

PSCI 2106: Introduction to Public Policy
Professor Kenneth Bickers
9:30 am-10:45 pm TR in MKNA 204
Fall 2017-2018

Office: Ketchum 222
Office Hours: 11:00-12:15 TR by appt.

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Course Description

This course is the Honors section of introduction to the analysis of public policy. This course utilizes the political economy approach to policy analysis, which explores ways that individual values and preferences get translated into collective processes and outcomes. This approach is directly related to debates about the meaning and operation of democratic systems; it is centrally concerned with how collective enterprises – from neighborhoods to nations – operate; and it treats governments, nonprofit organizations, and markets as sometimes competing and sometimes complementary instruments by which groups of individuals make collective choices.

During the semester, we will consider the components of public policies and how these relate to the kinds of politics that often surround policy debates. We will ask questions about governments and markets. We will examine the role of public bureaucracies, not-for-profit organizations, and for-profit firms in implementing policies in the United States. We will overview techniques for evaluating and analyzing public policies. Each week, we will build on core concepts of policy analysis to delve more deeply into current debates over major public policies. The central goal of the class is to better equip you to think critically about alternative ways that public policies might be produced and delivered.

This semester, I have invited the Colorado Municipal League (CML), a nonpartisan organization that represents Colorado's cities and towns, to collaborate on the research projects that are the basis for much of the content of the course. CML staff have agreed to that they (1) will be present in the class on several occasions, (2) will serve as resources for research projects, and (3) will provide real world feedback on the research projects that you will be conducting. Details on the research projects are provided below. Please note that because the schedules of CML staff are subject to last minute changes, accommodating them in the class may require altering specific class topics and/or readings from time to time. You will be notified in class and by email when such changes are required.

This course is designed as an introduction to the analysis of public policy problems and proposed solutions. It is *not* an introduction to political science or American politics. You will be assumed already to have a strong working knowledge about the U.S. political system, obtained, for example, through PSCI 1101 or some other introductory course in American government.

Course Requirements

The format of the course will be a combination of lectures, small group exercises, and class room discussions. Class sessions will be kept sufficiently informal that questions and discussions can be entertained.

The grade for the course will be determined on the basis of three exams, a variety of in-class exercises, a group-based term paper, and a group-based video presentation.

Exams. Each of the exams will be comprised of several multiple choice items and short essay questions. Questions on exams will cover readings and lecture material. Exams will be non-cumulative, with the exception of one item on the final exam. The final exam will include a longer essay question designed to allow you to reflect on what you have learned over the semester.

In-Class exercises. In-class exercises will include a number of short memos and responses to readings, in-class discussions, and lecture material. They are designed to give you an opportunity to think carefully about issues central to the analysis of public policies – issues which you are likely to encounter on an exam. These exercises will be announced during the class period in which they are assigned, and will be graded using a dichotomous scale of satisfactory or unsatisfactory. A satisfactory grade means that the exercise was seriously attempted. Not being present for an exercise will produce an automatic grade of unsatisfactory. With the exception of absences that have been excused (such as for a university sponsored athletic event, or a documented illness), in-class exercises cannot be made-up. In cases of excusable absences, in-class exercises must be made-up within a week after the excused absence.

Research Papers and Video Presentations. Each student will be required to work in a group to produce two inter-related research products. These groups will be comprised generally of two to three students. Each group will be assigned at random an issue that is currently under consideration locally or statewide in Colorado. The topics include (1) the role of social media for communication and citizen engagement; (2) the impact of different types of revenue earmarking on local marijuana sales passage rates; (3) the opioid abuse problem in Colorado communities; and (4) Tiny Homes as housing alternatives.

Each group will produce a research paper of approximately 25 pages that (1) gives a brief history of the policy issue as it pertains to Colorado local governments and in so doing provides an inventory of how the policy has been implemented across the state, if at all, (2) discusses the intricacies and tradeoffs presented by the policy issue, and (3) arrives at a clear statement of the specific issues and policy options involved in the policy area. The objective in these projects is *not* to arrive at a specific policy recommendation. The objective *is* to inform decision makers about the issues that should be considered when arriving at a specific policy option.

The second research product will be a short video presentation of approximately 8-10 minutes in which each student group highlights the key by arguments and findings in its research paper. My goals for each student in these research activities are three-fold: (1) to demonstrate familiarity with key concepts of policy analysis, (2) to develop skills, at least at an introductory level, that are employed in policy analysis, and (3) to practice communicating an understanding of an important issue and available policy options for public officials in Colorado.

The final versions of the research papers will be provided to CML after grades have been submitted at the end of the semester, subject to two conditions detailed below. Likewise, after the conclusion of the semester the video presentations will be posted to a page on a social media site that is accessible and linkable by CML and its members.

Release of research papers and video presentations will be subject to two conditions: (1) each student in the group submitting the product must sign a consent form allowing its publication and dissemination by CML and (b) as the instructor of record for the course, I must deem the product worthy to be made available for such publication and dissemination.

With regard to format, these papers should be double-spaced, using a ten or twelve point font, excluding any pages used for tables or figures. They will be graded for substantive content, clarity, and grammatical precision. Papers and video presentations will be penalized one full grade if they are not turned in by 5:00 pm on the day they are due. A full letter grade reduction will be taken if the research product is submitted after the 5:00 pm deadline and for each three days that go by until it is turned in.

Additionally, at the end of the semester each student will submit individually to me a completed form that describes the relative work load of each member of the group. This form will ask you to indicate the approximate percentage of effort engaged in by each member of your group. It will also ask you to provide a short narrative describing the division of labor in researching and preparing the group's research products. In cases, where the percentages assigned are approximately equal, the same grade will be given to each member of the group. In cases, where percentages diverge by non-trivial amounts, students will be asked to discuss the discrepancy with me and the grades may be adjusted up or down so as to deal with the problem of free-riding by members of the group.

Grade. The overall grade for the course will be determined as follows:

Midterm 1	Subtotal	15%
Midterm 2		15%
Final exam		24%
Term paper		24%
Video presentation		12%
<u>In-class exercises</u>		<u>10%</u>
	Total	100%

Course Policies

Grading. A word about my grading policy: No matter how careful, instructors sometimes make mistakes in grading. For that reason, I have an automatic regrade policy, subject to a couple of restrictions. I will be happy to regrade any assignment. I ask, however, that you hold on to any item for at least 24 hours after it is returned to you before asking for a regrade. Any request for a regrade must be made within one week after the assignment is returned to you, after which no regrading will be done. Should you feel that an assignment has been misgraded, I encourage you to take advantage of this policy. Ordinarily, the entire assignment will be regraded, which means that the grade may go up, go down, or stay the same.

Disability accommodations. If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to your professor a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner (for exam accommodations provide your letter at least one week prior to the exam) so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or by e-mail at dsinfo@colorado.edu. If you have a

temporary medical condition or injury, see [Temporary Injuries guidelines](#) under the Quick Links at the [Disability Services website](#) and discuss your needs with your professor.

Religious Observances. Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. If you need an accommodation of any scheduled activity due to a conflict with a religious holiday or observance, please let me know in writing of the conflict no less than two weeks prior to the date of the religious observance. I will be happy to work out a suitable accommodation.

Classroom Behavior. This course tackles subjects that are sometimes viewed as controversial. It is incumbent on every participant in the class (instructor and students alike) to strive to maintain an environment that is conducive to learning. We should always remember that people bring differences with them into the classroom and that these differences must be respected. It is imperative that each of us maintain civility when asking questions and making comments. Likewise, questions and comments by others should be treated with civility at all times.

The University's stated policy is that students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression, age, disability, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to instructors with legal names of students. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information, see the [policies on classroom behavior](#) and [the student code](#).

Discrimination and Harassment. The University of Colorado Boulder (CU-Boulder) is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. CU-Boulder will not tolerate acts of discrimination or harassment based upon Protected Classes or related retaliation against or by any employee or student. For purposes of this CU-Boulder policy, "Protected Classes" refers to race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSC) at 303-492-5550. Information about the OIEC, the above referenced policies, and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be found at the [OIEC website](#). The [full policy on discrimination and harassment](#) contains additional information.

Academic Integrity. All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to [the academic integrity policy](#) of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-735-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty

member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion).

Please be aware that cheating or plagiarism, of any sort, will lead to an automatic grade of zero on the item in question. Cheating is defined as using unauthorized materials or receiving unauthorized assistance during an examination or other academic exercise. Plagiarism is defined as the use of another's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgment. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to, the following: failing to use quotation marks when directly quoting from a source; failing to document distinctive ideas from a source; fabricating or inventing sources; and copying information from computer-based sources, i.e., the Internet. Additional information regarding the [Honor Code policy can be found online](#) and at the [Honor Code Office](#).

Course Materials

Several books will be utilized during the course:

Bickers, Kenneth N. and John T. Williams. *Public Policy Analysis: A Political Economy Approach*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001. (Please do not buy this book. It will be available to you free on the class D2L website.)

Finklea, Kristin and Lisa N. Sacco. 2013. *State Marijuana Legalization Initiatives: Implications for Federal Law Enforcement*. Congressional Research Service (Available only in Kindle format). 35 page pamphlet.

Fischel, William A. 2005. *The Homevoter Hypothesis: How Home Values Influence Local Government Taxation, School Finance, and Land-Use Policies*. Harvard University Press (Available in paper or Kindle format).

Gainous, Jason and Kevin M. Wagner. 2013. *Tweeting to Power: The Social Media Revolution in American Politics*. Oxford University Press (Available in paper or Kindle format).

Smith, Daniel A. and Caroline Tolbert. 2004. *Educated by Initiative: The Effects of Direct Democracy on Citizens and Political Organizations in the American States*. University of Michigan Press (Available in paper or Kindle format).

Vance, J. D. 2016. *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis*. Harper Press (Available in paper or Kindle format).

Additionally, a number of articles and other supplemental materials will be used through the semester. Some of these will be on the D2L course location. Others will be accessible via the web at www.JStor.Org and/or Scholar.Google.Com.

Course Outline

Week 1: August 29 (No class or office hours Thursday, August 31)

Topic: Overview of public policy analysis: public policies as hypotheses
Readings: Bickers memo on “Scientific Method” on D2L

Week 2: September 5 & 7

Topic: Assumptions in a political economy approach to policy analysis
Readings: Bickers & Williams, chapters 1
Smith and Tolbert, chapters 1 & 2

Week 3: September 12 & 14

Topic: Democratic Governance & Forms of Democracy
Readings: Bickers & Williams, chapters 2 & 3
Smith and Tolbert, chapters 5 & 6

Week 4: September 19 & 21

Topics: Forms of Democracy and Implications for Public Policy
Readings: Smith and Tolbert, chapter 7
Finklea and Sacco, all.
Case: Marijuana Legalization
Key Issues: What is the impact of different types of revenue earmarking on local marijuana sales passage rates? In places that have legalized, for what purposes are MJ revenues used?

Week 5: September 26 & 28

Topic: The Problem of Collective Action
Readings: Bickers & Williams, chapter 4 & 5
Gainous and Wagner, chapters 1 - 6.

Week 6: October 3 & 5

Topic: Government and Collective Action Problems (Tuesday Only)
Readings: Gainous and Wagner, chapters 7 – 9
Case: Social Media for Communication and Citizen Engagement
Key Issues: How has the adoption of social media altered the ways that government officials communicate with members of the public? How has this adoption enabled residents to influence the policymaking and implementation of policies by local governments? In what types of communication, in particular, are social media utilized (e.g., emergencies, local events, official proceedings, upcoming ballot measures, budget information, hearing from citizens, etc.)?

Exam 1: Thursday, October 5

Week 7: October 10 & 12

Topic: The Market as a Collective Action Mechanism
Readings: Bickers & Williams, chapters 5 - 7

Week 8: October 17 & 19

Topic: Markets and Local Government
Readings: Fischel, chapters 1 – 4, 9 - 10
Case: Tiny Homes as Housing Alternatives
Key Issues: How common are Tiny Homes in the community to date? Are they a response to affordability challenges or instead lifestyle statements? Are they a welcome addition in the community or viewed as threats to property values? What zoning and enforcement approaches, if any, is the community using with respect to Tiny Houses?

Week 9: October 24 & 26

Topic: Policy Analysis in the American Political Context
Readings: Bickers & Williams, chapters 8
Project: In-Class Research Project Work Session (Thursday)

Week 10: October 31 & November 2

Exam 2: Tuesday, October 31

Topic: Social Policy in a Polycentric Political System
Readings: Vance, all (Thursday)

Week 11: November 7 & 9

Topics: Social Policy in a Polycentric Political System (continued)
Readings: Vance, all (continued)
Case: Opioid abuse epidemic
Key Issues: What is the scale of the opioid abuse problem? What can be done at various levels of government for addressing the problem? What successes are being seen, to date?

Week 12: November 14 & 16

In-class group research paper presentations
Group paper first drafts due no later than Sunday, November 19 at midnight.

Week 13: November 28 & 30

Topic: Politics and Policy Choice
Text: Bickers & Williams, chapter 9

Week 14: December 5 & 7

Topic: Bureaucratic Implementation
Text: Bickers & Williams, chapter 10

Week 15: December 12 & 14

Project consultations, Tuesday, December 12

In-class Group Video Presentations, Thursday, December 14

Final Drafts of Group Research Projects due Friday, December 15 at 5:00 pm.

Final Exam: Saturday, Dec. 16, 1:30 – 4:00 p.m.