

Columbia University
School of International and Public Affairs

Public Affairs/EMPA U6223
The Political Environment of Policymaking
Summer 2005

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Office hours: Tuesday 5-6:30 and by appointment

This course is an introduction to political analysis for public- and nonprofit-sector managers and consultants. Public- and nonprofit-sector managers operate within a political environment, in which strategic, purposive actors seek to advance their own goals. These goals may take a number of forms — substantive policy outcomes, of course, but also political advancement or material advantage. Actors, moreover, may disagree about the goals they seek, and making policy requires some means of resolving those disagreements. Actors also differ in the resources they have at their disposal to seek their goals. Finally, policymaking actors cannot do anything they want in pursuit of their goals; they are constrained by the rules and structures that make up the policymaking system. These factors — actors, goals, resources, and rules — shape the strategic options available to would-be policymakers.

Ultimately, then, this is a course about strategy. Managers who understand the strategic political environment in which they operate, and who can integrate political, managerial, and policy analysis, are likely to prove more effective than managers who do not and cannot.

The concepts, skills, and analytical tools that this course presents rest upon a foundation of positive political theory and basic principles of political economy and political science. Consequently, the layout of the course may appear more “theoretical” than “practical.” But these theoretical foundations help us identify patterns of behavior and outcomes, ways of thinking about those patterns, and methods of analysis that facilitate understanding, prediction, and, ultimately, the shaping of strategies to improve policymaking in a political environment.

This course introduces these tools and principles through a close examination of the political institutions and processes that produce national public policy in the United States, although it also introduces questions of governance, political strategy, and policymaking at other levels of government (states, cities) and comparisons with other national systems.

Readings

Many of the readings for the course come from Margaret Weir, ed., *The Social Divide: Political Parties and the Future of Activist Government* (Brookings Institution, 1998), which is available as an e-book through the Columbia library web page. It is also readily available from online booksellers. The remainder of the readings are available on electronic reserve at Lehman Library

Course Requirements

1. Regular attendance, reading, and participation (10% of final grade)
2. Two political strategy memos of no more than 2 pages (12-point type, double spaced, normal margins) due in class on 7 June and 21 June, based on cases posted on Courseworks (more detailed information to be provided in advance) (20% each)
3. A final case analysis, due in class on 19 July, based on a packet of materials that will be posted on Courseworks in advance. The case analysis will simulate a “real-life” political situation, in which you will be asked to apply the tools and principles we have developed in order to devise and present a political strategy for policymaking. (50%)

Course Outline and Required Readings

17 May

Actors, Goals, Rules, Strategies: Theories of Public Policy

Clarkson Airport Authority Case (posted on Courseworks)

Charles E. Lindblom, “The Science of ‘Muddling Through’,” *Public Administration Review* 19 (1959): 79-88

John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, chaps. 1, 8

24 May

Democracy, the Public, and Public Policy

William H. Riker, *Liberalism Against Populism: A Confrontation Between the Theory of Democracy and the Theory of Social Choice*, chap. 1

Lawrence R. Jacobs and Robert Y. Shapiro, “The Politicization of Public Opinion: The Fight for the Pulpit,” in *The Social Divide: Political Parties and the Future of Activist Government*, ed. Margaret Weir

31 May

Interests, Interest Groups, and Policymaking

James Q. Wilson, *Political Organizations*, chap. 16

Cathie Jo Martin, “Inviting Business to the Party: The Corporate Response to Social Policy,” in *The Social Divide*, ed. Weir

7 June

Political Parties, Representation, and Policymaking

First case memos due

Margaret Weir, “Political Parties and Social Policymaking,” in *The Social Divide*, ed. Weir

The Party Game (rules from Michael Laver, *Playing Politics*, posted on Courseworks)

14 June

Congress: Maker of Policy or Agent of Gridlock?

R. Douglas Arnold, *The Logic of Congressional Action*, chap. 1

John Ferejohn, “A Tale of Two Congresses: Social Policy in the Clinton Years,” in *The Social Divide*, ed. Weir

21 June

Congress: Organization and Legislative Strategy

Second case memos due

The Agenda Game (rules from Michael Laver, *Playing Politics*, posted on Courseworks)

28 June

The President: Power, Persuasion, Politics

Charles M. Cameron, “Bargaining and Presidential Power,” in *Presidential Power: Forging the Presidency for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Robert Y. Shapiro, Martha Joynt Kumar, and Lawrence R. Jacobs

Charles O. Jones, “Campaigning to Govern: The Clinton Style,” in *The Clinton Presidency: First Appraisals*, ed. Colin Campbell and Bert A. Rockman

5 July

Implementing Policy: The Bureaucracy

Terry M. Moe, “The Politics of Bureaucratic Structure,” in *Can the Government Govern?*, ed. John E. Chubb and Paul E. Peterson

Jeffrey L. Pressman and Aaron B. Wildavsky, *Implementation*, chaps. 1, 3

12 July

Political Strategy and Policymaking: Health and Welfare in the 1990s

Mark A. Peterson, “The Politics of Health Care: Overreaching in an Age of Polarization,” and R. Kent Weaver, “Ending Welfare as We Know It,” in *The Social Divide*, ed. Weir

19 July

Conclusion

Final case analyses due

Discussion of case analyses