

**POLC 6320.1 – SPRING 2020**  
**POLICY ANALYSIS II: POLITICAL ANALYSIS**

**DAY, TIME & LOCATION:** Tuesday, 5.30–8.30pm, 315 McElhinney  
**INSTRUCTOR:** Pablo M. Pinto, ppinto@central.uh.edu, 307A McElhinney  
**OFFICE HOURS:** Tuesday, 4.00–5.30pm or by appointment

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

This is the second course in the Fundamental of Policy Analysis sequence. The course offers an introductory survey to methods and models of political analysis. Taxes, regulations and policies in general are the main output of the political system. Explaining the design, adoption and implementation of policies, thus, requires an analytical framework for understanding the main issues involved in aggregating individual preferences into collective political choices. The translation of preferences into policies results from the interaction of the demand and supply sides of politics. Individual and group preferences expressed through voting, mobilization and lobbying, are central features of the demand side of politics. Supply-side conditions are framed by political institutions, namely the structures that shape the aggregation of political preferences into policy outcomes. Political analysis is the discipline that studies how the interaction between political demand and supply results in different patterns of policy-making and policies.

Throughout the semester we will study the fundamental analytical models of politics applied to such topics as collective action, majority rule, coalition formation, and the functioning of government. The course will also help you develop an understanding of how political systems operate, and acquire tools to critically analyze policy issues and problems, evaluate the effectiveness of existing policy programs, and learn to communicate effectively your analyses to others.

**REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING**

**GRADING:** Course grades will be based on the following:

- **CLASS ASSIGNMENTS AND HOMEWORK (20%):** you will be graded for your completion and performance in homework assignments, in-class quizzes, policy simulations, and presentations of readings. All students, individually or in groups, are expected to contribute to these presentations, and be ready to participate in class discussions about the readings. I will ask direct questions about these readings in class, in quizzes and exam.
- **MID-TERM EXAM (20%):** a midterm exam will be given on March 24, 2020.
- **POLICY DEBATES AND MEMOS (20%):** on the last two sessions we will hold policy debates about a two relevant policy issue. Each student will be assigned to a group, and each group will represent a relevant stakeholder in the policy issue under debate. In preparation for the debate each group is expected to conduct in-depth research on the policy issue under discussion provide a list of relevant readings, publications and data. After the debate each group will submit a policy memo about the topic.
- **FINAL ASSIGNMENT (25%):** your final assignment will be to write a memo on one of the policy issues debated in the last sessions of the course. The memo will be based on the research done in preparation for the policy debate. Your memo should identify the relevant stakeholders in the policy-making process, discuss the many different dimensions upon which the intended policy impacts, and make a recommendation on the course of action for a relevant stakeholder. The assignment is due at 12pm on May 5.
- **CLASS PARTICIPATION (15%):** Student contribution to class discussion is a substantial component of the final grade for this class. Students are expected to complete ALL required readings prior to class meetings, and be actively participation in discussions about readings, case assignments, simulations, and other class activities.

**LOGISTICS**

*Books and Readings:* The required textbooks for this class are:

- Kenneth A. Shepsle (2010). *Analyzing Politics. Rationality, Behavior and Institutions.* 2nd Edition. W. W. Norton
- David L. Weimer and Aidan R. Vining (2011). *Policy Analysis,* 5th edition. Longman.

Recommended books include the following:

- Charles Wheelan (2011). Introduction to Public Policy. W. W. Norton.
- Avinash K. Dixit and Barry J. Nalebuff (2008). The Art of Strategy. A Game Theorist's Guide to Success in Business and Life. W. W. Norton.
- Ethan Bueno de Mesquita (2016). Political Economy for Public Policy. Princeton University Press.

All readings listed on the syllabus are available in the textbooks or can be obtained through UH Library resources in hard copy or digital form. The main readings for each session are marked with a (●) on the syllabus. You are also expected to present the readings marked with an (□), which you will be responsible for presenting during class. Please complete ALL readings (those marked with a ● as well as those marked with an □), before each meeting. We will also conduct several simulations and work on cases related to the topics covered.

*Official Hobby School Attendance Policy:* Hobby School students are expected to arrive on time for all their classes and remain in class until officially concluded. Students who miss more than three classes without a university approved excuse (e.g., military service, religious holidays), written note from a medical provider, or pre-approval from the course instructor will receive an F for the course. Students who are more than 15 minutes late for a class and/or leave class 15 minutes before its conclusion will be counted absent. Any student for whom this attendance policy represents a special hardship should talk to the instructor. Instructors are encouraged to make reasonable accommodations for students with special hardships or needs. However, students must understand that in-person instruction is essential to the education that Hobby School classes provide.

*Use of Cell Phones, Tablets and Laptops:* Since they cause interruptions and distractions, phones should be turned off during class time. Please do not use any Instant Messaging software if you bring your laptop to take notes. In particular, cell phones, portable devices and laptops may not be accessible during exams or quizzes.

*Contact:* Please use email to contact me with any issues. In the subject of your message please use an informative heading including course number (e.g. POLC 6397–Question about Tuesday's case). Please do not contact me through Blackboard; I rarely check those messages.

*Disclaimer and Announcements:* The information contained in this class syllabus is subject to change without notice. You are expected to be aware of any additional course policies presented during the course. You should also check Blackboard periodically for announcements and updates.

*Academic Integrity:* I strictly enforce all of the policies regarding academic integrity such as cheating and plagiarism as determined by University of Houston. A copy of these regulations is available at: <http://catalog.uh.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=1025>; ignorance of these policies is not an excuse for violations. Violations of academic integrity are a very serious matter, and I will pursue the strictest punitive action in the case of a violation. I consider very serious cases of academic dishonesty the following: using and/or submitting as one's own a paper/project that was written by another student in the past; using and/or submitting as one's own a paper/project that was obtained through the Internet, or some other source; having someone else write (even partially) or help with the writing of any of the required papers; having someone else do any of the work required for an exam; engaging in plagiarism: using any statements (either in a verbatim or paraphrased form) found in other people's work as one's own, and without proper citations; cheating on an exam.

*Accommodations for students with disabilities:* The University of Houston is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for eligible students with disabilities, including students who have learning disabilities, health impairments, psychiatric disabilities, and/or other disabilities. If you believe you have a disability that requires accommodation, please contact the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at 713-743-5400 or 713-749-1527 (TTY).

*University Sexual Misconduct Policy:* The University of Houston is committed to fostering a safe, productive learning environment. Title IX and University policy prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, which includes sexual misconduct or sexual exploitation. If you are a victim of sexual misconduct, sexual exploitation, or discrimination based on sex, you are encouraged to seek help from a trained professional or law enforcement. At the University of Houston the following personnel are available to assist you: Title IX Coordinator and his assistant coordinators [713-743-8835, rabaker4@uh.edu]; Campus law enforcement and/or security; Campus-based counseling staff; Campus-based student health center staff; Human Resources staff; Dean of Students Office staff; Student Housing and Residence Life professional staff.

# CLASS SCHEDULE AND READING LIST

## PART I – INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL ANALYSIS

### Week 1: January 14 – ECONOMIC THEORY OF POLITICS

- Bueno de Mesquita 2016, Introduction

### Week 2: January 21 – MARKETS AND GOVERNMENTS

- Weimer and Vining 2011, Chapters 4, 5 and 6

#### STUDENT PRESENTATIONS:

- Wheelan 2011, Chapter 2 [pp. 39–59]
- Wheelan 2011, Chapter 3 [pp. 80–98]

## PART II – COLLECTIVE DECISION–MAKING DILEMMAS

### Week 3, January 28 – INCENTIVES, CONSTRAINTS, CHOICES AND STRATEGIES

- Shepsle 2010, Chapter 1

#### STUDENT PRESENTATIONS:

- Stephen Levitt and Stephen Dubner. 2005. “Chapter 4: Where Have all the Criminals Gone?” In Levitt and Dubner, *Freakonomics*. Harper Collins.
- Gary W. Cox. 1994. “A Note on Crime and Punishment.” *Public Choice*, 78(1): 115–124.

### Week 4, February 4 – RATIONALITY AND PREFERENCE AGGREGATION

- Shepsle 2010, Chapter 2–3

### Week 5, February 11 – COOPERATION, COLLECTIVE ACTION AND PUBLIC GOODS

- Shepsle 2010, Chapters 8, 9 and 10

#### STUDENT PRESENTATIONS:

- Mancur Olson. 1971. *The Logic of Collective Action. Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*. Harvard University Press. [pp. 1–22, 33–65]
- Elinor Ostrom et al. 1999. “Revisiting the Commons: Local Lessons, Global Challenges.” *Science* 284: 278–282.
- Hillman, Arye L. (2019). *Public Finance and Public Policy*. Third Edition. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 4 [pp. 139–149].

### Week 6, February 18 – GROUP CHOICE

- Shepsle 2010, Chapters 4 and 5

#### STUDENT PRESENTATIONS:

- Larry Bartels. 2005. “Homer gets a tax cut: Inequality and public policy in the American mind.” *Perspectives on Politics* 3(1):15–31.
- Arthur Lupia, et al. 2006. “Were Bush Tax Cut Supporters ‘Simply Ignorant’? A Second Look at Conservatives and Liberals in ‘Homer Gets a Tax Cut’ ” *Perspectives on Politics*.

### Week 7, February 25 – ELECTORAL INSTITUTIONS

- Shepsle 2010, Chapters 6 and 7

#### STUDENT PRESENTATIONS:

- Jong Hee Park and Nathan Jensen. 2007. Electoral Competition and Agricultural Support in OECD Countries. *American Journal of Political Science*, 51(2): 314–329.
- Yotam Margalit. 2011. Costly Jobs: Trade-related Layoffs, Government Compensation, and Voting in U.S. Elections. *American Political Science Review* 105(1): 166–188.

### Week 8, March 3 – LEGISLATURES AND REPRESENTATION

- Shepsle 2010, Chapters 11 and 12

#### STUDENT PRESENTATIONS:

- Wheelan 2011, Chapter 6.
- Jeffrey Lax and Justin Phillips. 2009. “Gay Rights in the States: Public Opinion and Policy Responsiveness.” *American Political Science Review* 103(3): 367–386

- Michael A. Bailey, Judith Goldstein, and Barry R. Weingast. 1997. “The Institutional Roots of American Trade Policy: Politics, Coalitions, and International Trade.” *World Politics* 49(3): 309–38.

**Week 9, March 10 – SPRING BREAK**

**Week 10, March 17 – IMPLEMENTING POLICIES: DELEGATION AND AGENCY**

- Shepsle 2010, Chapters 13–14

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS:

- Roderick Kiewiet and Mathew McCubbins. 1991. *The Logic of Delegation*. University of Chicago Press. Chapter 2.
- Mathew D. McCubbins and Thomas Schwartz. 1984. “Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Policy Patrols versus Fire Alarms.” *American Journal of Political Science* 28 (1): 165–179.
- Elizabeth R. Gerber and Daniel J. Hopkins. 2011. “When Mayors Matter: Estimating the Impact of Mayoral Partisanship on City Policy.” *American Journal of Political Science* 55(2): 326–339.

**Week 11, March 24 – MIDTERM-EXAM**

**PART III – ANALYZING AND DESIGNING POLICY**

**Week 12, March 31 – EVALUATING POLICY I**

- Weimer and Vining 2011, Chapters 16 (Cost Benefit Analysis and Efficiency) and 17 (When statistics count: Revising the Lead Standard for Gasoline).
- William D. Berry and Mitchell S. Sanders. 2000. *Understanding Multivariate Research*, pp. 1–39, 45–49
- Writing policy memos: background information provided by Amy Lipke.

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS:

- Boardman, Anthony, Aidan Vining and W. G. Waters II. 2007. “Costs and Benefits through Bureaucratic Lenses: Example of a Highway Project.” *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 12(3): 532–555
- Soledad Artiz Prillaman and Kenneth J. Meier. 2014. “Taxes, Incentives, and Economic Growth: Assessing the Impact of Pro-business Taxes on U.S. State Economies.” *Journal of Politics* 76(2):364-379.
- James McDavid and Laura Hawthorn. 2005. *Research Designs for Program Evaluations*. Sage. Chapter 3.

**Week 13, April 7 – EVALUATING POLICY II**

- Weiss, Michael J., Howard S. Bloom, and Thomas Brock. 2014. “A Conceptual Framework for Studying the Sources of Variation in Program Effects.” *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 33(3): 778–808.
- William R. Shadish, Thomas D. Cook and Donald T. Campbell. 2002. *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Generalized Causal Inference*. Houghton Mifflin. Chapter 8: Randomized Experiments.

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS:

- Angus Deaton. 2009. “Instruments of Development: Randomization in the Tropics, and the Search for the Elusive Keys to Economic Development.” *NBER Working Paper* 14690, Cambridge, MA.
- Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo, 2009. “The Experimental Approach to Development Economics.” *Annual Review of Economics*, Annual Reviews 1(1): 151–78.
- Rose McDermott. 2002. “Experimental Methods in Political Science.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 5: 31–61.

**PART IV – PUBLIC POLICY DEBATES**

**Week 14, April 14 – CRAFTING EFFECTIVE POLICY ARGUMENTS**

- Arthur Lupia. 2013. “Communicating Science in Politicized Environments.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science* 110: 14048–14054.
- POLICY DEBATE I – Debate one of the following policy areas:
  - (i) Trade Policy in the United States ; or (ii) border security and immigration policy.
- *Readings and background material will be distributed by the instructor prior to the debate.*

**Week 15, April 21 – DEBATING POLICY**

- POLICY DEBATE II – Debate one of the following policy areas:
  - (i) Raising the minimum wage; or (ii) universal healthcare; or (iii) sustainable energy policy.
- *Readings and materials identified by students’ research on the topic and shared with class*