

McDaniel Europe, Campus in Budapest

PSI 2207 – American Public Policy

Professor: Kristin Makszin

Contact information

kristin.makszin@gmail.com

Availability

I am available before and after class for short consultations or via email.

Course Description

This highly-interactive course explores the process and politics of policy making in the United States. The course will be structured by specific policy areas and the theories behind the policy process and analysis will be covered within this structure. In addition to reviewing the main areas of policy making, we will discuss specific case studies (mostly from quite recent history) to clearly understand the role of various actors, assess available policy alternatives, and evaluate the specific policy choices. By analyzing real world (and in some cases real time) policy making, the course intends to provide a deeper understanding of U.S. public policy through detailed analysis of the process of policy making.

Learning outcomes

Through active engagement during this course, participants should achieve:

- A clear understanding of the policy making process in the United States of America,
- A grasp of the theories of public policy analysis,
- Improved skills at engaging with and debating multiple sides of a policy issue, and
- The ability to write this analysis in a clear policy brief.

Required texts

Clarke E. Cochran, Lawrence C. Mayer, T. R. Carr, N. Joseph Cayer, Mark McKenzie. 2016. *American Public Policy: An Introduction (11th edition)*. Cengage Learning.

All other texts will be sent via email or provided as photocopies.

Assignments & grading

Class participation (10%)

You are expected to attend class, be prepared, and participate actively in the discussions throughout the semester. In-class short reading quizzes and participation in class debates may be included in the participation grade.

Policy briefs (30%)

Each student will write two short papers that argue two sides of a policy debate and provides a detailed assessment of which policy choice the participant would recommend. The papers should be 800-1200 words in length and cover relevant topics from recent public policy in the USA. These should be sent via email by midnight on the night they are due (September 29 and November 10). Participants should send the topic of the policy brief to the instructor one week before the deadline. The structure and expectations of the policy briefs will be discussed in class.

Current event reports (10%)

You are expected to follow events related to public policy in the U.S.A. in the news throughout the semester. At the beginning of class each Monday, we will devote 15 minutes to discussing current events. On at least 4 occasions, each student should bring an article from a newspaper, magazine, or other news source to class that they can summarize in 2-3 minutes and we can discuss. Some recommended sources will be circulated via email.

Midterm exam – March 20 (20%)

The mid-term exam will cover the topics from the first six weeks of the course. It will be written in-class and will consist of short answer and essay questions.

Final exam – due May 11 (30%)

The final exam will cover the topics from the entire course. It will be written in-class and will consist of short answer and essay questions.

Standard McDaniel College scale:

100+	A+
93-100	A
90-92	A-
88-89	B+
83-87	B
80-82	B-
78-79	C+
73-78	C
70-72	C-
68-69	D+
63-67	D
60-62	D-
< 60	F

Honor code

You are expected to completely adhere to the McDaniel College academic honor code. Any violation will result in a zero on the related assignment or exam or other appropriate measures.

Course policies

Given the importance of interactive learning in the course, class attendance is essential. You are expected to be on time and prepared for class. Late arrival for class will be counted as half an absence. You will be allowed three unexcused absences. Each additional unexcused absence will result in 5% reduction of the final grade and will lower your class participation grade. Even if absent, students are expected to cover the material missed and complete the class requirements on time. Please send me an email to kristin.makszin@gmail.com indicating that you read the syllabus.

Semester schedule/topics covered (with required reading in parentheses)

Some changes may be made in the schedule based on current events.

Week 1: September 4 & 6	Mon.: Course introduction Wed.: Official actors in U.S. policy making (Excerpt from <i>Public policy : the essential readings</i> , “Institutional and non-institutional actors”, to be sent by email)
Week 2: September 11 & 13	Mon.: Unofficial actors in U.S. policy making Wed.: Policy evaluation and policy briefs (APP Ch 1)
Week 3: September 18 & 20	Mon.: Macroeconomic policy (TBA via email) Wed.: Economic policy: Government-Business relationships (APP Ch 3)
Week 4: September 25 & 27	Mon.: Fiscal policy (APP Ch 4) Wed.: Case study: government shutdowns (TBA by email) First policy brief due on September 29
Week 5: October 2 & 4	Mon.: Health care policy (APP Ch 8) Wed.: Case study: Affordable Care Act (TBA by email)
Week 6: October 9 & 11	Mon.: Welfare policy (APP Ch 7) Wed.: Pension policy (TBA by email)
Week 7: October 16 & 18 (MIDTERM WEEK)	Mid-term exam – Monday, October 16 Wed.: Regulation of finance (No reading)
Week 8: October 23 & 25	No class on Monday, October 23 Wed.: Case study: Subprime mortgage crisis (Excerpt from Schwartz, <i>Subprime Nation</i> sent via email)

Week 9: October 30 & November 1	Mon.: Immigration policy (APP Ch 11) and case study of DACA No class on Wednesday, November 1
Week 10: November 6 & 8	Mon.: Race and public policy (APP Ch 10) Wed.: Case study: Black Lives Matter movement Second policy brief due on November 10
Fall break: November 13-17	No classes on Monday or Wednesday
Week 11: November 20 & 22	Mon.: Education policy (APP Ch 9) Wed.: Case study: Affirmative action for university admission
Week 12: November 27 & 29	Mon.: Energy and environmental policies (APP Ch 5) Wed.: Case study: cap and trade
Week 13: December 4 & 6	Mon.: Foreign and defense policy (APP Ch 12) Wed.: Case study: TBA
Final exams: December 11-15	Exam date to be announced