



UMass

Dartmouth

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC POLICY

Public Institutions & The Policy Process POL 500

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Course Overview

This course introduces students to the foundations of public policy as both a **concept** and **process**. Students learn foundations of public policy theory, components of policymaking in relation to government functions, the issues surrounding policy implementation, as well as the purpose and function of policy evaluation. In addition students will **apply** their understanding of public policy by choosing a policy problem to write about, describing the problem within the context of the foundational concepts described in the course. Other courses in the public policy graduate program expand upon the foundations learned in this course.

Learning Outcomes

Course-Specific Learning Outcomes:

This course is intended to provide a conceptual foundation of public policy for students that includes the following:

- An understanding of public policy as a concept and process.
- The process of policymaking (including various theories and models).
- The roles of formal and informal actors in the policymaking process.
- Limitations on policymaking.
- Evaluation of policy and the concept of policy failure.

Program Learning Outcomes:

Students completing this course should have the following competencies that are considered either prerequisite or complementary knowledge for graduate programs offered by the Department of Public Policy:

- Policymaking as a theory.
- Policymaking as a process.
- The models of policymaking.
- Actors involved in policymaking.
- The impact of policymaking in government and citizen affairs.
- The ability to identify a policy problem and describe it using the theories and models expressed in the course.

Requirements

1. **Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory. Attendance is monitored by online discussion responses. During the semester, a number of online questions are asked in conjunction with the reading and written lecture materials. You are required to respond to these questions (called discussion boards) by the stated deadline. In addition, you are required to interact (comment on at least one other students response) in each discussion board question. These responses are considered your attendance and will form the basis for your class participation grade.
2. **Online Access:** Necessary course materials will be housed at “MyCourses” via your “MyUMassD” login portal. The username is password is **exactly** the same as your UMass Dartmouth email username and password. All of your online courses are located at this site.
3. **Outside Readings/Personal Interests:** Students are encouraged to develop a dialogue in the online setting based on outside readings, experiences, or personal interests that are related to the subject matter. Because we are dealing with subjects of **public policy** (health, welfare, and justice), each student undoubtedly has personal experiences/viewpoints that will add to the discussion. You are encouraged to share such viewpoints.

Required Readings

B. Guy Peters, American Public Policy: Promise and Performance, 10th edition (CQ Press/SAGE, 2016).

Handouts and Web-postings. **These readings will be provided throughout the semester.**

Student Behavior/Conduct

UMass-Dartmouth has developed a detailed student handbook to deal with various issues of student behavior. Each student should consult this resource for a better understanding of issues surrounding academic dishonesty. Any perceived negative behavior in this class will result in the student being reported and disciplined. I strive to treat each student as an adult, and will do so unless I am given a reason to act otherwise.

<http://www.umassd.edu/studentaffairs/studenthandbook/>

Course Assignments

Module	Topic
One	What is Public Policy? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peters, Chapters 1 & 2 • Stone, <i>The Policy Paradox</i> (Goals of Policy)
Two	Policy Restraints, Agenda Setting & Policy Formulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peters, Chapters 3 & 4 • Jones: <i>Punctuated Equilibrium Theory</i>
Three	Who Makes Public Policy? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peters, Chapter 5 • McGuire: <i>Legislative Policymaking</i>
Four	Policy Implementation, Evaluation & Policy Failure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peters, Chapters 6 & 8 • McGuire: <i>Critique of Public Policy Frameworks in Environmental Settings</i>
Five	Introduction to Policy Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peters, Chapter 17 • Bardach: <i>A Practical Guide to Policy Analysis</i>
Six	Course Paper <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Paper – Comment Period
Seven	Final Paper Submission <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Final Paper for Grading

Course Evaluation Measures

Component	Weight
Discussion Board Writings	50%
Course Paper	50%

Discussion Board Writings – 50%

Discussion board responses are due for each module of the course. You must submit an original response and at least one comment on another student's post in order to receive full credit for the discussion board in question. Grading for each board response is as follows:

- A complete original response and at least one comment = 100%
- A complete original response with no comments = 75%
- A comment with no original response = 50%
- No response or comment = 0%

I reserve the right to modify these grades based on the quality of the responses given in any discussion board.

Collectively your discussion board writings will account for **50%** of your final grade in the course.

Course Paper – 50%

The course paper requires you to: (1) choose a policy issue that is of interest to you, and (2) describe your chosen policy issue using the format described below. You may work in **groups** on this paper. If so **all** group members must be listed on the paper's title page, but only one group member needs to submit the paper for evaluation on the course site. The paper **must** adhere to the following requirements:

- It must be no longer than **10 double-spaced pages** of primary content, 12-point font. (The bibliography and title page – if used – is **excluded** from the page count).
- The paper must utilize the following format:
 - **Specific statement** of the policy issue you have chosen. The more specific the issue, the easier it will be to identify. For example, a general

issue like “healthcare” will be very difficult to describe. However, a more specific issue like “the federal subsidy program under the Affordable Healthcare Act” is a much more detailed issue that will be easier to describe. Approximately **2 pages**.

- **Historical Context** of policy development. Where the policy emanated and how the agenda was established. Approximately **2 pages**.
- **Description** of the policy using any **models** of policymaking discussed in the course you believe apply. Approximately **3 pages**.
- **Evaluation/Analysis** of the policy based on its impact or other factors (meeting its intended objectives, etc.). Approximately **3 pages**.
- Your grade on the paper will be based on the following factors¹:
 - **Adherence** to the format and other requirements stated above.
 - **Clarity** of *writing and reasoning* used to describe and explain each section.
 - General **content** and **flow** of paper.
 - **Use** of policy frameworks described in the course to inform the development of your paper.

An example of how to prepare your written paper is attached to this syllabus.

END OF MAIN SYLLABUS.

¹ If you are working individually on the paper, you will receive a single grade. If you are working as a group on the paper, then every member of the group will receive the same grade that is given for the paper.

Outline of POL500 Course Paper Response

Title Page

Include course, title of paper, and student information

*Beginning of 10-page limit (double-spaced, 12-point font)
Note the page numbering – make sure to number your pages...*

Specific Statement of Policy Issue

Create a heading for each major section of your paper (by bolding, underline, etc.). If you have subheadings, then use a different format:

Heading 1

Subheading 1

Subheading 2

Follow the directions closely in choosing your policy issue. Use the 2 pages.

Historical Context

Follow the directions and use the pages allotted.

Description of Policy

Models That Apply

Model A

** Note the different headings / subheadings being used*

Model B

Evaluation/Analysis

Impact vs. Output

Benefit-Cost Analysis

Etc.

Bibliography

Make sure to list references that are cited in the document. Cite any primary or secondary literature relied upon.

This format can be applied to many of the policy papers you will conduct in the program.