Overview
This course is about how institutions in the American political system shape public policy. It will examine some of the key actors and institutions that develop public policy and the ways in which policy analysis bears on policy development. We will consider several venues for policymaking – including agenda setting, legislation, interest group activity, judicial review, bureaucratic policymaking and regulation – and the role of policy analysis in those venues. In the context of these venues, we will explore several different American public policy domains in detail including health care insurance, tobacco regulation, national security and financial regulation. This course, however, will afford you plenty of room to draw on your own policy experience, background, and interests as you consider other policy domains and levels of government in the course of classroom discussions and in your written work.

Throughout the course, we will consider political actors’ motivations and their incentives to use or ignore policy analysis. Doing so will help you learn how to identify competing interests and institutional constraints that arise with any issue and that you will likely confront in policy related careers. The assignments are designed to help you apply the concepts we encounter in our readings and discussions to timely policy problems and think critically about the institutions that shape and constrain public policy and policy analysis.

Course Requirements
Course requirements include carefully reading all weekly assignments before class, outstanding attendance and participation, four short writing assignments, one oral presentation, and a final paper.
3 Short Memos: 45%
Class Participation: 25%
Final Project: 20%
Final Presentation: 10%
All papers should contain accurate and appropriate sources and citations. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please consult the Brown University Code of Conduct.

Short Memos
Our class is divided up into three substantive sections: (1) Agendas and interest groups; (2) Legislative policymaking; (3) Judicial and Bureaucratic policymaking

You are required to submit one short memo for each of the three substantive sections (for a total of 3 memos).
*Agendas and interest groups: last possible date to submit memo #1 is September 27
*Legislative policymaking: last possible date to submit memo #2 is October 25
*Judicial/Bureaucratic policymaking: last possible date to submit memo #3 is November 15
Each memo should include no more than 5 pages of text, double-spaced (endnotes and references do not count toward your page total). Each week’s list of required reading (below) ends with a policy question or puzzle for you to consider as you read the material. Your memo should address that question or puzzle, integrate the readings and apply them to a current policy problem. Unless otherwise indicated, you must identify real organizations, issues and individuals for the assignments. Memos should be formatted such that the first page provides all relevant information in an executive summary with supplementary details and theory presented in subsequent pages or endnotes. Hard copies of short memos are due in class at the beginning of the class in which we are discussing the required readings that are the topic of your memo. Your grade for late memos will be lowered by one full letter grade for each day it is late.

You may re-write the first memo you submit for the course. I will average the two grades as part of your final grade. Re-writes of the first memo are due no later than October 11.

Final Paper
Your final paper will be done as a group project with two other students of your choosing. Unlike the shorter memos, the final paper will be a longer (no more than 15 pages, double-spaced) policy brief targeted at a broader audience than your memos. The topic will be a current policy issue of your choosing but will be subject to approval by the instructor no later than November 15. The paper should integrate the concepts you’ve learned throughout the course as you target your brief toward a Congressional committee, leadership of a bureaucratic agency, or a particular advocacy organization. Your paper should also advance a strategy for moving policy forward. To present a good strategy you will need to integrate the concepts we’ve covered in this class, and pay particular attention to the incentives of key political actors with whom you must engage and the institutional constraints you must navigate to advance your policy objective.

The paper should be no more than 15 pages long, double-spaced, and is due on December 15 at noon via email to evan.schnidman@gmail.com. Any paper received after that date and time will be lowered by 1 full letter grade each day it is late. No papers will be accepted after December 18.

Group Presentations
Each group working on the final paper will give a 15-minute group presentation about your paper in the final class. This means that all research for the paper will need to be completed before your presentation and many groups will benefit from having completed draft as well. The goal of these presentations to inform your peers about your research topic and to get feedback on the material you present so that you can make improvements to the paper before the final draft is due.

Class Participation
Our class will benefit greatly from active participation from all class members. The unique analysis and personal experiences that each of you contributes to the discussions will help educate the rest of us. Class participation consists of the following components: (1) submitting a question about the week’s readings to me (evan.schnidman@gmail.com) each Wednesday by 8pm; (2) attending class; (3) engaging regularly in class discussions. Using laptops/phones during our class for purposes unrelated to the class (such as checking email or working on projects for other classes) will interfere with class discussion and will lower your class participation grade. If you miss a class, please obtain class notes from one of your classmates. I will be presenting material each week that will be important both for your short memos and your final paper.
Course Materials
There are 6 required books for this course. The following 6 are available for purchase at the Brown Bookstore:


An seventh book is recommended:

I have assigned 3 chapters from this book. In accordance with copyright laws, I may post only 1 chapter on our MyCourse site. You may purchase the book at the bookstore to read the additional chapters or read the copy of the book available through library reserves. Individual book chapters and articles are posted on the class MyCourse site. Books will also be on Reserves at the Rockefeller library.

A Note about the Class Schedule
You are in a policy program, so at the beginning of EVERY CLASS we will spend a significant amount of time discussing current events in policy and politics. This means that in addition to assigned readings you are expected to read the news daily, if not more frequently. I strongly suggest consulting multiple news sources each day (preferably including some geographic and ideological diversity) to ensure you are getting a complete and well-rounded view of the current events. We will be discussing these events in reference to the other material covered in class to ensure that you are utilizing the skills you are learning to examine and analyze policy issues.

Class Schedule

Course Introduction
(September 6)
NOTE: No readings for today, but please be up-to-date on current events.
Introductions
Course Overview
Explanation of Assignments
Brief Introduction to the U.S. Political System
Discussion of Current Events
Lesson in Writing for Public Policy
I. Agenda Setting and Interest Groups

Agenda Setting: Problems and Alternatives
(September 13)

Theory
*Tracy Sulkin “Issue Politics in Congress-Excerpts” (Reader)
*Gary Cox and Matthew McCubbins “Setting the Agenda” (Reader)

Practice
*Deborah Stone, Chapter 7 “Numbers” in *Policy Paradox*

Memo Assignment Due September 13:
Choose a public interest group and a policy issue relevant to that group which received a bit of attention during the 2010 campaign, but has not yet received legislative action beyond some committee attention. Your organization is developing its priorities for the 113th Congress, and you have been asked to draft a memo on the likelihood that the policy issue you have identified will appear on the legislative agenda in 2013. Your memo should address: Who is paying attention to this issue (other interest groups? elected officials? State officials?)? Can you identify anyone who might serve as a policy entrepreneur for the issue? Do you foresee a catalyzing event that might help put the issue on the agenda? Why do you think this issue is more/less likely to attract agenda space than other issues?

Interest Groups: Coalitions, Identity, and Lobbying
(September 20)

Theory
*Richard Hall and Frank Wayman “Buying Time: Moneyed Interests and the Mobilization of Bias in Congressional Committees” (Reader)
*John Wright “Legislative Lobbying”-Excerpt (Reader)
*Steven Ansolabehere and James Snyder-Why is There so Little Money in U.S. Politics? (MyCourse)

Practice
*Deborah Stone, Chapter 9 “Interests” in *Policy Paradox*. (OPTIONAL)

NOTE: only Chapter 7 is on MyCourse. You may obtain the other chapters by: purchasing the book, borrowing the book from Reserves, borrowing my copy of the book and making your own copies.

Memo Assignment Due September 20:
You work for an interest group that cares about a policy that is currently receiving or is likely to receive Congressional attention. Your boss has asked to you develop a strategy for building a
coalition of organized interests and legislators that will advance the group’s interest for this policy. In your memo, identify: which coalitions are likely, which are unlikely, what aspects of the proposed legislation bring together, or push apart the coalitions, and what forms of lobbying might contribute to the coalition?

Policy Images and Frames (September 27)
Theory
*James Druckman-The Implications of Framing Effects for Citizen Competence (MyCourse)

Practice

Memo Assignment Due September 27:
You work for a political consulting firm. One of your firm’s clients is an advocacy organization (e.g., firm, trade association, public interest group) that cares about issue y [any issue you want]. She recently saw on television an issue advertisement sponsored by an opposing group that dealt with issue y. She has asked you to analyze the ad. What is the opposing group trying to accomplish with the ad? Who is the target audience? To what extent and why might it be effective? Please include or attach the internet link to the ad as part of your memo.

How to Make a Difference in Policy--Guest Speaker: Todd Patterson (Brown ’84) (October 4)
Theory
TBA
Practice
TBA
No Memo Assignment but ALL STUDENTS MUST BRING QUESTIONS TO CLASS!

II. Legislative Policymaking

Incentives of Legislators (October 11)
Theory
*David Mayhew “Congress: The Electoral Connection” (Reader)
*Richard Fenno “U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration” (Reader)

Practice
*R. Douglas Arnold, The Logic of Congressional Action, Chapters 3, 4 & 5 (Only Chapter 3 is on MyCourse. You may obtain the other chapters by: purchasing the book, borrowing the book from Reserves, borrowing my copy of the book and making your own copies).
Memo Assignment Due October 11
You work for a member of Congress who aspires to be a coalition leader for policy X (a policy issue currently on the governmental agenda). Applying Arnold’s Logic of Congressional Action and learning from the experience of health care reform, what legislative strategies hold promise of promoting the legislative change your boss envisions? What are the potential benefits/costs to your strategy? In what ways is it more promising than other potential strategies?

Why Nothing Gets Done in Congress
(October 18)
Theory
*Steven Smith, Jason Roberts, and Ryan Vander Wielen “Introduction to the Spatial Theory of Legislating” (Reader)
*Sarah Binder “The Dynamics of Legislative Gridlock” (Reader)
*Keith Krehbiel “Pivotal Politics: A Theory of U.S. Lawmaking” (Reader)

Practice
*NEWS STORIES TBD

Memo Assignment Due October 18:
Select an issue which has failed to gain traction in Congress over the last few years. As an advocate for that issue, provide a detailed strategy for how you intend to build a coalition in support of your issue. If you do not believe a coalition can be built given the current composition of Congress, explain what/who needs to change for your issue to cease being stuck in gridlock.

Methods of Influencing Policymaking
(October 25)
*McCubbins and Schwartz-Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols versus Fire Alarms (MyCourse)
*Jeffrey Talbert, Bryan Jones, and Frank Baumgartner “Nonlegislative Hearings and Policy Change in Congress” (Reader)

Practice
*Cornelius Kerwin, Rulemaking, Chapter 6.
*McNollGast-Administrative Procedures as Instruments of Political Control (MyCourse)

Memo Assignment Due October 25:
Imagine you work for a government agency that is in the process of reviewing rules based on major legislation passed in President Obama’s first two years (such as the Affordable Care Act or Dodd-Frank). The Secretary has asked you to identify and discuss one rule that you think would not survive in a prospective Romney administration. Write a memo summarizing what the rule does and the issues that appear most controversial, as revealed in the Federal Register and/or a committee
hearing. Given the prospective administration’s policies, should your boss revisit the rule and craft it such that it might remain in place? What are the advantages and disadvantages to revisiting the rule?

III. Judicial and Bureaucratic Policymaking

Lawmaking, Rulemaking and Judicial Review
(November 1)

Theory
*Larry Sabato “A More Perfect Constitution”
http://www.amoreperfectconstitution.com/23_proposals.htm
NOTE: Please examine the proposals on the website; you are not required to read the corresponding book.

Practice
*Martha Derthick, Up in Smoke, Chapters 3, 5, 8, 9, 10 & 11.

Memo Assignment Due November 1:
You are a staff member for Senator/Representative who is a conservative/liberal member of the Senate/House Judiciary Committee who often fulminates about liberal/conservative policy activism by the federal courts. A prominent constituent recently told him about the success of the liberal/conservative interest group (or public interest law firm), in litigation concerning issue/case y. Your boss is thinking about introducing legislation to supersede the court decision or to mitigate its effects. At this point, he simply needs a memo that very briefly describes the interest group’s agenda, the purpose of its suit, the reason why the interest group prevailed in court, and the policy implications of the decision. What options should your boss consider in addition to legislation? What are the benefits and costs of those options?

Structural Impediments to Policy
(November 8)

Practice
*Amy Zegart, Spying Blind (entire)

Memo Assignment Due November 8:
You are a member of a special government task force assigned to examine and propose ways to make government agency X [the agency of your choice] more efficient, effective and better coordinated with other agencies that perform similar missions. In your memo to the task force: (1) identify areas of the agency’s performance that need improvement; (2) suggest structural factors that contribute to those agency problems; (3) enumerate possibilities for improving agency performance; and (4) discuss the likelihood of achieving those changes. You may want to draw on the experience of the FBI and CIA to justify your argument.
Bureaucratic Decision-making in a Crisis  
(November 15)
Theory

Practice
*David Wessel. 2010. In Fed We Trust: Ben Bernanke’s War on the Great Panic. Three Rivers Press. (entire)*

Memo Assignment Due November 15: 
Imagine you are a staffer in a bureaucratic agency at the outset of a crisis. Provide a memo to your boss that explains the details of the crisis and provide a step-by-step strategy for handling the crisis. Be sure to include immediate bureaucratic policy steps, management of the press coverage and a strategy to deal with eventual Congressional oversight.

IV. The Role of Policy Analysis in American Institutions  
(November 29)
Theory meets Practice

No Memo Assignment Due.

V. Student Presentations  
(December 6)