

Fall 2007

***PLS 510—Introduction to Public Affairs: Political, Social and Economic
Context of Public Administration***

Wednesdays

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Course Description: Covers the rationales for public policy and critical concepts in public economics. It also covers the public policy process and the legal and political foundations of public administration. Finally the basics of national, state and local politics in the U.S. are highlighted. Particular emphasis is placed on decision-making, bounded rationality, and incrementalism in American Politics and their impact on public administration and public policy.

Course Goals:

- To acquire knowledge of how social, political and economic institutions and processes operate in U.S.
- To understand how political values shape the organization of public organizations
- To examine the development and implementation of public policy and programs
- To develop the students ability to analyze how public organizations relate to their external political and economic environments

Course Grades:

- ***Weekly Written Assignments.....50%***
- ***Final Exam....40%.***
- ***Class participation.....10%***

Required Books :

Jeffrey Cohen (2000). Politics and Economic Policy in the U.S. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Don Kettl and James Fesler (2005). The Politics of the Administrative Process, third edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press. And the cases at the end of the book which will be used in class exercises so bring book to class.

John Kingdon (2003). Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies, Second Edition. New York: Longman.

Class Schedule and Assignments:

August 22

Universal Definitions of Politics, “The Triumph of the Will”

Major Political, Economic, and Social Trends

Political Decentralization

Suburbanization and Sprawl

Income Distribution and Poverty

Read: Kettl, chapter 1

Assignment: Surf the Internet and newspaper/magazine stories for summaries of important trends in the last year. Bring to class on August 29 a one-page memo identifying 5 of the most important trends over the last year. Indicate in a short paragraph why each trend was critical for the country. For example, besides those noted above, another trend might be the continued aging of the population and the continued growth of immigration especially from Latin and Asian Rim countries.

August 29

Rationales for Public Policy Intervention

Market Failures

Public Goods

Externalities and the Tragedy of the Commons

Monopolies

Information Asymmetries

Merit Goods

Skim: Cohen, Chapters 1-4.

Assignment: turn in one page memo on 5 critical trends in the last year. Remember to indicate briefly why the trends are critical.

September 5

Political Rationality vs. Economic Rationality
 Public Choice Theory
 Analysis of Policy Arenas:
 Distributive Policy
 Regulatory Policy
 Re-distributive Policy
 Self-Regulation Policy

Read: Cohen, Chap.10,11,12.

Assignment: Using the major economic rationales for economic intervention in the marketplace, indicate the principal rationales for a community to use public funds to build a swimming pool. Use bullet format. One page. Now identify the major economic rationales for adopting a heavily government subsidized prescription drug program at the national level. One page.

September 12

Monetary and Fiscal Policy
 Politics and Budgeting
 Revenue and Taxation

Read Cohen, Chapters 6, 7,8,9; Kettl, chapters 2, 10

Assignment: Take each of the four policy arenas discussed (distributive, regulatory, redistribution, and self regulation). Using the library and Internet resources, pick one policy/program for each arena and identify the major stakeholders (about 5) involved in directly shaping that policy/program. Be specific with stakeholders including individuals if appropriate, interest or advocacy groups, bureaucratic units, etc. Include supporters and those in opposition. Three page limit.

September 19

Federalism and Intergovernmental Relations
Public Interest Groups
Un-funded Mandates
Networking and Coalition Building

Read: Kettl, Chapters 3, 4, 5,6, 11

Assignment: Search the Internet on PIGS (public interest groups). Pick one of the groups and develop a two page handout on that public interest group which includes its mission, major activities, budget and staff, and latest legislative program or priority. Make a five minute power point presentation on your group.

September 26

Politics and Administration
Planning and Organizing
Implementation and Evaluation
Principle Agent Theory

Read: Kettl, Chapters 12, 13,14.

Assignment: Prepare a two page handout on a single federal agency of your choice and summarize the agency including how many employees, latest annual budget, major areas of responsibility or activity (mission), major legislative programs being implemented, and controversial issues in the last few years. Reference librarians can help you with sources. For a single federal agency, pick something below the entire Department. For example, do not take the Justice Department but select within the Department, an agency like the FBI or the Civil Rights unit. Check organization chart for Department you are interested in. Five minute power point presentation on federal agency.

October 3

Leadership
 Human Resource Management
 Political Appointees vs. Career Bureaucrats
 Factors affecting the selection of political appointees

Read: Kettl, Chapters 7,8.

Assignment: Using the library and Internet construct a profile of the characteristics of a typical cabinet secretary in the Bush administration. Then compare the profile with the profile of a typical cabinet secretary in the Clinton administration. For example, does a Secretary have to have contributed funds or WORKED directly in the Presidential campaign? Does a secretary have to fit a politically correct racial or gender profile? Does a secretary have to come from a state that was competitively very close in the last Presidential campaign? Or does the secretary have to have certain types of expertise? Put information into a table that compares the Secretary of States in each administration. Do this for six major department or cabinet posts. You pick. Five minute power point presentation on similarities or differences.

October 10

Decision Making and Bounded Rationality
 Incrementalism
 Issue Networks

Read: Kettl, Chapters 9. Kingdon, Chapters 1-4.

Assignment: Pick one specific issue network like health policy, immigration policy, social security policy, international terrorism, transportation policy, etc. and using Congressional Hearings, News Accounts, web-sites, etc identify the major interest groups and individuals who are speaking out on the issues both pro and con. Limit yourself to the top 20 people or groups. Do a five minute power point presentation..

October 17

Agenda Setting
The Policy Process
Policy Windows

Read Kingdon, chapters 5-10.

Assignment: In two pages, indicate what major changes you see taking place in the next year in the war in Iraq. Give your rationale and reasons. For example, do you anticipate more of the same and if so, why? If you anticipate major policy changes, what they may be and why? Take either position. Use concepts from February 27.

October 24

Local Politics
Community Power Structures
Elitism
Pluralism
Regime Theory

Read: Handout provided in class.

Assignment: Select one article from a professional journal on local politics and decision-making and summarize the main points in one page, bullet style. Look especially for basic principles or norms of local politics—i.e., economic elites always get their way unless there is a major realigning election and/or a public protest. Suggestions for professional journals are: Urban Affairs Review, Journal of Urban Affairs, The Municipal Finance Journal, National Civic Review.

October 31

All politics is local
 Professional City Management (major components)
 Partisanship and Local Governments
 Political Ethos Theory
 Continuity and change in local politics

Read: (on reserve)

Milan Dluhy and Howard Frank (1997), "Miami: Teetering on The Precipice of Disaster" Municipal Finance Journal, Vol. 18, Number 1, 1-17.

_____ (1999), "Miami's Fiscal Crisis: Two Years Later," Municipal Finance Journal, Vol. 20, Number 1, 1-19.

_____ (2003), "Miami's Fiscal Crisis," Lessons for Practice in American Cities," Municipal Finance Journal, Vol. 23, Number 4, 17-44.

Assignment: In one page, identify what things must take place in Miami before the city can get rid of its image of partisanship, corruption, and anti-professionalism. In short, what will it take to get the city to operate a professionally managed city where politics is minimized not maximized? Five minute power point presentation on your recommendations.

November 7

The Politics & Economics of Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid
 What can we afford in a Social Welfare State?
 What can be done to correct the anticipated shortfall?
 Should the SS system slowly be privatized?
 How can we accomplish major changes in the health care system?

Read: Use internet.

Assignment: In three pages, identify three potential solutions to the current debate about SS or health care reform (pick one). Indicate the major pro's and con's of each solution as well as a short list of which groups and individuals support each solution.

November 14

The Politics and Economics of Urban Sprawl
Economic Development vs. Sound Planning
Protectionism vs. Laissez Faire approaches
The politics of land use
Smart Growth

Assignment: Search the internet. Pick two of the largest urban/metropolitan areas in the U.S. and summarize their policies or approaches (or lack of) to urban sprawl. Indicate any reasons why each of these communities is more or less active. Try to pick communities known for progress and compare them with a community not known for progress. Some of the web sites on Urban Sprawl and Smart Growth will help you identify the urban areas and players. Speculate on possible reasons for their policies/approaches. Some examples of Smart Growth are Portland, Denver, and Minneapolis. Poor examples are LA, Houston, and Atlanta. Two pages.

November 28

Summary
Major Themes of Course
Review for Final

Read: Cohen, Chap. 14

December 5

Final Exam