

POLS 3351 Policy Process

Fall 2025

Instructor: Esther Han

Office: Benedict Hall, Room 210

Office Hours: Monday 1-3 PM or by appointment

(Please, email to make an appointment: ehan2@utep.edu)

Class meetings: QUIN 206 (Monday and Wednesday 10:30-11:50 AM)

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- ✓ Identify the key steps, environments, institutions, and actors in the policy process
- ✓ Explain different ways of categorizing policies
- ✓ Demonstrate knowledge of current policy process theories
- ✓ Evaluate policy issues in the context of policy process theories

COURSE OVERVIEW

The first part of the course will review the basic concepts and factors of policy process, such as definition, elements, contexts, actors, and types of policies. Next, the course will address different policy process theories to explain policy changes. Class activities and assignments will encourage students to understand and apply the knowledge to current policy issues.

Students are expected to complete the assigned readings ***before*** class.

TEXTS BOOKS

NOTE: Please start by purchasing the Birkland text. The book is also available through the library (on Sep 3 or after).

-Birkland, T. A. (2020). *An introduction to the policy process: Theories, concepts, and models of public policy making*. Routledge. (5th edition)

-Extra mandatory readings (*available on the Blackboard)

GRADING

Class attendance and discussions: 10% of grade

Policy debates: 15% of grade

Midterm examination: 30% of grade

Final examination: 25% of grade

Final policy paper & presentation: 20% of grade

All grades will conform to the following scale:

A	93 – 100%	C-	70 – 72%
A-	90 – 92%	D+	67 – 69%
B+	87 – 89%	D	63 – 66%
B	83 – 86%	D-	60 – 62%

B- 80 – 82% F Below 60%
C+ 79 – 77%
C 73 – 76%

CLASS DISCUSSIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Discussions are a critical feature of the class to strengthen developing & understanding of policy process. In general, Wednesday classes will entail discussions after a summary lecture on each week's topic. Students will also be asked to have a short presentation about different policy process theories to facilitate the discussions later in the semester.

POLICY DEBATES

We will have approximately 4-5 debates for the semester. Each student will be assigned to a small group of students. In each debate, one group will argue in favor of a given policy viewpoint, and the second group will argue against it. These topics will be closely connected to the course readings. Each group will provide a 3-5 page paper (double-spaced) summarizing their argument. The paper should draw on readings from the course and can draw on outside readings and *real-world examples* as well. Each side will also create a narrated presentation that lasts up to 10 minutes. Each group will upload their paper and presentations in the assignments folder by 5pm before the debate is listed in the class schedule or noted by the instructor. I will provide more detailed information about the debate topic for each debate. All members of a group will receive the same grade.

MIDTEM AND FINAL EXAMINATIONS

The midterm likely will be an in-class exam, and the final exam will be online. Both exams will aim to test your understanding of the key points made by readings and lectures. The Midterm exam will largely include short answer questions. The final exam will also include longer essays. There will not be a makeup date for either the midterm or the final examination.

POLICY PAPER & PRESENTATION

There will be a short final policy paper & presentation. The paper will be 3 to 5 pages long and require students to compare and critically evaluate the policy process theories. I will provide detailed guidelines for the paper & presentation in class. The paper will also be a group work, and each group will have two students. All members of a group will receive the same grade.

OFFICE HOURS, E-MAIL, AND CONSULTING WITH INSTRUCTOR

I have office hours: Monday 1 -3 pm, and students are encouraged to drop by as necessary. If you would like to meet for another time slot, please e-mail me with a few dates and times that you are available, and we will set up an appointment. I also strongly encourage you to use e-mail to contact me when you have questions that do not require a meeting. I will check my e-mail regularly and make every effort to answer your questions as quickly as possible. Please, allow a day or two business day for a reply.

*NOTE: Please e-mail me directly at chan2@utep.edu rather than through Blackboard.

CLASS STATEMENT

We all represent a variety of backgrounds and perspectives. To build a community learning environment that respects diversity, I ask all class members to:

- Share their unique experiences, values and beliefs
- Be open to the views of others
- Honor the uniqueness of their colleagues
- Appreciate the opportunity that we must learn from each other in this community
- Value each other's opinions and always communicate in a respectful manner
- Keep conversations of the community that are of a personal or professional nature confidential

ACCOMMODATIONS POLICY

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. Students requesting an accommodation based on a disability must register with the UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS). Contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at 915-747-5148, or email them at cass@utep.edu, or apply for accommodations online via the CASS portal.

SCHOLASTIC INTEGRITY

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory reports. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another as ones' own. Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. All suspected violations of academic integrity at The University of Texas at El Paso must be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR) for possible disciplinary action. To learn more, please visit HOOP: Student Conduct and Discipline.

CLASS RECORDINGS

The use of recordings will enable you to have access to class lectures, group discussions, and so on in the event you miss a synchronous or in-person class meeting due to illness or other extenuating circumstances. Our use of such technology is governed by the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and UTEP's acceptable-use policy. A recording of class sessions will be kept and stored by UTEP, in accordance with FERPA and UTEP

policies. Your instructor will not share the recordings of your class activities outside of course participants, which include your fellow students, teaching assistants, or graduate assistants, and any guest faculty or community-based learning partners with whom we may engage during a class session. You **may not share recordings outside of this course**. Doing so may result in disciplinary action.

PLAGIARISM DETECTING SOFTWARE

Some of your course work and assessments may be submitted to SafeAssign, a plagiarism detecting software. SafeAssign is used to review assignment submissions for originality and will help you learn how to properly attribute sources rather than paraphrase.

COPYRIGHT STATEMENT FOR COURSE MATERIALS

All materials used in this course are protected by copyright law. The course materials are only for the use of students currently enrolled on this course and only for the purpose of this course. They may not be further disseminated.

COURSE RESOURCES: WHERE YOU CAN GO FOR ASSISTANCE

UTEP provides a variety of student services and support:

Technology Resources

- [Help Desk](#): Students experiencing technological challenges (email, Blackboard, software, etc.) can submit a ticket to the UTEP Helpdesk for assistance. Contact the Helpdesk via phone, email, chat, website, or in person if on campus.

Academic Resources

- [UTEP Library](#): Access a wide range of resources including online full-text access to thousands of journals and eBooks plus reference service and librarian assistance for enrolled students.
- [University Writing Center \(UWC\)](#): Submit papers here for assistance with writing style and formatting, ask a tutor for help and explore other writing resources.
- [Math Tutoring Center \(MaRCS\)](#): Ask a tutor for help and explore other available math resources.
- [History Tutoring Center \(HTC\)](#): Receive assistance with writing history papers, get help from a tutor and explore other history resources.
- [RefWorks](#): A bibliographic citation tool; check out the RefWorks tutorial and Fact Sheet and Quick-Start Guide.

Individual Resources

- [Military Student Success Center](#): Assists personnel in any branch of service to reach their educational goals.
- [Center for Accommodations and Support Services](#): Assists students with ADA-related accommodations for coursework, housing, and internships.
- [Counseling and Psychological Services](#): Provides a variety of counseling services including individual, couples, and group sessions as well as career and disability assessments.

COURSE OUTLINE, SCHEDULE, AND ASSIGNMENTS

The course syllabus provides a general plan for the course and is subject to change if necessary.

We might occasionally have online activities or meetings to supplement the class meetings.

Readings with * indicate that they are available on the Blackboard

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| Week 1
(Aug 25/27) | COURSE INTRODUCTION; PUBLIC POLICY
Read: Birkland, Chapter 1 |
| Week 2
(Sep 3) | POLICY PROCESS AND POLICY ENVIRONMENTS
Read: Birkland, Chapter 2

*NOTE: <u>Sep 1</u> NO CLASS (Labor Day) |
| Week 3
(Sep 8/9) | THE CONTEXT OF PUBLIC POLICY MAKING.
OFFICIAL POLICY ACTORS
Read: Birkland, Chapter 3 (<u>p.92-99 only</u>) and Chapter 4

*NOTE: <u>Sep 10</u> Census Day |
| Week 4
(Sep 15/17) | OFFICIAL AND UNOFFICIAL POLICY ACTORS
Read: Birkland, Chapter 4 and 5 |
| Week 5
(Sep 22/24) | POLICY AGENDA SETTING
Read: Birkland, Chapter 6 |
| Week 6
(Sep 29/Oct 1) | POLICY TYPES
Read: Birkland, Chapter 7
Policy Debate #1: Elite vs. Citizen (Oct 1) |
| Week 7
(Oct 6/8) | POLICY DECISION MAKING – POLICY ANALYSIS
Reading: Birkland, Chapter 8 |
| Week 8
(Oct 13/15) | MIDTERM
<u>In-Class Midterm</u> |
| Week 9
(Oct 20/22) | POLICY DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION
Reading: Birkland, Chapter 9 (p.307-308; 324-326; 333-337) and 10
Policy Debate #2: Rational vs. Incremental Decision-making (Oct 22)

*NOTE: <u>Oct 31</u> Drop/Withdrawal Deadline |

Week 11
(Oct 27/29)

**OVERVIEW: UNDERSTANDING AND COMPARING
POLICY PROCESS THEORIES; MULTIPLE STREAM FRAMEWORK**

Reading: Birkland, Chapter 11 (p.374-376; 382-388)

*Cairney, P., & Heikkila, T. (2023). How Should We Compare Theories of the Policy Process?. In Theories of the Policy Process.(pp. 292-311).

*Case Study: Policing Reform

Week 12
(Nov 3/5)

PUNCTUATED EQUILIBRIUM THEORY

Reading: Birkland, Chapter 11 (p.392-395)

*Amri, M. M., & Drummond, D. (2021). Punctuating the equilibrium: an application policy theory to COVID-19. Policy Design and Practice, 4(1), 33-43.

[Policy Debate #3: Top-down vs. Bottom-up \(Nov 3\)](#)

Week 13
(Nov 10/12)

ADVOCACY COALITION FRAMEWORK

Reading: Birkland, Chapter 11 (p.388-392)

*Case Study: Erik Hysing & Jan Olsson (2008) Contextualizing the Advocacy Coalition Framework: theorizing change in Swedish forest policy, Environmental Politics, 17:5, 730-748.

Week 14
(Nov 17/19)

NARRATIVE POLICY FRAMEWORK

Reading: Birkland, Chapter 11 (p. 400-405)

*Merry, M. K. (2022). Trump's tweets as policy narratives: Constructing the immigration issue via social media. Politics & Policy, 50(4), 752-772.

*Case study: Ertas, N. (2015). Policy narratives and public opinion concerning charter schools. Politics & Policy, 43(3), 426-451.

[Policy Debate #4: Policy process theories \(Nov 19\)](#)

Week 15
(Nov 24/26)

POLICY FEEDBACK THEORY

Reading:

*Mettler, S. and Welch, E. 2004. "Civic Generation: Policy Feedback Effects of the GI Bill on Political Involvement over the Life Course." British Journal of Political Science, 34, 3, 497-518.

Case Study: Pulled Over: Policing and Citizenship (video)

Week 16
(Dec 1/3)

POLICY PAPER PRESENTATIONS
Final Paper Due Dec 6 (Sat) 11:59 PM

Online Final Exam: Dec 8