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 two weeks examine policy making as a whole and the concept of power in political science. The next four weeks examine the environment within which policy makers operate, with special attention to public opinion, mass media, and elections. The second half of the courses focuses on political institutions and the making of policy decisions, with attention given to agenda setting, legislatures, the courts, and bureaucracy.

**Please Note:** Seminar participants are required to read one short book before the first seminar on September 17.

**A. Weekly Schedule**

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B. Course Requirements

1. **Reading.** The course operates as a seminar. The amount of reading averages 212 pages per week, all of it nontechnical. 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. I will return each of the short papers with comments a week after they are due.
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 by Monday, November 26.

The final paper should be typed, double-spaced, and a *maximum* of 25 pages, and is due on Tuesday, January 15, 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 Monday, November 26.
- **Research paper:** Due Tuesday, January 15.

6. **Grading.**

- **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. The estimated cost is $24.

2. Books Available for Purchase. The Princeton University Store has copies of the 10 paperback books that we use most intensively.

3. Reserve Readings. There are also multiple copies of these ten books on reserve in the Donald E. Stokes Library in Wallace Hall.

4. Additional Required Readings. The week prior to several seminar meetings, one or more short, topical articles will be distributed in order to help connect the weekly readings with what is happening in the news.

5. 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, 1:00-4:10 Engineering Quad, E329

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 over the coming week. I will respond with an appointment that works for both of us.

Weekly Readings

1. The Politics of Policy Making (September 17)

Please read the following case study before the first seminar and come to class prepared for discussion.
2. **The Analysis of Power in Politics (September 24)**

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 (266 pages)**

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

### b. **Suggested**


3. Public Opinion I (October 1)

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


4. Public Opinion II (October 8)

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 (200 pages)


b. Suggested


5. **The Mass Media (October 15)**

What role does the mass media play in American politics?

a. **Required** (169 pages)


b. **Suggested**


6. **Elections (October 22)**

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* (235 pages)


b. *Suggested*


7. **Agenda Setting (November 5)**

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).

8. **Legislatures and Public Policy (November 12)**

   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?

   a. *Required (243 pages)*

b.  Suggested


William Muir, Legislature: California’s School for Politics (1982).


Keith T. Poole and Howard Rosenthal, Congress: A Political-Economic History of Roll Call Voting (1997).


9. Analyzing Policy Choices (November 19)

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

a. Required (135 pages)


b. Suggested


10. Courts and Public Policy (November 26)

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**


11. The Politics of Housing (December 3)

Does New Jersey’s Mount Laurel case support or refute Rosenberg’s generalizations about the impact of courts on social policy? Did courts make a difference? Why or why not?

a. Required (210 pages)


b. Suggested


12. **Bureaucracy and Public Policy (December 10)**

How do political forces affect and constrain the actions of bureaucratic actors?

a. *Required* (292 pages)


b. *Suggested*


