

## URPA 5311 Social Policy Formation

**Class Meets:** Thursday 7 to 9:50 PM in 016 University Hall

**Instructor:** Dr. Ivonne Audirac, Email: [audirac@uta.edu](mailto:audirac@uta.edu)

**Office:** 546 University Hall, Phone: 817-272-3338



### Course Description

In this course we will use a sociological approach to study the policy formation process in a number of areas including social planning and community problem solving. We are also concerned with the goals, problems and solutions in policy decision making including the process through which policy is developed, implemented and revised. Whether you are a student of urban affairs, public administration, urban planning or social sciences, this course will build analytical skills that will be useful in your career either in public or private service.

We will explore key questions about the role of public policy as you develop a policy brief on an issue that is of interest to you. Questions you need to ask as you develop your policy brief include but are not limited to: What is the social **problem** (how is it defined or should be defined)? What are the **goals** of this policy? Who are the policy actors (institutional leaders and decision makers, nonprofits, lobbyists, academia, think tanks, the media, foundations)? What is the policy subsystem (e.g., other policies, programs, levels of government, public-private partnerships)? What are the debates surrounding this policy (e.g., the technical disputes over the severity of the problem and/or its causes)? What evidence do actors present in support or against this policy? What belief systems, values and interests underpin this policy? What policy instruments have been adopted as **solutions** to the problem? Does the policy represent the continuation of or a departure from the status quo? Is the policy intended to foster real social change or merely placate a potentially insurgent group?

### Expected Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of the course, you should be able to:

- Demonstrate a broad understanding of major perspectives regarding the social policy formation process in the U.S.
- Explain the dynamics of the public policy process for a range of major contemporary social issues- vis-à-vis (a) the political economy, (b) social structure, (c) prevailing cultural values and beliefs, and (d) common political ideologies.
- Critically assess the embedded values and belief systems influencing the public interest and policy problem definitions and their relationship to the notion of policy paradox.
- Apply policy-brief writing techniques to a policy issue.
- Practice skills in research and information gathering and in effective communication.

### Textbooks

#### Required

1. Stone, Deborah (2012). *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (Norton)
2. Smith, Catherine (2009). *Writing Public Policy: A Practical Guide to Communicating in the Policy Making Process*, 2d ed. (Oxford UP)
3. Smith & Larimer (2009) *Public policy primer*, Boulder, CO: Westview
4. Other required readings available from Bb or UTA library as specified in this syllabus.

#### Recommended

5. Sabatier, Paul A. (2007) *Theories of the Policy Process*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (West View Press)

**COURSE AT A GLANCE\***

Week	Date	Topic	Discussion Board	Assignments
	Jan 16	Introduction to the course: Objectives, structure, expectations	<input type="checkbox"/> Required	Bio/expertise
<b>Module 1</b>		<b>The Policy Process</b>		
1	Jan 23	The Role of Rationality in the Policy Process –Alternative- Identifying the Policy Issue –Problem Definition The Rationality Project vs the Polis –Stone Ch.1	<input type="checkbox"/>	Assignment 1 <b>part 1</b> Identifying the Problem (due Jan 23 by 6PM)
2	Jan 30	Who Rules America? elite, pluralism, regime theories Policy Goals: Equity --Stone Ch. 2 Communication in the Process –Smith Ch. 2.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3	Feb. 6	Policy Networks and Subsystems Policy Goals: Efficiency –Stone Ch. 3 Research Legislative History –Smith Ch. 5	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4	Feb 13	Decision making and Agenda Setting Policy Goals: Welfare --Stone Ch. 4 Framing the Problem –Smith Ch. 3	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5	Feb 20	Advocacy Coalitions Policy Goals: Liberty & Security -Stone Ch. 5 & Ch. 6	<input type="checkbox"/>	Assignment 1 Identifying the Problem <b>part 2</b> (due Feb 20 by 6PM)
<b>Module 2</b>		<b>Defining &amp; Framing The Problem (policy analysis)</b>		
6	Feb 27	Policy Problems: Symbols & Numbers –Stone Chs. 7 & 8 Analyze and Advice –Smith Ch. 4	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7	Mar 6	Policy Problems: Causes –Stone Ch. 9 Know the record –Smith Ch. 5	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8	Mar 13			
9	Mar 20	Policy Problems: Interests & Decisions –Stone Ch. 10 & 11 Know the Argument–Smith Ch. 6	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Module 3</b>		<b>Policy Solution and Implementation</b>		
10	Mar 27	Implementation of Public Policy Policy Solutions: Incentives, Rules –Stone Chs. 12, 13. Petitions and Proposals–Smith Ch. 7	<input type="checkbox"/>	Assignment 2 Causes of the Problem (due Mar 27 by 6PM)
11	Apr 3	Policy Solutions: Facts, Rights –Stone Chs. 14 & 15 Briefing Memo or Opinion Statement: Inform Policy Makers –Smith Ch. 8	<input type="checkbox"/>	
12	Apr 10	Policy Solutions: Powers – Stone Ch. 16	<input type="checkbox"/>	Assignment 3 Draft Policy Brief (due Apr 10 by 6PM)
13	Apr 17	Global Social Policy Testimony: Witness in a Public Hearing –Smith Ch. 9		Assignment 4 Peer Review (due Apr 17 by 6PM)
14	Apr 24	Policy Presentations & Deliberation		
15	May 1	Policy Presentations & Deliberation		
16	May 8	FINAL SUBMISSION		Assignment 5 Final Draft (due May 8 by 6PM)

\* This outline includes only textbook readings. Additional readings are detailed in the syllabus.

\* If necessary, the instructor reserves the right to make adjustments to this schedule providing advanced notice to the class.

☐ A total of 10 out of 13 weekly Bb discussion board postings—related to the readings—are required. The first one is the only one unrelated to the readings, but is the only one that cannot be missed.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS & POLICIES**

1. **Readings:** each student should have read the assigned readings and be prepared to participate in class discussions.
2. **Weekly postings.** A one-page statement with 3 or more takeaways obtained from the required weekly readings will be collected before the beginning of each session. This brief should contain a summary of reflections written in the student's own words. Quotations should be used sparingly and when used, the text should be included in quotes followed by the author, publication date and page (example: "text quoted" (Stone 2012, p. 17). The weekly brief should be posted, no later than 6:00PM before class, to the "Weekly Notes" section in Blackboard (Bb)—after such time no further posting is possible. A total of 10 postings (out of 13 possible) is required for participation credit. Although individual posting will not be graded, the instructor will assess the quality of student postings using the weekly brief rubric found in Bb's "rubrics" section.
3. **Class Participation, Presentations and Leading of Class Discussion**  
The success of the course as a learning experience depends, to a large extent, on the level and quality of participation by students. Class participation by everyone in the class is therefore required. Participation quality is enhanced by the students' willingness to challenge the readings, established concepts and theories, and each other or by highlighting the important and interesting points. This can only be accomplished by prior preparation and attendance to all class sessions. In your presentations and in writing your weekly postings you should strive to relate the assigned readings to your policy problem and to relevant issues discussed in the news or other sources.

## SPRING 2014 SYLLABUS

URPA 5311

**Class discussion/presentation.** Depending on class enrollment, one or two students will present and lead class discussion on one or more assigned topics. Presenter and Discussant roles will be assigned at the beginning of the class.

- Presenter** is expected to prepare and deliver a presentation covering the most salient ideas from the readings assigned for the week. The presentation can be delivered using Powerpoint or Prezi. Quality of oral presentations should heed the criteria in Oral Presentation Rubric found in Bb/Rubrics. The PPT file of the presentation should be posted to the "Presentations" section in Bb.
- Discussant** the role of the discussant is to be idea "provocateur" and to lead the class discussion with questions prepared based on the readings.

**ASSIGNMENTS & ASSESSMENT**

Assignments	Description	Points	Due Date
Assignment 1	Identifying the Problem (Part 1 & 2): Students are required to meet individually with the instructor to discuss the topic developed in Part 1 of this assignment.	15	Part 1: Jan 23 Part 2: Feb 20
Assignment 2	Causes of the Problem (literature review)	15	Mar 27
Assignment 3	Final Draft of Policy Brief for Peer Review	20	Apr 10
Assignment 4	Peer Review	10	Apr 17
Assignment 5	Revised Final Policy Brief	15	May 8
Assignment 6	Class Participation & Presentations	15	
Postings	Discussion Board weekly postings 10 (minimum to obtain full credit)	10	weekly
	TOTAL	100	
Assessment	<b>Grading Scale:</b> A: > 90.6; B: > 78.6 – 90.6; C: > 69.6 – 78.6; D: < 69.6.		

**4. Lateness & Course Deliverables Policy**

Late papers will conflict with the course grading process, so they are not acceptable. If extenuating circumstances prevent you from meeting a deadline, please contact me immediately. Incomplete grading or extensions are not available unless severe illness or documented extenuating circumstances justify it.

**IMPORTANT NOTES**

- CONTACT ME**—If at any time you feel the need to discuss any issue related to the class or your performance in this class, do not hesitate to email me or to schedule an appointment during my office hours (shown on the first page). If you need to meet outside office hours, e-mail me or call to set an appointment. Do not leave it until later if I can help make this course a fun and fruitful learning experience
- Seminar** – The course will be run as a seminar with active student-instructor interaction. Students are required to attend class and to make high-quality presentations and contributions to the class discussion. Students will be expected to have read the assigned material thoroughly and to have thought through its relationship to material from previous sessions.
- Blackboard** – The syllabus and other materials for this course will be available from Blackboard. Go to: <https://elearn.uta.edu/webapps/login/>
- Writing Quality** – Written assignments and presentations for this class must be of professional quality. Students should carefully edit and proofread all written work for typing, stylistic, spelling, and grammatical errors, and for clarity. Writing quality will affect the student's grade. It is very important to consult and use consistently the APA manual of style for correct citation of sources and formatting of your references: Please consult: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>
- Class Rubrics** – Oral presentations, written assignments, and weekly postings should follow the criteria contained in our class rubrics: Please consult these rubrics and use them as guidance for preparing work submitted.  
  
[MCRP Term Paper Rubric \(writing skills\)](#)  
[AACU Oral Communication skills](#)  
Weekly Briefs Rubric (in Bb).
- Academic Honesty** –"It is the philosophy of The University of Texas at Arlington that academic dishonesty is a completely unacceptable mode of conduct and will not be tolerated in any form. All persons involved in academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with University regulations and procedures. Discipline may include suspension or expulsion from the University.

Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts." (Regents' Rules and Regulations, Series 50101, Section 2.2).

<http://www.uta.edu/studentaffairs/conduct/saconstitutes.html>  
[http://library.uta.edu/tutorials/JA\\_Plagiarism/](http://library.uta.edu/tutorials/JA_Plagiarism/)

- G. **What is PLAGIARISM?** – Although most students will be familiar with the term and would not deliberately incur in plagiarism, it is always important to review the following description to make sure your assignments uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Basic examples of plagiarism include:
- Word-for-word copying of sentences or paragraphs without quoting and citing the source and page number;
  - Closely paraphrasing sentences or paragraphs without clearly citing the source; and
  - Using another person's ideas, work, data, or research without appropriate acknowledgment or citation of the source.
- "If five or more words in sequence are taken from a source, those words must be placed in quotes and the source referenced with author's name, date of publication, and page number of publication. If the author's ideas are rephrased, by transposing words or expressing the same idea using different words, the idea must be attributed to the author by proper referencing, giving the author's name and date of publication.
- If a single author's ideas are discussed in more than one paragraph, the author must be referenced at the end of each paragraph.
- Authors whose words or ideas have been used in the preparation of a paper must be listed in the references cited at the end of the paper.
- Students are encouraged to review the plagiarism module from the UT Arlington Central Library at <http://library.uta.edu/tutorials/Plagiarism> " Source: College of Nursing, Student Handbook, p. 8, accessed 8/16/2013 from: [http://www.uta.edu/nursing/handbook/msn\\_policies.php](http://www.uta.edu/nursing/handbook/msn_policies.php)
- H. **Student Feedback Survey** – At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as lecture, seminar, or laboratory shall be directed to complete a Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student's feedback enters the SFS database anonymously and is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. UT Arlington's effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly urged to participate. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>
- I. **Students With Disabilities** – The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

## J. Library Resources

The following is a list of commonly used library resources:

Library Home Page	<a href="http://www.uta.edu/library">http://www.uta.edu/library</a>
Subject Guides	<a href="http://libguides.uta.edu">http://libguides.uta.edu</a>
Subject Librarians	<a href="http://www-test.uta.edu/library/help/subject-librarians.php">http://www-test.uta.edu/library/help/subject-librarians.php</a>
Database List	<a href="http://www-test.uta.edu/library/databases/index.php">http://www-test.uta.edu/library/databases/index.php</a>
Course Reserves	<a href="http://pulse.uta.edu/vwebv/enterCourseReserve.do">http://pulse.uta.edu/vwebv/enterCourseReserve.do</a>
Library Catalog	<a href="http://discover.uta.edu/">http://discover.uta.edu/</a>
E-Journals	<a href="http://utalink.uta.edu:9003/UTAlink/az">http://utalink.uta.edu:9003/UTAlink/az</a>
Library Tutorials	<a href="http://www.uta.edu/library/help/tutorials.php">http://www.uta.edu/library/help/tutorials.php</a>
Connecting from Off- Campus	<a href="http://libguides.uta.edu/offcampus">http://libguides.uta.edu/offcampus</a>
Ask A Librarian	<a href="http://ask.uta.edu">http://ask.uta.edu</a>

The City and Regional Planning Librarian is: Mitch Stepanovich 817-272-2945 [stepanovich@uta.edu](mailto:stepanovich@uta.edu)

## K. Student Support Services Available:

The University of Texas at Arlington supports a variety of student success programs to help you connect with the University and achieve academic success. These programs include learning assistance, developmental education, advising and mentoring, admission and transition, and federally funded programs. Students requiring assistance academically, personally, or socially should contact the Office of Student Success Programs at 817-272-6107 for more information and appropriate referrals.