

**“Wicked Problems”:
Introduction to Public Policy
POLS 1007
Syllabus**

Mondays 6:05-8:35PM
James Hall 2610, Brooklyn College, CUNY

Instructor: Be Stone
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Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Description and Learning Objectives

This is an introductory course to some of the key concepts, principles, and politics of policymaking. We begin with an introduction to theories of the policymaking process and some key institutions and processes of the American political system that influence policy formulation and implementation. Next, we read a selection of critiques of the classic theories of policymaking from critical discourse, critical race, and feminist perspectives. We conclude with several weeks of group presentations on policy areas of the students' choice, applying these concepts and critical approaches to contemporary examples.

Course Objectives:

- Develop a basic understanding of some of the core concepts, principles, and politics of policymaking.
- Acquire a working knowledge of critical discourse, critical race, and feminist analyses of the policymaking process.
- Acquire a working knowledge of several U.S. policy areas.
- Improve writing and critical thinking skills through regular writing assignments.
- Improve oral communication skills through class discussion.

Texts

You do not need to buy a textbook for this class. All of the readings are available on Blackboard. **It is required that you bring a copy of the readings to class with you.** It is preferred that you print out hard copies of the readings, but you may also bring a tablet or laptop to class for accessing them. If it becomes clear that you are using your tablet or laptop for something other than accessing the readings, I reserve the right to change this policy. **NO CELLPHONES in the classroom.**

Lecture PowerPoint Slides

The PowerPoint presentations for each class will be posted on Blackboard on the “Syllabus & Lectures” page. These slides do not include everything covered in class and should not be your only resource when studying for the exams. You will need to take additional notes during class to supplement these slides.

Current Events

You are expected to stay up-to-date on current issues in American public policy while taking this course. If you do not have regular access to the news, Brooklyn College offers all of its students a free one-year subscription to *The New York Times* online. All you need to sign up is your CUNY email address:

https://library.brooklyn.cuny.edu/resources/?view=fullRecord&res_id=4677.

Blackboard

This course requires that you log into Blackboard regularly to access class readings, submit assignments, and check for announcements. Please ensure that you have access to Blackboard within the first week of class. The syllabus and PDFs of all required readings are uploaded to Blackboard under “Syllabus & Lectures” and “Readings,” respectively.

Grading & Class Requirements

Your grade is based on the four requirements for this course:

1. Class Participation (20% of class grade)

- Participation in class discussion is a critical part of the learning process. You are expected to come to every class having read all of the readings, prepared to contribute to class discussion and participate in class activities.
- If you miss class, it is your responsibility to get notes and any assignments from a classmate.
- You are required to bring a printed or electronic copy of all the readings and your reading response paper to each class. Failure to do so will negatively affect your grade.

2. Weekly Reading Responses (20% of class grade)

- To foster your thinking outside of class and to facilitate discussion in class you are required to submit weekly reading response papers. Response papers should be between 400 – 500 words in length and must include four parts. See the handout (available on Blackboard) for details.
- Unless otherwise noted, reading responses are due via Blackboard at 1:00PM on Mondays before class.

3. Midterm Exam (30% of class grade)

- The midterm exam will be held on Monday, April 8 in class.

4. Final Group Presentations (30% of class grade)

- Final group presentations will be made over the last several weeks of class, including the class meeting allocated for the final exam. Each group of 3-5 students will choose a policy topic to research. The group will be responsible for choosing one reputable news or academic article for the entire class to read before their presentation, in consultation with Prof. Stone. Each group will make a 15-20 minute presentation on the development and current status of that policy, and lead class discussion. Details and rubric for this assignment will be distributed separately.

For the midterm exam:

- You will receive a study guide one week prior to the exam. We will not review for the exam during class time.

- The exam will include content from the assigned readings and class lectures. Reading the assigned readings, taking notes during lectures, and participating in class discussion are the best ways to prepare for the exam.
- If you have to miss an exam you must inform me by email before the exam is held. Otherwise, you will not be permitted to take a make-up.

Classroom Philosophy and Conduct

Discussing political topics can challenge deeply held or unexamined beliefs. Expect to be challenged in this classroom to think critically about the ideas presented in the readings and common assumptions made about historical and contemporary politics. Given the difficult, sensitive, and political nature of the material to be discussed in this course, students will be expected to conduct themselves in a mature and respectful manner. This requires both thoughtfully voicing your own opinion and respectfully listening and responding to the opinions of others. The ultimate goal of this course is to provide you with the knowledge and critical thinking skills to construct informed opinions on complex political issues.

A Note on Gender Pronouns: Please notify me of your gender pronouns and the name you'd like to be called prior to the start of class using the First Day Survey. I use she or they pronouns and you may call me Professor Stone or Professor Be. You are expected to respect the pronouns and gender identities of me, your classmates, and the people we discuss in class.

Email policy

Email is the best method for getting in touch with me. My policy is to respond to email within 48 hours. In order for me to respond to your email, you must include "POLS 1007" in the subject line of the email. If your email address is not a variation of your name, please indicate in the body of the email who you are.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

In order to receive disability-related academic accommodations students must first be registered with the Center for Student Disability Services. Students who have a documented disability or suspect they may have a disability are invited to set up an appointment with the Director of the Center for Student Disability Services, Ms. Valerie Stewart-Lovell at 718-951-5538. If you have already registered with the Center for Student Disability Services please provide me with the course accommodation form so we may discuss your specific accommodation.

Academic Integrity

The faculty and administration of Brooklyn College support an environment free from cheating and plagiarism. Each student is responsible for being aware of what constitutes cheating and plagiarism and for avoiding both. The complete text of the CUNY Academic Integrity Policy and the Brooklyn College procedure for implementing that policy can be found at this site: <http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/bc/policies>. If a faculty member suspects a violation of academic integrity and, upon investigation, confirms that

violation, or if the student admits the violation, the faculty member MUST report the violation.

Weekly Course Schedule

All dates, readings, and assignments are subject to change.

** Indicates a response paper is due at TIME this day

Part I: Introduction to Public Policy

Mon Jan 28: Welcome and introduction

Fri Feb 1: LAST DAY TO DROP A COURSE WITHOUT A GRADE

Mon Feb 4: What is Public Policy? “Wicked Problems” and Paradoxes

- Horst Rittel and Melvin Webber. 1973. “Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning” *Policy Sciences*, pp. 155–169.
- Deborah Stone. 2012. *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making*, 3rd ed, “Introduction: Why This Book?” pp. 1–15.

Mon Feb 11: Theories of the Policy Process

- Stella Theodoulou. 2013. “The Contemporary Language of Public Policy: A Starting Point” in *Public Policy: The Essential Readings*, 2nd ed.
- Deborah Stone. 2012. *Policy Paradox*, Chapter 1 “The Market and the Polis,” pp. 19–36.

Mon Feb 18: NO CLASS (Presidents’ Day)

Mon Feb 25: Policymaking in Context

- “How a Law is Made” Infographic.
- Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page. 2014. “Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens,” *Perspectives on Politics*, pp. 564–581.
- Michael Rogin, 1998. “Political Repression in the United States” in *Ronald Reagan, the Movie*.

Mon Mar 4: Evaluating Policy Claims

- Deborah Stone. 2012. *Policy Paradox*, Chapter 8 “Numbers,” pp. 183–205.
- Christie Aschwanden. 2015. “Science Isn’t Broken, it’s just a hell of a lot harder than we give it credit for” in *FiveThirtyEight*.

Part II: Critical Approaches to Analyzing Public Policy

Mon Mar 11: Ideas and Discourse in Policymaking

- Frank Fischer. 2003. *Reframing Public Policy: Discursive Politics and Deliberative Practices*, Chapter 3 “Public Policy as Discursive Construct,” pp. 48–69.

- Mary Hawkesworth. 1988. *Theoretical Issues in Policy Analysis*. Chapter 4 “The Fallacy of False Alternatives,” excerpts.

Mon Mar 18: Policy Target Populations

- Anne Schneider and Helen Ingram. 1993. “Social Construction of Target Populations: Implications for Politics and Policy” in *American Political Science Review*, pp. 334–347.
- Sean Nicholson-Crotty and Kenneth Meier. 2005. “From Perception to Public Policy: Translating Social Constructions into Policy Designs” in *Deserving and Entitled: Social Constructions and Public Policy*, Anne Schneider and Helen Ingram, eds., pp. 223–242.

Mon Mar 25: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Policymaking

- Deva Woodly. 2018. “The Importance of Public Meaning for Political Persuasion,” *Perspectives on Politics*, pp. 22–35.
- Assata Zerai and Rae Banks. 2002. *Dehumanizing Discourse, Anti-Drug Law, and Policy in America: A “Crack Mother’s” Nightmare*, “Introduction” and Chapter 2 “Black Feminist Theory and Methods in Pursuit of Social Justice,” pp. 1–32.
- Holloway Sparks. 2003. “Queens, Teens, and Model Mothers: Race, Gender, and the Discourse of Welfare Reform” in *Race and the Politics of Welfare Reform*, pp. 171–195.

Mon Apr 1: LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW FROM A COURSE WITH A “W” GRADE

Mon Apr 1: Concluding Parts I & II

- Deborah Stone. 2012. *Policy Paradox*, “Conclusion: Policy Analysis and Political Argument,” pp. 379–385.
- Assign groups for policy presentations & review assignment; distribute midterm study guide.

Mon Apr 8:

- **MIDTERM EXAM**

Part III: Policy Presentations

Mon Apr 15: Presentation Group Consultations

- In-class group consultations with Prof. Stone to prepare for group presentations.

Mon Apr 22: NO CLASS (Spring Break)

Mon Apr 29: Policy presentations

- Group 1
- Group 2
- Group 3

Mon May 6: Policy presentations

- Group 4
- Group 5
- Group 6

Mon May 13: Policy presentations

- Group 7
- Group 8
- Group 9

Mon May 20: Policy presentations

- Group 10
- Group 11
- Group 12



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