University of Wisconsin-Madison  
La Follette School of Public Affairs – Spring 2015  
PA 874 Policy Making Process Syllabus

Tuesdays 6:00 – 7:50 pm  
Social Science 6102  
Instructor: Dave Nelson, Ph.D., MPP – denelson3@wisc.edu. I plan to be in our 
classroom one hour early before each class. Additional meetings can be scheduled by 
appointment.  
Non-Section Teaching Assistant: Rengin Aktar, Ph.D. Candidate – 
renginaktar@gmail.com. Office hours on Mondays from 2:00 to 4:00 pm in 401B 
Bascom Hall.

This is a graduate seminar on the policy making process from agenda setting, to 
policy formation, and to program implementation. We will pay particular attention 
to the constraints that operate on policy makers, and the circumstances in which 
policy makers and other actors can overcome these constraints to change the 
direction of public policy.

Assignments and Grading  
• Class Participation – 25%  
• Class Exercise Presentations – 20%  
• Online Discussions – 20%  
• Group Presentation – 15%  
• Group Paper – 20% (15% from instructor and TA and 5% from peer evaluation)

Class Participation  
I expect noteworthy participation from all students during each class. Note that I 
frequently call on students for both answers to my questions and to provide new 
questions to enhance our discussion. As a result, every student must come to class 
ready to participate.

If participation or attention to the course’s readings falls below an acceptable level, 
I will hold unannounced quizzes. Quizzes may come in short-answer form or as 
longer essays. Quiz scores will be factored into the overall participation grade and 
cannot be made up due to course absences for any reason.

Class Exercise Presentations  
Discussion leaders will be assigned for most weeks (with eight total opportunities). 
Discussion leaders should plan a class activity that addresses the main concepts of 
the readings. Do not feel that you have to cover all of the material in the readings. 
Just pull out the primary concepts as you see them and focus on those elements. In 
addition, you do not need to repeat the substance of the material since everyone will
have read the materials prior to class. Instead, think of applications of this material and key questions that should be considered.

I will assign four or five students to each exercise. The activity should be approximately 20 minutes long. You may use PowerPoint, but it is not required. You may pose questions, set up a verbal quiz, discuss new case studies, run a game show, lead and moderate a debate, or think of something far more innovative.

Class will typically begin with these exercises before delving into the far less entertaining instructor-led discussion. You will receive a short email with feedback and a team grade.

**Online Discussions and Use of Learn@UW**

On a nearly weekly basis, there will be a question on the course discussion board at Learn@UW. You must participate each week by submitting at least two substantive, well-reasoned, and well-written posts to the discussion board. One of these responses should be an original comment, and the other should be a reply to another student’s post. Feel free to post more than twice.

The TA and/or I will review the discussion board and determine the grade for these assignments based on the number of posts from each student and their substantive contributions. Substantive posts may cite specific sections of the readings, reconnect with ideas in previous readings, question lines of reasoning, reference in recent events to illustrate points, or suggest new ways of thinking about the material. Comments should go beyond simply agreeing or disagreeing with original posts and offer meaningful contributions to the discussion.

On Learn@UW, the Content section will contain course materials (primarily the syllabus and additional readings). We will also use the Discussions section, where you will respond to questions from me, the TA, and comments from your fellow students. Dropbox is where you will "turn in" some class assignment documents.

Resources are available online for students who want more information on how Learn@UW works. You may go to: [https://learnuw.wisc.edu](https://learnuw.wisc.edu) for instructional tutorials. Tech support for Learn@UW is also available through UW-Madison’s DoIT Help Desk (608-264-HELP).

**Policy Research Report and Presentation**

We will divide students into eight groups of four or five students to research a piece of national or state legislation of the group’s choosing. The group may choose any piece of legislation that was either signed or vetoed by the President or the Governor of Wisconsin within the last decade. The assignment consists of a written report, presentation, and peer evaluation.
Students will turn in one copy of the policy research report consisting of:

**Title Page:** Title, authors, class information (one page)

**Abstract:** An approximately 150 word summary of all parts of the document (one page)

**Introduction:** Describe the policy, its evolution, and importance. The introduction should also provide a “roadmap” of the report as a whole to give the reader an overview of what will follow (two to three double-spaced pages).

Note that a first draft of this introduction is due five weeks before the first group presentation. The TA and I will provide comments on this draft within one week.

**Chronological Narrative:** Next, you will provide a chronological narrative of the legislative process. In this section, answer the “who, what, when, where, and why” questions about your legislation in a descriptive and well-organized style. Be sure to describe the history of the policy and how and why it has moved on and off the policy making agenda. You may also want to attach a table listing important dates as an appendix to the report (seven to 11 double-spaced pages).

**Analysis:** In this section, you will discuss the relevance of the course readings to understanding the policy making process for this particular policy. You will want to focus on one or more theories of the policy making process – for example, punctuated equilibrium theory or policy streams – and discuss how the readings on this stage relate to your case. If particular interest groups have played a key role furthering or blocking the policy, include that information and relate it to course readings. You will also need to go beyond the course’s assigned readings to better familiarize yourself with the facts related to the particular policy issue.

The analytical section of the report is pivotal. It requires you to critically evaluate how the course’s theoretical ideas apply or do not apply to your case (nine to 13 double-spaced pages).

**Conclusion:** This section must answer the important “so what?” question. In other words, now that you have completed this research, what does this case study tell us about the American policy making process more generally? (two to three double-spaced pages).

**References:** You will need to document sources and provide full citations for all cited works. Bibliographic information should allow another person to replicate your research. All direct quotes should be in quotation marks with parenthetical reference format and page number, e.g., (Daphne 2009, 19) and all use of another’s work should be in parenthetical reference format, e.g., (Velma 2009). If you use
websites, be very careful about knowing your source and being able to judge the veracity of the information, especially any data sources. For this project, it is best to start with government sources and then move to journal articles and scholarly books. After exhausting those sources, only then should you use Internet search engines. For style information, refer to the American Political Science Association website at: [http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocAPSA.html](http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocAPSA.html).

Additional information about your report:
- Your paper should be no more than 35 pages long (including all parts detailed above but not the Works Cited pages).
- Please do not ask for exceptions on the page length.
- Your paper should be Times New Roman font, size 12, double-spaced.
- Reports will be turned in on the same day as your group’s presentation before the class meeting.
- Only one paper per group is necessary.
- Your paper should follow the sections headers listed above. Any sub-headers may be labeled as you wish.
- Do not assume that the readers of your paper (the TA and I) are familiar with our class concepts, ideas, and theories. You will need to explain jargon or theories within your paper.
- Include page numbers.

**Presentation** Each group will present a synopsis of the report to the class. The presentation should emphasize the analysis section of the report. Presentations must be well organized in order to highlight the key issues and findings of the written report. Every member of the group must participate in the presentation. The presentation will be graded based on content, communication skills, and style (professionalism, energy, and organization).

Each presentation should take approximately 15 Minutes, followed by up to 10 minutes for class Q&A.

You should plan to use PowerPoint. Dress professionally, and please practice and time your presentations beforehand.

**Peer and Self Evaluation**

After you have completed your presentation, you will receive a peer and self-evaluation form. On this form you will rate yourself and group members on a scale, and these rankings will affect each student’s paper grade. The instructor will not reveal the names associated with particular ratings.
Required Texts


Godwin, Ken, Scott A. Ainsworth, and Erik Godwin. 2012. *Lobbying and Policy Making: The Public Pursuit of Private Interests*. CQ Press. (Kindle edition on Amazon may be all that is available.)


Weekly Schedule

Week One 1/20 – Introduction
- Class Goals, Format, and Presentation Groups
- Review Syllabus
- Paper Presentation Group Selection
- Class Exercise Group Selection
- Why public policy and government? Collective action problems and beyond?
- Policy stages

Week Two 1/27 – Theoretical Foundations

Week Three 2/3 – Political Culture and Policy Paradox
- Excerpts from Wildavsky’s *Cultural Theory*. 1-61. (Recommended)
- Take the World’s Smallest Political Quiz at [http://www.theadvocates.org/quiz/quiz.php](http://www.theadvocates.org/quiz/quiz.php) and come prepared to discuss your results and critique the quiz.
• Take the quiz at https://www.idealogue.org/en/quiz and come prepared to discuss your results and critique the quiz.
• Class Exercise Group 1 (not on online quizzes)

Week Four 2/10 – Policy Analysis
• Bardach (In its entirety – but note the light reading list for the week before)
• Class Exercise Group 2

Week Five 2/17 – Policy Making Theories
• Class Exercise Group 3

Week Six 2/24 – Agenda Setting – Policy Streams
• Kingdon Chapters 1-3
• Class Exercise Group 4

Week Seven 3/3 – Agenda Setting – Policy Streams
• Kingdon 2nd Chapter 4-9
• Class Exercise Group 5

Week Eight 3/10 – Policy Implementation
• Kerwin Chapters 1-4
• Class Exercise Group 6

Week Nine 3/17 – Policy Implementation
• Kerwin Chapters 5-7
• Class Exercise Group 7
• Group Presentation Introduction Due

Week Ten 3/24 – Lobbying and Policy Making
• Godwin Chapter 1-5
• Class Exercise Group 8

Week Eleven 3/24 – Lobbying and Policy Making
• Godwin Chapters 6-10
Week Twelve 4/14 – Wisconsin Policy Making Process
- Guest Speaker on Wisconsin Policy Making Process
- The Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau Materials
  - The Governor’s Veto [http://legis.wisconsin.gov/lrb/gw/gw_5.pdf](http://legis.wisconsin.gov/lrb/gw/gw_5.pdf)

Week Thirteen 4/21 – Wisconsin Panel
- Panel of Guest Speakers discussing agenda setting and the UW-Madison Budget

Week Fourteen 4/28 – Group Presentations
- Group A Presentations
- Group A Papers Due

Week Fifteen 5/5 – Group Presentations
- Group B Presentations
- Group B Papers Due

*As the course instructor, I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus as needed.*