

# Syllabus for The Public Policy Process

Political Science 3351, Sec. 2, CRN 13668; Fall 2023: August 28 to December 15, 2023

**Instructor:** William Corbett, MPA, J.D.

**Office Hours:** Monday 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. and by appointment, Benedict Hall, #106

**Email:** wjcorbett@utep.edu but **use the Blackboard email function, not UTEP email**

**Telephone:** (575) 522-1372 Mon. to Fri. 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. w/voicemail, no text messaging

**Course Structure:** This is a 100% online, asynchronous course. We do not meet for class.

**Office Hours** Live in Benedict Hall, Room 106, on Mondays from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Do not use UTEP's email; instead, you are also encouraged to contact me via Blackboard email or Blackboard's discussion board at any time. You may telephone me from Mon. to Fri. from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., give you name, course and section number and repeat your telephone number slowly twice. There is no provision for text messaging. I will endeavor to get back to you the next business day.

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 achieving 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.

**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

### **Book/Reading Materials**

Michael Kraft and Scott Furlong, (K&F), Public Policy: Politics, Analysis, and Alternatives, 7<sup>th</sup> edition (2021). ISBN: 978-1-544374611

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 may pose questions in your discussion groups about significant public policy issues in the media.

### **COVID-19 PRECAUTION STATEMENT**

Please stay home if you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. The Student Health Center can provide COVID-19 testing.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that people in areas of substantial or high COVID-19 transmission wear face masks when indoors in groups of people. The best way that Miners can take care of Miners is to get the vaccine. If you still need the vaccine, it is widely available in the El Paso area. For more information about the current rates, testing, and vaccinations, please visit [epstrong.org](http://epstrong.org).

### **COVID-19 Accommodations**

Note that our class is a 100% online asynchronous class delivered via Blackboard—we will not meet face-to-face or be on campus for our class. You need medical documentation to support a makeup request.

### **Evaluation Criteria:**

**Note: our course is not self-paced—do not work ahead of the current week’s work, except for the two written projects; begin the written project right away.**

**Exams:** Two examinations, (midterm and final), each worth 100 pts., for a total of **200 pts.** in the course. 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 are 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:** There are two written projects, each worth 75 pts., for a total of **150 pts.** in the course. They are the Public Policy Research Project and the Experiential Research Project.

**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 research project below will include:

1. Research and Scholarly Activities via the Public Policy Research Project and the Experiential Research Project.
2. Community Engagement via the public meeting attendance for the Experiential Research Project.
3. Learning Community via the Group Discussion Boards used for the Public Policy Research Project.

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

1. Communication via the Public Policy Research Project.
2. Critical Thinking via the Public Policy Research Project and the Experiential Research Project.
3. Confidence via the Experiential Research Project.
4. Problem Solving via the Public Policy Research Project and the Experiential Research Project.
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 for the Public Policy Research Project.

### **Public Policy Research Project**

Your Public Policy Research Project is worth 75 points, based on policy research and application of course materials. See the due dates on the course schedule. NOTE: there are two due dates for this project—one for the draft and one for the final version: drafts are due to be posted in your discussion group on a Saturday at 11:30 pm Mountain Standard (for your groups discussions) and the final versions are due on a Monday at 11:30 pm Mountain Standard Time (submit the final draft via the appropriate Learning Module Unit to your instructor for a grade—do not send the final draft via emails or a discussion board). Save your paper in **.pdf format, give a word count at the end**, MS Word’s default margins, page #s, and double spacing with at least 3 paragraphs per page.

Directions: After re-reading the course lectures in chapters and units 1 through 6, answer the policy question about what should be done about teen pregnancies. Be sure to research and read multiple sources for this public policy issue, including the websites in the lectures and the policy journal listings in the text. Provide 1,000 or more words and note the number of words at the end of the project and include two or more authoritative sources besides your textbook. On the first line of page one, provide your name and date.

### **Experiential Research Project**

The best way to understand democracy and public policy making is to see our government in action. Each student is required to attend, in person, a public meeting of an entire city council, school board, or county commission. Only one of these three meetings counts for this project. A regular meeting in which voting is conducted and policy is debated is required. If you are living far 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 political candidate’s meeting; a public speaker give a presentation, a committee meeting, a work session, a rally, etc., is not a public meeting appropriate for this course.

You must attend the meeting in person.

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 “Experiential Research Project”). The four-page paper should detail the time and place of the meeting, how long you were there (at least two hours), 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. This assignment is worth **75 points**. Please research and select which meeting you will attend during the first week of class, since meetings are not conducted each week. **Begin this assignment the first week of class**. Save your paper in **.pdf format** and **give a word count**. The cover sheet is not numbered and the four following pages are numbered 1, 2, 3, and 4.

**The Course Grading Scale** is based on **537 total course points** (200 for exams, 187 for quizzes, and 150 for two projects, 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 Discussion Participation/Extra Credit:** Other than the following, there is no extra credit in our course.

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 projects, exams, and quizzes. It does not take into consideration your participation in the group discussions based on providing and using feedback regarding public policy project drafts.

Your gradebook 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 public policy project drafts. A 0% adjustment is given for satisfactory participation in the 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 were 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.

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 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 who wish to improve their writing skills should consult the Online Writing Lab at Purdue University (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu>) (free).

WARNING!

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

This is a labor-intensive course that contains 16 weeks of course material. A tremendous amount of time is necessary to complete this course successfully. Consider this: the 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. Of course, there is NO driving or parking time investment. 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 work efficiently 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.

## **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](mailto:cass@utep.edu), or apply for accommodations online via the [CASS portal](#).

## **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, quizzes, and submitting assignments late; early submissions are not permitted)

Absent documented emergencies and instructor approval, there are no makeups for the exams, assignments, or quizzes. Also, early submissions are not permitted.

If a student has a truly exceptional circumstance or an “authorized absence,” a makeup exam, assignment, or quiz 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 of the student. Illnesses resulting in a request to submit late work or take a makeup exam not accompanied by a visit to the doctor or hospital with documentation 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 mandatory 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 or visiting others, not having the textbook, transportation, or computer, computer hardware or software problems, ISP, or financial problems, or caring for other people or pets, are not exceptional circumstances that would allow a makeup exam, quiz, or late assignment submission, etc.



Any approved makeup assignment, exam or quiz is to be taken the first day the student returns to class. In the event of an approved late assignment, quiz, or exam, 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 an approved exam or quiz or submit an assignment late.

Absent instructor prior approval **do not email** assignments, quizzes, or exams 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 of 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:**

Missing to fulfill a work, travel, visiting, moving, or job commitment—even an unexpected one;  
Missing to transport, supervise, visit, or care for someone, including family members and pets;  
Missing due to a failure of transportation;  
Missing for a permissible reason and failing to provide documentation the first day returning to class;  
Not having transportation, the textbook, financial funds, or a computer; and  
Computer hardware, software, or ISP problems.

**Extra Credit:** Other than the Group Discussion Participation, there is no extra credit in our course.

**Course Schedule/Calendar:** See the Course Schedule document.

**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 if needed. Notice of changes will be provided to the class via Blackboard.