

# PUBPOL 320: POLITICS, POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AND PUBLIC POLICY

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Graduate Student Instructors:

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<b>Lecture:</b>	Monday, 10.00am – 11.20am	<b>Classroom:</b>	1120 WEILL & See Zoom link on Canvas
<b>‘Meet Practitioner’ session:</b>	Wednesday, 10.00am – 11.20am	<b>Classroom:</b>	See Zoom link on Canvas
<b>Discussion section:</b>	Friday	<b>Classroom:</b>	1110/1120 WEILL See Zoom link on Canvas
<b>Office hours Cavaille :</b>	Monday, 12pm – 2pm Friday, 11am – 1pm	<b>Office:</b>	See sign up sheet on Canvas
<b>Office hours Kalumbi:</b>	Monday, 1pm – 2pm Thursday, 2.30pm – 4.30pm	<b>Office:</b>	See sign up sheet on Canvas
<b>Office hours Peisach:</b>	Tuesday, 11.30am – 1.00pm Thursday, 2.30pm – 4.00pm	<b>Office:</b>	See sign up sheet on Canvas

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## Course Overview

This class provides an introduction to how public policy is made, and by extension, not made, in the United States today. The class is divided into three parts. In the first part, we review the political and economic institutions that structure the policymaking process in the United States. These institutions are:

- a majoritarian electoral system, a presidential system and a polarized two-party system (week 2)
- a federal state that leaves a wide range of decisions about education, zoning and criminal justice to local elected authorities (week 3)
- a version of capitalism with winner-take-all outcomes (week 4)

You can think of these institutions as the fundamental rules of the game: if these institutions were to change, the game would look very different and, as we will discuss, so would policy outcomes. To help us in our inquiry, we will compare the state of affairs in the U.S. with that in other ‘advanced’ democracies, i.e. countries with well-developed democratic institutions and economies, like those in

Western Europe.

In the second part of the class, we cover concepts and analytic frameworks central to the study of the policy process. These concepts and frameworks are useful for understanding specific policy outcomes. They can also be used to participate in the policymaking process in an informed and more effective fashion (think of it as a tool box) . For example, you will learn how to:

- diagnose the type of policymaking situation you are dealing with based on the configuration of *de facto* stakeholders and mobilized interest groups (week 5)
- recognize collective action as a problem and identify ways to overcome it (week 6)
- make or break legislative coalitions in Congress (week 7 and week 8)
- identify policy feedback effects, i.e. the ways in which policies, once in place, can reshape the political landscape with important implications for future policymaking (week 9)

In the third part of the class we turn to advanced topics in the study of politics and public policy. In week 10, we discuss the complicated issue of public opinion, what it is, how it forms and whether or not it influences the policy making process. Then we turn to less ‘visible,’ yet fundamental, facets of politics and policy making. This is the part of the class where we discuss hard to pin down concepts such as ‘structural power’ and ‘powerlessness’ (week 13). We will also discuss the ‘hidden’ politics of bureaucratic rule making, and examine the complicated legal apparatus (so technical that it becomes invisible) that underpins wealth and income inequality in capitalist societies (week 11).

In week 12, we take a step back and, building on the material previously covered in class, we discuss possible ways to conceptualize policy stability and change in the United States. In the last class (week 14), we focus on the policy response to Covid 19, which has been complicated by political factors such as ideological polarization and low levels of trust in government. In addition, low interest rates and high levels of sovereign debt have left policymakers with little room to maneuver. We will briefly discuss the political origins of these macro-economic imbalances.

I will lecture about these concepts and frameworks in class and in online videos. Most importantly, you will learn about them through your readings, synchronous online group discussions, asynchronous online activities and memo writing.

Please be aware that to maintain the coherence of the course (and given recent events), I have decided to only covers *domestic* policy issues. Note however that the concepts you will learn apply to both domestic and international issues. The other important topic that did not make it on the syllabus is that of judicial politics. Students interested in that topic should reach out to me to discuss available courses at the University of Michigan.

## Learning Objectives

- Learn about the political institutions that enable and constrain policymaking in the United States
- Learn how to identify and evaluate strategies for advancing policy initiatives in different contexts
- Gain a critical understanding of the multiple dimensions of one major policy challenge (see semester-long assignment below)
- Enhance...
  - Analytic reasoning skills

- Ability to work in a group (semester-long assignment and practitioner interview assignment)
- Oral presentation skills (semester-long assignment and practitioner interview assignment)
- Writing skills (memo assignment)

## Readings

The following two books are required reading and cannot be accessed on line:

- Robert Kaiser, *Act of Congress*.
- Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law*.

All other readings are available as PDFs on Canvas, where you will also find lecture slides and online videos.

## Evaluation

You will be evaluated as follow:

- Participation in online sections and online activities (25%)
- Memo writing (three in total) (25%)
- Practitioner Q & A (10%)
- Semester-long assignment (40%)

## Discussion sections and online activities

Participation in the weekly Friday sections is mandatory. If you have to miss a section, please do let the GSIs know in advance. After two unjustified absences, you will automatically receive an D for the section participation share of your final grade. Only health and family reasons qualify as justified absences. Unfortunately, volunteering for a political campaign does not qualify as a justified absence.

## Decision Memos

You will write three policy memos of the kind you would actually write for a client or employer. Doing so in a professional way is an essential skill, and the GSIs and I will spend time helping you master it. Your final memo grade will mostly come from how you did on memos 2 and 3. Memo 1 is a practice memo to help you better understand the format and it will be graded pass/fail. Failure to turn in memo 1 (or failure to turn in something that looks like a memo) will result in a penalty, meaning that your final memo grade will be the combination of what you got for memo 2 and 3 minus the penalty. A pass means no penalty.

The topic for memo 1 will be decided by me. For the second memo, you will have the choice between two policy issues. For memo 3, you can chose the topic: it merely needs to connect in some fashion to the topic for your semester-long project. For more more information on this assignment, see the dedicated Canvas discussion thread.

## Practitioner interview (group work)

You will be in charge of leading a Wednesday Q & A session with a policy practitioner. I have identified policy practitioners willing to participate including the chief of staff for the Democratic caucus in the CO state assembly, a corporate lawyer, a former member of Congress and the Ford School Dean, Michael Barr. There will be 6 such session throughout the year. Each time, a different discussion section will be in charge of leading it.

The goal of this exercise is three-fold. First, you should use it as an opportunity to learn more about a given aspect of the policy making process. Second, the interview should speak to some of the issues discussed in class. Finally, the Q & A should generate insights on policy change in the issue area this practitioner is involved in (e.g. what they think, based on their experience, is the biggest barrier for reform on issue X). Remember, this is a course on *how* to get a policy change, not on which type of policy change is the best. For more more information on this assignment, see the dedicated Canvas discussion thread.

Note that, if this is not your turn to lead the Q & A session, you can still participate and ultimately ask questions through the chat. While participation is mandatory it is highly recommended: with the pandemic, you will have less opportunities this year to interact with practitioners.

### **Semester-long project (SLP)** (group work)

Week 14, you will present to a panel of three (myself, Vivian and Lauren) your findings from your semester-long project. For this project, you will work in groups of 4-5. Throughout the semester, you will be required to do regular check-ins following your group meetings. The check-ins are part of the final grade.

The SLP should be on one of the following issue areas:

- Unemployment insurance (UI)
- Parental leave
- Childcare
- Tax benefits for renter (versus home owners)
- Minimum wage
- Public higher education
- Gun control
- Prison/Criminal reform

You should also feel free to pitch me an alternative issue area. However, note that this needs to be done by the end of week 2.

This project proceeds in three steps. In the first few weeks of the semester, you will be asked to collectively agree on a specific question, one that is—in theory— answerable. To zoom in on this question, you will have to read reports and look at data. In the process of doing so, many puzzling patterns will jump at you. You need to pick one to focus on for the rest of the semester. Here are some examples:

- Why has there been no UI reform since the 1940s? Why are UI benefits higher in some states than others?
- Why is the U.S. the only country without country-wide paid parental leave? Why do some states have paid parental leave and others do not?

- Why are rents tax-deductible in some states and not others?
- Why has the federal minimum wage remained virtually unchanged? Why have some cities successfully passed local minimum wage ordinances and others have failed?
- Why is per capita funding for public higher education the same today as it was in the 1960s? Why is public funding for higher education higher in Illinois than in Michigan?
- What explains the absence of any major gun control legislation? (just pointing to the NRA is not a good enough answer)
- Why have some states done a 180 on mass incarceration?

Once you have agreed on a specific question, you will collectively brainstorm and research the possible answers to your question. Answers will need to be backed up with evidence. Finally, you will have to present your question, answer and evidence in 15 min or less. You can chose to do this presentation synchronously or submit it as a recording for the panel to review. You will also submit an individual 1 page memo reflecting on the collaboration process.

Note that this is NOT an assignment that can be done at the last minute. Failure to regularly work on this project throughout the semester is a recipe for disaster. For more more information on this assignment, see the dedicated Canvas discussion thread.

### **Note on Monday lectures**

Synchronous attendance of the Monday lecture is mandatory unless we have an agreement. A video of the lecture will be made available the following Tuesday for students in a different time zone.

## **Administrative and Organizational Details**

**Office Hours:** Due to their online format, office hours are by appointment only. You can make an appointment using Canvas (see Canvas' main landing page for a link).

**Emails:** All emails related to the structure and content of the class should be sent to Vivian or Lauren who will then forward to me any unanswered questions. If the answer is relevant to everyone, I will reply on the dedicated discussion thread. All other emails that are not class related should be sent directly to me (unless you want to directly email Vivian and Lauren of course) with the following email heading [PubPol 320: OTHER].

**Class website (Canvas):** This is first and foremost an online course that happens to have a synchronous in person lecture, so Canvas is where the action is at. Through Canvas, I have access to metadata that tells me how each of you are engaging with the website. I am not using this to 'spy' on you but to double check that you interact regularly with Canvas and that everyone is roughly on track. Note also that a fourth of your grade comes from readings, online assignments (often tied to the readings) and discussion sections.

### **Important organizational information:**

You have been assigned to three different groups:

- First group assignment (L1/L2/L3): This is your lecture group. Depending on the week, you will either be in class or online. Before coming to Weill hall, make sure that this is indeed your week to be in class.
- Second group assignment (DS1/.../DS6): This is your discussion section. It is also the group you will be working with for the practitioner interview. Depending on the week, your section will be either with me in person or with your assigned GSI (Vivian or Lauren) online. Before coming to Weill hall, make sure that this is indeed your week to be in class.
- Third group assignment (P1/P2/.../P18): This is your semester-long group assignment. Each group includes a maximum of 5 students. Quickly identify who the other students' in your group are so you can start working on the project ASAP.

## Schedule Overview: Assignments and Readings

- *Week 1 (lecture (L) : 08/31 - discussion section (DS): 09/04). Introduction*
  - This week is dedicated to introductions, organizational details and building a PubPol 320 community.

### Part 1. American Institutions

- *Week 2 (W: 09/09 - DS: 09/11). The Fundamental Rules of American Democracy*
  - Readings:
    - \* Rodden Jonathan. 2019. *Why Cities Lose: The Deep Roots of the Urban-Rural Political Divide*. Chap. 1 and 5.
  - Semester-long project (SLP): 1<sup>st</sup> check-in. By Sunday 5 pm, submit 1 page overview.
- *Week 3 (L: 09/14 - DS: 09/18). Federalism, Local Democracy and Racial Inequality*
  - Readings:
    - \* Richard Rothstein. 2017. *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*. Preface, Chap. 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8. See reading prompts on Canvas.
- *Week 4 (L: 09/21 - DS: 09/25). Economic Inequality, Politics and Public Policy*
  - **Decision Memo 1** due by Wednesday midnight.
  - Memo 1 peer review due by Sunday midnight.
  - Readings:
    - \* Miles Corak, “Income Inequality, Equality of Opportunity, and Intergenerational Mobility” in *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 27(3)
    - \* Jonas Pontusson. 2005. “Varieties of Capitalism” in *Inequality and Prosperity*.
  - Listen to the podcast *Nice White Parents*, focus on episodes 1, and 3 (I also recommend 5).

## Part 2. Policymaking in America: A Conceptual Tool Kit

- *Week 5 (L: 09/28 - DS: 10/02). Mapping the Lay of the Land: Stakeholders Analysis*
  - Readings:
    - \* Leah Cardamore Stokes. 2020. *Short Circuiting Policy: Interest Groups and the Battle Over Clean Energy and Climate Policy in the American States*. Chap. 4 and 5.
    - \* Listen to episode 760 of the podcast *Planet Money* titled “Tax hero.”
  - Semester-long project (SLP): 2<sup>nd</sup> check-in. By Sunday 5 pm, submit 1 page overview.
- *Week 6 (L: 10/05 - DS: 10/09). Politics and Collective Action*
  - Readings:
    - \* Vanessa Williamson and Theda Skocpol. 2016. *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*. Chapter 3.
    - \* Terry Moe. 1981. “Towards a Broader View of Interest Groups.” *The Journal of Politics* 43(2).
  - Wednesday 10 am: Meet-a-Practitioner session (1/6), Swathi Shanmugasundaram (DS 6).
- *Week 7 (L: 10/12 - DS: 10/16) and 8 (L: 10/19- DS: 10/23). Identifying Pivotal Players in the Legislative Process*
  - Readings:
    - \* Richard Kaiser. 2014. Act of Congress. We will read most of the book, focusing on chapters, 1, 3, 6, 7 (week 7 ) and then chapters 11 through 23 (week 8) (you can skim chapters 12, 15 and 20).
  - Wednesday 10 am: Meet-a-Practitioner session week 7 (2/6), Michael Barr (DS 5).
  - Week 7: **Decision Memo 2** due by Sunday midnight (10/18)
  - Wednesday 10 am: Meet-a-Practitioner session week 8 (3/6): Chris D’Angelo and Serena Villalba (DS 4).
- *Week 9 (L: 10/26 - DS: 10/30). When to Expect, and What to Expect from Policy Feedbacks?*
  - Readings:
    - \* Doug Massey and Karen Pren. 2010. “Unintended Consequences of US Immigration Policy: Explaining the Post-1965 Surge from Latin America”
    - \* Vesla Weaver and Amy E. Lerman. 2010. “Political Consequences of the Carceral State.”
  - Semester-long project (SLP): 3<sup>rd</sup> check-in. By Sunday 5 pm, submit 1 page overview.
  - Wednesday 10 am: Meet-a-Practitioner session (4/6): Kelly Watkins (DS 3).

## Part 3. Advanced Topics

- *Week 10 (L: 11/02 - DS: 11/06). Does Public Opinion Matter?*
  - Readings:
    - \* Lane Kenworthy. 2020. “The Effect of Public Opinion on Social Policy Generosity”
  - Wednesday 10 am: Meet-a-Practitioner session (5/6), David Trott (DS 2).
- *Week 11 (L: 11/09- DS: 11/13). The ‘Hidden’ Politics of Rulemaking and a Discussion on Legal Classification*

- Readings:
  - \* Katharina Pistor. 2019. *The Code of Capital*. Chap. 1, 3, 6 and 7.
  - \* Imanol Arrieta-Ibarra et al. 2018. “Should We Treat Data As Labor? Let’s Open Up the Discussion.”
  - \* TBD. Update on California Proposition 22 following November 3<sup>rd</sup> ballot. The proposition asks whether or not to keep Uber/Lyft drivers paid as independent contractors without benefits.
- Note that two of the Friday discussion sections(DS5 and DS6) will be held jointly on Wednesday (at 10 am). The two remaining 10 am discussion sections (DS1 and DS2) will be merged. Same for the two 1 pm (DS3 and DS4) sections. All sections will be led by Prof. Cavaille.
- **Week 12 (L: 11/16- DS: 11/20). How Does Change Happen? (or Not)**
  - Readings:
    - \* Edward Carmines and James Woods. 2002. “The Role of Party Activists in the Evolution of the Abortion Issue.”
    - \* Kristen Luker. 1995. “World Views of the Activists” in *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood*.
  - Wednesday 10 am: Meet-a-Practitioner session (6/6), David Harinton (DS 1)
  - **Decision Memo 3** due by Sunday midnight.
- **Week 13 (L: 11/31- DS: 12/04). Power and Powerlessness**
  - Readings:
    - \* John Gaventa. 1980. *Power and powerlessness : quiescence and rebellion in an Appalachian valley*. Chapter 6: ”Voting and vulnerability : issues and non-issues in local politics.”
    - \* Marius Busemeyer and Kathleen Thelen. 2020. “Institutional Sources of Business Power” in *World Politics* 72(3)
    - \* Jane F. McAlevey. 2016. “Nursing Home Unions Class Snuggle vs. Class Struggle” in *No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age*.
  - Semester-long project (SLP): 4<sup>th</sup> check-in. By Sunday 5 pm, submit 1 page overview.
  - Note that two of the Friday discussion sections(DS5 and DS6) will be held jointly on Wednesday (at 10 am). The two remaining 10 am discussion sections (DS1 and DS2) will be merged. Same for the two 1 pm (DS3 and DS4) sections. All sections will be led by Prof. Cavaille.
- **Week 14 (L: 12/07). Public Policy in Response to the Covid-19 Crisis**
  - No readings

## Please Read Carefully

**Ford School Public Health Protection Policy:** In order to participate in any in-person aspects of this course, including meeting with other students to study or work on a team project, you must follow all safety measures mandated by the State of Michigan, the University of Michigan and the Ford School. This includes maintaining physical distancing of six feet from others and properly wearing a face covering at all times while on campus. In addition, it is expected that you will protect and enhance the health of everyone in the Ford School community by staying home and following self-isolation guidelines if you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19, have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, are awaiting a test result, or have engaged in a higher-exposure activity such a flying or attending an indoor social gathering of more than 10 people. If you are unable or unwilling to adhere to all prescribed safety measures, you will be accommodated through remote access to all aspects of this course. Additional information on public health safety measures is described in the Wolverine Culture of Care and the University's Face Covering Policy for COVID-19.

[https://campusblueprint.umich.edu/uploads/Wolverine\\_Culture\\_of\\_Caresign\\_8.5x11\\_UPDATED\\_071520.pdf](https://campusblueprint.umich.edu/uploads/Wolverine_Culture_of_Caresign_8.5x11_UPDATED_071520.pdf)

<http://ehs.umich.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/U-M-Face-Covering-Policy-for-COVID-19.pdf>

**Ford School Inclusivity Statement:** Members of the Ford School community represent a rich variety of backgrounds and perspectives. We are committed to providing an atmosphere for learning that respects diversity. While working together to build this community we ask all members to:

- share their unique experiences, values and beliefs
- be open to the views of others
- honor the uniqueness of their colleagues
- appreciate the opportunity that we have to learn from each other in this community
- value one another's opinions and communicate in a respectful manner
- keep confidential discussions that the community has of a personal (or professional) nature
- use this opportunity together to discuss ways in which we can create an inclusive environment in Ford classes and across the UM community

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** If you believe you need an accommodation for a disability, please let your instructor know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of courses may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make your instructor aware of your needs, they can work with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office to help determine appropriate academic accommodations. Any information you provide will be treated as private and confidential.

**Student Mental Health and Well-Being Resources:** The University of Michigan is committed to advancing the mental health and wellbeing of its students. We acknowledge that a variety of issues, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, and depression, directly impact students' academic performance. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services are available. For help, contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) and/or University Health Service (UHS). For a listing of other mental health resources available on and off campus, visit the third link below:

<https://caps.umich.edu/>

<https://uhs.umich.edu//mentalhealthsvcs>

<https://uhs.umich.edu/stressresources>.

**Academic Integrity:** The Ford School academic community, like all communities, functions best when its members treat one another with honesty, fairness, respect, and trust. We hold all members of our community to high standards of scholarship and integrity. To accomplish its mission of providing an optimal educational environment and developing leaders of society, the Ford School promotes the assumption of personal responsibility and integrity and prohibits all forms of academic dishonesty, plagiarism and misconduct. Academic dishonesty may be understood as any action or attempted action that may result in creating an unfair academic advantage for oneself or an unfair academic advantage or disadvantage for any other member or members of the academic community. Plagiarism involves representing the words, ideas, or work of others as one's own in writing or presentations, and failing to give full and proper credit to the original source. Conduct, without regard to motive, that violates the academic integrity and ethical standards will result in serious consequences and disciplinary action.

Please review additional information and policies regarding academic expectations and resources at the Ford School of Public Policy at this link: <http://fordschool.umich.edu/academics/expectations>.