

Syllabus
PPAI 2000
Institutions and Policymaking

Thursday 4:00-6:20

Evan Schnidman

evan.schnidman@gmail.com

Office Hours:

Thursday 2:00-4:00 or by appointment

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 is 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:

1. *The American Congress Reader*. 2008. Edited by Steven Smith, Jason Roberts, and Ryan Vander Wielen. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2. Andrea Campbell. 2003. *How Policies Make Citizens: Senior Citizen Activism and the American Welfare State*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
3. Markus Prior. 2007. *The Post-Broadcast Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
4. Martha Derthick. 2002. *Up in Smoke*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.
5. Wessel, David. 2010. *In Fed We Trust: Ben Bernanke's War on the Great Panic*. Three Rivers Press.
6. Amy B. Zegart. 2007. *Spying Blind: The CIA, the FBI and the Origins of 9/11*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

An seventh book is recommended:

- R. Douglas Arnold. 1990. *The Logic of Congressional Action*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
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)
- *John Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policy*, Chapter 8 "The Policy Window and Joining the Streams," p. 165-195. (MyCourse)

Practice

- *Deborah Stone, Chapter 7 "Numbers" in *Policy Paradox*
- *Frank Baumgartner and Bryan Jones. 1994. Attention, Boundary Effects and Large-Scale Policy Change in Air Transportation Policy. Chapter 3 in *The Politics of Problem Definition*, edited by David A. Rochefort and Roger W. Cobb. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, pp.50-66. (MyCourse)

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

- *Kenneth M. Goldstein, *Interest Groups, Lobbying and Participation in America*, Chapter 5 "Lobbying Decisions and the Health Care Reform Battle," pp.72-105. (MyCourse)
- *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

*Ted Brader. 2005. "Striking a Responsive Chord: How Political Ads Motivate and Persuade Voters by Appealing to Emotions." *American Journal of Political Science*. 49 (2), 388-405.

(MyCourse & OL)

*James Druckman-The Implications of Framing Effects for Citizen Competence (MyCourse)

Practice

*Markus Prior. 2007. *The Post-Broadcast Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (entire)

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).

**Volden and Wiseman. 2011. Breaking Gridlock: The Determinants of Health Policy Change in Congress. *The Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law* 36 (2) 227-264. (MyCourse)

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

*Groseclose and King 2000. Committee Theories Reconsidered.

*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

*John Cushman "Obama and Congress Point Fingers Over Jobs." New York Times. June 1, 2012.

*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

*Paul Posner, "The Politics of Preemption: Prospects for the States," *PS*, July 2005, p. 371-374. (MyCourse & OL)

*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

*George Krause 1994 "Federal Reserve Policy Decision Making: Political and Bureaucratic Influences" *American Journal of Political Science* 38 (1): 124-144 (MyCourse)

Practice

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

*Evan Schnidman 2011. Why The Federal Reserve Is Dodd-Frank's Big Winner. Harvard Business Law Review.

*Evan Schnidman 2012. Fed Inflation Goal is More Politics than Policy. Bloomberg News.

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

*J.A. Hird. 2005. Policy Analysis for What? *Policy Studies Journal* 33 (1): 83-105 (MyCourse)

*Nancy Shulock. 1999. The Paradox of Policy Analysis: If It Is Not Used, Why Do We Produce So Much Of It? *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 18 (2): 226-244 (MyCourse)

*Andrea Campbell. 2003. *How Policies Make Citizens: Senior Citizen Activism and the American Welfare State*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. (entire)

No Memo Assignment Due.

V. Student Presentations (December 6)