

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
Woodrow Wilson School

WWS 322
The Politics of Policy Making

Spring 2005
R. Douglas Arnold

This seminar introduces students to the political analysis of policy making in the American setting. The focus is on developing tools for the analysis of politics in any setting – national, state, or local. The first two weeks examine policy making with a minimum of theory. The next five weeks examine the environment within which policy makers operate, with special attention to public opinion, political participation, and elections. The next four weeks focus on political institutions and the making of policy decisions, with attention given to agenda setting, legislatures, and the courts. The final week returns to the politics of policy making and allows students to apply the theoretical tools from the course to analyze why policy makers make the choices they do.

********* **Please Note: Seminar participants are** *********
********* **required to read one short book before** *********
********* **the first seminar on February 2.** *********

A. Weekly Schedule

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| 1. Politics and Policy Making: Health Care | February 2 |
| 2. Politics and Policy Making: Public Finance | February 9 |
| 3. Origins of Public Opinion | February 16 |
| 4. Dynamics of Public Opinion | February 23 |
| 5. Political Participation | March 2 |
| 6. Electoral Politics | March 9 |
| 7. Representation and Accountability | March 23 |
| 8. Agenda Setting | March 30 |
| 9. Legislatures | April 6 |
| 10. Political Institutions | April 13 |
| 11. Courts | April 20 |
| 12. Politics and Policy Making: Welfare Reform | April 27 |

B. Course Requirements

1. **Reading.** The course operates as a seminar. The amount of reading averages 200 pages per week. Each student is expected to do the assigned reading *before* each seminar and come to class prepared for discussion.
2. **Discussion.** The main event each week is a structured discussion of the week's reading. I provide the structure; you provide the discussion. Our aim is to come to terms with the scholarship on a subject *and* to see what lessons it offers for those involved in making and administering public policy. Each student is expected to participate actively in each week's discussion.
3. **Three Short Papers.** Each student writes three short papers during the course of the semester. These are opportunities for you to discuss the week's readings, unprompted by the instructor or your fellow students. The purpose of these papers is to develop your skills at political analysis and to gain feedback from the instructor prior to writing the final paper.

The key to a good paper is to pose an interesting question and answer it. You might focus on the value of an author's theory, examining its logical rigor, the plausibility of the arguments, or its relation to other theories. You might focus on the adequacy of the empirical evidence, asking whether the author used appropriate methods, whether the evidence really supports the hypotheses, or whether other evidence contradicts it. Alternatively, you might address the question of how well a piece of scholarship illuminates other happenings in the real world. Does a book help to explain why government makes the decisions it does? Under what conditions does it appear useful? These papers are *not* an opportunity to summarize the week's readings. You should assume that anyone who reads your paper has also done the week's reading.

These papers should be well organized and well written. A paper that fails to develop an argument until the last paragraph is called a first draft. A paper that fails to anticipate potential counter arguments, is written in the passive voice, or is filled with grammatical, spelling, or typing errors, is called a second draft. A paper that you would be proud to read to the class is called a final draft. I like final drafts.

The class will be divided in thirds, with one group writing in weeks 2, 5, and 8, a second group writing in weeks 3, 6, and 9, and the third group writing in weeks 4, 7, and 10. In order to provide adequate time for completing the senior thesis, each senior may choose to reschedule one of the short papers.

Your papers should be typed, double-spaced, and a *maximum of five pages*. References to books or articles used in the course should be cited in the text (Zaller 1992, 79). *Please attach an extra page to the back of your paper (with your name and date in the upper right corner) for my comments.*

Papers are due at the *start* of the seminar in which their subjects are scheduled for discussion. I will return each of the short papers with comments a week after they are due.

4. **Final Paper.** The final paper requires that you apply the lessons of the seminar to explaining why some governmental institution enacted, or failed to enact, a significant policy change. The aim is to explain how and why political forces combined to produce or thwart change. You may choose any level of government – national, state, or local – and you may choose any significant policy change, whether adopted or rejected.

Although these papers require some outside research, the emphasis should be on original political analysis, not exhaustive research in primary source materials or extensive interviews with participants. Some description will undoubtedly be necessary, but your paper should primarily be a piece of analysis. You should attempt to *explain* why an institution adopted or rejected a proposed policy change.

You are free to choose a policy area in which you already have some expertise. You are free to choose a subject that journalists or other observers have already covered extensively. You are free to select a topic for which the gathering of research materials is relatively easy. I am more interested in observing your analytic skills than your research skills. If you are having trouble choosing, or narrowing down, a topic, please come and see me. You should select a topic and submit a one-page description of the policy decision that you intend to analyze by Wednesday, April 6.

The final paper should be typed, double-spaced, and a *maximum* of 25 pages, and is due on Tuesday, May 10, at noon. The real world of politics and public affairs does not grant extensions, and neither do I. Unlike the real world, I do accept late research papers, but only after assessing a penalty of one third of a letter grade for each day of lateness. The penalty is in fairness to all students who manage to submit their papers on time. Late papers must be logged in, with date and time, by my assistant.

Papers should either be placed in my Robertson Hall mailbox (fourth floor) or given to my assistant, Helene Wood, in 301 Robertson Hall. Late papers must be logged in with my assistant.

5. **Due Dates.**

Short papers:	Due at the <i>start</i> of each week's seminar.
Research plan:	Due Wednesday, April 6.
Research paper:	Due Tuesday, May 10, noon.

6. **Grading.**

Seminar participation	20%
Short papers	30%
Final paper	50%

C. Availability of Readings

1. **Books Available for Purchase.** The Princeton University Store has copies of the nine paperback books that we will use most intensively (marked PUS in the readings).
2. **Reserve Readings.** There are also multiple copies of these nine books on reserve in the Donald E. Stokes Library in Wallace Hall (marked DES in the readings).
3. **Electronic Course Reserves.** Seventeen chapters, articles, and papers are available as part of the library's electronic course reserves (marked ECR in the readings).

D. Times and Places

1. **Seminar Meetings.** Wednesday, 1:30-4:20
2. **Office Hours.** By appointment Robertson Hall, Room 310
Phone: 258-4855 arnold@princeton.edu

I am readily available by appointment. Please send me an e-mail that includes all the times that are *impossible* for you over the coming week. I will respond with an appointment that works for both of us.

E. Weekly Readings**1. Politics and Policy Making: Health Care (February 2)**

Required (106 pages)

Richard Himelfarb, *Catastrophic Politics: The Rise and Fall of the Medicare Catastrophic Coverage Act of 1988* (1995), pp. vii-ix, 1-103 [PUS, DES]. Congress and the president first enact, by overwhelming margins, a major increase in health coverage for senior citizens; then, a year later, they repeal it.

2. Politics and Policy Making: Public Finance (February 9)

Required (207 pages)

Larry Bartels, "Constituency Opinion and Congressional Policy Making: The Reagan Defense Build Up," *American Political Science Review* (1991), pp. 457-474 [ECR]. Public opinion about defense spending appears to matter.

R. Douglas Arnold, "Tax Policy," in his *The Logic of Congressional Action* (1990), pp. 193-223 [PUS, DES]. Public opinion about tax reform appears to matter.

Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson, "Abandoning the Middle: The Revealing Case of the Bush Tax Cuts," APSA convention paper (2003), pp. 1-63 [ECR]. Public opinion about recent tax cuts appears not to matter.

Benjamin I. Page, "Zoe Baird, Nannies, and Talk Radio," in his *Who Deliberates? Mass Media in Modern Democracy* (1996), pp. 77-105 [ECR]. The public gets mad when rich people don't pay their taxes.

Larry Bartels, "Homer Gets a Tax Cut: Inequality and Public Policy in the American Mind," APSA convention paper (2003), pp. 1-47 [ECR]. The public doesn't get mad when rich people get a big tax cut.

John Mark Hansen, "Individual, Institutions, and Public Preferences over Public Finance," *American Political Science Review* (1998), pp. 513-531 [ECR]. Public preferences about taxes, spending, and deficits.

3. Origins of Public Opinion (February 16)

Required (184 pages)

John R. Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (1992), pp. 1-184 [PUS, DES]. A theory of why citizens acquire opinions about policies and politicians.

4. Dynamics of Public Opinion (February 23)

Required (169 pages)

John R. Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (1992), pp. 185-309 [PUS, DES]. Explaining opinion change at the micro level.

Robert S. Erikson, Michael B. MacKuen, and James A. Stimson, "Public Opinion," in their *The Macro Polity* (2002), pp. 193-236 [ECR]. Explaining opinion change at the macro level.

5. Political Participation (March 2)

Required (248 pages)

Steven J. Rosenstone and John Mark Hansen, *Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in American* (1993). Read with care pages 1-127, read more rapidly pages 128-210, and then with care pages 211-248 [PUS, DES]. Why do people participate in politics?

6. Electoral Politics (March 9)

Required (193 pages)

Morris P. Fiorina, *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized Electorate* (2005), pp. 1-113.

Larry M. Bartels, "The Impact of Electioneering in the United States," in David Butler and Austin Ranney (eds.), *Electioneering: A Comparative Study of Continuity and Change* (1992), pp. 244-277 [ECR]. What is known about campaigns and elections.

Larry M. Bartels and John Zaller, "Presidential Vote Models: A Recount," *PS* (2001), pp. 9-20 [ECR]. The 2000 presidential election.

Robert S. Erikson, Joseph Bafumi, and Bret Wilson, "Was the 2000 Presidential Election Predictable?" *PS* (2001), pp. 815-819 [ECR]. The 2000 presidential election revisited.

Robert S. Erikson and Gerald C. Wright, "Voters, Candidates, and Issues in Congressional Elections," in Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer (eds.), *Congress Reconsidered*, 7th ed. (2001), pp. 67-95 [ECR]. Explaining congressional elections.

7. Representation and Accountability (March 23)

Required (157 pages)

James A. Stimson, Michael B. MacKuen, and Robert S. Erikson, "Dynamic Representation," *American Political Science Review* (1995), pp. 543-565 [ECR]. A macro theory of representation.

Robert S. Erikson, Michael B. MacKuen, and James A. Stimson, "Presidential Approval," in their *The Macro Polity* (2002), pp. 29-75 [ECR]. Why do citizens approve or disapprove of a president's performance in office?

Gary C. Jacobson, "Elections, Representation, and the Politics of Congress," in his *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, 6th ed. (2004), pp. 219-258 [ECR]. What effects do elections have on the politics of Congress?

R. Douglas Arnold, "The Press and Political Accountability," in his *Congress, the Press, and Political Accountability* (2004), pp. 244-264 [ECR]. Does the press provide citizens with enough information to hold legislators accountable for their actions in office?

Stephen Ansolabehere, John M. de Figueiredo, and James M. Snyder, Jr., "Why Is There So Little Money in U.S. Politics?" *Journal of Economics Perspectives* (2003), pp. 105-130 [ECR]. Myths and realities about the role of money in American politics.

8. Agenda Setting (March 30)

Required (230 pages)

John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 2nd ed. (1995), pp. 1-230 [PUS, DES]. How does government decide which problems to attack?

9. Legislatures (April 6)

Required (235 pages)

R. Douglas Arnold, *The Logic of Congressional Action* (1990), pp. 3-193, 265-276 [PUS, DES]. What accounts for legislatures sometimes serving narrow and particularistic interests and sometimes serving more general interests?

Eric Patashnik, "After the Public Interest Prevails: The Political Sustainability of Policy Reform," *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions* (2003), pp. 203-234 [ECR]. Why do some reforms last while others are reverse?

10. Political Institutions (April 13)

Required (176 pages)

Keith Krehbiel, *Pivotal Politics: A Theory of U.S. Lawmaking* (1998), xiii-xvi, 3-164, 227-236 [PUS, DES]. What are the consequences of separation of powers and divided government?

Read the preface and chapters 1 and 2 with great care. The rest of the book contains some technical materials. Please do not get bogged down with the evidentiary details. Read these chapters for the overall argument, the nature of the evidence supporting it, and the ways in which the argument can be applied to the real world.

11. Courts (April 20)

Required (273 pages)

Gerald N. Rosenberg, *The Hollow Hope: Can Courts Bring About Social Change?* (1991), pp. 1-265, 336-343 [PUS, DES]. How much influence do courts have in the making of public policy?

12. Politics and Policy Making: Welfare Reform (April 27)

Required (230 pages)

Martin Gilens, *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Antipoverty Programs* (1999), pp. 1-79, 102-153, 174-216 [PUS, DES]. Explaining citizens' views on welfare.

Kent Weaver, "Ending Welfare as We Know It," in Margaret Weir, ed., *The Social Divide: Political Parties and the Future of Activist Government* (1998), pp. 361-416 [ECR]. Explaining welfare reform.