SOPA 200- Approaches to Social Policy
Fall 2017

Prof. Robert Stein T/Th 9:25-10:40
Hertzstein 202 TBA
Office Hours: T/Th 11 AM - 12 PM

Required texts:

- Frank Baumgartner and Bryan Jones, *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*
- David Weimer and Aidan Vining, *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice*
- Paul Peterson, *City Limits*
- Douglas Arnold, *The Logic of Congressional Action*

Assigned readings on Canvass course website

Course requirements:

- Quizes 25%
- Midterm examination: 25%
- First and second team written assignments: 25%
- Final team memo and presentation 25%

This course provides an introduction to the study and evaluation of public policy as practiced across and within different levels and types of governments. Policy making in United States is the principal, but not the exclusive focus of the course. Readings and lectures pertaining to comparative public policy and public policy in nonwestern societies are included in the course syllabus. Different models and theories of policy making serve as the focus of the first half of the course. The course will explore how different academic disciplines including, Anthropology, Economics, Political Science, Psychology and Sociology approach the study and evaluation of public policies.

For the first four weeks of the semester class will be devoted to discussing assigned readings. Students will be given periodic quizzes to complete during the first half of the course pertaining to course readings and lectures. At the end of the fifth week students will take a qualifying examination to test their understanding of the basic concepts and tools of the policy making process and alternative analytic approaches to policy making and evaluation. Starting in week six students will work in teams to evaluate current policies and proposals before the local, state and national governments. Each research team will complete a policy briefing memo and make a class presentation.

Any student with a documented disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with me during the first two weeks of class. All
discussions will remain confidential. Students with disabilities will need to also contact Disability Support Services in the Ley Student Center.

** Readings posted on course owlspace website

** Syllabus:

August 22 ,24 , 29, 31
Topics:
- Rationales for Public Policy (the economic perspective)
- Limits to Public Intervention
- Market failure and its correction
- A systems (biological) model of public policy

Readings:
- Weimer and Vining, chapters 4-8

September 5, 7, 12,14

Topic:
- Other disciplinary approaches to policy studies

Readings:
- Neil Smelser, A Theory of Collective Action

Topic: The trolley problem: Ethnical choices in public policy

Readings:

See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOpf6KcWYyw

See: http://www.trolleydilemma.com/

Topics:
Input and agenda setting (The Political Science perspective)

Readings:
Baumgartner and Jones, chapters 1-3

Topics
Conversion, output and implementation
Policy typologies: Distributive, redistributive, regulatory and allocational
Other policy models

Readings:
Baumgartner and Jones, chapters 4-8

Topics:
Policy making at the national level
Budgetary policy
Pork barrel politics
Mobilization and countermobilization
Interest group liberalism

Readings:
Arnold, chapters 1-6
**Stein and Bickers, "Congressional Elections and the Pork Barrel,"
**Bickers and Stein "The Congressional Pork Barrel in a Republican Era"
Baumgartner and Jones, chapters 9-12

September 19, 21
Topics:
Policy making at the subnational level
Tiebout's model
Federalism and Intergovernmental relations
Markets, privatization and service provision
Principal-agent models of public policy

Readings:
Peterson, chapters 1-5, 11

Midterm examination October 13 (tentative)
September 26,28
Topics:
Leander and Spring Branch Independent School District Bond Initiatives: A growing versus and Aging school district
Repeal and Replacement of the Affordable Care Act
Repeal of the City of Houston Revenue Cap
Texas state nullification of municipal ban of plastic grocery bags
Sanctuary City Legislation

Readings:
Assigned readings on class Owlspace website

October 3,5
Topics:
Sanctuary City Legislation
Repeal of straight ticket voting ballot option in Texas
Reform of Harris County bail system for low level/midemainer crimes
Vote by mail elections
Sexual harassment and sexual assault on college campuses

Readings:
Assigned readings on class Owlspace website

October 12
Topics:
Team meetings in class

First written assignment due November 12

October 17,19
Topics:
Team meetings

October 24,26
Topic:
Team meetings
Second written assignment due November 18

October 31, November 2, NO CLASS NOV. 24 (Thanksgiving break)
Topic:
Team meetings in class

November 7, 9
Topic:
Team presentations

November 14, 16

November 21

November 28, 30

Final written assignment: Due December 14

Policy briefing memo topics

Memos on the topics below will be assigned to student teams (4 students). The assignment is to write a memo to a specific person or group (e.g., U.S. Representative), from a person or group (e.g., professional health association), on a specific topic (e.g., recommendation for replacing Affordable Health Care Act). Your memo will be evaluated for its persuasiveness and understanding of the contemporary context in which the policy debate is under consideration as well as the positions, viewpoints and constraints each actor/group (i.e., memo author and recipient) operate under.

1. Leander and Spring Branch Independent School District Bond Initiatives: A growing versus and Aging school district
2. Repeal and Replacement of the Affordable Care Act
3. Repeal of the City of Houston Revenue Cap
4. Texas state nullification of municipal ban of plastic grocery bags
5. Sanctuary City Legislation
6. Repeal of straight ticket voting ballot option in Texas
7. Reform of Harris County bail system for low level/midemeanor crimes
8. Vote by mail elections
9. Sexual harassment and sexual assault on college campuses
Other topics to be announced