The Policymaking Process

Course Information
PSCI 4370
The Policymaking Process

Fall 2026
Mondays 6:30-9:30 PM

Faculty Contact Information

Lecturer	**Professor Virginia Huth, MPP**
Email Address	Virginia.Huth@UTDallas.edu
Office hours:	By appointment
Lecturer	**Professor John Piazza, JD**
Email Address:	John.Piazza@UTDallas.edu
Office hours:	By appointment
Lecturer	**Professor William Shute, JD**
Email Address:	William.Shute@UTDallas.edu
Office hours:	By appointment
Instructor of record:	**Derek O'Leary, Ph.D.**
Email Address:	Derek.O'Leary@UTDallas.edu
Office hours:	Before class and by appointment

We enthusiastically encourage you to meet with the faculty in office hours throughout the semester. Every instructor is available to meet by appointment, either individually or with a group of students, to discuss the course as well as your academic and career development. Please reach out to faculty by email to schedule a time to meet virtually or in-person.

Note: Please use only your University of Texas at Dallas account to email Archer Center faculty.

Course Description

Course overview: This course introduces you to the federal policymaking process. Over the span of the semester, you and your policy group will work closely with each of the three instructors to examine how policy is influenced, debated, formulated, and implemented. Through a series of modules focused on advocacy, Congress, and the executive branch, you will expand your knowledge of the federal policymaking process and policy career pathways while developing a range of skills through practical simulations.

Course format: Throughout the semester, you will be in a policy group that focuses on one policy area: Healthcare and Public Health, Justice System, or Science and Technology. Your policy group will proceed through a series of three modules, each focused on a different component of the policymaking process: advocacy, Congress, and executive rulemaking. During each of these four-week modules, you policy group will work directly with the instructor who oversees that module.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the semester, you will be able to:

- Explain the structure and dynamics of the federal policymaking process
- Demonstrate in-depth knowledge and articulate nuanced analysis of topics within a significant policy area
- Apply critical thinking and analytical skills to crafting effective written and verbal communication about federal policy
- Understand how to pursue career pathways in federal policymaking

Policy Groups:

Working Group	Policy Area	Topics by Module	
1	Science and Technology	*Advocacy*	Federal data center policy
		Congress	PL 117-167, Combating Sexual Harassment in Science Act (included within the CHIPS and Science Act)
		Executive	FAA proposed rule, "Remote Identification of Unmanned Aircraft Systems"
2	Healthcare and Public Health	*Advocacy*	Health inequity
		Congress	PL 117-105, Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act
		Executive	Proposed rulemaking on "Minimum Care Standards at Long Term Care Facilities"
3	Justice System	*Advocacy*	Non-consensual intimate imagery
		Congress	Title X of the Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization Act of 2022, Improving Conditions for Women in Federal Custody, PL 117-103

		Executive	2013 Housing rule on "Disparate Impact Standards"

Calendar of Classes and Assignments

All classes meet on Monday from 6:30 to 9:30 PM at the Archer Center. The readings and other materials for each session are posted to the class eLearning site.

SESSION	DATE	READING	ASSIGNMENT
Introductory session	August 25, 10 to 11 PM at Kluge Center	None	None

Advocacy
Professor Shute

SESSION	JUSTICE	HEALTH	TECH	READING	ASSIGNMENT
Session 1: The Concept of Advocacy	8/31	10/5	11/9	John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, Chapter 4 excerpt (2003).	Complete reading before class.
Session 2	9/14	10/19	11/16	Justice: Jasmine Mithani, *The Take It Down Act is in full effect. What is it and how do you use it?* The 19thNews, May 19, 2025. Jasmine Mithani, *Senate moves to let victims of sexually explicit deepfakes sue for*	Complete reading before class.

				damages, The 19thNews, January 13, 2026. Health: *The Root Causes of Health Inequity* Communities in Action: Pathways to Health Equity, the National Library of Medicine. Baciu A, Negussie Y, Geller A, et al., editors. Jan 11, 2017. Tech: Bridges, Lauren E., *The State of Data Center Policy in the United* States, Tech Policy, June 2, 2026.	
Session : Evaluating the Efficacy of Advocacy	9/21	10/26	11/23	"Using the Composite Logic Model To Articulate an Advocacy Strategy or Theory of Change"	Complete reading before class.
Session : Developing an Advocacy Strategy	9/28	11/2		Thomas F. Sheridan, *Helping the Good Do Better: How a White Hat Lobbyist*	Complete reading before class. Prepare for oral presentation of draft advocacy

				Advocates for Social Change (2019). Justice: Chapter 4 Health: Chapter 1 Tech: Chapter 1	strategy **Simulation:** Deliver oral presentation of Advocacy Strategy Plan, including identification of potential obstacles and other considerations, and craft advocacy strategy memo**.** **Due Sunday after final class**: Written advocacy strategy memo

Congress
Professor Piazza

SESSION	TECH	JUSTICE	HEALTH	READING	ASSIGNMENT
Session 1: The Legislative Process	8/31	10/5	11/9	The Legislative Process (Congress.gov). ~ 30 minutes. "Introduction to the Legislative Process in the U.S. Congress" (CRS, 2025). ~45 minutes.	Complete reading before class.
Session 2: Committees and Members of Congress	Tech: 9/14	Justice: 10/19	Health: 11/16	Read: "Committee Types and Roles" (CRS, 2025). ~15	Complete reading before class, learn about your member persona, and examine the legislation.

				minutes. Review "Federal Legislative History: A Research Guide for Congressional Staff" (CRS). ~ 30 minutes. Read your policy group's assigned legislation.	**Due Sunday before class:** Submit Member background research on Canvas.
Session 3: Committee Process	Tech: 9/21	Justice: 10/26	Health: 11/23	"The Committee Markup Process in the House of Representatives" (CRS). ~60 minutes.	
Session 4: Markup	Tech: 9/28	Justice: 11/2			**Due Friday before final class**: Submit mark-up hearing memo and prepare for simulation. **Simulation:** As your member persona on a congressional committee, you will write a markup memo and participate with your caucus in the markup of a piece of legislation.

Executive
Professor Huth

SESSION	HEALTH	TECH	JUSTICE	READING	ASSIGNMENT
Session 1: Introduction to Federal Rulemaking	8/31	10/5	11/9	Selections from "The Federal Rulemaking Process: An Overview" (CRS, 2013). ~60 minutes. "Regulation: A Primer," The Mercatus Center (2012), pgs. 1-9. ~15 minutes. Prof. Huth's Glossary of Key Federal Rulemaking Terms. *Optional resources:* "An Overview of Federal Regulations and the Rulemaking Process" (CRS, 2021). ~10 minutes.	Complete reading before class.
Session 2: Notice and Comment	9/14	10/19	11/16	"The End of Chevron Deference," American Bar Association, (August 2024). ~10 minutes.	Complete reading before class. Justice policy group: **Public Comment assignment due** Sunday before

				Rulemaking case brief for your policy group.	session 2.
Session 3: Policy analysis	9/21	10/26	11/23	Brief on comparative policy approach for your policy group.	<u>Health and Tech policy groups:</u> **Public Comment assignment due** Sunday before session 3. <u>Justice:</u> **Submit policy memorandum** Sunday before session 3.
Session 4: Rulemaking	9/28	11/2			<u>Health and Tech policy groups</u>: **Submit policy memorandum** by Sunday before session 4.

Assignments

For each module, you will receive a grade out of 30 points. This is based on 1) your preparation and engagement in those sessions and 2) completion of the simulation and deliverable for that module. Please consult the detailed rubric for each module in Canvas. Based on your policy group, the due dates for each module will vary.

For each assignment, your instructor will communicate with you about effective and

permissible uses (if any) of AI tools. Any other use of AI tools to complete any aspect of your assignments is not permitted.

In addition, you will receive 5 points for the completion of your start-of-semester self-assessment and 5 points for your end-of-semester self-assessment. You must complete these on time to receive credit.

Attendance policy:

We expect you to arrive on time and ready to participate fully in class. Excused absences are limited generally to personal illness, an emergency related to an immediate family member, or a religious holiday. If you are unable to attend class or may be delayed due to circumstances beyond your control, please inform Dr. O'Leary and your instructor for that session as soon as possible prior to class. If you miss class for an excused absence, it is your responsibility to promptly contact your instructor for that module and ask how you can catch up.

Your internship or other extracurricular events (such as travel and family visits) are not considered excuses to miss class. You will not be allowed to make up unexcused absences. Each unexcused absence will reduce your final course grade by 5 points (e.g. if you earn a 94 but have one unexcused absence, you will receive an 89; if you have two unexcused absences, an 84; and so on).

Grading Policy

Total points	Requirement
5 points	Start-of-semester self-assessment due Sunday, September 6
30 points	Advocacy organization simulation (20) and weekly engagement (10)
30 points	Congressional committee simulation (20) and weekly engagement (10)
30 points	Executive rulemaking simulation (20) and weekly engagement (10)
5 points	End-of-semester self-assessment due Sunday, November 29
100 points	

Your total points correspond to this grading scale:

A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D+	67-69

D	64-66
D-	60-63
F	< 60

Your lecturer will assess your work and report grades to Dr. O'Leary, who then reports grades through UTD and to your individual campus. Your campus will convert your final grade to their grading scale, if different from the scale at UTD.

Midterm grades will be posted by October 17**.** Final grades will be reported to your home UT System institution by December 17**,** and posted in accordance with their respective grade submission deadlines.

Course Policies

Classroom Citizenship

All students and faculty must adhere to the Guiding Principles for Archer Fellows.

1. Archer Fellows represent not only themselves, but their home institutions, the Archer Center, the UT System, and the State of Texas.

2. The Archer Center expects all Archer Fellows to abide by the highest standards of conduct, demonstrating the utmost integrity, character, respect, and professionalism.

3. The Archer Center is committed to ensuring an enriching cohort and learning environment by selecting students with varying interests, fields of study, and political perspectives.

4. The Archer Center is committed to bringing together students who value constructive and respectful dialogue among individuals and groups with varying ideas.

5. Archer Fellows are expected to respect varying political, personal, and religious beliefs within the cohort and throughout the program.

6. As an educational program, the Archer Center sees all aspects of the Archer Fellowship experience as an opportunity for learning, from the application and internship search process to the academic, networking, professional, and fellowship opportunities provided throughout the semester.

7. The Archer Center and Archer Fellows have a shared commitment to open, honest, and timely communication.

Class Recordings

Unless the AccessAbility Resource Center has approved the student to record the instruction, students are expressly prohibited from recording any part of this course. Recordings may not be published, reproduced, or shared with those not in the class, or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved AccessAbility Resource Center accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the

Student Code of Conduct.

Reporting Sexual Misconduct and Sharing Confidential Information

Students considering sharing personal information in email or in person should be aware that all University staff, faculty, teaching assistants/associates, and graduate/research assistants are required by UT Dallas policy to report information about sexual misconduct to the UT Dallas Title IX Coordinator. Per university policy, Sexual Misconduct Policy - UTDBP3102, faculty have been informed that they must identify the student to the UT Dallas Title IX Coordinator. Students who wish to have confidential discussions of incidents related to sexual harassment or sexual misconduct should contact the following confidential resources, including, but not limited to:

1. the Student Counseling Center (972-883-2575 or the 24/7 Crisis Hotline at 972-UTD-TALK or 972-883-8255),
2. a health care provider in the Student Health Center (972-883-2747),
3. a clergyperson (or other legally recognized religious advisor) of their choice, or
4. an off-campus resource (e.g., a rape crisis center, doctor, psychologist).

Students who are sexually assaulted, harassed, or are victims of sexual misconduct, domestic violence, or stalking, are encouraged to directly report these incidents to the Title IX Coordinator by making a report online or by calling the Title IX Coordinator at 972-883-2306. Students may also contact the UTD Police Department (UTDPD) for emergency assistance; criminal reporting and investigation; information or assistance regarding protective orders or forensic sexual assault exams; or to request a police escort. In case of emergency, call 911. For non-emergency situations, students can reach the UT Dallas Police Department by calling 972-883-2222. For more information about available support and resources, students can visit the Office of Institutional Compliance (Support Services & Resources) webpage.

Pregnancy and Parenting

UT Dallas is committed to providing support and resources for pregnant and parenting students, faculty, and staff in accordance with Title IX, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Texas Education Code Section 51.982, and other applicable federal and state laws. Pregnant and parenting students are encouraged to complete the Pregnant and Parenting Self-Identification Form located on the Office of Institutional Compliance's website. Submitting this form allows for a coordinated University effort to help facilitate support for pregnant and parenting students, such as early registration for parenting students and accommodations for pregnant students. For more information about the services and resources available to pregnant and parenting students, visit the Pregnant & Parenting Resources page and the Student Pregnancy and Parenting Nondiscrimination Policy.

Nondiscrimination

UT Dallas prohibits all forms of discrimination (including harassment) based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, national origin, disability, genetic information, or veteran status. UT Dallas further prohibits all forms of sex-based discrimination (including sex-based harassment). Students who believe they have been discriminated against or harassed in violation of University policy, or who believe that someone else has been discriminated against or harassed, are encouraged to directly report these incidents to the Office of Institution Compliance by making a report online or by calling the

Office of Institution Compliance at 972-883-2306. For more information, see the University's Nondiscrimination Policy and Sexual Misconduct Policy. For additional information about available support and resources, see the Office of Institutional Compliance (Support Services & Resources) webpage.

Technical Support

If you experience any issues with your UT Dallas account, contact the UT Dallas Office of Information Technology Help Desk or call 972-883-2911.

UT Dallas provides eLearning technical support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week through UTD eLearning Helpdesk. The services include a toll-free telephone number, 1-866-588-3192, for immediate assistance, Educational Technology Services (eLearning) is available by email to request services. They also have an online chat service.

Student Conduct and Discipline

The University of Texas System Regents' Rule 50101 and UT Dallas have rules and regulations for the orderly and efficient conduct of their business. It is the responsibility of each student and each student organization to be knowledgeable about the rules and regulations which govern student conduct and activities. General information on student conduct and discipline is contained in the Student Complaints Resources within the online UT Dallas Undergraduate Catalog, and the Graduate Catalog.

UT Dallas administers student discipline within the procedures of recognized and established due process. Procedures are defined and described in the (Student Code of Conduct, UTDSP5003). Copies of these rules and regulations are available to students in the Office of Community Standards and Conduct, where staff members are available to assist students in interpreting the rules and regulations (SSB 4.400, 972-883-6330) and online at their webpage.

A student at the University neither loses their rights nor escapes the responsibilities of citizenship. He or she is expected to obey federal, state, and local laws as well as the Regents' Rules, university regulations, and administrative rules. Students are subject to discipline for violating its standards of conduct whether such conduct takes place on or off campus, or whether civil or criminal penalties are also imposed for such conduct.

Social Media Use

The Student Code of Conduct includes behaviors conducted via any digital platform. Students may not use any digital platform to seek or provide unauthorized assistance for any assignment done for academic credit. Students may not use any digital platform to impersonate or represent any person other than themselves. Please consult with your instructor regarding authorized assistance.

Academic Integrity

The faculty expects from its students a high-level of responsibility and academic honesty. Because the value of an academic degree depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done

by the student for that degree, it is imperative that a student demonstrates a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work. Additional information is provided within their website.

Academic Dishonesty: Academic dishonesty can occur in relation to any type of work submitted for academic credit or as a requirement for a class. It can include individual work or a group project. Academic dishonesty includes plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, and collaboration/collusion. In order to avoid academic dishonesty, it is important for students to fully understand the expectations of their professors. This is best accomplished through asking clarifying questions if an individual does not completely understand the requirements of an assignment.

Additional information related to academic dishonesty and tips on how to avoid dishonesty may be found on their website.

Military-Affiliated Students

At the University of Texas at Dallas, we are committed to supporting our military and veteran students and their spouses and dependents as they pursue their academic goals. Recognizing the unique challenges faced by those who have served, we strive to create a welcoming and supportive environment. Please contact your instructor if you are on active duty, called to serve, or if any aspect of your current or past military service, or your family situation, makes it challenging to meet the course requirements or affects your academic progress. Your instructor is committed to supporting you and will work with you to address any complications.

The Military and Veteran Center (MVC) offers a range of resources and referrals to campus and community partners, ensuring that our military and veteran students can access the assistance they need. Whether it is academic advising, financial aid, or personal support, the MVC is dedicated to helping our students succeed and thrive in their educational journey.

Student Grievance Procedures

Procedures for student grievances are found in the university policy UTDSP5005. In attempting to resolve any student grievance regarding disputes over grades, application of degree plan, graduation/degree program requirements, and thesis/and dissertation committee, adviser actions and/or decisions, evaluations, and/or other fulfillments of academic responsibility, it is the obligation of the student first to make a serious effort to resolve the matter with the instructor, supervisor, administrator, or committee with whom the grievance originated.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The University of Texas at Dallas is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. The syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. If you are seeking classroom accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (2008), you are required to register with the AccessAbility Resource Center (ARC), located in the Administration Building, Suite 2.224. They can be reached by email, calling 972-883-2098, or at their website. To receive academic accommodations for this class, please register and request services by completing the Request for Services form with the proper documentation and meeting with the Director of ARC at the beginning of the semester.

Religious Holy Days

UT Dallas will excuse a student from class or other required activities, including examinations and travel time, for the observance of a religious holy day for a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property tax under Section 11.20, of the *Texas Tax Code*.

Students are encouraged to notify the instructor or activity sponsor as soon as possible regarding the absence, preferably in advance of the assignment.

Excused students will be allowed to take missed exams or complete assignments within a reasonable time after the absence: a period equal to the length of the absence, up to a maximum of one week. A student who notifies the instructor and completes any missed exam or assignment may not be penalized for the absence. A student who fails to complete the exam or assignment within the prescribed period may receive a failing grade for that exam or assignment.

If a student or an instructor disagrees about the nature of the absence [i.e., for the purpose of observing a religious holy day] or if there is similar disagreement about whether the student has been given a reasonable time to complete any missed assignments or examinations, either the student or the instructor may request a ruling from the school's vice or associate dean, who serve as the President's designees for these rules. The vice or associate deans must take into account the legislative intent of *Texas Education Code* 51.911(b), and the student and instructor will abide by the decision of the vice or associate dean.

This information is also included in the online UT Dallas Undergraduate Catalog, and the Graduate Catalog.