

PSC 4730: American Public Policy

Instructor: Dr./Professor Wehde

E-mail: wehdew@etsu.edu

Office Hours: Mondays 9:00 am to 12:00 pm (Eastern) or by appointment

Catalog Description: A study of the economic and social policies of American national government. The course analyzes fiscal, monetary, social welfare, trade, and labor policies, and examines the major debates over public policy, including whether and how it can promote economic prosperity and social justice.

My Description: Public policy is the product of a complex series of processes involving many actors including formal political institutions such as Congress and informal groups such as social movements. This course introduces students to broad theories which seek to explain the creation of public policy, with a substantive focus on social welfare policy, and its subsequent analysis as the product of such a complex system. Using these theories, students will develop a variety of different writing and presentation skills crucial to success as students and professionals.

Using the process and product of policy analysis as a frame, we will examine a variety of scholarly approaches, with an emphasis on policy feedback, to understanding the policy process. The various theories scholars use to examine the policy process emphasize different aspects of political and policy relevant concepts. Students will develop critical thinking skills by comparing and contrasting the various concepts central to the theories of the policy process covered throughout the course. By synthesizing the theories of the policy process through the lens of policy analysis, students will gain preparation for both scholarly research and professional practice in their future endeavors.

COVID Clause: First things first. This semester will not be normal. There is STILL a pandemic. One we tried to react to quickly, but not quickly enough, and strongly, but not strongly enough, back in March. Life is harder than normal right now. If you need extra time on an assignment, just let me know. No need to tell me why but a quick heads-up is super helpful. If you need extra time on lots of assignments, definitely let me know so we can talk and figure out how to build a structure of support for you to finish this class and your degree. All I ask for is patience and kindness in return.

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes:

Students will leave this course with a deeper understanding of the American public policy, specifically social policy.

Students will develop writing abilities and critical thinking skills necessary to evaluate political and policy arguments through course assignments.

Students will engage with issues of poverty and social welfare critically and empathetically.

Students will be able to better assess the process of creating knowledge and information and critically approach information sources.

Course Materials:

There is one required book for the course which has been purchased by the University Bookstore.

Andrea Campbell's *Trapped in America's Safety Net*.

There is a recommended book Freeman's *Tales of Two Americas*. I will post required reading from this book to D2L however it has many, many really interesting stories for reading.

Finally, we will read excerpts from Nathan Kelly's *America's Inequality Trap* as well as a series of articles posted to the course website on D2L.

You are free to purchase the text from the book store or find it, likely less expensive, elsewhere.

Students will need reliable access to a computer and internet to succeed in this course. Please contact the instructor if this will be an issue and we will work to resolve it.

All other readings and materials will be posted on the course D2L site.

Course Schedule:

Dates	Topic	Readings
Week One: 8/24 – 8/28	Intro to Policy Analysis	Syllabus
Week Two: 8/31-9/4	Cost Benefit Analysis	Boardman et al Ch. 1
Week Three: 9/7 – 9/11	Policy Memo Writing	Pennock Ch. 10
Week Four: 9/14 – 9/18	Policy Analysis Data	Pennock Ch. 5 and 6
Week Five: 9/21 – 9/25 Theory Assignment One Due 9/27	Social Construction and Policy Design	Kreitzer and Watts Smith Social Construction
Week Six: 9/28 – 10/2 Theory Assignment Two Due 10/4	Narrative Policy Framework	NPF and Nuclear Energy
Week Seven: 10/5 – 10/9 Theory Assignment Three Due 10/11	Advocacy Coalition Framework	Weible ACF
Week Eight: 10/12 – 10/16	Policy Feedback and Submerged State	Campbell Feedback & Mettler and Guardino Submerged
Week Nine: 10/19 – 10/23 Policy Memo Due 10/25	Introduction to Campbell's Story	Campbell Trapped Ch1. & 2
Week Ten: 10/26 – 10/30	The Place of the Poor and Keeping Them There	Campbell Trapped Ch. 3 & 4
Week Eleven: 11/2 – 11/6 Reading Reflection 1 Due 11/1	Complexity of Social Policy and its Future	Campbell Trapped CH. 5 & 6
Week Twelve: 11/9 – 11/13	Plutocracy	Mobility, American Work, Kelly Trapped Ch. 2
Week Thirteen: 11/16 – 11/20	Public Opinion and Financial Deregulation	White Debt, We Share the Rain, Kelly and Enns 2010, Keller and Kelly 2015

Weeks Fourteen: THANKSGIVING 11/23 – 11/27 NO CLASS		
Week Fifteen: 11/30 – 12/4 Reading Reflection 2 Due 12/1	Integrating Theory and Analysis for Social Welfare	Kelly's Trapped Ch. 7, Death by Gentrification, and Youth from Every Corner
Finals Week 12/7-12/11	Wikipedia Assignment due 12/10	

Assignments and Grading:

A rubric for each major assignment will be posted to the course D2L site detailing the grading and structure of the assignments in further detail.

Grading Policy

A = 94-100	B+ = 87-89	C+ = 77-79	D+ = 67-69
A- = 90-93	B = 84-86	C = 74-76	D = 60-66
	B- = 80-83	C- = 70-73	F = 0-59

Grades will be calculated to the second decimal point and then rounded twice (all 5s will be rounded up), i.e. 93.35 rounds to 93.4 rounds to 93. Another example to be clear 93.44 rounds to 93.4 which rounds to 93.

Assignment

Grade

Process Theory Assignments (10 points each)	30
Reading Reflections (10 points each)	20
Wikipedia Assignment	30
Policy Memo	20
Total:	100

Late Work Policy for Assignments:

Work for the assignments for this class will be accepted **up to three days after the due date**. For each day late, the assignment will be docked ten points. So if an assignment is due 9/10 and is turned in on 9/13 then the maximum grade a student can receive is a 70. After the third day, the student will receive a zero for that assignment.

Policy Analysis/Memo: The midterm major project for this course will be a policy report. Students will learn the fundamentals of policy analysis in the first few weeks of class. They will then use these skills to conduct a policy analysis on an issue of their choosing. Students must seek approval of their policy issue by the end of Week Three.

This will be due at the end of the term (effectively replacing a midterm exam). The project will be approximately 2 pages long with at least 8-10 citations, four of which should be academic, peer-reviewed articles. Students will incorporate secondary data and statistics into their analysis to either

motivate the need for policy or the recommended policy alternative. These memos will follow the format in *The CQ Press Writing Guide for Public Policy* which will be provided on the course D2L website. More detailed instruction will be posted to the class website.

Process Theory Assignments: At the end of weeks five, six, and seven, you will have an assignment based on that week's policy process theory due. Each assignment is worth 10 points and the specific instructions for these assignments will be posted to the course D2L website.

Reading Reflections: Two reading reflections will be due in the latter half of the semester. These reading reflections are short, 1-page reflections on at least two readings each. In the 1-page (single spaced, less than 500 words), you should discuss any connections you observe between at least two readings designated for the reflections below. Reflect on how the readings are connected and what you learned or what surprised you in these readings:

Relevant Readings for Reflection 1: Campbell Feedback, Mettler and Guardino Submerged, or any Chapter in Trapped in America's Safety Net

Relevant Readings for Reflection 2: Any portion of Tales of Two Americas, Kelly Trapped Ch. 2, Kelly and Enns 2010, Keller and Kelly 2015, Kelly's Trapped Ch. 7

Wikipedia Assignment: As a portion of this class, we will think critically about how information and knowledge is made and consumed. As such, one major assignment will be to review the limitations of Wikipedia on a policy topic. This assignment overall will function in place of a final exam. This topic can be on any policy area however the primary focus of this course is social policy (though this will by nature involve ventures into tax, health, and education policy at least). Additionally, it will likely be easier to find gaps on Wikipedia for local and state policies such as TennCare, Tennessee Promise and HOPE scholarships, the Hall Income Tax, creating Founders Park, the Mountain Home VA, etc. This assignment consists of three parts (each worth 10 points). The first is a brief review of a relevant Wikipedia page or set of pages. This review should identify gaps in the sources used on the page or pages or even gaps on Wikipedia more broadly where there is no relevant page for the information you are interested in. This review which should both document the differences between the information on Wikipedia and that you have found in your research from other sources (such as peer-reviewed articles, government websites and statistics, etc.). The review should also comment on the "strength" of the sources on the Wikipedia page of interest. Are strong sources used or are weak sources used? This review should be approximately 8-10 pages double spaced and include at least 8-10 sources. Part of this portion of the assignment can look like an annotated bibliography or bulleted structure with each source citation and a brief analysis of its strengths and weaknesses underneath. This should feed into a broader discussion in the assignment of the Wikipedia page and knowledge production more generally.

The next aspect of this assignment is actually editing Wikipedia. This can be adding lines and paragraphs to existing pages, adding stronger sources to existing pages for existing claims, or even creating new pages entirely. This can be documented using before and after screenshots. Students should make edits equal to multiple, at least 3, major, substantive changes on Wikipedia. Substantive in this sense means noticeably improving the quality of the page.

Finally, a 2-page reflection essay is the last portion of this assignment. In this reflection essay, I want you to assess your comfort with editing Wikipedia. Was it easy or difficult and why? How much confidence do you have in your edits? What do you see as your role in creating or updating information in our society? Do you feel that you have a better understanding of Wikipedia and how to use it? Have your views on how information is produced changed? If so, how?

College Policies

Syllabus Attachment

Follow this link, <https://www.etsu.edu/reg/academics/syllabus.php>, for more information about the following listed resources, policies, and many more. Please let me know if you have any questions about the information obtained through this link.

Accommodations for students with disabilities:

If you are a student who requires accommodations please see me immediately. Together we will develop a full accommodation strategy for you in this course. It is the policy of ETSU to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal law, state law and the University's commitment to equal educational opportunities. Any student with a disability who needs accommodations, for example arrangement for examinations or seating placement, should inform the instructor at the beginning of the course. Faculty accommodation forms are provided to eligible students by Disability Services. Disability Services is located in the D.P. Culp Center, Room 326, telephone 439-8346. <http://www.etsu.edu/students/disable/>.

Adjustments for Pregnancy/Childbirth Related Issues

Should you need modifications or adjustments to your course requirements because of documented pregnancy-related or childbirth-related issues, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss. Generally, modifications will be made where medically necessary and similar in scope to accommodations based on temporary disability.

Religious Beliefs policy:

It is the policy of the University to excuse the absences of students that result from religious observances and to reschedule examinations and additional required classwork that may fall on religious holidays, without penalty. Please let me know BEFOREHAND, if possible, if you foresee needing an accommodation in this regard.

Title IX Resources

For any concerns regarding gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, stalking, or intimate partner violence, the University offers a variety of resources, including advocates on-call 24.7, counseling services, mutual no contact orders, scheduling adjustments and disciplinary sanctions against the perpetrator. Please contact the Title IX coordinator Sara Houck at 423-439-8544/ houckse@etsu.edu for aid in the above. The University Counseling Center <https://www.etsu.edu/students/counseling/default.php> and the BucsPress2 hotline at (423)-439-4841 are also available to help students in these types of situations.

Mental Health and Wellness Resources:

Students may experience overly stressful situations throughout the semester in their personal, professional or academic lives. The university provides a variety of resources for students in these

situations or any situation the student may find they need help. One such resource is the University Counseling Center in Nell Dossett Hall and can be contacted at 423-439-3333. The BucsPress2 hotline is a 24/7 mental health helpline available to students at (423)-439-4841. Finally, students should take care of their physical well-being as well. Resources to do so include the CPA and the University Health Center which can be reached at 423-439-4225. (Syllabus Easter egg 1: send an e-mail to my etsu.edu address with a picture of your favorite animal, can be your own or any random picture, and I will give you 0.3 percent of extra credit on your final grade – i.e. if you have a 93.2 (A) you would end up with a 93.5 from rounding (A+).

Class Policies and Assignments:

Office Hours:

Office hours are a designated time I will be in my office (virtually) available to you to discuss the content of this course. You are welcome to come by during these times to seek help or clarification on the assignments, tests, lectures, or any other material. Please take advantage of this time I have set aside for you; otherwise, I'll be sitting in my office alone probably staring at my computer waiting for you to come in.

Academic Misconduct:

Cheating is strictly prohibited because it devalues the degree you are working hard to get. As a member of the ETSU community it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the rules. To be successful in this class, all work on exams and quizzes must be yours and yours alone. You may not receive outside help. On examinations and quizzes you will never be permitted to use your notes, textbooks, calculators, or any other study aids. Plagiarism is also a form of cheating. If I find that you are plagiarizing on any of your assignments, you will be given a 0 for that assignment and may face further penalty, depending on the severity. Should you see someone else engaging in this behavior, I encourage you to report it to myself or directly to the Office of Academic Integrity Programs. That student is devaluing not only their degree, but yours, too. Be aware that it is my professional obligation to report academic misconduct, which I will not hesitate to do. Sanctions for academic misconduct can include expulsion from the University and an F in this course, so don't cheat. It's simply not worth it.