

## **Public Affairs 874: The Policy-Making Process**

*Professor Graham K. Wilson*

The object of this course is to familiarize you with perspectives on policy making in the United States. It follows from this that we are concerned with both the specifically *American* aspects of policy making and more general issues that arise in making policy in any modern democratic system. There are aspects of the political culture and institutions that are unique to the United States that have important consequences for policy making; to take one obvious example, the Congress matters far more in making policy than does Parliament in the UK. Yet American policy makers also struggle with problems such as the consequences of policy decisions made in the past (path dependency) that are familiar to their counterparts in other democracies. We start with issues arising from the American setting of policy making, then explore more general issues and conclude the course with an exploration of some specific policies.

We are particularly concerned to explore the nature of *constraints* that operate on policy makers. As we shall see, these constraints are far from being merely economic in nature. In spite of all the barriers to change, public policy is not static. We are therefore also concerned with how and when policy makers can overcome the constraints under which they operate. In one of the major assignments for the course you will be part of a team that identifies key constraints in a policy field of your choice.

### ***Course Requirements***

#### **1) Midterm (50% of grade)**

You will have a take-home midterm due on 11/6. You will be tested on all of the material on “The American System” covered through 10/30.

#### **2) Paper and Presentation (50% of grade)**

You will write and present a group paper. You will have the opportunity to choose your groups of five or six based on your policy interests. The paper should be about 20 pages and is due on 12/4. The presentations will be held on 12/4 and 12/11 and should be about 15 minutes in length.

Your assignment is to pick a policy area and write about the constraints (especially the *political* constraints) that inhibit policy change in that area. In essence, you will be drawing on material from the first part of the course and applying it to a policy area in which you and your group members are interested.

### ***Course Outline and Readings:***

The Following books are mandatory and are available at the ***University Bookstore:***

- Baumgartner, Frank R. and Jones, Brian D. 1993. *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Kingdon, John. 1984. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Wilson, Graham K. 1998. *Only In America? American Politics in Comparative Perspective*. Chatham House Publishers.

All other required readings not in these books are available in a reading packet sold through the ***Law School Copy Shop.***

## **I. The American System**

### **Week #1, 9/4/06: Labor Day**

#### **Week #2, 9/11/06: What is Public Policy?**

- Peters, Chapter 1: What is Public Policy?

#### **Week #3, 9/18/06: American Culture/Exceptionalism**

- Steinmo, Sven. 1995. "Why is Government So Small in the U.S.?" *Governance*
- Wilson, Graham K. *Only In America? American Politics in Comparative Perspective*, Chatham House Publishers.
- Smith, Tom W. 2001. "Trends in National Spending Priorities, 1973-2000. General Social Survey National Opinion Research Center.
- Glazer, Nathan. 2003. "On Americans & Inequality." *Daedalus*.
- Miscellaneous American public opinion poll results

#### **Week #4, 9/25/06: Policymaking Institutions and Process**

- Peters, Chapter 2: The Structure of Policymaking in American Government
- Peters, Chapter 3: Agenda Setting and Public Policy
- Peters, Chapter 4: Legitimizing Policy Choices

#### **Week #5, 10/2/06: Policymaking Institutions and Process**

- Douglas Arnold. 1990. *The Logic of Congressional Action*. Chapters 1.
- Rudalevige, Andrew. 2005. "The Executive Branch and the Legislative Process," in *The Executive Branch*, New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.
- Quirk, Paul J. and Sarah A. Binder. 2005. "Congress and American Democracy: Institutions and Performance," in Paul J. Quirk and Sarah A. Binder (eds.) *The Legislative Branch*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.
- **Sinclair (get info on this)**
- Shier, Steven E. 2006. "'Typing' the George W. Bush Presidency," *Forum*, Volume 3, Issue 4, Berkeley Electronic Press.

#### **Week #6, 10/9/06: Regulation**

- Wilson, James Q. (ed.). 1980. *The Politics of Regulation*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., Chapter 10.
- Bardach, Eugene and Robert Kagan. 2002. *Going By the Book, The Problem of Regulatory Unreasonableness*, New Brunswick: Transaction, pp2-122.
- Vogel, David. 2003. "The Tortoise and the Hare Revisited: The New Politics of Consumer and Environmental Regulation" *British Journal of Political Science* 33, pp558-80.
- Jasanoff, Sheila. 1993. "American Exceptionalism and the Political Acknowledgement of Risk" in Edward Burger (ed.) *Risk*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Miscellaneous figures on regulatory spending

#### **Week #7, 10/16/06: Policy Stasis**

- Pierson, Paul. 2000. "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics." *American Political Science Review* " 94( 2): 251-268.
- Rose, Richard. 1990. "Inheritance Before Choice in Public Policy", *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 2,3, 263-91.
- Lindblom, Charles. 1959. "The Science of Muddling Through." *Public Administration Review* 19 (no. 2): 79 - 88.

## Wilson Syllabus

### **Week #8, 10/23/06: Policy Change**

- Baumgartner, Frank R. and Jones, Brian D. 1993. *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Kingdon, John. 1984. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*. Boston: Little, Brown.

### **Week #9, 10/30/06: Implementation and Bureaucracy**

- Peters, Chapter 5: Organizations and Implementation
- Weingast, Barry R. 2005. "Caught in the Middle: The President, Congress, and the Political-Bureaucratic System," in Joel D. Aberbach and Mark A. Peterson (eds.), *The Executive Branch*, New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.
- Carpenter, Daniel. 2005. "The Evolution of National Bureaucracy in the United States," in Joel D. Aberbach and Mark A. Peterson (eds.), *The Executive Branch*, New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.

**\*\*Take-Home Midterm due 11/6/06\*\***

## **II. Policy Areas**

### **Week #10, 11/6/06: Group Work**

#### **Week #11, 11/13/06: Economic Policy & Tax Policy**

- Peters, Chapter 8: Economic Policy
- Peters, Chapter 9: Tax Policy
- Weisman, Jonathan and Peter Baker. "After Bush Leaves Office, His Budget's Costs Balloon." *Washington Post*, Monday, February 14, 2001, Page A01.
- Miscellaneous figures on 1) tax revenues, 2) government spending, and 3) budget balance.

#### **Week #12, 11/20/06: Energy, Environment, Social Security and Welfare**

- Peters, Chapter 13: Energy and the Environment
- Peters, Chapter 11: Income Maintenance: Social Security and Welfare
- Hacker, Jacob. 2004. "Privatizing Risk Without Privatizing the Welfare State: The Hidden Politics of Social Policy Retrenchment in the United States" *American Political Science Review* 98, pp 243-60.
- Eisner, Marc A. "Corporate Environmentalism, Regulatory Reform and Industry Self Regulation: Towards Genuine Regulatory Reinvention in the United States" *Governance* 17 145-167.
- Kraft, Michael. 2006. "Environmental Policy in Congress: From Consensus to Gridlock" in Norman Vig and Michael Kraft (eds.) *Environmental Policy*, Washington DC: CQ Press, 124-147.
- Miscellaneous figures on Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid

**\*\*Thanksgiving (11/23-11/26)\*\***

#### **Week #13, 11/27/06: International Policy**

- I.M. Destler *American Trade Policy* 4<sup>th</sup> ed (Washington DC: Institute for International Economics, 2005) 3-11, 233-326.

#### **Week #14, 12/04/06: In-Class Presentations**

#### **Week #15, 12/11/06: In-Class Presentations**