Howard University  
Department of Political Science  

POLS-218 Public Policy Formulation (3 Credits)  
CRN: 81989 218 01  
Fall 2014  

Instructor  
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Office hours:  
Tues 10:00-11:00am and 12:30-1:30  
Thurs 10:00-11:00am  
And by appointment.  

Course Format  
The course meets for one 140-minute session per week, meeting on Tuesdays from 2:40-5:00pm. We will meet in Douglass Hall room 0325, unless otherwise noted. Many of the communications for this class will be conducted through the course website.  

Course Description, Goals, and Objectives  
Course Description from Graduate Bulletin:  
POLS 218. Public Policy Formulation. 3 crs. Examination of forces that shape the direction of public policy and mechanisms of its formulation and promulgation.  

Course Goals:  
Welcome to POLS-218 Public Policy Formulation. This is a graduate seminar class for political science majors and non-majors.  

This course will provide you the following:  
• A framework for structuring your thinking about the public policy process and policy cycles,  
• How policy analysis and policy analysts impact public policy formulation,  
• An appreciation of the challenges to improving public policies from implementation to evaluation to change, and  
• Techniques to approach contemporary public policy issues.  

Public policy inquiry and practice is inter-disciplinary in nature, requiring you to become comfortable working across many different disciplines. To help you achieve this we will read a variety of articles, books, and reports related to, or about, public policy.
A range of public issues, such as energy, healthcare, immigration, information technology, and economic policy will help to animate and illustrate the key concepts covered in this course.

Americans have become suspect about the effectiveness and efficiency of government and of our policymaking institutions. Recent failures such as the botched roll-out of the Healthcare.gov website, FEMA’s pitiful response to Hurricane Katrina, and the failure of the intelligence community in identifying and preventing the 9/11 attacks have added to the public’s mistrust of government. This should not dissuade you from studying public policy. First, it means there is ample room for improvement – we will explore methods for improving the performance of government. Second, government has become an increasingly important player in most aspects of modern life, from education to healthcare to the economy. Even small improvements in the public policies that impact effectiveness and efficiency of government operations can result in major societal benefits, from cost savings to better service delivery.

**Course Objectives:**

By the end of this course you should be able to:

- Identify the location of specific policy issues within the policy cycle,
- Explain the difference between private and public sector administration/management,
- Describe the federal government budgeting process,
- Describe the challenges of performing a program evaluation,
- Prepare arguments for a debate on a public administration issue,
- Assimilate large amounts of information quickly and critically, and,
- Research and analyze the scale, scope, and importance of organizations within the policy process.

**Instructional Methods**

The course will be taught seminar style with discussion based learning. Students are required to read the materials assigned before class and participate in discussions. We will also periodically have guest speakers come to class to help connect the theoretical work to practice.

**Reading Materials and Resources**

Students are required to purchase the following two textbooks, available at the Howard University bookstore. E-Book format is acceptable.


In addition, the instructor will provide you selected readings and may assign additional texts.
Attendance and Participation & Roles
You are expected to attend and actively participate in all class sessions.

Submission of Assignments
Your assignments will generally be turned in electronically. All work that will be submitted for a grade must be handed in before or at the beginning of class on the day it is due.

Summaries, Assignments, Exams and Grading

Summary of Readings: A significant share of your learning will come from the assigned readings. To ensure that you keep pace with the readings, you are required to turn in a summary of the current week’s readings to the instructor at the beginning of class. Careful and critical reading is central to your learning.

The summaries should be brief. No more than 2 pages for each book and a couple of paragraphs for each article. Shorter is better because it will help you focus on the most important points of the readings. The purpose of the summary is to recap the most important points of the material, not to give your own judgment about it. You should be prepared to discuss the readings in depth in class. During the class period discussion I will expect you to provide your opinions.

In addition to your summaries of readings, there will be two assignments and a final exam.

Assignment 1 Organizational Profile: Select an organization, with the instructor’s approval, that is engaged in the policy process and summarize its: role in the policy process; governance; and, finances. The instructor will provide you a template for this assignment. You will provide the profile and make a brief presentation to the class. Due Tues Nov 4th – Week 11. (10 Points)

Assignment 2 Policy Brief: Complete a public policy brief about a contemporary policy issue/question of interest. The topic needs to be approved by the instructor. DUE Tues Nov 25th – Week 14 (20 Points)

Final Exam: A comprehensive final exam (20 points)

SUMMARY OF GRADING
1. 11 weeks of Summaries of Readings x 10 points each = 110 points
2. Assignment 1: Organizational Profile = 20 points
3. Assignment 2: Policy Brief = 40 points
4. Final Exam = 30 points

TOTAL POINTS = 200 points

Syllabus Subject to Change
This syllabus is subject to change. Should anything on the syllabus be changed students will be notified in class and provided an updated syllabus.
Unauthorized Collaboration and Academic Dishonesty

All students are expected to comply fully with the Howard University’s Policies on Academic Dishonesty. The policy states:

As part of Howard’s community of scholars, you are expected to hold the pursuit of learning and the search for truth in the highest regard while displaying unquestionable integrity and honesty. There is no place for academic dishonesty, regardless of any seeming advantage or gain that may accrue from such dishonesty. Students will be disciplined for any intentional act(s) of dishonesty in the fulfillment of academic course or program requirements and for intentionally representing as one’s own, any ideas, writings and works of another without acknowledging that author.

The minimum disciplinary penalty imposed upon a student found to have committed any infraction(s) of the Academic Code of Conduct is no credit for the course assignment or examination in which the infraction(s) occurred. However, a more severe penalty, such as failure in the course involved or suspension from the University may be imposed depending upon the nature and extent of the infraction(s).

Please see the University’s Policies on Academic Standing for more information: http://www.howard.edu/academics/standing.htm

Collaboration on homework is authorized provided that it is done in the spirit of mutual learning and sharing of ideas. When this occurs, you should indicate the names of all persons with whom you collaborated. The copying of someone else’s work or ideas and representing them as your own is unethical and prohibited.

American Disabilities Act (ADA)

Howard University is committed to providing an educational environment that is accessible to all students. In accordance with this policy, students who need accommodations because of a disability should contact Dr. Barbara Williams, Dean for Special Student Services (202-238-2420), as soon as possible after admission to the University or at the beginning of each semester. If you need a special accommodation required by the American Disabilities Act, please document and discuss your disability with me during the first week of classes.

Electronic Communication

I will often communicate with you via email or through the notifications through the Blackboard system. Check your email account often (at least daily) for relevant information on the course. Lecture notes, assignments, and other information will be posted on the Blackboard site throughout the semester.
Detailed Schedule (Subject to Change & Calibration)

Week 1 - Introduction to Class
Tues August 26th – Introduction to Course – Syllabus – Approaching Public Policy Inquiry

Week 2 – Some Public Policy Readings
Tues September 2nd – Read and Summarize the following articles

Week 3 – Public Policy Classics
Tues September 9th – Read articles; Policy Brief Assignment handed out

Week 4 – Policy Process I
Tues September 16th – Read Chapters 1–5 of John Kingdon’s Agendas; Howlett Policy Cycles Article; Policy brief topic due

Week 5 – Policy Process II
Tues September 23rd – Read Chapters 6-10 and Epilogue of John Kingdon’s Agendas; Sabbatier Advocacy Coalition Framework

Week 6 – Policy Analysis I
Tues September 30th – Read Moon and Ghetto excerpts; prepare critique of GAO Study on Healthcare

Week 7 – Policy Analysis II
Tues Oct 7th – Challenges of Policy Analysis – Normative vs. Positive

Week 8 – Policy Analysis Techniques
Tues Oct 14th – Survey of Policy Analysis Techniques – pros and cons; Where to learn about techniques; Organizational Profile Assignment handed out

Week 9 – Federal Budgeting
Tues Oct 21st – Kettl and Articles
Budgeting exercise

Week 10 – Immigration Policy
Tues Oct 28th – Articles and congressional hearings
Week 11 – Comparative Policies - Health Policy
Tues November 4th – T.R. Reid Book; Organizational profile due

Week 12 – UNIVERSITY CLOSED
Tues November 11th – Veterans Day – University is Closed

Week 13 – Guest Author – Aneesh Chopra, First CTO of Federal Government
Tues November 18th – Using Technology to Improve Performance of Government

Week 14 – Public Administration + Policy Brief Presentations
Tues November 25th – NAPA Guest Lecture plus first third of Policy Brief presentations

Week 15 – Policy Brief Presentations
Tues December 2nd – Complete Policy Brief presentations & Course Wrap-up

Week 16
Take Home Comprehensive Final Exam