life. Some of these readings will be challenging but none exceed the expectations of course work for this course. I will give you guidance on how to approach difficult readings. The general reading task in the course is threefold:

- I. First, determine what problem or problems the author is concerned about.
- II. Second, read for the argument the author is making.
- III. Third, assess the observations and evidence the author brings to bear in the writing, and/or the soundness of the reasoning.

After these three tasks are accomplished, at least in part, you are ready to evaluate the text. I will give you guidance on how to approach the various readings. Questions about the readings are most welcome, especially when they are specific. I expect excellent comprehension, retention and substantial reflection to be evident in course discussions, questions raised, and in your writing. The reflection papers (discussed below) are intended to support thorough, thoughtful reading.

Your reading assignments are due on the date they are listed on the course schedule, and the class sessions will be structured based on the assumption that you come to class ready to ask questions and share observations, frustrations, insights or concerns about the reading assignment.

Writing Assignments

Writing assignments in the course consist of the following:

1) Seven short (2-3 page) reading reflection papers - The purpose of these assignments is to: 1) provide a means for exploring the readings beyond what is typically done by reading alone, and 2) enhance class discussion. This is informal writing focused on expressing ideas, asking questions, and drawing connections. To the extent a reading relates to some previous experience, it is often helpful to include that, but the focus of the paper should be on the reading. You select the readings you wish to write your reflection papers on. They are due the day the readings are due in class. You will be expected to contribute to class discussion if you have written a reflection paper on the reading. If you write about one reflection paper a week you will easily get them done before the research paper is due. **You may not turn in more than two reflection papers per week.** You should have all your reflection papers turned in by May 23rd (end of week 8).

2) One short analytical paper - The purpose of this assignments is to develop the ability to form an analytical argument regarding public affairs and express it clearly to others. This papers will be short (4-5 pages). This will be due in late January.

3) Class Policy Conference:

a) research paper (about 10 pages) - You will use the analytical frameworks we learn in class to study the politics of a policy that is of interest to you. The purpose of this assignment is to gain facility in understanding the effects of the political context on policy formation. The papers will be grouped into general topical areas or themes. Although the papers in each group will relate to each other, your research paper will be independent work. **This is due Wednesday, May 28.**

b) a panel presentation based on your research paper - The groups formed for the research papers will make a short, informal panel presentation to the class. These will occur during weeks 9 and 10. They will likely require meeting for one session outside of regularly scheduled class time, such as common time.

c) two short (1-2 page) discussant papers - These papers will be short discussions of other student papers in preparation for the question and answer session as part of the panel presentations. Your discussant paper should include one or two questions for the panelist.

There will be no exams in this course.

Papers are due as paper copies in class on the date specified. I encourage you to print your papers double-sided. Late papers will be graded down two points for each day they are late.

I encourage you to talk with me about your assignments. I am happy to answer any questions you have about either the course materials or your progress in the course. You can visit me during my office hours or make an appointment.

GRADES

	points	%
Class Conference		
Research Paper	140	28
Panel Presentation	45	9
2 Discussant Papers (25 points x 2)	50	10
1 Short analytical paper	60	12
7 Reflection papers (25 points x 7)	175	35
Class participation	30	6
Total	500	100

ACADEMIC HONESTY

An act of academic dishonesty is a serious offense in a college community. By seeking credit for work which is not his or her own, a student takes unfair advantage of fellow students, who accept their limitations, and of teachers, who trust that the work received is the student's. Dishonesty in academic work, particularly in the form of plagiarism, also defeats the process of self-discovery which is the heart of a liberal education. People establish their integrity and personality only as they learn to distinguish what is significantly their own from what belongs to another, only as they learn to value their own work, including its limitations, in relation to the work of others. As a scholar, finally, one should be generous in acknowledging the work of other scholars, for their work makes possible one's own.

At Carleton College, an act of academic dishonesty is therefore regarded as conflicting with the work and purpose of the entire College and not merely as a private matter between the student and an instructor; all cases involving such dishonesty are referred to the Academic Standing committee for appropriate action. This action can vary from a grade of Unsatisfactory in the given piece of work to a recommendation of permanent dismissal from the College in cases of repeated or serious offenses.

You can find information about academic dishonesty at:
<http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/doc/honesty/>