This seminar introduces students to the political analysis of policy making in the American setting. The focus is on developing tools for the analysis of politics in any setting — national, state, or local. The first three weeks examine policy making as a whole and the concept of power. The next four weeks examine the environment within which policy makers operate, with special attention to public opinion, the mass media, and elections. The final five weeks focus on political institutions and the making of policy decisions, with attention given to agenda setting, legislatures, separation of powers, and the courts.

A. Weekly Schedule

1. Organizational Meeting February 4
2. The Politics of Policy Making I February 11
3. Political Power February 18
4. Public Opinion I February 25
5. Public Opinion II TBA
6. Elections March 11
7. Mass Media March 25
8. Agenda Setting April 1
9. Legislatures and Public Policy April 8
10. Separation of Powers and Public Policy April 15
11. The Politics of Policy Making II April 22
12. Courts and Public Policy April 29

B. Course Requirements

1. **Reading.** The course operates as a seminar. The amount of reading averages 200 pages per week. Each student is expected to do the assigned reading *before* each seminar and come to class prepared for discussion.

2. **Discussion.** The main event each week is a structured discussion of the week’s reading. I provide the structure; you provide the discussion. Our aim is to come to terms with a serious piece of scholarship *and* to see what lessons it offers for those involved in making and
administering public policy. Each student is expected to participate actively in each week’s discussion.

3. **Three Short Papers.** Each student writes three short papers during the course of the semester. These are opportunities for you to discuss the week’s readings, unprompted by the instructor or your fellow students. The purpose of these papers is to develop your skills at political analysis and to gain feedback from the instructor prior to writing the final paper.

The key to a good paper is to pose an interesting question and answer it. You might focus on the value of an author’s theory, examining its logical rigor, the plausibility of the arguments, or its relation to other theories. You might focus on the adequacy of the empirical evidence, asking whether the author used appropriate methods, whether the evidence really supports the hypotheses, or whether other evidence contradicts it. Alternatively, you might address the question of how well a piece of scholarship illuminates other happenings in the real world. Does a book help to explain why government makes the decisions it does? Under what conditions does it appear useful? These papers are *not* an opportunity to summarize the week’s readings. You should assume that anyone who reads your paper has also done the week’s reading.

These papers should be well organized and well written. A paper that fails to develop an argument until the last paragraph is called a first draft. A paper that fails to anticipate potential counter arguments, is written in the passive voice, or is filled with grammatical, spelling, or typing errors, is called a second draft. A paper that you would be proud to read to the class is called a final draft. I like final drafts.

The class will be divided in thirds, with one group writing in weeks 2, 5, and 8, a second group writing in weeks 3, 6, and 9, and the third group writing in weeks 4, 7, and 10. Your papers should be typed, double-spaced, and a maximum of five pages. References to books or articles used in the course should be cited in the text (Zaller 1992, 79).

Please attach an extra page to the back of your paper with your name and the date on the first line and the rest of the page blank for my comments.

Papers are due at the start of the seminar in which their subjects are scheduled for discussion.

4. **Final Paper.** The final paper requires that you apply the lessons of the seminar to explaining why some governmental institution enacted, or failed to enact, a significant policy change. The aim is to explain how and why political forces combined to produce or thwart change. You may choose any level of government — national, state, or local — and you may choose any significant policy change, whether adopted or rejected.
Although these papers require some outside research, the emphasis should be on original political analysis, not exhaustive research in primary source materials or extensive interviews with participants. Some description will undoubtedly be necessary, but your paper should primarily be a piece of analysis. You should attempt to explain why an institution adopted or rejected a proposed policy change.

You are free to choose a policy area in which you already have some expertise. You are free to choose a subject that journalists or other observers have already covered extensively. You are free to select a topic for which the gathering of research materials is relatively easy. I am more interested in observing your analytic skills than your research skills. If you are having trouble choosing, or narrowing down, a topic, please come and see me. You should select a topic and submit a one-page description of the policy decision that you intend to analyze no later than Monday, April 22.

The final paper should be typed, double-spaced, and a maximum of 25 pages, and is due on Tuesday, May 14, at 4:00. The real world of politics and public affairs does not grant extensions, and neither do I. Unlike the real world, I do accept late research papers, but only after assessing a penalty of one third of a letter grade for each day of lateness. The penalty is in fairness to all students who manage to submit their papers on time.

Papers should either be placed in my Robertson Hall mailbox or given to my secretary, Helene Wood, in 326 Robertson Hall.

5. Due Dates.
   Short papers: Due at the start of each week’s seminar.
   Research plan: Due no later than Monday, April 22
   Research paper: Due Tuesday, May 14

   Seminar participation 20%
   Short papers 30%
   Final paper 50%

C. Availability of Readings

1. Course Packet Available for Purchase. Pequod Printing, located on the ground floor of the Princeton University Store, sells a course packet that contains excerpts from seven books and journals.

2. Books Available for Purchase. The Princeton University Store has copies of the nine paperback books that we use most intensively.
3. **Reserve Readings.** There are also multiple copies of these nine books on reserve in the Donald E. Stokes Library in Wallace Hall. There is also a single copy of the Course Packet on reserve.

4. **Suggested Readings.** The suggested readings are places you can turn if you want to learn more about a given subject. Although all of these works are available somewhere in the Princeton University library system, I have not placed them on reserve for this course.

**D. Times and Places**

1. **Seminar Meetings.**
   
   Monday, 1:30-4:20  
   Robertson Hall, Room 005

2. **Office Hours.**
   
   Tuesday, 1:30-3:30  
   Robertson Hall, Room 310
   
   Phone: 258-4855  
   arnold@princeton.edu

   I am also available by appointment. Please send me an e-mail that includes all the times that are impossible for you during the next seven days. I will respond with an appointment that works for both of us.

**Weekly Readings**

1. **Organizational Meeting (February 4)**

   General discussion of the politics of policymaking.

2. **The Politics of Policy Making I (February 11)**

   These two readings introduce general themes for the seminar. The book is a short case study and is easy to read. The scholarly article contains some difficult statistical materials. Just read the article for the overall argument and don’t get bogged down in the statistics.

   a. **Required (129 pages)**


3. **The Analysis of Power in Politics (February 18)**

Power is one of the fundamental concepts in political science. Gaventa reviews several alternative conceptions of power and then seeks to measure power in an isolated Appalachian community. How well does Gaventa capture power relations in this community? How generalizable are his findings to other communities? How useful are the various notions of power?

a. **Required** (216 pages)

John Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley* (1980), pp. v-xi, 3-201, 252-261. Read chapters one and two with great care, chapters three and four rapidly, and chapters five, six, seven, and ten more carefully.

b. **Suggested**


4. Public Opinion I (February 25)

How do citizens acquire opinions about policies and politicians? Zaller offers a sophisticated theory to explain public opinion. How well does the theory explain your own opinions? Your friends and family? The mass public? What seems to account for the shape of mass opinion in society?

a. Required (184 pages)


b. Suggested


5. Public Opinion II (DATE AND TIME TO BE ANNOUNCED)

How can one explain the dynamics of public opinion? What accounts for stability and change in public opinion over time? What role do interest groups and the mass media play in shaping attitudes?

a. **Required** (139 pages)


b. **Suggested**


6. **Elections (March 11)**

How can we explain election outcomes? How much are congressional elections national contests between two parties? How much are they local contests between pairs of candidates? How important are campaigns? Information? Money?

a. **Required** (270 pages)


b. **Suggested**


7. The Mass Media (March 25)

What role does the mass media play in American politics?

a. Required (169 pages)


b. Suggested


**8. Agenda Setting (April 1)**

How does government decide which problems to attack? Which solutions to consider? What are the roles of bureaucrats, executives, legislators, the mass media, interest groups, and public opinion in shaping the governmental agenda?

a. **Required** (230 pages)


b. **Suggested**


R. Kent Weaver, *Ending Welfare as We Know It* (2000).

9. **Legislatures and Public Policy (April 8)**

How do legislators respond to public opinion? What accounts for legislatures sometimes serving narrow and particularistic interests and sometimes serving more general interests? What strategies are available for encouraging legislators to adopt specific policies?

Please note that there is a required lecture today at 4:30 by Robert Dahl, the most important democratic theorist of the past half century, on his forthcoming book, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*

a. **Required (233 pages)**

b. Suggested


10. Separation of Powers and Public Policy (April 15)

What kind of an imprint does separation of powers leave on the shape of public policy?

a. Required (234 pages)

b. **Suggested**


11. **The Politics of Policy Making II (April 22)**

How can we explain why government adopts or fails to adopt specific policies?

a. **Required** (135 pages)


b. **Suggested**


12. **Courts and Public Policy (April 29)**

How much influence do courts have in the making of public policy? Can courts be used to bypass elected legislatures and executives? Under what conditions do courts matter?

a. **Required (273 pages)**

b. Suggested


