

## Introduction to Public Policy

**Political Science 3351, Sec. 4, CRN 27023**; Spring I 2020: Jan. 20 to Mar. 6, 2020

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**Office Hours** via telephone TR 2:00-3:30 p.m. and contact via Blackboard email or discussion board anytime)

Public policy analysis covers wide, interdisciplinary attention to social problems and their solutions. It asks the questions: What is the problem? How can existing policies be improved to enhance their effectiveness in achieve goals? Among various alternatives, what should be done? Why, when, how, by whom, and with what costs and benefits? At all levels of government—**federal, state, and local**—officials make decisions about particular issues and problems such as health, economic development, transportation, education, and other areas. Note that our course is not a self-paced course.

The study of the public policy-making process is often divided into **stages: agenda-setting**, wherein the public is involved through lobbying and pressure; research to facilitate **choice among alternative policy options**, conducted in academia, think tanks, and other settings; policy **adoption**, in hidden to contentious spectacles; **implementation** (or the failure to implement, for intriguing political reasons); and **evaluation** to determine whether the policy is effective.

In this course, filled with practical analytic tools, we will read, discuss, write about and propose policy solutions. The first half of the course focuses on concepts and tools, while the second half, on particular policy issues. Throughout, the instructor will sprinkle examples and cases in order for students to apply concepts and tools to policy issues. Many of these examples and cases are controversial and contentious, likely to stimulate disagreement and civil, constructive dialogue in group reflections and discussions with the instructor. There is no ‘right’ or ‘correct point of view’. Rather, discussion should be grounded in principles, documentation, and information.

### **Book/Reading Materials**

Michael Kraft and Scott Furlong, (K&F), Public Policy: Politics, Analysis, and Alternatives, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, 2018. ISBN: 978-1-5063-5815-4

The instructor encourages students to subscribe to the New York Times (free), and read it DAILY, combing the email online edition for content on national public policy issues. Students should also read the Texas Tribune and local news for public policy content. For El Paso students, the newspaper options include the El Paso Times, El Paso Inc (weekly), and Diario de El Paso. Students living elsewhere should identify local media to

read for public policy content. Occasionally, the instructor will pose questions in your discussion groups about significant public policy issues in the media.

### **Evaluation Criteria:**

**Note: our course is not self-paced—do not work ahead of the current week’s work, except for the Public Meeting Paper**

**Exams:** Two examinations, (midterm and final), each worth 100 pts., for a total of **200 pts.** in the course, in weeks 4 and 7. Note: **It is strongly recommended that a landline be used** in taking quizzes and exams; do not use a wireless connection, since it is less stable in Blackboard.

**Quizzes:** Unit quizzes based on reading, lectures, and links/videos therein. There are 12 quizzes worth various amounts, for a total of **187 pts.** in the course.

**Written Projects/Public Meeting Paper:** Two Short Projects and a Public Meeting Paper, each worth 50 pts., for a total of **150 pts.** in the course.

**Total Course Pts.: 537 pts.**

### **UTEP Edge Experience**

This is a UTEP EDGE experience where students acquire new skills and research and observe public officials deciding public policy. The three-credit public policy course is designed for well-prepared students to gain insight into the public policy process. Well-prepared students will not only have a good GPA, but also working knowledge of government in action and of contemporary news about public affairs via researching contemporary public policy issues and observing governmental entities legislating public policy. Please see the UTEP EDGE website: <https://www.utep.edu/edge/>.

**The Edge Experiences** for the assignments below (Short Projects/Public Meeting Paper) will include:

1. Research and Scholarly Activities via the two Short Projects and the Public Meeting paper
2. Community Engagement via the Public Meeting attendance
3. Learning Community via the Group Discussion Boards used for the two Short Projects

**The Edge Advantages** for the assignments below (Short Projects/Public Meeting Paper) will include:

1. Communication via the two Short Projects and the Public Meeting paper
2. Critical Thinking via the two Short Projects and the Public Meeting paper
3. Confidence via the Public Meeting attendance
4. Problem Solving via the two Short Projects

5. Teamwork via the group Discussion Board wherein short paper drafts are shared with your group and feedback is provided and received to assist in preparing the final drafts.

### **Short Projects/Public Meeting Paper:**

#### **Short Projects**

Two short projects, each with a written paper, each project/paper is worth 50 pts., for a total of **100 pts.** in the course, based on policy research and application of course materials. See instructions on the course schedule. **NOTE** the two due dates for **EACH** short paper draft and final version: drafts on Saturdays at 11:30 pm Mountain Standard (for your groups discussions) and on Mondays at 11:30 pm Mountain Standard Time (for the final draft via the appropriate Learning Module Unit to your instructor for a grade—do not sent the final drafts via emails of a discussion board) in weeks 2 and 3. Save your paper in **.pdf format** and **give a word count**.

The first short project is Short Paper 1: After re-reading the lecture, answer the policy question about what should be done about teen pregnancies. Be sure to research and read multiple sources, including the websites in the lecture and the policy journal listings in the text. Provide 750 or more words and note the number of words at the end of the essay. Save your file as in .pdf format and include two or more authoritative sources besides your textbook.

The second short project is Short Paper 2: After re-reading the lecture and textbook, discuss how would you go about applying a cost-benefit analysis for the policy question regarding a suggestion that college tuition and textbooks should be fully subsidized by the federal government, beginning August 15 of next year? What steps would you go through and what kinds of data would you need to conduct such an analysis? This benefit would apply to undergraduate students only, and may be used for a total of four years per student. Be sure to research and read multiple sources, including any relevant websites and/or policy journal listings in the lecture, text, and any other websites you can find regarding constructing a costs-benefit analysis; you may also use sources that address funding college education. Then apply this information to the issue of government subsidizing college education. Provide 750 or more words and note the number of words at the end of the essay. Save your file as in .pdf format and include two or more authoritative sources besides your textbook.

#### **Public Meeting Paper**

The best way to understand democracy and public-policy making is to see our government in action. Each student is required to attend a public meeting of a city council; school board, or county commission. A regular meeting in which voting is conducted or policy is debated is preferred. If you are taking this course and living outside of the United States, an equivalent public meeting in the country in which you are living suffices. However, if you live within driving distance of the United States, attend a

meeting in the United States. Seeing a public speaker give a presentation is not a public meeting appropriate for this course.

Each student is to submit a four-page (no more, no less), typed report with an additional page as a cover sheet (listing the course, student name, date, and “Public Meeting Paper”). The four-page paper should detail the time and place of the meeting, how long you were there (at least one hour), who spoke, what the issues were, how the issues were resolved, and what your impressions of the meeting were.

Please use MS Word’s default margins, double space your paper with at least three paragraphs per page, use page numbers (but not for the cover sheet), and use 12-point Times New Roman font. Please staple your paper, and do not place the paper into a protective cover. This assignment is worth **50 points**. Please research and select which meeting you will attend during the first week of class, since meetings are not conducted each week. The public meeting paper is due at the beginning of the final week of class, but **begin this assignment the first week of class**. Save your paper in **.pdf format** and **give a word count**.

**The Course Grading Scale** is based on **537 total course points** (200 for exams, 187 for quizzes, and 150 for short projects/public meeting paper), is as follows for your semester course grade (there is no fractional grading):

A = 481-537 points

B = 427-480 points

C = 374-426 points

D = 319-373 points

F = 0-318 points

**Group Discussions:** In groups, students have the opportunity to build **social capital** (relationships of trust to accomplish goals). Through group discussion, you and your colleagues discuss chapter material and offer feedback on short paper drafts, both of which have the potential to enhance learning and strengthen grades! In the overall final grade, in which most students will fall in the 90s (As), 80s (Bs), and 70s (Cs), the instructor will add or deduct percentage points to the final grade percentage for the quality of participation in a range of [-1% to +1%]. In other words, high-quality intensive participation could bring an 89% up to 90% (or down to 88%). Average participation will have a neutral effect of a 0% change to the final grade percentage. This is an example of a course **policy, using the incentives and penalties approach**.

Your gradebook contains a column, “Final Grade.” This is expressed as a percentage between 0% and 100%. This column is your course grade for all short papers, exams, and quizzes. It does not take into consideration your participation in the group discussions based on providing and using feedback regarding short paper drafts.

Your gradebook then contains a column, “Participation % Adjustment.” Here, you will receive a final grade adjustment between -1% (little or no participation) and +1% (perfect

participation) for your participation in the group discussions regarding the short paper drafts. A 0% adjustment is given for satisfactory participation in the group discussions.

Your gradebook then contains a column, “Adjusted Final Grade.” This is your “Final Grade” column percentage that is then adjusted up or down by the “Participation % Adjustment” column. For example, if your Final Grade was 90% and the Participation Adjustment was -1%, your Adjusted Final Grade would be 89% (90% minus 1% equals 89%), and you would receive a grade of “B” for the course.

Most importantly, group participation will enhance your learning and performance in your short papers and understanding of the lectures and readings. Besides regular dialogue, these specific tasks include (1) timely peer review of their colleagues’ paper drafts and (2) taking turns within your group triggering discussion based the lecturers and on one or more of the discussion questions at the end of each chapter in the Kraft and Furlong text AND from the lecture.

Forgive the mechanical visual from Clip Art, but the instructor views the groups like gears that work together, with students interacting as much with each other as with instructors. Multiple eyes and minds enhance learning!

PLEASE learn how to navigate the Group Discussion ASAP, within two days of enrolling in this class (See FAQs in the sidebar.) Check what group you have been assigned to and get to know each other! Consider the group names—all ‘players’ in the policy system—and what those names MEAN in terms in terms of the old adage: ‘where you stand depends on where you sit.’ Group names: Analysts, Bureaucrats, Critics, Political Appointees, Wonks (a name once given to former Vice President Al Gore).

### **Writing Issues**

This is a writing-intensive course. Students should be sure to identify, cite, and credit credible sources after quotes (5 or more words together), numbers, unique arguments, and other contentious items not from their own minds and experience in parentheses, with the year and page number (referenced to a bibliography at the end of the writing). Possible plagiarism will be checked, reported, and penalized (see UTEP website). Online courses contain software to identify the extent to which students’ writing matches other material.

Students’ writing will be graded for content, but spelling and grammar errors will result in point deductions. Always watch for feedback. Students can improve their writing skills should consult the Online Writing Lab at Purdue University (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu>) (free).

**Course Outcomes:** By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Define problems, their causes and consistent solutions and political
- Strategies to achieve those solutions

- Acquire knowledge about different public policies, such as economic, education, health, environment/energy, and homeland security
- Understand and explain the stages of the policy-making process
- Map organizations, policy entrepreneurs, and leaders in the agenda-setting stage
- Identify key stakeholders and decision-makers in the policy adoption stage
- Diagnose bureaucratic and budgetary problems in the implementation stage
- Analyze policy alternatives in multiple content areas
- Develop research strategies for policy evaluation
- Identify their representatives at the local, state, and federal levels and their policy preferences
- Identify credible policy sources for analysis in government, academic journals, and think-tanks

WARNING!

### **Proceed with Caution....**

This is a labor-intensive course that packs 16 weeks of course material into only 7 weeks. A tremendous amount of time is necessary to complete this course successfully. Consider this: time commitments for 16-week courses are estimated at 3 contact hours in the classroom, plus 2-3 hours preparation/study/writing for each hour of classroom time outside the classroom per week, totaling 9-12 hours weekly. So, double that for this concentrated course! (At least 18 hours!) Of course, there is NO driving or parking time investment, and...if you pass (quite likely if you complete the assignments), you will move three credits toward graduation. In addition, this will be an interesting course, and you will acquire skills for your major, concentration, future professional work, and life.

### **Being Successful in an Online Class and Computer Requirements**

Online learning is not a spectator sport. It is everyone's responsibility to participate as fully as they can so everyone can get the most from the experience. Here are some simple rules to follow to ensure your participation and engagement in the learning process:

- Ask questions: If you don't know the answer, someone else will. The discussion board is the area for asking questions related to content OR any problems (related to the class) you are having. Make sure that you have clearly indicated the subject of your message.
- Reach out to others: Offer a fact, article, link, or other item that can help others learn something you can share.
- Be appropriate: The online classroom is not the place for insulting or insensitive comments, attacks, or venting. Inappropriate behavior can be subject to disciplinary action, as well.
- Be diplomatic: When sending messages on emotionally charged topics, I recommend that you write the message and then walk away for at least an hour before re-reading the message and then sending it. Re-reading emotionally

charged messages ensures that they are constructive instead of destructive. Think of the person at the other end.

- Stay focused: Stay on topic to increase the efficiency of your learning.

### **Computer Requirements**

You will need the following software on your computers to efficiently work in this course. In some cases, your computer may already have some of these programs installed.

- Adobe Acrobat Reader. You can get the program by going to <http://www.adobe.com/> and then clicking on the icon on the center of the screen which says “Get Adobe Reader”. Follow instructions to install the reader.
- Adobe Flash Player. You can get the player by going to <http://www.adobe.com/> and then clicking on “Get Adobe Flash Player”. Follow instructions to install the player.
- Apple QuickTime Player. You can get this player by going to <http://www.apple.com/> . Once there, click on the “Downloads” tab on the top of the page and then click on QuickTime “Download” and follow instructions.
- Microsoft Office. I recommend buying this if you do not have any word processing software or presentation software.
- Email tool with file attachment capability.

### **Disabled Student Statement and Technical Support**

In Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, if a student needs an accommodation then the Office of Disabled Student Services located at UTEP need to be contacted. If you have a condition, which may affect your ability to perform successfully in this course, you are encouraged to discuss this in confidence with the instructor and/or the director of the Disabled Student Services. You may call 915.747.5148 for general information about the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the rights that you have as a UTEP student with a disability. You also can visit the DSSO website at [www.utep.edu/dsso](http://www.utep.edu/dsso) or the DSSO office in Room 108 East Union Building.

Individuals with disabilities have the right to equal access and opportunity. It is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor and The Disabled Student Services Office at The University of Texas at El Paso.

### **Technical Support**

The University of Texas at El Paso offers complete technical information and help desk support at: <http://issweb.utep.edu/techsupport/>.

**Makeups** (applies to making up exams and submitting assignments or discussions late)

Absent documented emergencies and instructor approval, there are no makeups for the

exams, assignments, or discussions.

If a student has a truly exceptional circumstance or an “authorized absence,” a makeup exam, paper submission, or discussion submission may be possible, at the instructor’s discretion, provided the student notifies the instructor by email or in person before the relevant due date, makes up the work on the first day in which he or she is physically able, and the reason for the late submission is documented in writing, scanned, and emailed to the instructor:

1. By the student in the event of the death of a parent, spouse, sibling, grandparent, or child, including the obituary.
2. By a doctor in the event of a medical emergency or hospitalization. Illnesses resulting in a request to submit late work or take a makeup exam not accompanied by a visit to the doctor or hospital would not be sufficient for a makeup opportunity. The dates of the medical disability must be included in the doctor’s note.
3. By the appropriate university representative in the event of a university-sponsored activity.
4. By the student in the event of an instructor-approved truly exceptional, unpreventable, emergency.

Note: Job, travel, work conflicts, providing transportation for others, computer hardware or software problems, ISP problems, or caring for others are not exceptional circumstances that would allow a makeup exam, late paper submission, etc.

Any approved makeup exam is to be taken the first day the student returns to class. In the event of an approved late assignment or discussion, it is to be submitted the first day the student returns to class. At that time, documentation regarding the absence must be provided to the instructor via hard copy or scanned email attachment in order to take, in approved, an exam or submit an assignment or discussion late.

Absent instructor prior approval, **do not email** discussions, assignments, short papers, quizzes or examinations to the instructor. Such emailed items are neither read nor graded.

**Examples of absences in which a makeup may be possible:**

Attending a documented funeral of a family member;  
Visiting a doctor or hospital in the event of a medical emergency or hospitalization involving the student and documentation is provided;  
Attending a mandatory university-sponsored activity and documentation is provided by the sponsor; and  
Extraordinary circumstances beyond a student’s control if documented and approved by the instructor.



**Examples of absences in which a makeup will not be possible:**

Failure to provide documentation for an authorized makeup;  
Missing class to fulfill a work, travel, moving, or job commitment—even an unexpected one;  
Missing class to transport, supervise, visit, or care for someone, including family members;  
Missing class due to a failure of transportation;  
Missing class for a permissible reason and failing to provide documentation upon returning to class; and  
Computer hardware, software or ISP problems.

**Extra Credit:** None.

**Caveat:** When you use a computer (UTEP or another), be aware of any time-outs limits for users BEFORE you use the computer for any quizzes or exams. Make sure you will have the time you need to complete the quiz or exam. Do not use a wireless computer. Do not sign on as a “guest,” but use your name. Use Chrome or Firefox as your browser.

The instructor reserves the right to change the syllabus and schedule as needed.