

**Public Policy Process: Political Science 329  
California State University, Long Beach**

Spring 2001  
SPA 211  
Tuesday and Thursday  
11:00 am - 12:15 pm

Instructor: Todd Belt  
Phone: (562) 985-4736  
E-mail: belt@usc.edu

Office: SPA 344  
Office Hours: Thursday, 1:45-3:00 pm  
and by appointment

**Course Description**

The making of public policy is central to government and can have an enormous impact on our lives. Understanding the process by which public policy is made, therefore, helps people to understand and even to become involved in the governmental forces which have an impact on their lives. This course focuses on the processes through which public policies are formulated, adopted and implemented. This includes the various stages of the policy process including agenda setting and policy formulation, budgeting, implementation, and evaluation. Important to understanding the policy making process are the political and organizational contexts that condition these processes.

This course consists of two halves. In the first half of this course we will discuss policymaking structure and process in general. In the second half we will discuss these processes and structures in greater detail by analyzing them within the context of several different policy domains.

The primary goal is to develop the skills needed to be an effective interpreter as well as participant in the American public policy process. By the end of this class you should be able to understand the role of ideas, individuals, interests, organizations, and institutions in the public policy process. Moreover, you will understand how the influences of these actors can vary during the differing stages of the process and among the various policy domains.

**Required Texts**

- Meier, Kenneth J. 1994. *The Politics of Sin: Drugs, Alcohol, and Public Policy*. New York: M.E. Sharpe. ISBN 1-56324-299-0. Paperback.
- Peters, B. Guy. 1999. *American Public Policy: Promise and Performance* 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House. ISBN 1-56643-067-4. Paperback.
- Theodoulou, Stella Z. 1996. *AIDS: The Politics and Policy of Disease*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. ISBN 0-13-368630-2. Paperback.

In addition, students are expected to follow politics on a daily basis in either the *New York Times* or the *Los Angeles Times*, and handouts distributed in class will be required reading as well.

## Course Requirements

There are four requirements for the course:

1. Participation includes contributions to classroom discussion, completion of assignments and quizzes, as well as attendance (do not be tardy or leave class early). In order to participate well in class you must complete all assigned readings prior to coming to class. All of the readings for each week are to be completed before the first meeting that week (Tuesday). To get credit for attending class, you must show up within 10 minutes of the start of class. If you are not in class within the first 10 minutes, you will be marked absent for the day. You will also be marked absent if you leave class early. You will be permitted two unexcused absences. Beyond these first two absences, your participation grade will be reduced by one-third of a letter grade for every time you are marked absent. For example, if you earned a participation grade of a B+ and had three unexcused absences, you will be penalized one-third of a letter grade, and your final participation would be a B. Similarly, if you had six unexcused absences and you had earned an A- for your participation grade, you would be penalized for four-thirds of a letter grade, meaning that you would end up with a C+ for your final participation grade. Any assignments for credit / no-credit that are missed (as well as missed quizzes) will also result in a one-third reduction of your final participation grade. Any assignments turned in after the first 10 minutes of class will not receive credit. Assignments may not be emailed.
2. Participants in this class are expected to keep a personal journal that addresses this course. For each journal, write a *full*, handwritten page (or a full typewritten page spaced at 1½ spacing) of your reflections on the material covered in this course (partial work will receive partial credit). Journals will be collected each Tuesday on a weekly basis beginning the second Tuesday of class. The subjects of your journal should include your emotional and intellectual reactions to things you observe outside of this course in terms of what you have learned through this course, as well as your own responses to what you have learned. It is not important that you think and feel in any particular way, only that you do pay attention to what you are thinking and feeling, and that you become an active part in your own learning process. The emphasis of this class is on participatory education — you will get out of it what you put into it — rather than on a passive, consumer-student mentality.  
Journal Writing Guidelines: Do not reiterate what happened in lecture or discussion. Since only the instructor will read the journals, there is no need to recap. Discuss what you have learned about yourself and others in the context of what you have learned in this course as a frame of reference. You may also give feedback on the readings and the exercises — points that you like, dislike, or feel could be improved. This is your chance to express yourself without being given any specific topic — enjoy this freedom, do not run away from it. Write whatever you are thinking and feeling, not what you think the instructor wants to hear. Be sure to keep your journal on subjects relating to the course, it is not a diary of your daily life. Examples might include trying to explain a current event in terms of what is learned in this class, or reflecting upon a point made in class or in the readings — did it seem correct in terms of what you know (or might it need further exploration)?
3. Examinations: The midterm and final exams will include short answer and essay questions. Make-up exams are rarely given and only when a university-authorized excuse is provided.

4. Students will be required to undertake a group project. Each group will consist of three to four students. This project will consist of an analysis of a specific public policy issue in the form of a final paper (8-10 pages) and presentation to the class. The presentation will account for one-third of the project grade, and the paper will count for two-thirds of the final grade. In the project analysis, students will be required to identify and analyze all of the key players in the policy process, their relationships and their influences on each other, the process, and the outcome. For this assignment, students will also be expected to include a policy evaluation section that will also include an analysis of implementation as well as suggestions on issues involving the future of the policy issue. Presentations will be scheduled for the last week of class and papers will also be due that week. Papers received late will be marked down one full letter grade for every day they are late. Late papers must be turned in to the department office and date-stamped.

### **Grading**

Participation and Assignments	15%
Journals	15%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	20%
Research Project	30%

### **Course Outline**

#### **Week 1 (1/30, 2/1). Introduction to the Public Policy Process**

*Reading:* Peters, ch. 1

*Assignment:* Where is Government? (Due Thursday, 2/1)

- ◆ Syllabus Distributed
- ◆ What is Public Policy and Why Do We Study It?
- ◆ Rhetoric and Reality: Is the US Government “Large”?
- ◆ What is a “Welfare State”?
- ◆ Levels of Policy: Federal, State, County, Local
- ◆ Public and Private Agents
- ◆ Policy Instruments: Law, Services, Money, Taxes and Others

#### **Week 2 (2/6, 2/8). Policy Making Structures and Institutions**

*Reading:* Peters, ch. 2.

*In-Class Film:* Schoolhouse Rock: “I’m Just a Bill”

- ◆ Inefficiency as Founders’ Intent
- ◆ Divided Government
- ◆ Federalism
- ◆ Separation of Powers
- ◆ Executive Offices
- ◆ Legislative Committees and Subcommittees
- ◆ Iron Triangles
- ◆ Public and Private Policy Sectors

#### **Week 3 (2/13, 2/15). The Policy Process I: Theoretical Orientations, Agenda Setting, and Policy Formulation**

*Reading:* Peters, ch. 3; and Handout: Dye, “Models of Politics”

- ◆ Pluralist, Elitist, and State-Centric Theories
- ◆ Media and Agenda Setting
- ◆ Symbolism
- ◆ The Issue Attention Cycle
- ◆ Agents of Formulation
- ◆ Techniques of Formulation

**Week 4 (2/20, 2/22). The Policy Process II:  
Policy Legitimation**

*Reading:* Peters, ch. 4; and Theodoulou, ch. 5.

*In-Class Film:* Schoolhouse Rock: “Sufferin’ ‘till Suffrage” and “Elbow Room”

- ◆ Media and Public Opinion
- ◆ The Role of Political Socialization in Policy Legitimation
- ◆ Legislative Legitimation and Coalition Building
- ◆ Regulation and Administration
- ◆ The Role of Courts

**Week 5 (2/27, 2/29). The Policy Process III:  
Organizations and Implementation**

*Reading:* Peters, ch. 5; and Handout on the NEA Controversies

*Assignment:* Research Project Topics Due Tuesday (1 Page)

- ◆ The Bureaucracy
- ◆ Executive Departments
- ◆ Legislative Organizations
- ◆ Independent Commissions and Agencies
- ◆ Public Corporations
- ◆ Public Foundations
- ◆ Implementation Methods and Structures
- ◆ Organizational Structures
- ◆ Standard Operating Procedures

**Week 6 (3/6, 3/8). The Policy Process IV:  
Budgeting**

*Reading:* Peters, ch. 6.

- ◆ The Power of the Purse
- ◆ The Line-Item Veto
- ◆ Agency Requests
- ◆ Sunset Provisions
- ◆ The Budget Cycle
- ◆ Budget Execution
- ◆ Impounding of Funds
- ◆ Hidden Money: AEC, Covert Operations, Transfers
- ◆ Deficits, Surpluses and Deficit Spending
- ◆ Budget Reforms

**Week 7 (3/13, 3/15). The Policy Process V:  
Analysis, Evaluation, and Change**

*Reading:* Peters, chs. 7 and 15.

- ◆ Cost-Benefit Analysis
- ◆ Value Assessment
- ◆ Missing Costs and Discounting
- ◆ Measurement Issues
- ◆ Ethical Considerations in Cost-Benefit Analysis
- ◆ Goals and Goal Change
- ◆ Efficiency
- ◆ Types of Policy Change

**Week 8 (3/20, 3/22). Midterm Exam on Tuesday  
Thursday: Economic and Tax Policy**

*Reading:* Peters, chs. 8 and 9.

- ◆ The Goals of Economic Policy
- ◆ Supply-Side Economics
- ◆ The Laffer Curve
- ◆ Balance of Payments
- ◆ Trade and Tariffs
- ◆ Fiscal and Monetary Policy
- ◆ Privatization
- ◆ Graduated and Flat Taxes

**Week 9 (3/27, 3/29). Educational Policy**

*Reading:* Peters, ch. 12; and Handout on Vouchers

- ◆ Testing — Teachers and Students
- ◆ Teacher Compensation
- ◆ School Rankings
- ◆ Per-Pupil Spending
- ◆ Vouchers
- ◆ The Church / State Distinction
- ◆ Busing
- ◆ Maximum Class Sizes
- ◆ Higher Education Policy
- ◆ Grants to Universities
- ◆ Student Loan Policy

**Week 10 (4/3, 4/5). Welfare Policy**

*Reading:* Peters, ch. 11; and Handout on the Social Security Crisis

*Assignment:* Paper Outline Due Tuesday (1-2 Pages)

- ◆ Guaranteed Income
- ◆ AFDC
- ◆ Social Security
- ◆ Disability
- ◆ The War on Poverty

- ◆ Homeless Policy
- ◆ The Personal Responsibility Act of 1996
- ◆ The Coming Social Security Shortfall and Reform

**(4/10, 4/12). Spring Break – No Class**

**Week 11 (4/17, 4/19). Health Care Policy**

*Reading:* Peters, ch. 10; and Theodoulou chs. 2, 9 and 10.

- ◆ How Does the US Rank in Health Care?
- ◆ Health Care Expenses in the US
- ◆ Ethics in Healthcare Policy
- ◆ Medicare and Medicaid (MediCal)
- ◆ Prescription Drug Regulation
- ◆ Single-Payer
- ◆ The Clinton Debacle
- ◆ The AIDS Crisis
- ◆ The Future: Cloning, DNA, and the Human Genome Project

**Week 12 (4/24, 4/26). Energy and Environmental Policy**

*Reading:* Peters, ch. 13; and Handout: Bullard, “Dumping in Dixie.”

- ◆ Oil, Coal, Gas and Nuclear Power
- ◆ Clean Energy and Incentives
- ◆ Pollution
- ◆ Clean Air and Water Acts
- ◆ Toxic Waste Policy
- ◆ Endangered Species

**Week 13 (5/1, 5/3). Law Enforcement and The Drug War**

*Reading:* Peters, pp. 404-417; and Meier chs. 1-2 and 7-8

- ◆ DEA and Drug Policy
- ◆ Federal Support
- ◆ Death Penalty
- ◆ Clinton Crime Bill

**Week 14 (5/8, 5/10). Defense Policy and The Drug War (Cont’d)**

*Reading:* Peters, pp. 384-404; and Meier chs. 4-5.

- ◆ Requests and Expenditures
- ◆ Procurement and Pork
- ◆ Defense Jobs
- ◆ Selective Service
- ◆ Public Opinion
- ◆ Black Ops
- ◆ Iran-Contra
- ◆ Panama
- ◆ Gulf War
- ◆ Nuclear Weapons Policy

**Week 15 (5/15, 5/17). Tuesday: Project Presentations**

**Thursday: Ethics in Public Policy**

*Reading:* Peters, ch. 19.

*Assignment:* Research Project Paper Due Thursday

- ◆ “Externalities”
- ◆ The Value of Life
- ◆ Individual Autonomy
- ◆ Fairness

**Week 16. Final Exam: Thursday, May 24, 11:00 am - 12:15 pm**