COURSE OVERVIEW

This course introduces students to the study of public policy. That has two meanings. From a political science perspective, the question is how public policy is made, and why some policies are made rather than others. But public policy analysis has developed into a separate field, taught in many Masters and Ph.D. programs and sending graduates (the professors hope) out to improve the world. From the public policy field's perspective, the questions are what policies should be, how they should be chosen, and why they succeed or fail.

I think both questions are important. The *policy process view* provides a useful way to understand politics, a way that is different from the usual approach that involves studying institutions and their powers. At the same time, efforts to understand policy success or failure which ignore politics are unfortunately common but usually badly flawed. In this course we will explore both kinds of questions and discuss why they need to be asked together.

Policy-making, as studied in this course, is basically a form of decision-making. The concepts in this course – such as agenda-setting, the importance of implementation, and conflicts about value and fact – can be used to analyze action in any group or organization or community. For example, they can be applied equally well to U.S. politics, with its extremely complicated division of formal authority into competing institutions, and to British politics, with its much simpler structure of formal authority. They can be applied to international relations, in which nobody is "in charge," and to Case Western Reserve University or the Cleveland Clinic Foundation.

The first thing to remember about any decision for a group of people is that it is likely to involve disagreement about what to do, or even what the problem is. It then is going to involve both consideration of facts and persuasion about both facts and values: people pitching arguments at other people. One theme of this course therefore will be values that can be applied to choosing policies, some of the reasons for disagreement, and how people argue about collective choices. As part of that, we will see the discussion in one of the most influential books in the field, Deborah Stone's *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision-Making*. But as Stone argues, people disagree not only about specific values, such as how to define liberty or equity, or which of those is more important. They also start from different premises about how people should relate to each other, which she describes as "Market" and "Polis" views. The former assumes in essence that individuals are separate units only exchanging with each other; the latter assumes that we gain meaning from our communities.
A further major theme is how decisions should or can be made, in order to achieve whatever goals are suggested by the group's values. Many discussions of decisions in all walks of life, including making public policy, are influenced by a "rational model" that, as many fine scholars have shown, does not fit either how individuals or collectives can make decisions most of the time. Both Stone's book and other readings offer alternative ways to think about how means get related to ends.

A second key point about policy-making is this: politicians (and bureaucrats, and corporate managers) not only assert influence, or "power," but they also "puzzle." That is, they try to figure out what actions (such as a law or business plan) will accomplish what goals. Therefore you can look at any policy process as a series of components that look a bit like cogitation but are social rather than individual, such as: the definition of problems, generation of alternatives, assessment of alternatives, adoption of a policy, implementation of a policy, and feedback about the new programs the policy creates. What kind of analysis occurs, and what it manages to consider, then varies with the problem and the organizational circumstances. The stages above sound like the "rational model" but, as we will see, rarely fit that model.

Understanding how policy cogitation occurs should begin with sensitivity to the issues Deborah Stone raises. But it also involves the role of policy communities in the various "stages" of the process, from problem definition to feedback, summarized above. Moreover, the ways people think about problems are shaped by many factors that they carry around but that do not have much to do with a given problem in its own terms. Social scientific analyses of the "policy process" also risk leading us to forget the deep and emotional human stakes that can be involved. We will focus on all these dimensions when we read the second assigned book for the class, Randy Shilts' classic, *And the Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic*. The story of the early years of AIDS will give the whole class a set of events that we can think about as we discuss other readings.

Another theme of this course is that there are numerous ways to try to achieve policy goals. As such, we will examine various types of policies, such as direct provision of services by government, command and control attempts to direct the behavior of other parties (regulation), attempts to manipulate markets to cause desired results, and various other efforts to shape individuals' behavior to achieve somebody's notion of desired ends. The choices among these goals rarely are driven by good evidence about effectiveness; instead, various tribes of analysts and politicians tend to favor certain approaches due to ideological or professional biases. Hence a third topic in this class will be the tools of policy.

All three topics – bases for decisions, processes of decisions, and the means available – influence a fourth concern for this course: why policies succeed or fail. We will consider that question throughout the course. If students learn nothing else in this course, I hope they at least will develop an appreciation for why policy success can be so difficult, including that there usually are people whose cooperation is needed for success, but who either don't want to or don't know how to make the policy succeed.

There are many things I hope that students will learn from this course but, if the Higher Learning Commission were to go ahead with its demand that all syllabi include "learning objectives," then I would list:

---

1 This is an example of a private policy with significant power. Post-secondary institutions (e.g. universities) are accredited in 19 states, including Ohio, by the Higher Learning Commission, which thereby exercises a quasi-governmental power over Case Western Reserve University. At one stage during our last accreditation round there were reports that HLC would expect
* Students should develop a sense of what the "policy process" involves and how that relates to "politics."
* Students should understand the controversy about the "rational model."
* Students should develop an understanding of the range of tools of government, and the controversies about how they can or should be used.
* Students should have a much better sense than many policy-makers do about what questions to ask in order to assess whether a policy proposal is likely to "work" – that is, attain the goals its promoters claim it will attain.

I hope that students will learn through reading, discussion, lectures, and through studying a particular policy issue from the list below. I will assess learning from readings and classwork through three in-class exams. Students will write papers on one of the following topics, which I selected to offer a wide range of technical difficulties, political/institutional contexts, and political challenges:

- Opioid overdoses in the United States
- Unwanted robocalls.
- Threats to the survival of elephants
- Affordability of college education.
- Hydrofracking

More information about the research project is below.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING**

**Readings**
You are expected to complete all the readings for every class. The readings are the most important part of the class. As one guide through the readings, I have provided for most days a "key question" or two, which we may talk about in class discussion.

**Participation and conduct.**
Classes will be a mix of lecture and discussion. The class appears to be large enough that I cannot expect everyone to participate every day; but I expect students to be prepared to talk about the readings if I ask them a question, and I will occasionally direct questions to individual students (especially if nobody is volunteering). I will take attendance most if not all days, and if a student misses more than nine classes without an approved reason, that could reduce their participation grade. **Participation will count for 10% of your grade.**

**Exams**
Three exams, focused on the reading material, will each count for 15% of your grade. My plan at the time of writing this syllabus is to administer those exams in class, as I expect they will be mostly short-answers about specific points in the reading. If I can think of a sensible way to assign an essay, however, I will consult with the class about whether students would prefer a take-home for that particular exam.
The three exams will be held, or be due, on September 27, October 18, and November 25.

Research projects
As mentioned above, you will be writing a policy analysis on one of five issues. We will do choice of projects no later than the middle of third week, so September 13. My goal is to have roughly equal numbers of students doing each topic. During the first week of class we will discuss students' attitudes towards making these some form of team projects. For the moment I am assuming they will be individual projects, but students could investigate more material if they collaborated.

The product of these projects should be a policy memo. This memo should be between 2000 and 3000 words long. Please note that this is actually a bit unrealistic – if you were a policy analyst working for some clients you might be expected to tell your story in fewer words! The memo should be delivered to me by e-mail, at joseph.white@case.edu, by December 16 at Noon.

As intermediate steps, you should submit project journals on three occasions: October 7, November 1, and November 27. These will be evaluated based on timely submission and evidence that you have done substantive work on the project. Particular expectations for each stage are stated in the assignment schedule below. I will provide feedback that will be designed to both encourage and challenge your work, as seems appropriate to me. After students submit their second journals, I will arrange group meetings with the students working on each topic.

The grading for your research projects will account for 45% of your grade. That will be divided into 5% for each of the three project journals, and 30% for the final paper. This grading metric is intended to very strongly encourage students to make progress on the paper rather than do the work in a rush at the end of the class.

So, to summarize, grades for POSC 386 students will be calculated as follows:

- Participation: 10%
- First exam: 15%
- Second exam: 15%
- Third exam: 15%
- First Project Journal: 5%
- Second Project Journal: 5%
- Third Project Journal: 5%
- Final Policy Memo: 30%.

POSC 486 students will be required to do extra work for their policy memos. This work will consist of a literature review paper that critiques some of the sources used for the project. Timing and length of this paper will be worked out individually with POSC 486 students.

I do all my grading during a course on a numerical scale that I will explain, which can also be expressed as letter grades including minuses and pluses. The final grades for POSC 486 will be with pluses or minuses (if that's how it works out) but, for POSC 386, an A minus minus still will be an A.
COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Attendance Exceptions. I understand that conflicts arise which may make it sensible not to attend class. You may have religious obligations, or have to travel for sports teams. There are occasional situations when a student needs to travel for research or a presentation, or for job interviews. I would not want to interfere with that kind of opportunity. Students who wish to miss class due to such conflicts should let me know, in writing, and with documentation if I ask for it (e.g. a note or e-mail from a coach). I will normally approve, but reasons like "I'm behind in my other work" will not do. Managing your time so that doesn’t happen is part of your job. Please also inform me if you are ill. If you are sick enough to have to inform me that you missed class due to illness twice in a row, you should go to the health service, get looked at, and then bring me a note from them.

Deadlines are serious. For each day a project journal report is late, the grade on the journal will be a third of a grade lower. So, for example, an A- report that is two days late will receive a B. If students believe in advance that they have to miss an exam, they should discuss that with me. If they miss an exam without prior approval I will arrange a make-up, but with a penalty. Students should understand that missing an exam creates a severe policy problem for the professor, who has to give a different exam in order to ensure students do not learn the questions on the original exam from other students. I will make exceptions without penalty for a good reason, but that is for me to judge.

The final policy memo is due at Noon on Dec 16. Papers received after 5 p.m. on that day will incur a reduction of 1/3 of a grade (e.g., from B+ to B), unless you have received approval in advance. Further deductions will be made for each extra day the paper is late – again, unless I have approved that in advance.

Please understand that, if a student has good reasons for delay and is best served by taking an Incomplete, my policy is to accommodate students without penalty in that situation. But I need to be informed in advance and to talk with the student about the circumstances. I also reserve the right to make exceptions to the sanctions defined here on a case-by-case basis.

Academic integrity includes both not cheating (e.g. plagiarism) but also making it possible for any reader to track down your sources. So please document all sources you use in writing your papers according to an accepted style guide. A good standard approach is in the Chicago Manual of Style (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), but any standard format will be fine for this class. Please read the undergraduate handbook policy on academic honesty and plagiarism http://students.case.edu/handbook/policy/integrity.html. Plagiarism of any form will be punished by referral to the appropriate university judicial proceedings, as well as by a failing grade in the assignment on which the plagiarism occurs. Plagiarism includes, according to the MLA Handbook (New York: MLA, 1988), two related activities: repeating “as your own someone else’s sentences, more or less verbatim,” and “paraphrasing another person’s argument as your own, and presenting another’s line of thinking as though it were your own.” Proper citation of sources will allow you to incorporate others’ analyses without committing plagiarism. If you have questions about these rules, PLEASE ASK ME!

Other class policies. Please put your cell phones away during class. Texting or any other use of the phone is not permitted. If I observe you using your cell phone, I will record you as absent from that
class session. Please also close your laptops. Using a laptop has three disadvantages. First, if the student is taking notes, it appears to encourage just typing more than listening and selecting. Second, it appears to discourage the kind of attention to other people that leads to good discussion (this is something that has become an issue in regard to physicians having to fill out electronic medical records and so not looking at patients as they talk). And last but hardly least, of course, too many students surf the net rather than pay attention to the class. Laptops will be allowed, of course, for students who have permission from ESS.

I am happy to meet with any and all students enrolled in this course. I also am especially interested in meeting with any students with issues that involve ESS or Disability Services and who may need special arrangements. **I have regular office hours posted at the top of this syllabus, but I am very willing to meet at other times.** Please just contact me so we can schedule time, as you need it. Please also remember that this syllabus is supposed to be a resource to help you understand what I hope we accomplish with the course. As you do reading you should consider both the individual things to "think about" and the essay topics that you will be asked to answer based in part on each reading.

**SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

The following books are required and will be read cover to cover, so should be purchased or otherwise legally obtained. The University bookstore will have copies. Used copies are fine.

Randy Shilts, *And the Band Played On: Politics, People, And The AIDS Epidemic*. Various editions, such as St. Martins Griffin, 2007


The following books are recommended for purchase, though the portions that I am assigning will be provided through the course Canvas website.

John W Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies 2nd ed.* (any version you can find, though the most recent, which is also the most expensive, has some interesting thoughts on the 2010 health reform legislation).


Other readings will be available on Canvas, unless a link is provided in this syllabus.
## Part I: Introduction and Core Concepts

### Aug 26
**Introduction to the class.**

### Aug 28
Overview of the "Policy Process"
Joseph White, "Views of the Policy Process"
Please tell me what, in this overview, seems strangest or most confusing. Please.

### Aug 30
Market and Polis (1):
Stone, Introduction and Chapter 1.
How can one use communities, rather than individuals, as units for analysis?

### Sept 2
**Labor Day, No Class**

### Sept 4
Market and Polis (2):
Who should decide what to do about mosquitoes? And who should do that, for whom?

### Sept 6
Advocacy Coalitions
Think about common issues today: do you see identifiable advocacy coalitions? And can you think of any that couldn't just be called "Democrats" and "Republicans"?

### Sept 9
National Differences
What were the core dimensions of the difference that once existed, and what are the main reasons that seems to have declined?

### Sept 11
Calculation or Culture? Defining, Assessing, and Action on Risk
How do you think about risks? Do you often think other peoples' judgments of risk are silly?

**Students Should Have Chosen Their Topics by Sept 13**
Part II: A Frightening Case Study

At this point in the class, we will step back from social science and look at one of the most dramatic cases of public policymaking in my lifetime: the response to the rise of AIDS. Randy Shilts' book is very long, and so the pages per day may seem like a lot. But it is easier to read than many novels, and a story I think everyone should know.

In the context of this class, it illustrates or raises some key issues. These include:

* How a condition becomes politically noticed and defined as a "problem." This is part of the fundamental process of "agenda-setting."

* Making effective policy normally requires technical knowledge that may be hard to acquire. In this case, that involved defining the condition and its causes. Expertise was needed, and the work had to be funded. In the long run it required creating effective treatments, an equally technical problem that has been mostly solved since the book was written, and ideally creating a vaccine – which is still not solved.

* People tend to see phenomena in ways that are shaped by their other activities and beliefs. AIDS is a classic example in which some people had backgrounds that disposed them to find the right answer, while many others denied that partly out of self-interest, but also because they did not have the same cognitive habits. Epidemiologists who had worked on blood-borne epidemics, or especially on hepatitis B, were disposed to see what was happening. Other experts were not.

* An individual's stance on an issue is likely to be shaped by not only their material interests (as in the case of bath house owners) but by their positions on other issues, or other responsibilities. As you will see, for example, officials loyal to the Reagan administration on budget policies resisted spending for AIDS research because the budget was their priority. Administrators of blood banks viewed ensuring an adequate supply of blood as their greatest responsibility, and so resisted policies that would have restricted donations by certain groups. Advocates for "gay rights" viewed policies that defined gays as especially likely to contract AIDS as an attack on those rights.

* Attitudes towards conditions are influenced by attitudes towards the persons affected. Never mind AIDS – consider poverty...

* Effective policy change often requires that "the media" draw attention to a problem, and "frame" it in a way that favors support for the right kind of change. But "the media" as social and economic organizations have their own concerns.

* Action normally requires entrepreneurship: that some set of people take the lead in pressuring other people. But that requires expense or investment in various ways obvious and less so.

* Policies cannot simply be adopted on the expectation that people will respond the way policy-makers would like. How, for example, would policies to inhibit donations of blood be enforced?

* There can be political power stakes in responding to any policy initiative, and those stakes may have little to do with the substance of the initiative.
There are many other points that may turn up in discussions of the book. On the whole, I hope reading it does two things. First, it should remind everyone that policy can have dramatic human stakes. It involves real people. Second, we should be able to refer to the book's events as we discuss questions of values and process throughout the course.

Sept 13  Shilts, *And the Band Played On*, through Part II, Chapter 5

Sept 16  Shilts, *And the Band Played On*, through Part IV, Chapter 21

Sept 18  Shilts, *And the Band Played On*, Part V, Chapters 22-32


Sept 25  Shilts, *And the Band Played On*, Epilogue and Afterword

Sept 27  First Exam

**Part III: Facts, Values, and Decisions**

Sept 30  Equity and Efficiency
Stone, Chapters 2, "Equity" and 3, "Efficiency"
How do you think a chocolate cake should be divided? Can you think of issues beyond the ones she makes up?

Note: This day is the "first day" of Rosh HaShanah, and most Jewish people, such as myself, would not work on this day. On the other hand, for reasons that are a policy story of their own, conservative and orthodox Jews of European background celebrate a second day of Rosh HaShanah on the day after the first. So I will work on the first day and go to synagogue on the second, which means I'll hold class today. Naturally, I will understand if any Jewish student follows the usual schedule and misses this class; please just inform me in advance.

Oct 2  Liberty vs. Protection?
What, if anything, surprised you in this discussion?

Oct 4  Illustrating or Promoting "Problems" (1)
Is the argument obvious, or do you find it very hard to accept?
Oct 7  Illustrating or Promoting "Problems" (2)  
Stone, Chapter 7, "Symbols" and Chapter 8, "Numbers"  
Can you think of examples of her points here, from your policy topic or something else you have observed?  
* First project journal due. You should seek to define the "problem" and its dimensions – or describe competing views of the "problem" and its dimensions  

Oct 9  No Class Session  
(Professor White must fast and pray for Yom Kippur. There is no second day)  
Please read Stone chapter 9, "Causes," and Chapter 10, "Interests."  
Think about the definitions of causes and construction of interests during the early years of the AIDS epidemic.  

Oct 11  Deciding Through Politics  
Stone chapter 11, "Decisions."  
Think about how you (or was it your family?) decided where you would go to college.  
Then think about a decision made by some group of which you are a member.  

Oct 14  Policy Communities and Politics  
What ideas are "floating around" in the policy area you are studying? What does the "political stream" look like?  

Oct 16  Applying Kingdon's Analysis (planning to fill the garbage can?)  
Think about “path dependency” and what a “policy entrepreneur” can do (McDonough being a “policy entrepreneur.”)  

Oct 18  Second Exam  

Oct 21  No class, Fall Break  

**Part IV: Policy Tools and Policy Success or Failure**  

Oct 23  Introduction  
Can you do what RAND did? And what are the main policy tools being considered for your policy topic?
Oct 25  Changing Behavior (1)
Stone, Chapter 12, "Incentives"
Where does cheating fit in, and what can be done about it? Think about this in relation to your policy memo!

Oct 28  Changing Behavior (2)
Stone, Chapter 13, "Rules"
Think of three examples of rules that apply to your own behavior. To what extent do you comply, and why or why not?

Oct 30  Knowledge, Power, and Political Will
Joseph White, "Three Meanings of Capacity"
Think about how these concepts apply to your policy topic

Nov 1 * Second policy journal due. You should focus on what you have found about proposed "solutions" to the "problem," and on what you see, so far, as the prospects for these "solutions." We will spend the class session discussing your projects

Note: I would like to schedule discussions with each group of students doing a given topic, as a group, after receiving these second journals. I will consult with you to work out time and place (place is preferably Dunkin' Donuts if in the morning, and Mitchell's if later)

Nov 4  Delivering Government Services
Gordon Chase, Introduction and Parts I and II of "Implementing A Human Services Program: How Hard Will It Be?" Public Policy Vol. 27, No. 4 (Fall 1979), pp. 385-420. What are the implementation steps for your policy area?

Nov 6  Challenges of Cooperation
Excerpts from Jeffrey L. Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky, Implementation: How Great Expectations in Washington Are Dashed in Oakland... 3rd ed. "Preface to the First Edition" (pp. xix – xxv); "Appearances" (pp. 1-6); "Two Smaller Programs: Business Loans and the Health Center" (pp. 70-86); "Acknowledgments" (pp. ix-xii). What are the main claims made, in these excerpts, about conditions for successful implementation?

Nov 8  Management Matters (1)
Also attached and please read: New York Times article on Ebola from 7/17/2019
How might the AIDS and Ebola cases be similar and different?
Nov 11  Management Matters (2)
What, according to this reading, seems to be the "reinventing government" diagnosis of the reasons for government failures? And what seems to be Moe's alternative diagnosis?

Nov 13  Regulation (1)
What is required for regulation to be effective? You might consider how this reading fits into White's analysis.

Nov 15  Regulation (2)
Peter J. May, "Performance-Based Regulation and Regulatory Regimes," paper delivered to 13th World Conference on Earthquake Engineering, August, 2004
To what extent do the problems with "performance-based regulation" seem to differ from the challenges to effective regulation through "prescribed means" or "adherence to particular technologies"?

Nov 18  Regulation (3)
What are the values that "market-based governance" is supposed to serve?

Nov 20  Forms of Persuasion (1)
Stone, Chapter 14, "Facts"
Think about what counts as evidence, to whom

Nov 22  Forms of Persuasion (2)
What do you think Stone would say about the arguments for "nudges"?

Nov 25  Third Exam

Nov 27  Third Policy Journal Due
Summarize your current thoughts about your analysis. And then identify two doubts that could be raised about that.
Class attendance will be optional due to proximity to Thanksgiving. If anyone shows up, we will talk about your projects.
Dec 2  Shaping Policy By Reallocating Power? (1)
    Stone, Chapter 15, "Rights"
    How would rights-based policies change behaviors?

Dec 4  Shaping Power By Reallocating Power? (2)
    Stone, Chapter 16, "Powers" and "Conclusion."
    Can you think of other examples of these approaches?

Dec 6  Conclusion and Final Discussion

Voluntary Discussion of Class Material in Case It Might Help You Write Your Papers
Dec 9, Mather House 100, Noon

Policy Memos due by Noon on Dec 16, by e-mail to joseph.white@case.edu