“Public Policy” is the sexy alter ego of public administration. The study of policymaking tantalizes us; if we can unlock the secrets to how and when big policy decisions are made, and have an impact on those decisions, we can also benefit groups and causes we care about. As we enter a Presidential election year, it will be fascinating to watch the multitude of factors and forces that will seek to affect the outcome. The candidates and their supporters seek to win, and thus to have the power to shape the ideological and policy preferences of the new Administration. The winner, however, will confront a political system that is arguably at its most polarized since the pre-Civil War era, both nationally and at the state level.

This course will provide an overview of the concepts and issues in the field of public policy. As the first course in the TESC MPA program policy concentration, it is intended to provide an introduction to the study of public policy processes and to the practice of policy analysis. We will examine the political and economic rationales offered for public intervention in our society and economy, analyze the many factors influencing the policy process, and critique the models analysts have created to describe it. Policy analysts have a vital role in the policy process through their ex-ante analysis of proposals to take action on public problems, and their evaluation of programs that have been implemented. We will contrast a two categories of approaches to policy analysis—a classic approach epitomized by rational consideration of alternatives, and their benefits and costs, and an interpretive model that features deliberative processes at the core of democratic systems of governance. Our goal is to provide guidance for future policy analysts in our representative democracy, a system in which marginalized groups still find it difficult to gain entrée to the policy process.

Course learning objectives. Students will gain:
1. Improved understanding of the complex nature of public problems in several policy arenas;
2. Improved understanding of the many factors influencing the policy process, as well as models used to describe it;
3. An understanding of critical skills and concepts of policy analysis and ability to apply a variety of policy analysis techniques;
4. Improved analytical and writing skills.

We will read 5 texts plus a variety of shorter articles, governmental reports, and research studies, and discuss these in class. Lectures, films, guest presentations and workshops will be featured during our class sessions. Students will write several short papers, and prepare one longer paper, on which they will deliver a presentation the last day of class.

Credit and Evaluation: Students will receive 4 credits at the completion of the course if all course requirements have been successfully completed. Plagiarism (i.e., using other peoples’ work as your own), failing to complete one or more assignments, completing one or more assignments late (without having made arrangements before the due date), or multiple absences may be grounds for denial of credit. Partial credit will be awarded only under unusual circumstances. Consistent with MPA program requirements, a self evaluation will be required for credit.
Expectations: All students are expected to contribute to a well functioning MPA classroom learning community. Behavior that disrupts the learning community may be grounds for disciplinary action, including dismissal from the MPA program. Evergreen e-mail will be used for communication about class work; course documents will be available on the course Canvas site. Faculty will be prepared for class, responsive to questions and provide prompt feedback on completed assignments.

**Texts**


Optional texts (if you haven’t read them, at least skim through to get the gist of each author’s arguments).


**Articles and other readings.** (Available at the course Canvas site unless otherwise noted). Note that additional, optional readings will also be posted to Canvas for each week if you wish to go into greater depth on a particular subject).


Assignments. Please complete in 11 or 12 point font, double spaced. Include page numbers. Post to the course Canvas site by 5 p.m. on the date noted.

1. **Assignment 1. Public Policy Observation.** Attend in person a government or non-profit public meeting of your choice (not something you’ve attended before or are attending for work). Check the agenda in advance to ensure they will be discussing a policy at the meeting. Assess where the organization is in their policy process around that issue and what factors are playing a role in decision making. To what extent is the issue a public policy issue? How have formal or informal policy analysis influenced the process, if at all? Over what time span has the action on this issue occurred? Collect data on the timing of key events and include a brief chronology. If you wish, you may use “Time Toast” or “Dipity” technology ([https://www.timetoast.com/](https://www.timetoast.com/) or [http://www.dipity.com/](http://www.dipity.com/)) and put the link in your paper. Due January 5th, 5 p.m. 2-3 pages.

2. **Assignment 2. Is Congress “broken”?** This week’s readings consider the state of the U.S. Congress as well as Hofstadter’s prescient depiction of “the paranoid style” and its influence on American politics. What is YOUR analysis of this problem? If you could change the system, what would be your goal? What ONE change would you make to move it in that direction? Due January 12th; 2-3 pages.


4. **Assignment 4.** Complete a bill analysis of a bill proposed before the U.S. Congress or Washington state legislature. It may be an analysis of a proposed bill or one already enacted. Follow the template provided on Canvas, where sample bill analyses will be posted. Additional details on the assignment will be covered in class and posted to Canvas. Due January 26th. 2-3 p.
5. **Assignment 5.** Come to class with a *one paragraph* proposal for your final paper project (see Assignment 9). Define the problem; explain why this is a *public policy* problem. **Due Feb. 9th.**

6. **Assignment 6. Postmodern Policy Analysis: A Thought Experiment.** After reading the book chapter by Hajer & Wagenaar, write a short paper in which you sketch out how a “postmodern” policy analyst would apply this approach to a policy issue, preferably the one that is the focus of your final paper. **Due: Feb. 9th. 2-3 pages.**

7. **Assignment 7. Technology and the Future.** “Science and Technology Policy” is deeply contradictory. Every developed country uses public policy to encourage the growth of a high-tech sector. Yet as the articles by Halpern and Joy point out, the creations of this sector, from artificial intelligence and genetic engineering to nanotech and robotics, pose a threat not only to our economic and social model (based on widespread employment) but potentially to human life itself. How in your view should public policy manage this dilemma? **Due: Feb. 16th. 2-3 pgs.**

8. **Assignment 8. Prohibition vs. Pot.** What historical parallels, if any, can be drawn between the US experience with prohibition of alcohol, and prohibition of marijuana? How will the current muddled state of marijuana policy play out in the years ahead? Skim a few sources on the current state of this issue in the U.S. (see the document posted to Canvas). Consider the policy model suggested by Okrent, and the various models summarized by Nowlin. Do any of them provide helpful guidance? **Due February 23rd. 2-3 pages.**

9. **Assignment 9. Final paper.** Research and write a 10 to 15 page policy brief. Explore an important issue in depth and provide recommendations to policy makers. Additional details on this assignment will be provided in class and posted to Canvas. **Due: March 8th.**

   **Presentation:** Prepare a 5 minute presentation summarizing your findings; be prepared to deliver it March 8th. If possible, we will present these in the campus TV studio.

**Policy Studies and Policy Analysis Resources. Useful webpages:**

Cato Institute: [www.cato.org](http://www.cato.org)
The Urban Institute: [http://www.urban.org/index.cfm](http://www.urban.org/index.cfm)
Brookings: [http://www.brookings.edu/](http://www.brookings.edu/)
The Heritage Foundation, [http://www.heritage.org](http://www.heritage.org)
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week/Date</th>
<th>Topics</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 Jan 5th</td>
<td>Policy: what it is and why it matters</td>
<td>Anderson (2003) Ch. 1; Dunn, Ch. 3</td>
<td>Assignment 1.</td>
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<td>Competing concepts of the public; Rationales for public action</td>
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<td>2 Jan 12th</td>
<td>The “Paranoid Style” and the Struggle to Frame Public Problems</td>
<td>Baumgartner, et al, Ch. 1, 5, 10; Binder and Mann (2011); Hofstadter (1964)</td>
<td>Assignment 2.</td>
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<td>Systems &amp; Institutions: Is Congress broken? Does $ control politics?</td>
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<td>4 Jan 26th</td>
<td>Policy analysis I: Conceptual foundations, ethical principles</td>
<td>Radin, Ch. 1-5; Bryson (2004); Dunn Ch. 1,2; Mintrom (2010).</td>
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<td>Stakeholder analysis &amp; workshop</td>
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<td>Is a “nudge” enough? Policy analyst panel</td>
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<td>6 Feb 9th</td>
<td>Policy Analysis III: Bardach and Beyond: CBA vs. postmodern policy</td>
<td>Dunn, Ch. 5-8; Hajer &amp; Wagenaar (2003); Radin, Ch. 6-9.</td>
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<td>Assignment 6.</td>
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<td>8 Feb 23rd</td>
<td>Case Study II: Pot: What can we learn from alcohol Prohibition?</td>
<td>Okrent (2011) Parts II-IV. Dunn, Ch. 9 Skim sources on marijuana policy</td>
<td>Assignment 8.</td>
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<td>Policy communication Panel on marijuana policy.</td>
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<td>10 March 8th</td>
<td>Final Presentations</td>
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<td>Assignment 9: Final paper</td>
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