

**Public Policy**  
EVSS/PUBA 602  
FALL 2020

ONLINE

👤 Dr. Matthew Nowlin

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🗨 **Office hours:** [By appointment](#) (on Zoom)

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## Course Description

*Our responsibility is one of decision—for to govern is to choose - John F. Kennedy*

The above quote from President Kennedy came from a speech at Liberty Hall in Philadelphia on July 4th, 1962. In the audience were members of the 54th National Governors' Conference. Speaking to elected officials that were charged with making often difficult decisions, Kennedy was reminding them that making choices is at the heart of governing. How do policymakers make choices regarding public policy? This course will address this question by examining the policymaking process in the United States.

Public policy is an on-going process of actions (or inactions) and decisions (or non-decisions) by government at all levels. The policymaking process considers the interactions of decision-makers, those trying to influence decision-makers, and the venues where decisions are made. As likely future actors in the complex process of making public policy, you will likely be involved in considering, informing, and perhaps making consequential policy decisions. The aim of this course is for students in the MES, MPA, and concurrent MES/MPA programs to develop an understanding of the ways in which policy choices are developed, considered, and made in a democratic system.

The tools and frameworks discussed in the course will help you to be able to identify the major components and important facets of the policymaking process as well as enhance your capacity to critically analyze important policy issues.

The course is divided into three sections, 1) **Foundations:** includes some of the foundational aspects of policymaking in the US such as democracy, equality, institutions, and actors; 2) **Theories of the Policy Process:** covers the major policy process theories that scholars have developed; and 3) **Applied Policy Research:** discusses how knowledge is applied to address pressing societal problems and includes policy design, implementation, analysis, and evaluation.

## Content Modules

**OAKS**, including Gradebook, will be used for this course throughout the semester to provide the syllabus and class materials and grades for each assignment, which will be regularly posted. Course content will be delivered in weekly modules on **OAKS**. *The course will be asynchronous, meaning that you will work through the material in each module each week on your own and at your own pace.* Each module will contain assigned readings, one or a few short lectures on VoiceThread, short paper assignments, and a one or a few discussion questions that will be posted on a Discussion Board on **OAKS**. There will also be supplemental material such as additional readings, podcasts, and/or videos that are not required but will likely enhance your understanding of the required materials. A *Module Guide* will be provided that will include a reading guide for the readings assigned that week as well as a list of assignments that are due. **The modules will become available every Tuesday morning, starting on August 25, at 7:00 AM Eastern and all assignments will be due by class time the following Monday, 5:30 PM Eastern.**

## Office Hours

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I will not be able to meet with you in person and all office hour appointments will be on Zoom. To schedule an appointment go here: <https://calendly.com/nowlinmc/meetings>. You need to book an appointment 24 hours in advance. Note that if the times available do not work for you, I am happy to work with you to find a time. Just [email](#) me. **I strongly encourage you to take advantage of office hours.**

## NASPAA Competencies and Course Learning Objectives

Students who graduate from NASPAA accredited MPA programs should develop the ability to: lead and manage in public governance, participate in and contribute to the policy process, apply skills in analysis and critical thinking to solve problems and make decisions, articulate and apply a public service perspective, and communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry. **This course is designed with a special emphasis on providing students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to participate in and contribute to the policy process.** To that end, learning objectives include:

- Explain the various policy process theories and frameworks
- Apply one or more of the policy process theories to a policy problem
- Analyze policy problems and their potential solutions
- Develop a detailed understanding of a policy problem or issue
- Display oral, written, and group communication skills

These objectives will be achieved through critically reading the course readings; by writing several short papers; and by completing a policy report about a particular policy issue.

## Required Texts

The following texts are **required**. Additional readings will be listed on the schedule below and available on OAKS.

- Birkland, Thomas A. 2020. *An Introduction to the Policy Process: Theories, Concepts, and Models of Public Policy Making*. Routledge. 5th Edition. (The 4th Edition from 2016 is also acceptable)
- Weible, Christopher and Paul Sabatier (eds). 2018. *Theories of the Policy Process*. Westview Press. 4th Edition.
- Bardach, Eugene and Eric M. Patashnik. 2016. *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*. SAGE Press. 5th Edition. (There is at least one newer edition, and it is also acceptable)

## Course Requirements and Grading

Performance in this course will be evaluated on the basis of five issues papers, five policy process papers, an agency paper, a decision memo, a policy report, a reflection paper, and class engagement. *Instructions for each assignment will be placed on OAKS*. Due dates are in the schedule below. Points will be distributed as follows:

Assignment	Possible Points
Issue Papers (5 at 20 points each)	100 points total
Policy Process Papers (5 at 20 points each)	100 points total
Agency Paper	25 points
Decision Memo	50 points
Policy Report	200 points
Reflection Paper	25 points
Engagement	100 points
Total	600 points

*There are 600 possible points for this course. Grades will be allocated based on your earned points and calculated as a percentage of 600: A = 90 to 100%; B+ = 87 to 89%; B = 80 to 86%; C+ = 77 to 79%; C = 70 to 76%; F = 69% and below*

## Assignments

**Specific instructions for the following assignments are posted on [OAKS](#). All work must be turned in through the dropbox on OAKS, and is due at class time: 5:30 PM Eastern.**

- *Issue papers*: You will pick a public policy issue or problem of interest to you and write a series of five short, 2 to 3 page, papers about different aspects of the issue.
- *Policy process papers*: We will learn about several of the leading theories of the policy process. To help facilitate your learning you will write five short, 1 to 2 page, discussion papers about

each of the policy process theories discussed in the course. These papers will follow the format provided on [OAKS](#), which includes briefly explaining some of the major components of each of the theories and discussing what you learned about the policy process from learning about the theory. You will also need to find a peer-reviewed journal article that applies the theory and post a brief (about a paragraph) summary of the article as well as a pdf of the article on the [OAKS](#) discussion board.

- *Agency paper*: You will write a short, 3 to 4 page, agency paper that discusses a government (federal, state, or local) or non-profit agency involved in implementing some policy or policies related to your issue.
- *Policy Report*: For the policy report, you will combine and expand your five issue papers and the agency paper into a 15 to 20 page report. **The reflection paper is due 📅 December 11, 11:59pm**
- *Decision Memo*: The decision memo will be two-page memo that will clearly distill for a decision-maker what you have learned and would recommend regarding your policy issue. **The reflection paper is due 📅 December 11, 11:59pm**
- *Reflection Paper*: The reflection paper will be a 1 to 2 page paper that will ask you guided questions so you can reflect on how well we met the course objectives. **The reflection paper is due 📅 December 11, 11:59pm.**

### **A Note on Feedback**

Each of your short papers will be graded in a holistic fashion. I will examine and grade the document as whole, I am therefore not likely to make specific comments on multiple aspects of each of your papers. Any feedback will be provided on [OAKS](#). For the policy process papers, I will looking to see that you adequately address each of the questions, and if you do you will likely get all or most of the points. For the issue papers and the agency paper, you should think of them as rough drafts of sections of the policy report. As such, I may provide feedback on how to improve for the final report. If you adequately address what is asked for each of the papers, you will likely get all of most of the points. Any major issues with the assignments or your writing in general (such as grammar) that results in a significant loss of points (below 90%) will be addressed with feedback. Finally, I am happy to meet you with to discuss any individual paper or your writing as a whole.

### **Late Work**

Due to the fact that the world seems to be falling apart, I will be very flexible with accepting work past the due dates. But, late work should be the exception not the rule. Also, you must be in contact with me about when you expect to complete the work. I reserve the right to adjust this policy if needed.

### **Course Engagement**

Significant engagement with the course material, the professor, and your classmates is essential to learning. However, COVID-19 is making traditional forms of engagement (e.g., class attendance, office hours) difficult. As a result, I am offering multiple ways to engage with the material and each


other including required discussion board posts that includes replying to a classmate's post and contacting me through email / meeting with me on Zoom, among others. There will be flexibility in terms of engagement points so, if you miss a discussion board post or two your engagement grade will not be negatively impacted. Note that the professor has final say over what does or does not count as adequate engagement.


## Course Schedule


**Subject To Change.** All changes will be announced through email and on the [OAKS](#) course page. **Expect changes.**


**All readings listed under *Readings* below are required.** For some weeks I have provided supplemental materials. These are not required but are strongly encouraged. Apart from the books, additional readings will also be made available on [OAKS](#) or as external links. Readings can be found under Readings for each module. I recommend doing the readings in the order listed below and on the module guide.

### Books


 **Birkland:** Birkland, Thomas A. 2016. *An Introduction to the Policy Process: Theories, Concepts, and Models of Public Policy Making*. Routledge. 4th Edition

 **WS:** Weible, Christopher and Paul Sabatier (eds). 2018. *Theories of the Policy Process*. Westview Press. 4th Edition.


 **BP:** Bardach, Eugene and Eric M. Patashnik. 2016. *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*. SAGE Press. 5th Edition.

 *Other book chapters will be available as pdfs on [OAKS](#)*

### Articles

 You will be reading several peer-reviewed academic journal articles. *These will be made available as pdfs on [OAKS](#)*. In addition, you will be required to find several journal articles on your own.

### Blog Posts

 I also provide several links to Paul **Cairney**'s excellent series of blog posts, [policy in 500 words](#) and [policy in 1000 words](#). The blog posts are required reading and should be discussed in your policy process papers. Professor Cairney's [website](#) also provides podcasts and a host of other resources that I recommend.

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## Part I: Foundations

### Aug 25: Introduction and Course Overview

*Readings:*

📖 Birkland, Chap 1, *Introducing the Policy Process*

🔗 Cairney blog post [What is Public Policy and Why Does it Matter?](#)

🔗 Cairney blog post [12 Things to Know about Studying Public Policy](#)

## Sept 1: Democracy and the Policy Sciences

*Readings:*

📖 Dahl, Robert A., Chap 4, *What is Democracy?*

📖 Dahl, Robert A., Chap 5, *Why Democracy?*

📖 Smith and Larimer, Chap 1 *Public Policy as a Concept and a Field (or Fields) of Study* (pgs. 7-15)

📖 deLeon, Peter. 1995. "Democratic Values and the Policy Sciences." *American Journal of Political Science* 39(4): 886–905.

*Supplemental Materials:*

📺 **Lasswell Talk (audio only)** [Harold Lasswell speaking at UCLA 5/13/1970](#)

📖 Weible, Christopher M. et al. 2020. "COVID-19 and the Policy Sciences: Initial Reactions and Perspectives." *Policy Sciences*: 1–17.

🔗 [Bright Line Watch](#)

## Sept 8: Equality and Social Constructions

*Readings:*

📖 Dahl, Robert A., Chap 6, *Why Political Equality I? Intrinsic Equality*

📖 Dahl, Robert A., Chap 7, *Why Political Equality II? Civic Competence*

📖 powell, john a., Chap 1, *Post-Racialism or Targeted Universalism?*

🔗 Cairney blog post: [The Social Construction of Target Populations](#)

📖 Schneider, Ingram, and deLeon, *Democratic Policy Design: Social Construction of Target Populations*

*Supplemental Materials:*

📖 Michener, Jamila. 2020. "Grounding, Frameworks and Challenges: An Introduction to the PSJ Virtual Special Issue on Racial Justice." *Policy Studies Journal*


## Sept 15: The Policymaking Process

*Readings:*

📖 Birkland, Chap 2, *Elements of the Policy Making System* (pages 32-37, skim the rest)

🔗 Cairney blog post: [The Policy Cycle and its Stages](#)

🔗 Cairney blog post: [The Policy Process](#)

 Dye, Thomas R. 2013. Chap 1, *Models of Politics: Some Help in Thinking About Public Policy*

 Birkland Chap 3, *The Contexts of Public Policy Making*

*Supplemental Materials:*


 **Finding Sustainability** podcast, [Policy processes and advocacy coalitions with Chris Weible](#)

*Assignments:*

**Issue Paper 1 due**


## **Sept 22: Institutions, Actors, and Subsystems**

*Readings:*

 Dahl, Robert A., Chap 8, *What Political Institutions Does Large-Scale Democracy Require?*

 Cairney blog post [Institutions and New Institutionalism](#)

 Birkland, Chap 4, *Official Actors and Their Roles in Public Policy*

 Birkland, Chap 5, *Unofficial Actors and Their Roles in Public Policy*

 Cairney blog post [Networks, Sub-government, and Communities](#)

 Anderson, James A., *Levels of Politics*

*Assignments:*

**Issue Paper 2 due**

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## **Part II: Theories of the Policy Process**


### **Sept 29: Agenda Setting and the Multiple Streams Approach**

*Readings:*

 Birkland Chap 6, *Agenda Setting, Power, and Interest Groups*

 Cairney blog post: [Multiple Streams Analysis](#)

 WS Chap 1: Herweg, et al., *The Multiple Streams Framework*

 Find a peer-reviewed journal article on agenda setting and/or the Multiple Streams Approach and post it to the discussion on [OAKS](#)

*Supplemental Materials:*

 **Video with Prof. Nikolaos Zahariadis** [Multiple Streams Approach: An Introduction](#)

*Assignments:*

**Policy Process Paper 1 due**

## Oct 6: Punctuated Equilibrium

*Readings:*

🔗 **Cairney blog post:** [Punctuated Equilibrium Theory](#)

📖 **WS Chap 2:** Baumgartner, Jones, and Mortensen, *Punctuated Equilibrium Theory: Explaining Stability and Change in Public Policymaking*.

📄 *Find a peer-reviewed journal article using punctuated equilibrium*

*Supplemental Materials:*

📺 **Video with Prof. Frank Baumgartner** [Punctuated Equilibrium: An Introduction](#)

📺 **Video with Prof. Frank Baumgartner** [Punctuated Equilibrium: Applications](#)

🔗 **Comparative Policy Agendas website**

*Assignments:*

**Policy Process Paper 2 due**

## Oct 13: Advocacy Coalition Framework

*Readings:*

🔗 **Cairney blog post:** [The Advocacy Coalition Framework](#)

📖 **WS Chap 4:** Jenkins-Smith, Nohrstedt, Weible, and Ingold, *The Advocacy Coalition Framework: An Overview of the Research Program*

📄 Weible, Christopher M, and Karin Ingold. 2018. “Why Advocacy Coalitions Matter and Practical Insights About Them.” *Policy & Politics* 46(2): 325–43.

📄 *Find a peer-reviewed journal article using the advocacy coalition framework*

*Supplemental Materials:*

📺 **Video with Prof. Christopher Weible** [Weible On ACF](#)

*Assignments:*

**Policy Process Paper 3 due**

## Oct 20: Narrative Policy Framework

*Readings:*

🔗 **Cairney blog post:** [Critical Policy Studies and the Narrative Policy Framework](#)

📖 **WS Chap 5:** Shanahan, Jones, McBeth, Radaelli, *The Narrative Policy Framework*

📄 Crow, Deserai, and Michael Jones. 2018. “Narratives as Tools for Influencing Policy Change.” *Policy & Politics* 46(2): 217–34.

📄 *Find a peer-reviewed journal article using the narrative policy framework*

*Assignments:*



## Policy Process Paper 4 due

### Oct 27: The Institutional Analysis and Development Framework and Social-Ecological Systems

*Readings:*

🔗 **Cairney blog post:** [The Institutional Analysis and Development Framework \(IAD\) and Governing the Commons](#)

📖 **WS** Chap 6: Schlager and Cox, *The IAD Framework and SES Framework: An Introduction and Assessment of the Ostrom Workshop Frameworks*

📖 Heikkila, Tanya, and Krister Andersson. 2018. “Policy Design and the Added-Value of the Institutional Analysis Development Framework.” *Policy & Politics* 46(2): 309–24.

🔗 **Cairney blog post:** [The Social-Ecological Systems Framework](#)

📖 *Find a peer-reviewed journal article using the IAD OR the SES framework*

*Supplemental Materials:*

📺 **Video with Dr. Elinor Ostrom** [Elinor Ostrom on managing “common pool” resources](#)

📖 McGinnis, Michael D. 2011. “An Introduction to IAD and the Language of the Ostrom Workshop: A Simple Guide to a Complex Framework.” *Policy Studies Journal* 39(1): 169–83.

📖 Boettke, Peter J., Jayme S. Lemke, and Liya Palagashvili. 2016. “Re-Evaluating Community Policing in a Polycentric System.” *Journal of Institutional Economics* 12(2): 305–25.

*Assignments:*

## Policy Process Paper 5 due

### Nov 3: Applying the Theories of the Policy Process

*Readings:*

📖 Weible, Christopher M., Tanya Heikkila, Peter deLeon, and Paul A. Sabatier. 2012. “Understanding and Influencing the Policy Process.” *Policy Sciences* 45(1): 1–21.

📖 Cairney, Paul. 2015. “How Can Policy Theory Have an Impact on Policymaking? The Role of Theory-Led Academic–Practitioner Discussions.” *Teaching Public Administration* 33(1): 22–39.

*Assignments:*

## Issue Paper 3 due


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## Part III: Applied Policy Research

### Nov 10: Policy Design and Implementation

*Readings:*

📖 **Birkland** Chap 9, *Policy Design and Policy Tools*

 **BP** Appendix B: Things Governments Do

 **Birkland** Chap 10, *Policy Implementation, Failure, and Learning* (pgs. 342-353)

*Supplemental Materials:*

 **Video with Dr. Raphael Bostic** [Policy Design and Implementation: A Perspective from Obama's Washington](#)


 Arsneault, Shelly, and Shannon K. Vaughan. 2020. "Teaching the Public Policy Context of Nonprofit Management." In *Teaching Nonprofit Management*, Edward Elgar Publishing, 94–109.


*Assignments:*

**Agency Paper due**


## Nov 17: Policy Analysis and Evaluation

*Readings:*

 **Birkland** Chap 8, *Decision-Making and Policy Analysis*

 Radin, Beryl A., Chap 6, *The Tools of the Trade*

 **Cairney blog post:** [Success and Failure \(Evaluation\)](#)

 deLeon, Peter. 1992. "The Democratization of the Policy Sciences." *Public Administration Review* 52(2): 125–29.

*Supplemental Materials:*

 [Does Head Start work? The debate over the Head Start Impact Study, explained](#)

 [Army Corp of Engineers Charleston Peninsula Study](#)


*Assignments:*

**Issue Paper 4 due**

## Nov 24: THANKSGIVING BREAK

## Dec 1: Doing Policy Analysis

*Readings:*

 Cairney, Paul, and Christopher M. Weible. 2017. "The New Policy Sciences: Combining the Cognitive Science of Choice, Multiple Theories of Context, and Basic and Applied Analysis." *Policy Sciences* 50(4): 619–27.

 **Cairney blog post** [Evidence-based policymaking and the 'new policy sciences'](#)

 **BP:** Parts I-IV

*Assignments:*

**Issue Paper 5 due**

## **Important Information**

### **Inclement Weather, Pandemic or Substantial Interruption of Instruction**

If in-person classes are suspended, faculty will announce to their students a detailed plan for a change in modality to ensure the continuity of learning. All students must have access to a computer equipped with a web camera, microphone, and Internet access. Resources are available to provide students with these essential tools.

### **Honor Code and Academic Integrity**

Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when identified, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved.

Incidents where the instructor determines the student's actions are related more to a misunderstanding will be handled by the instructor. A written intervention designed to help prevent the student from repeating the error will be given to the student. The intervention, submitted by form and signed both by the instructor and the student, will be forwarded to the Dean of Students and placed in the student's file.

Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly by the instructor and/or others having knowledge of the incident to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive a XF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This grade will appear on the student's transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the X to be expunged. The student may also be placed on disciplinary probation, suspended (temporary removal) or expelled (permanent removal) from the College by the Honor Board.

Students should be aware that unauthorized collaboration – working together without permission – is a form of cheating. Unless the instructor specifies that students can work together on an assignment, quiz and/or test, no collaboration during the completion of the assignment is permitted. Other forms of cheating include possessing or using an unauthorized study aid (which could include accessing information via a cell phone or computer), copying from others' exams, fabricating data, and giving unauthorized assistance.

Research conducted and/or papers written for other classes cannot be used in whole or in part for any assignment in this class without obtaining prior permission from the instructor.

Students can find the complete Honor Code and all related processes in the [Student Handbook](#)

### **Students with Disabilities**

The College will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students should apply at the [Center for Disability Services](#) located on the first floor of the Lightsey Center, Suite 104. Students approved for accommodations are responsible for notifying me as soon as possible and for contacting me at least one week before any accommodation is needed.

## **Financial Challenges**

If a student has difficulty affording groceries or getting sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, please contact the Dean of Students for support. Furthermore, please notify me if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable me to assist with identifying available resources.

## **Counseling Center**

As a student, you may experience a range of challenges that can interfere with learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, substance use, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may diminish your academic performance and/or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. Services are available, and treatment does work. You can learn more about confidential mental health services available on campus at the [Counseling Center](#).

## **Center for Student Learning**

I encourage you to utilize the Center for Student Learning's (CSL) academic support services for assistance in study strategies and course content. They offer tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, study skills appointments, and workshops. Students of all abilities have become more successful using these programs throughout their academic career and the services are available to you at no additional cost. For more information regarding these services please visit the CSL [website](#) or call (843) 953-5635.

## **Religious Holiday Policy**

It is the policy of the College to excuse absences of students that result from religious observances and to provide without penalty for the rescheduling of examinations and additional required class work that may fall on religious holidays. Please see me immediately if you will need to miss class any time during this semester.