**PAUP 801: Theories of Public Policy**

**Old Dominion University**

**COURSE SYLLABUS**

**INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION**

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**COURSE OVERVIEW**

This seminar on public policy focuses extensively on theories of public policy. It does not cover everything. Our goal is to develop a solid understanding of theory and research bearing on important dimensions of policy and the policy process. What sorts of theories and models are available to describe and explain these processes? What evidence supports the theories and models? What theories of public policy might we be able to generate and how might we go about testing those theories? During our consideration of assigned readings, we want to maintain a critical attitude. That involves looking for shortcomings in theory, logic, and evidence in the materials, but it also involves asking how the materials can be extended in new directions to further enhance our knowledge of public policy.

A central objective of the course is to introduce students to major research dealing with public policy so that you will know and understand some of the most important and best work that is being done in the field. A second objective is to encourage you to develop your own research interests and skills. In other words, we want to promote scholarship, which is concerned with the development, testing, and application of theory.

Despite this central concern with theory and research, we do want to be attentive to the implications of theory and research for the practice and the implications of practice for theory and research. In a professional field such as public administration, these relationships are important. No matter what the subject matter for our weekly sessions, you will have a chance to pursue your policy interests. You can do that in your reflection essay and in your research. You can also do it by thinking about how the theories, concepts, and methods that show up in our literature are relevant to your policy interests.

In the small group of a seminar, everyone has an important role. All members of the seminar will be expected to contribute to our joint education. You can do this through presentations, leadership of discussions, and active involvement in discussions. The seminar will work to the extent that everyone plays her or his role. The purpose of this seminar is to examine the theoretical bases upon which public policy discussions take place, both at the formulation and implementation stages of the policy process. Such an undertaking will require careful preparation and thought on the part of all seminar participants- there will be no “free rides,” and students should not come to class expecting to be “lectured to,” but rather prepared to be equal partners in this process.

Our intent in this semester is to delve into both the classic and cutting-edge debates in the field of public policy. Some of the material can seem confusing; I thus encourage you to seek help or advice outside of class, as needed. I will have office hours available prior to class, and I will do my best to accommodate those of you that need to speak with me at other times. An excellent means to communicate with me for more straightforward questions is by email; I check email several times each day, and will be able to respond quickly. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or issues you might have.

**Critical Questions**

For all the readings and topics covered in the seminar, I expect you to think critically about the contributions of the authors and their research to our understanding of public policy. As such, I expect you to think about the theories and research not just as standalone entities, but also in the context of the course and public policy as a whole. Some critical questions we shall focus on in our discussions are:

* What are we trying to explain?
* How are we trying to explain it?
* What are the key concepts and theoretical propositions?
* What are the key assumptions?
* Do the measures fit the concepts? (if applicable)
* Is the research design sufficient? (if applicable)
* How does the theory or research extend our current knowledge?

**COURSE GRADING**

Grading for this course will be based on five components:

1. Policy reflection essay 5%
2. Policy review 15%
3. Policy theory literature review 15%
4. Research proposal 25%
5. Participation 20%
6. Seminar leadership 20%

Points Letter Grade

93-100 A

90-92 A-

87-89 B+

83-86 B

80-82 B-

77-79 C+

70-76 C

< 70 F

**Written Assignments**

As a doctoral seminar, this course is designed as both an oral- and written-intensive course. Written assignments will include:

* One three-page policy reflection essays that is due at the beginning of the semester. This essay is a reflection of your policy interests and what you hope and expect to get out of the course.
* Policy review that discusses key issues in your policy area of interest. This review should (1) identify a policy area, (2) review the literature pertaining to this policy area, and (3) identify key questions to be addressed by researchers and policymakers in the area. Ultimately, the purpose of the policy review is to determine the foundational question for your research.
* Preparation of a literature review examining a policy theory that may be relevant for answering questions identified in your policy review. The literature review should provide background of the theory, including the development of the theoretical and empirical literature. The goal of this policy theory literature review is to help you develop a theoretical framework for your proposed empirical research. It should identify the major contributions in the area, discuss ambiguities in the theories, concepts and models; identify strengths and weaknesses in the literature; and how the theories, concepts, and methods that show up in the literature are relevant to your policy interest.
* Research proposal that builds on your policy and literature reviews. Written proposals should be 20–30 pages long. The proposal should not only convince readers of the need and importance of the research idea to be investigated, but also to highlight the viability of the research. The research proposal will have three components: a section reviewing key policy issues, a theory (or conceptualization) section, and an empirical research outline. The empirical research outline should be sufficiently detailed that it could be given to another graduate student who could then execute the research.

**Participation, Seminar Leadership and Class Discussion**

A significant portion of your course grade will be based on your in-class performance.

There are two important elements to this performance: quality of participation, and quantity of participation. While a little quality can go a long way, quantity cannot be a substitute for quality. It should also be evident that one must be present in order to participate. While there is no explicit attendance policy attached to this course, and conflicts can and do arise, absences will necessarily detract from your participation grade. If you know ahead of time that you must miss a class meeting, notification will help offset the impact of that absence.

In order to maximize your performance, it is imperative that you arrive at the class meeting with all assigned readings completed, and prepared to discuss the material in significant detail. I also encourage you to give thought to the material, and attempt to place the ideas in broader context of knowledge and practice. The outcome of this thought should be judgments about the utility and value of the ideas in the readings, and their potential for application to both theory and practice. Many of the ideas we will explore this semester are complex; our job during our class meetings will be to “demystify” the ideas. Do not be discouraged if the readings initially do not make sense to you, but come to class prepared to pose questions and to seek answers. The fundamental notion of the seminar format is that all participants (including the instructor) learn together, so we will seek answers collectively and consider the seminar (not just the instructor) as the source of learning.

Student will be assigned regular leadership of class discussion of assigned readings. For each class section two students will be assigned to lead the class discussions. For your seminar leadership, you should be prepared to:

* Quickly summarize the reading.
* Identify the critical issues of theory and research that it addresses,
* Critique it by discussing strengths and weaknesses of the theory or analysis,
* Indicate possible extensions of the theory or analysis,
* Lead your colleagues in a discussion related to the readings.

Please note that all participation grades are earned; in other words, it is assumed that all students start at a grade of “0” and earn the grade; you do not start at “100” and have points deducted for lack of participation.

**TEXT AND READINGS**

The readings for this course will involve book chapters and journal articles. Most journal articles are available through the ODU library. There are two required books:

Birkland, Thomas A. 2005. *An Introduction to the Policy Process: Theories, Concepts, and Models of Public Policy Making.* M.E. Sharpe. (B)

Sabatier, Paul A. 2007. *Theories of the Policy Process.* Westview Press. (S)

Additional book chapters are included in a coursepack available for purchase from the bookstore. Readings from the coursepack are labeled (C) in the reading list.

**ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**

Violations of the academic honest code will be dealt with in the strictest terms. Students are advised to become familiar with the university and the college academic honesty code. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that both the *letter* and *intent* of this code are met in all circumstances**. Ignorance of this code, or of proper rules of citation, provides no defense.** My policy concerning enforcement of this code is inflexible; no exceptions will be made. There is absolutely no excuse at the Ph.D. level of study to tolerate academic misconduct or dishonesty. I will be happy to answer any questions you might have regarding this policy or about proper rules of citation.

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

1. **Introduction**

* DeLeon, Peter. 2008. The historical roots of the field. In *The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy*. Moran, Michael, Martin Rein & Robert E. Goodin (eds.), New York: Oxford University Press. p. 39-57 (C)
* Etzioni, Amitai. 2008. The unique methodology of policy research. *The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy*. Moran, Michael, Martin Rein & Robert E. Goodin (eds.), New York: Oxford University Press. p. 833-843 (C)
* Smith, Kevin B. & Larimer, Christopher W. 2009. Chapter 1: Public policy as a concept and a field (or fields) of study. In *The Public Policy Theory Primer*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. p. 1-25. (C)
* Sabatier, Paul A. 1991. Political Science and public policy. *Political Science and Politics* 24(2): 144-147
* Radin, Beryl. 1997. Presidential address: The evolution of the policy analysis field: From conversations to conversations. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 2: 204-218.

1. **The Policy Process**

* Birkland, Thomas A. 2005. *An Introduction to the Policy Process: Theories, Concepts, and Models of Public Policy Making.* M.E. Sharpe. (B)

Policy Reflection Essay due

1. **Theory and Theorizing**

* Sutton, Robert I. & Staw, Barry M. 1995. What theory is not. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 40(3): 371-384.
* DiMaggio, Paul J. 1995. Comments on “What theory is not.” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 40(3): 391-397.
* Weick, Karl E. 1995. What theory is not, theorizing is. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 40: 385-390.
* Van de Ven, Andrew. 1989. Nothing is quite so practical as a good theory. *Academy of Management Review* 14(4): 486-489.
* Rapoport, Anatol. 1958. Various meanings of theory. *American Political Science Review* 52: 972-988.
* Whetten, David A. 1989. What constitutes a theoretical contribution? *Academy of Management Review* 14(4): 490-495.

1. **Introduction to Policy Theories**

* Hill, Kim Quaile. 1997. In Search of Policy Theory. *Policy Currents, the Newsletter of the Public Policy Section of APSA* April:
* Sabatier Paul A. 2007. The need for better theories. In *Theories of the Policy Process.* Sabatier, Paul A. (ed.), Westview Press. p. 3-17. (S)
* Theodolou, Stella Z. 1995. How public policy is made. In *Public Policy: The Essential Readings.* Theodolou, Stella Z. and Cahn, Matthew (eds.), Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. pp. 86-96. (C)
* McCool, Daniel C. The theoretical foundation of policy studies. In McCool, Daniel C. *Public Policies, Theories, Models, and Concepts.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: prentice-Hall.p. 1-27. (C)

1. **Policy Typologies**

* Lowi, Theodore J. American business, public policy, case studies, and political theory. In McCool, Daniel C. *Public Policies, Theories, Models, and Concepts.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.p. 177-181. (C)
* Lowi, Theodore J. 1972. Four systems of policy, politics, and choice. *Public Administration Review* 33: 298-310.
* Greenberg, George, Jeffrey Miller, Lawrence Mohr, & Bruce Vladeck. 1977. Developing public policy theory: Perspectives from empirical research. *American Political Science Review* 71(December): 1532-1543.
* Spitzer, R.J. 1987. Promoting policy theory: Revisiting the arenas of power. *Policy Studies Journals* 15: 675-689.
* Steinberger, Peter J. 1980. Typologies of public policy: Meaning construction and the policy process. *Social Science Quarterly* 61: 185-197
* Smith, Kevin B. 2002. Typologies, taxonomies and the benefits of policy classification. *Policy Studies Journal* 30: 379-395.
* Howlett, Michael. 1991. Policy instruments, Policy styles, and policy implementation. *Policy Studies Journal* 19(2): 1-21.

Policy Review Due

1. **Policy Process**

* Easton, David. 1957. An approach to the analysis of political systems. *World Politics* 9: 383-400.
* Ripley, Randall B. Stages of the policy process. In McCool, Daniel C. *Public Policies, Theories, Models, and Concepts.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: prentice-Hall.p. 157-162. (C)
* Nakamura, Robert. 1987. The textbook policy process and implementation research. *Policy Studies Review* 7(2): 142-154.
* DeLeon, Peter. 1999. The stages approach to the policy process: What has it done? Where is it going? In Sabatier, Paul A. (ed.) *Theories of the Policy Process* (BlackBoard)
* Lindblom, Charles E. 1959. The science of “muddling through.” *Public Administration Review* 19(2): 79-88.
* Schulman, Paul R. 1975. Nonincremental policymaking. *American Political Science Review* 69: 1354-1370.

1. **Issues and Agenda**

* Ingram, Helen, Schneider, Anne L. & deLeon, Peter. 2007. Social construction and policy design. In *Theories of the Policy Process.* Sabatier, Paul A. (ed.), Westview Press. p. 93-126. (S)
* Sharp, Elaine B. 1994. The dynamics of issue expansion: Cases from disability rights and fetal research controversy. *The Journal of Politics* 56(4): 919-939.
* Cobb, Roger, Ross, Jennie-Keith & Ross, Marc. 1976. Agenda building as a comparative political process. *American Political Science Review* 70: 126-138
* Jacoby, William G. 2000. Issue framing and public opinion on government spending. *American Journal of Political Science* 44(4): 750-767.
* Stone, Deborah A. 1989. Causal stories and the formation of policy agendas. *Political Science Quarterly* 104(2): 281-300.
* Birkland, Thomas A. 1998. Focusing events, mobilization, and agenda setting. *Journal of Public Policy* 18(1): 53-74.

1. **Policy Change**

* Zahariadis. Ambiguity, Time and Multiple Streams – Problems, Solutions and Streams). In *Theories of the Policy Process.* Sabatier, Paul A. (ed.), Westview Press. p. 3-17. (S)
* Kingdon, John W. *Agenda setting.* In *Public Policy: The Essential Readings.* Theodolou, Stella Z. and Cahn, Matthew (eds.), Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. pp. 105-113. (C)
* True, James L., Jones, Bryan D. & Baumgartner, Frank R. 2007. Punctuated-equilibrium theory: Explaining stability and change in public policymaking. In *Theories of the Policy Process.* Sabatier, Paul A. (ed.), Westview Press. p. 155-188. (S)
* Berry, Frances Stokes & Berry, William D. 2007. Innovation and Diffusion Models in Policy Research. In *Theories of the Policy Process.* Sabatier, Paul A. (ed.), Westview Press. p. 223-260. (S)
* Blomquist, William. 2007. The policy process and large-N comparative studies. In *Theories of the Policy Process.* Sabatier, Paul A. (ed.), Westview Press. p. 261-289. (S)
* Adam, Silke & Kriese, Hanspeter. 2007. The network approach. In *Theories of the Policy Process.* Sabatier, Paul A. (ed.), Westview Press. p. 129-154. (S)
* Marsh, David & Smith, Martin. 2000. Understanding policy networks: Towards a dialectical approach. *Political Studies* 48: 4-21.
* Dowding, Keith. 1995. Model or metaphor? A critical review of the policy network approach. *Political Studies* 43: 136-159.
* Sabatier, Paul A. & Weible, Christopher M. 2007. The advocacy coalition framework: Innovations and clarifications. In *Theories of the Policy Process.* Sabatier, Paul A. (ed.), Westview Press. p. 189-220. (S)

1. **Policy Actors**

* Cahn, Matthew A. The players: Institutional and noninstitutional actors in the policy process. In *Public Policy: The Essential Readings.* Theodolou, Stella Z. and Cahn, Matthew (eds.), Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. pp. 201-211. (C)
* Kelso, William. Three types of pluralism. In McCool, Daniel C. *Public Policies, Theories, Models, and Concepts.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.p. 41-55. (C)
* Mills, C. Wright. The power elite. In *Public Policy: The Essential Readings.* Theodolou, Stella Z. and Cahn, Matthew (eds.), Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. pp. 72-85. (C)
* May, Peter J. 1991. Reconsidering policy design: Policies and publics. *Journal of Public Policy* 11(2): 187-206.
* Mitchell, William. Fiscal behavior of the modern democratic state: Public choice perspectives and contributions. In McCool, Daniel C. *Public Policies, Theories, Models, and Concepts.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: prentice-Hall.p. 125-142. (C)
* Ostrom, Elinor. 2007. Institutional rational choice: An assessment of the institutional analysis and development framework. In *Theories of the Policy Process.* Sabatier, Paul A. (ed.), Westview Press. p. 21-64. (S)
* Kenneth Shepsle. 1989. Studying Institutions: Some Lessons from the Rational Choice Approach. *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 1: 131-147
* Jordan, A.G. 1990. Sub-governments, policy communities, and networks. *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 2: 319-338.
* Hamm, Keith E. 1983. Patterns of influence among committees, agencies, and interest groups. *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 8(3): 379-426.
* Heclo, Hugh. Issue networks and the executive establishment. In *Public Policy: The Essential Readings.* Theodolou, Stella Z. and Cahn, Matthew (eds.), Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. pp. 46-58. (C)

1. **Policy Implementation**

* Sabatier, Paul A. and Mazmanian, Daniel. 1980. The implementation of public policy: A framework for analysis. *Policy Studies Journal* 8: 538-560. (TC)
* Sabatier, Paul A. 1986. Top-down and bottom-up approaches to implementation research: A critical analysis and suggested synthesis. *Journal of Public Policy* 6(1): 21-48.
* Goggin, Malcolm, Bowman, Ann O’M., Lester, James & O’Toole, Laurence. 1990. *Implementation Theory and Practice: Towards a Third Generation*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman/Little, Brown. Chapters 1 & 2. (BlackBoard)
* Hill, Michael. 1997. Implementation theory: Yesterday’s issue? *Policy and Politics* 25(4): 375-385
* O’Toole, Laurence J. 2004. The theory-practice issue in policy implementation research. *Public Administration* 82(2): 309-329