Government 358: American Public Policy
Department of Government
University of Texas
Autumn 2012

Instructor: Bryan Jones
TTh 11-12:30, MEZ 1.306
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Email: bdjones@austin.utexas.edu
Teaching Assistants: Michelle Wolfe and Clare Brock

This course will examine the politics and history of public policymaking in America. We will examine how policy is made, and whether LBJ’s dicta that “good policy is good politics” holds. We will study contemporary policy challenges, especially focusing on financial and budgetary challenges, and health care. We will also examine education, environment, and justice.

Since good policies can only come about with good information, properly interpreted, the course will emphasize the roles of ideas and information in the policy process: how elected and appointed political leaders use it to formulate and implement public policies.

Guiding Course Principle:

“Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passion, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence.” --John Adams, Argument in Defense of the Soldiers in the Boston Massacre Trials, December 1770

Major Theme:

Economic inequality has worsened in the US since the late 1970s. Why has this occurred? What are the consequences? Is it OK, or should we be discussing policy options to change the situation? While the course is designed as a survey of approaches and policies, we will develop our understanding of the material through an examination of increasing economic inequality in America. We’ll read two books, whose factual bases have not been contested, but whose interpretations and prescriptions have been vigorously debated. These are (from the right of the political spectrum) Charles Murray’s Coming Apart; and (from the left): Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson’s Winner-Take-All Politics.

Course Objectives

* Survey the approaches used by political scientists to understand the public policymaking process.
* Integrate current public affairs into our understanding of public policy.
* Survey the use, history, and success of the major tools used by governments in the US to address policy problems in several major issue areas.
* Further the development of analytical skills in policy analysis through brief exercises and a major paper employing library and web-based sources. Students will use the Policy
Agendas Project’s datasets located at the University of Texas to trace public policy activity across time.

Required Texts

* Carter A. Wilson, *Public Policy: Continuity and Change.*
* Charles Murray, *Coming Apart*
* Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson, *Winner Take All Politics.*
* Subscription to the *New York Times*
* Readings available on Blackboard*
* Readings from *CQ Researcher* -- on line through UT Libraries: http://library.cqpress.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/cqresearcher/

Course Requirements

First and foremost, acquire and read the assigned material. Second, attend class! Attendance will be monitored and will influence grades.

Grades will be based on:

One Examination. (25%)

The exam will be objective-style. It will concentrate on your understanding of the course material--readings (including texts, newspapers, and Blackboard postings).

One Essay (15%)

Your essay will compare the approaches of Hacker and Pierson, on the one hand, and Murray on the other. (3-5 pages).

Two Exercises. (20% total: 5% for the first, 15% for the second).

These will be short papers (2-3 pages), based on the Policy Agendas Datasets. The datasets are located at http://www.policyagendas.org. The second exercise should also include the proposal for your final paper.

Policy Paper. (25%).

The paper will ask you to use the analytic skills that you are learning in the course to study the course of policy development in a major policy area. You will develop a policy history (including using the resources of the Policy Agendas Project), analyze the current implementation arrangements (if any), and make policy recommendations (if you wish). REMEMBER John Adams!

Course attendance and participation (including in-class quizzes). (15%)

Paper:

Students will prepare a policy paper analyzing the development of policy within an approved policy area. The paper must use a theoretical perspective discussed in the class to develop an understanding of the history and recent developments of a particular public policy, and will rely on the Policy Agendas Datasets and other web-based material as well as traditional library resources.

Students will submit a one-page proposal for the paper with the second exercise (see above), which we will comment on. The paper should be around 7-10 pages in length, with proper citations (APSR or other approved style). Writing style and clarity of presentation are important. The paper must be thematic in development, and must
incorporate some of the ideas developed in the course. The paper must include a one-paragraph abstract, an introductory section introducing the theme of the paper, a body developing the evidence, and a concluding statement drawing the linkages between the theme of the paper and the evidence developed.

Notice:
Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259, http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/.

Grading and Attendance Guidelines

Missed and Late Work
You will need a doctor’s note to document any request for taking an exam at other than the regularly scheduled time.

Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day listed for the syllabus unless otherwise noted. Online submissions will not be accepted. To discourage late work, we have adopted the following policy:
• Assignments lose a full letter grade for every 24-hour period they are late. This penalty includes Saturdays and Sundays.
Late work will hurt your grade, so don’t do it. We reserve the right to make an exception to the late policy in the case of an extreme (and documentable) emergency.

Quizzes
Quizzes will be randomly administered throughout the semester. At the end of the semester your lowest quiz score will be dropped and the remaining scores will be counted toward your participation grade for this course.

Attendance
Attendance will be monitored throughout the semester and will also be counted toward your participation grade for this course. We reserve the right to make an exception to the attendance policy in the case of a documentable emergency or university sanctioned absences.

Plagiarism
Please make yourself familiar with the University’s Code of Academic Integrity http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php. There will be zero tolerance for plagiarism and cheating. If you are not sure about how to represent another person’s work in an assignment, contact the course TA’s for advice before submitting. The code specifies that you may be given an F, suspended or expelled for academic dishonesty. Don’t do it.

Accommodations
If you require special accommodation please submit official documentation to the course instructor or TAs.

***These are generally applicable guidelines for the course. We will provide additional requirements as necessitated for specific assignments.
# Course Outline

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<tr>
<td>Class:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thur Aug 30th</td>
<td>Course Introduction</td>
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<td>Tue Sept 4th</td>
<td>Policy Processes</td>
<td>Wilson, Introduction &amp; Ch. 1</td>
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<td>Thur Sept 6th</td>
<td>Policy and Politics</td>
<td>Wilson, Ch. 2</td>
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<td>Tue Sept 11th</td>
<td>Policy Theories</td>
<td>Leonhardt, Lessons (Blackboard)</td>
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<td>Thur, Sept 13th</td>
<td>Policy Change</td>
<td>Wilson, Chapter 2 (continued)</td>
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<td>Tue Sept 18th</td>
<td>Decision-Making</td>
<td>Jones and Thomas, Bounded Rationality (Blackboard)</td>
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<td>CRS Summary (Blackboard)</td>
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<td>Thur Sept 20th</td>
<td>Studying Public Policy</td>
<td>Policyagendas.org</td>
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<td>Tue Sept 25th</td>
<td>Policy History</td>
<td>Wilson, Ch. 3</td>
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<td>Thur Sept 27th</td>
<td>Institutions &amp; Processes</td>
<td>Wilson, Ch. 4</td>
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<td>CQ Researcher 4/30/2010</td>
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<td>Dan Vergano</td>
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In-Class Case Study: [Columbia Space Shuttle Disaster](#)

**FIRST EXERCISE DUE**

| Tue Oct 2nd | Government and Economy | Wilson, Ch. 10                                  |
| Thur Oct 4th | Financial Overhaul     | CQ Researcher 7/30/2010                          |
|              | In-Class Case: The Meltdown | The Warning |
| Tue Oct 9th  | Economic Policy        | Wilson, Ch. 14                                   |
| Thur Oct 11th | Fiscal Problems        | CQ Researcher (3/18/2011)                        |
| Tue Oct 16th | Inequality: Coming Apart | Murray, Prologue, Chs. 1-7.                    |
| Thur Oct 18th | Coming Apart, continued | Murray, Chs. 8-176                               |
Tue Oct 23\textsuperscript{rd}  \hspace{1cm} \textbf{Money, Politics, and Policy} \hspace{1cm} CQ Researcher 5/28/2010

\textbf{In class case: Dark Money}

Thur Oct 25\textsuperscript{th}  \hspace{1cm} \textbf{Inequality: Winner-Take-All}  
\hspace{1cm} Hacker and Pierson, Intro, Chs. 1-6

\hspace{1cm} \textbf{Engineered Inequality}

Tue Oct 30\textsuperscript{th}  \hspace{1cm} \textbf{Winner Take-All, continued}  
\hspace{1cm} Hacker and Pierson, Chs. 7-10, Concl

**\textbf{ESSAY Due}

Thur Nov 1\textsuperscript{st}  \hspace{1cm} \textbf{Health Policy}  
\hspace{1cm} Wilson, Ch. 6

Tue, Nov 6\textsuperscript{th}  \hspace{1cm} \textbf{The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act}  
\hspace{1cm} CQ Researcher 6/11/2010; updated 5/24/2011

**\textbf{SECOND EXERCISE DUE; Paper proposal due.}

Thur Nov 8\textsuperscript{th}  \hspace{1cm} \textbf{Labor Policies}  
\hspace{1cm} Wilson, Ch. 9

Tue Nov 13\textsuperscript{th}  \hspace{1cm} \textbf{Social Welfare; Social Security}  
\hspace{1cm} Wilson, Ch. 5

Thur Nov 15\textsuperscript{th}  \hspace{1cm} \textbf{Education Policy}  
\hspace{1cm} Wilson, Ch. 13

\hspace{1cm} No Child Left Behind

\hspace{1cm} Value of College

CQ Researcher 4/16/2010

CQ Researcher 11/20/2009

Tue Nov 20\textsuperscript{th}  \hspace{1cm} \textbf{CLASS EXAM}

\textbf{Thanksgiving Break}

Tue Nov 27\textsuperscript{th}  \hspace{1cm} \textbf{Civil Rights}  
\hspace{1cm} Wilson, Ch. 7

\hspace{1cm} Affirmative Action

CQ Researcher 10/17/2008

Tue Nov 29\textsuperscript{th}  \hspace{1cm} \textbf{Crime and Drugs}  
\hspace{1cm} Wilson, Ch. 12

Thur Dec 6\textsuperscript{th}  \hspace{1cm} **\textbf{FINAL PAPER DUE}