Overview

Public policy is defined in many ways. I think of public policy as the government’s statement of what it intends to do to address problems that cannot, or should not, be solved in a purely private way. Public policy is made at the international, national, state, regional, county, city, and even more local levels. Some public policies address large problems (e.g., international policies to address climate change and global warming). Other public policies focus on highly localized problems (e.g. the University of Wisconsin Student Union’s decision to remove from public spaces the names of two men identified as members of the KKK during the 1920s when they were undergraduates at UW-Madison.) These very different policy initiatives share a common impetus: Governmental or quasi-governmental entities have concluded that a problem exists, and that it requires the allocation of public resources to mitigate, or prevent, the resulting harm.

Learning about public policy – what it is, the legal framework within which it is made, the tools available to policy makers, the policy making process, how to evaluate public policies – will strengthen your writing, analytical, research, and advocacy skills, and will better inform your participation in civil society. I look forward to your engagement this semester.

Required Texts

Learning Outcomes

My objective in teaching this course is to encourage your understanding of the policy-making process in the United States. The course has the following learning outcomes:

- You will understand the provisions of the United States Constitution most related to the development and execution of public policy in the United States: Delegation of powers; separation of powers; federalism; and the allocation of powers within the states.
- You will learn to define and frame problems as an essential first step in the development of public policy.
- You will learn to develop, analyze, and advocate policy alternatives.
- You will learn how to write a policy memo.
- You will learn about executive, administrative, legislative, judicial, and other governmental authorities and their respective roles in making public policy.
- You will understand the role of politics in policy development.
- You will learn various approaches to policy analysis.
- You will learn about various tools and functions available to public policy-makers.
- You will learn various approaches to evaluate the success of public policy initiatives.
- You will learn about the role of norms and values in public policy formulation.

Course Requirements
1. Attendance: Class attendance is required. I will take attendance at the beginning of each class. If you have unexcused absences for more than 10% of class sessions, your participation grade will be lowered. If you are going to miss class, please notify me by email in advance, if possible. I will let you know if your absence is excused or unexcused. In general, I will excuse absences for illness, emergencies, and other extenuating situations if you email me as soon as possible at eharrington2@wisc.edu. If you are ill with anything that might be contagious, please do not come to class. Email me that you are ill and I will excuse your absence.

2. Laptops/tablets/smartphones in class: Unless I give permission, you may not use laptops, tablets and/or smartphones during class. Adult learners give their full attention, and do not multi-task while learning.

3. Written assignments: Assignments must be submitted on time. Grades will be reduced by a full grade per 24-hour period for which the assignment is late.

4. Readings: You are expected to do all assigned readings.

5. Plagiarism: I use software tools to detect plagiarism. If you submit written work containing plagiarized material, you will receive a failing grade for the course and be reported to the University.

**Basis for Assessment**

Your grade will be based on your performance in the following areas:

Class participation (10 percent). Your class participation will be noted and evaluated.

Policy memoranda (3) (60 per cent; 20 per cent per memorandum). You will write three brief policy memoranda, not to exceed three double-spaced pages, excluding source references. You will follow exactly a format that is posted on the course website.

Final exam (30 percent). The final exam will cover the entire course and will be given on The location has not yet been posted. Please do not sign up for this class if you cannot be present for the final exam. I will not provide for any alternative exam opportunity.
How Credits Will Be Earned

Credit hours will be earned by attending two classes of 1.25 hours each; reading and preparing written work outside of class for 6 to 9 hours per week; submitting three policy memos; and taking a final exam.

Policy memos

Memo #1 topic announced September 17; due by 4 p.m. October 1.

Memo #2 topic announced October 8; due by 4 p.m. October 24.

Memo #3 topic announced November 5; due by 4 p.m. November 28.

Other requirements

Debates: This semester includes an election season. I expect you to watch televised debates in the U.S. Senate and Wisconsin gubernatorial races. I will remind you in class of the dates and times for these debates, and there will be questions and assignments involving the debates.

Class and Reading Schedule

The reading schedule is firm; the topic schedule is tentative because we will incorporate guest speakers on policy topics related water policy.

Week one:

September 5th:
Course overview

Review of course requirements.
The United States Constitution and Federalism
Read: The United States Constitution
Read: The Death and Life of the Great Lakes

Week two:
September 10th:
The Policy-Making Framework

Read: Bardach, pp. 1-78

September 12th:

Policy making authorities, structures, actors and roles

Read: Birkland Chapters 1-5

**Week three:**

September 17th:
Federalism, Constitutional Home Rule, and Dillon’s Rule: what do these mean for policies related to water policy in Wisconsin?

September 19th:
Agenda setting, policy types, tools, and decisions

Read: Birkland Chapters 6

**Week four:**

September 24th:
Policies and Policy Types

Read: Birkland Chapters 7

September 26th:
Decision Making and Policy Analysis

Read: Birkland Chapter 8

**Week five:**

October 1st and 3rd:
Policy Designs and Tools, Implementation, Evaluation, and Science

Read: Birkland Chapters 9-11
**Week six:**

October 8th and 10th:
Conceptual tensions in policy-making

Read: Stone, Part I

**Week seven:**

October 15th:
Polis and market models

October 17th:
*Understanding the role that policy goals play in shaping policy*

Read: Stone, Part II

**Week eight:**

October 22nd:
Equity and Efficiency

October 24th:
Welfare and Liberty

**Week nine:**

October 29th
Security

October 31st:
*Summarizing policy goals and trade-offs*

**Week ten:**

November 5th:
Behavioral economics
November 7th:
Tensions between and among policy goals

Week eleven:

November 12th:
Defining problems through various disciplines: framing policy issues

Read: Stone, Part III

November 14th
Conceptual solutions to policy problems.

Read: Stone, Part IV

Week twelve:

November 19th:
Tools and instruments

November 21st: NO CLASS

Week thirteen:

November 26th:
Beginning to put it all together: Problem definition

Re-read Bardach, Part I and Appendices B and C

November 28th:
Assembling evidence

Read Bardach, Part II

Week fourteen:
December 3\textsuperscript{rd} and 5\textsuperscript{th}:

**Best practices**

Read Bardach, Part III

**Week fifteen:**

December 10\textsuperscript{th}:
Final exam review.

December 12\textsuperscript{th}:
Complete final exam review.