Meeting time and location:

Monday, 4:30-6:25 pm; Room 475 Van Hise

Instructor:

Jim Doyle
E-mail: jdoyle6@wisc.edu (best way to contact me)
Office phone: (608)262-4531
Office location: La Follette (Observatory Hill Office Building), Room 205
Office hours: I will try to be in the office every Monday, before class, from 2-4 pm

Course Description and Objectives

To a large extent the adoption and implementation of governmental policy affecting people’s lives is determined not in Washington D.C., but in state capitals across the country. State governments operate in a complex federal system and are affected by their relationships with the federal government on one hand, and local governments on the other.

In this seminar we will focus on a number of important and pressing areas of state governmental policy, including health care, early childhood and K-12 education, higher education, the environment and energy, economic development, budget and taxes, criminal and juvenile justice and poverty. Obviously, the policies underlying each of these areas could be a semester long class. This seminar is intended to examine the real practical, political and budgetary issues confronting policymakers and advocates in each of these areas. By examining political divides, interest groups, campaign politics and the broader budgetary context, students will gain a sense of how to anticipate and navigate the political obstacles and opportunities they may face in their careers.

Students will be expected to:

1) Explain the role state governments play in the development of policy in these areas, how they make choices, and how they fit into the broader US federal system of government;
2) Predict and analyze how state government’s interaction with the federal government, local governments and interest groups can shape policy design and implementation;
3) Critically analyze the political dimensions of policy change at the state level given political divides, interest groups and budgetary constraints;
4) Evaluate the vitality of strong leadership at the state level; and
5) Anticipate and navigate the political obstacles and opportunities in policy making.

Texts/Materials

There is no required textbook for this course. Any readings noted in the syllabus or assigned in class are (or will be) available online, or will be made available via Learn@UW or directly from me.

The readings are listed for the first three or four weeks. They will be added for the following weeks at a later time.

All readings listed are required and should be completed before we meet each week.

Course Assignments and Evaluation

Course grades will be based on the following:

Class Participation 25%
Assignment 1 25%
Assignment 2 50%

Class participation is an essential component of the course and is critical to your learning and that of your peers. You will be expected to read assigned materials prior to our class meetings and come prepared to discuss them. From time to time I will assign a group of students to select and lead a discussion of a sub-topic of that day’s subject. John Bryson offers four “hallmarks of good participation” that I recommend to you: (1) risk-taking (i.e., presenting an opposing view or a different interpretation of readings/information); (2) listening (i.e., trying to understand what others are saying and why they are saying it); (3) bringing in your own work-related and other experiences when relevant to the discussions; and (4) monitoring your own participation in terms of both “airtime” and quality. Regular class attendance is necessary.

Assignment 1: Medicaid Expansion Policy Memo (25%)

The first assignment will be due at the beginning of Session # 5 on February 23, 2015

Description: The country is currently split between states that have chosen to move forward with Medicaid expansion that was included in the Affordable Care Act and those that have not. In this assignment students should imagine that they are working in the Governor’s office of a state of their choosing (other than Wisconsin) and are asked to write a confidential policy memo to the Governor on whether or not to expand the Medicaid Program. The memo is to be written as though it were the week after the Supreme Court ruling that enabled states not to participate in the expansion if they chose.

A complete memo will consider:
The effect of expansion on coverage, the state’s Medicaid program, and the broader state health care system
-The fiscal and economic effect on the state
-The political consequences of expanding or not expanding

Students should come to class on the day that the assignment is due prepared to discuss their recommendations and participate in class discussion.

The paper should be 3-4 pages in length.

Assignment 2: Public Policy Innovation (50%)

The second assignment will be a group (in groups of 4) assignment due at the beginning of the last session on May 4, 2015.

Description: States must operate under much stricter financial controls than the federal government. All but one (Vermont) has a constitutional requirement of a balanced budget. They have no ability to alter the money supply and have very limited borrowing authority (usually limited to capital improvements). Any decision to spend additional money in one area very likely means a decrease in another.

Over the semester we will have discussed a number of areas of substantive state policy. From one of those areas, pick a policy innovation that is intended to improve quality while reducing costs. Develop and describe a model of how this innovation will bring down costs (or slow the rate of growth) and provide estimates as to how much this will save. Evaluate how different states have approached this issue. This should include comparing and contrasting how state approaches have differed and how these differences have contributed or may contribute to degrees of success.

Each group of students should prepare a paper of 7-10 pages, together with appropriate slides for the class presentation. Students will pitch their policy to the class in a 15-minute presentation followed by a 15-minute question and answer session.

Disabilities

People with disabilities will be fully included in this course. Please inform me if you need any special accommodations in the curriculum, instruction, or assessments of this course to enable you to participate fully. Confidentiality of the shared information will be strictly maintained. Certain accommodations may require the assistance of the UW’s McBurney Disability Resource Center: http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/.

Course Communication

The best way to contact me is via email. I will return emails from students within two business days. Please do not email shortly before class, presentation, or assignment deadline with the expectation that I will be able to respond immediately to your concern.
I am happy to meet with or speak by phone to students outside the class as needed. Please email me to make an appointment. I will try to be in my office from 2-4 pm on the Mondays when class is meeting. I will use the class list serve to communicate additional course information as needed.

Course Schedule

Please note that the following outline and listed reading may be adjusted to accommodate additional guest speakers and class interests. I will also weave in newspaper articles, etc. reflecting current events and issues related to the course. In particular, the reading for the first three classes is included. The reading for classes after that will be provided soon.

Week 1: January 26, Introduction, Understanding the Quilt of American Government

In this session we set the foundation for the rest of the course by briefly exploring the logic and the philosophy of the American federal system, the variety of governmental structures among the states, the responsibilities that state governments have to their residents, and the politics surrounding federalism and states’ rights. We will look at how states fit in to the American patchwork with the many roles they play, ranging from the entity from which people derive much of their identity, to the dutiful implementers of federal policy, to the “laboratories of democracy.”

Required Readings:


Week 2: February 2, Medicaid, SCHIP and Advance of the State Health Apparatus

The development and divergence of state health systems was vastly accelerated with the creation of the Medicaid program. In this session we explore the choices states made in designing and implementing state Medicaid/SCHIP programs, how this shaped the political environment of health at the state level, and how expansion affects the future of Medicaid in the states.

Required Readings


**Week 3: February 9, The Affordable Care Act and the States**

The Affordable Care Act, together with the subsequent Supreme Court decision, left much of the major policy decisions to the states. State level choices determine the way the public experiences the law. We will discuss the policy choices for the states, the politics surrounding those choices, and the broader budgetary context in which those choices are made.

**Required Readings**


Week 4: February 16, State Health Policy, Tobacco, Marijuana

We will continue discussion of state health policy in preparation for paper due the following week. We will also focus on two examples of health policy driven by the states: tobacco control and legalization of marijuana.

Required Readings


Other readings to be assigned.

Week 5: February 23, Criminal and Juvenile Justice

Due: First Paper

In this class we will hear from students about their papers, the advice they gave to governors and the reasons.

We will also begin the discussion on juvenile and criminal justice, exploring the costs to state governments, underlying juvenile, criminal justice and corrections policies, the manner in which these issues play out politically, and suggested reforms.

Required Readings:

To be assigned

Week 6, March 2, Criminal and Juvenile Justice and Corrections Policy (continued)

We will continue discussion of criminal and juvenile justice and corrections policy. One or two groups of students will choose an issue in these areas and will lead a 30-minute discussion.

Required Readings

To be assigned
Week 7, March 9, Early Childhood and K-12 Education

K-12 education receives the biggest share of state taxpayer money and often stirs the most vigorous political debate. We will discuss the policy and political dimensions of the tradition of local control, the tension between local and state taxation and payment of school costs, the payment of teachers, various “reforms” and other hot educational topics.

Required Readings

To be assigned

Week 8, March 16, Early Childhood and K-12 Education (continued), State Budget and Tax Policy

We will continue the discussion of issues surrounding education. One of two groups of students will choose a topic in this area and lead a 30-minute discussion.

Because K-12 education is such a major part of the state budget, and its financing raises important taxation questions, our education will provide an opportunity to talk broadly about the state budget process and state tax policy. We will compare different state’s approaches to taxation and the political and economic issues involved in those decisions.

Required Readings

To be assigned

Week 9, March 23, State Budget and Tax Policy (continued), State Economic Development Tools

In addition to continuing the discussion of the state budget and tax policy, we will discuss what tools state governments have to foster economic development. States often compete with each other for businesses. Is this an “arms race” in a zero-sum environment that produces as may winners as losers, or is it a viable means to pursue economic development? Have different states approached it differently?

Required Readings

To be assigned

Week 10, March 30, No Class, Spring Recess
**Week 11, April 6, Higher Education**

We will discuss topical issues surrounding higher education, particularly the relationship between public universities and state government. Financing, access, affordability, job training, research, and so on, all involve state policy decisions that have significant budgetary and political aspects. We hope to have the former President of the UW System, Kevin Reilly, as a guest.

**Required Readings**


Other reading to be assigned

**Week 12, April 13, State Policy as it Addresses Poverty**

In preparation for the La Follette School Symposium on April 24, we will discuss the politics and policy involved in states’ approaches to poverty. State governments work in the framework of a number of federal policies including Medicaid, TANF, SNAP, WIC, and the Earned Income Tax Credit. State policy choices how fully they embrace these programs vary significantly. In addition, state and local governments deal with the effects of poverty such as child welfare and higher crime rates.

**Required Readings**

To be assigned

**Week 13, April 20, No Class-Rescheduled for Friday, April 24 from 8:30 am to noon at Marquette Law School in Milwaukee**

Rather than a class on April 20, students are asked to attend the La Follette School Policy Symposium on “Men in Poverty” to be held at the Marquette Law School in Milwaukee on Friday, April 24 from 8:30 am until noon.
Week 14, April 27, The Environment and Energy Policy

Some of the most contentious issues in state government revolve around environmental and energy issues. The proper role of regulation, jobs v. regulation, the involvement of the federal government, reliance of fossil fuel and the development of alternatives, climate change, land use, among others, are matter that stir intense debate. One or two groups of students will choose and lead a 30-minute discussion on topics of interest in this area.

Required Readings

To be assigned

Week 15, May 4, Class Presentations

Due: Assignment 2

Students will present their proposed policy innovations.