MPPA 5302 Decision Making for Public Policy
Fall 2016

Dr. Jon R. Taylor
Meeting Time: 8:10am – 9:35am TTH Malloy 022
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Phone: (713) 525-3856
Office Hours: MW: 7:00am – 8:00AM; 9:00am – 5:00pm; TTH: 7:00am – 8:00am;
9:30am – 10:30am; 12:30pm – 3:00pm; F: 7:00am – 8:00AM; 9:00am – 12:00pm
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Required Text:

None – You will provide me with a flash drive. In return, I will provide you with readings, lecture notes, and supplementary materials.

Course Description:

This is a core course in the Master of Public Policy and Administration Program. The objective of this course is to make the student a better producer, consumer, and evaluator of public policy analyses. It will strengthen decision-making ability and skills regarding public policy issues. The course does not focus on methodology per se, but rather looks at the results of methodology as they frame and shape public policy issues. Thus the focus of the course is on the role of managers and executives in systematically seeking, organizing and analyzing information to address policy problems.

Course Learning Objectives:

By the end of the course, students will:

• Discuss and identify various key concepts in the process of American public policymaking and the major steps from start to finish in the public policy process.
• Identify vital issues and specific areas of concern for contemporary American policymakers within the broad fields of economic, national security, public health, environmental, education, rural, and social policy.
• Identify key actors and agencies involved in the making of public policy within the United States and their respective roles in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of policy.
• Analyze the various political, social, economic, military, legal, and ethical goals and cultural values that form the basis of policymaking decisions.
• Explain the context, evolution, and linkages of specific policies and between certain polices within the broader context of American political history.
Exams and Grading:

There will be a comprehensive final exam, an analytical essay, and book/literature review for the class. The following is the grading breakdown for the course:

- Analytical essay: 30%
- Attendance and participation: 20%
- Policy memorandum: 15%
- Comprehensive exam: 35%

Students are expected to prepare thoroughly for each class session, to submit written materials on time, and to participate actively and constructively in class. Attendance is critical. All written work is expected to be of high quality. That is, it should be logically organized, complete, and lead the reader to a conclusion. Spelling, grammar, punctuation, proper referencing, and organization will be graded as well as content and presentation. All quotations and significant paraphrases should be properly cited.

Analytical Essay:

An analytical essay is required. The research will be due at the end of the term. A short summary of the essay topic and partial bibliography will be due by October 14, 2016. The completed analytical essay is due on December 5, 2016.

All work submitted must be typewritten and double spaced, using a 12 point font, with 1 inch margins on all four sides and properly footnoted. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade. The grading of the essay will be based on:

- Your ability to provide an analytical viewpoint on the topic to back up your opinions provided with research materials.
- Clarity and organization of the essay.
- Appropriate citations and reference throughout the essay (footnotes, bibliography, etc.).
- Correct grammar, spelling and form.
- **Unexcused late essays will be reduced by one-half a grade per day.**
- The analytical essay should between 15 – 20 pages in length.

Policy Memorandum:

A policy briefing memo is a concise, clear statement in memo-format that distills essential information for a policy maker/elected official. The goal of a policy brief is to highlight the most important information necessary for a busy policy maker to make a decision. Memos should all focus on a single problem or issue that you care deeply about.

Your policy briefing memo should include the following items:

- Summarize the policy problem and the pending policy decision
• Critically evaluate the political and policy context
• You may distill the principal arguments, or talking points, supporting different positions or policy options.
• You should provide a clear recommendation.

The memo will be due on December 5, 2016. Try to keep it to 3 – 4 pages in length, typewritten and single-spaced, using a 12 point font, with 1 inch margins on all four sides.

Class Rules:

• Attendance and participation is required and worth 20% of your overall grade
• Arriving late is strongly discouraged
• Reading course assignments is expected
• All Electronic devices are to be muted during class – period
• Showing respect to other students and the professor is expected
• Make up work will be limited to special circumstances (and with prior notification only)
• Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will result in a failing grade.

Attendance and Miscellaneous:

I rarely, if ever, take roll in class. That does not mean I fail to notice the lack of your presence in the classroom. On the contrary. With such intimate classes as offered at the University of St. Thomas, your absence is quite noticeable. I like to have you in class. I value your input. But I make the presumption that since you are in college that you are a reasonably responsible adult. It bothers me very little if you have found someone or something better than attending my class. Of course, it bothers me very little to flunk you as result of your finding that someone/something better. If you don’t show up for class and/or blow-off or do extraordinarily poor on the homework assignments, exams, and the article review, you may be looking at crime or a job in the fast food industry as a succinct alternative to the stresses of higher education.

Academic Integrity:

"It would have been better if he had never been born" – Mark 14:21.

All of the work you do in this course is expected to be your own. Absolutely no cheating or plagiarism (using someone else’s words or ideas without proper attribution) will be tolerated. Any cases of cheating or plagiarism will be handled according to university policy and reported to the University’s Academic Misconduct Committee.

As stated in the Academic Misconduct Code for the University of St. Thomas, academic misconduct includes: (a) cheating (using an authorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise), plagiarism, falsification of records, unauthorized possession of examinations, intimidation, and any and all other actions that may improperly affect the evaluation of a student’s academic performance or achievement; (b) assisting others in any such act; or (c) attempting to engage in such acts.
Plagiarism is using the work or another person and claiming it as your own. The most common types of plagiarism include:

- Using a paper or portion of a paper prepared by someone else;
- Quoting someone else’s language or words without proper quotation or citation; and
- Paraphrasing someone else’s ideas, framework, or insights without giving credit to the original author in a citation.

Academic misconduct in any form is unacceptable and suspected violations will be pursued aggressively.

**Students with Disabilities:**

If you have any condition, such as a physical, psychiatric/emotional, medical or learning disability, which will make it difficult for you to carry out the work as outlined in this syllabus, please notify me and the Office for Counseling and Testing Services in the first week of the course so that we may make appropriate arrangements. All information and documentation of disability is confidential. Course materials are available in alternative formats upon request.

**Schedule of Events (Subject to Change):**

Course Overview  
Public Policy: Identifying Issues and Problems  
Models of Public Policy-making  
The Changing Roles of Government  
People and Power in the Policy Process  
**Fall Break October 10 – 11th**  
**Analytical Essay Topic due October 14th**  
Use (and Misuse) of Research and Knowledge in Policy  
Policy Formulation in the Contemporary United States: Theory versus Practice  
Policy Formulation: Decision Making and Agenda Setting  
Impact of Institutional Design on Policy Formulation in America  
Problems with Implementation  
Outputs & Outcomes: Evaluation and Accountability Systems  
**Thanksgiving Break November 23 – 25th**  
Public Policy: To What End?  
Learning and Policy Change Over Time  
**Analytical Essays and Policy Memoranda due December 5th**  
**Final examination December 13th 8:00am – 10:30am**