Hobby School of Public Affairs
UNIVERSITY OF **HOUSTON**

Polc 6320/Publ 6313 – Spring 2024
Policy Analysis II: Political Analysis

Day, Time; Location:	Monday 5:30–8:30pm; 240 TU2 Building
Instructor:	Pablo M. Pinto; ppinto@central.uh.edu
Office:	212 Bates Building
Office hours:	Monday 2:30–4 pm, or by appointment
Teaching Assistants:	Sameer Malik;smalik6@central.uh.edu
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Course objectives:

This course offers an introductory survey to methods and models of political analysis. Political analysis is the discipline that studies how the interaction between political demand and supply results in different patterns of policy-making and policies. 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.

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.

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:

- Ethan Bueno de Mesquita (2016). Political Economy for Public Policy. Princeton University Press.
- 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.
- Charles Wheelan (2011). Introduction to Public Policy. W. W. Norton.

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 bullet (●) on the syllabus. Importantly, before each meeting ALL students are expected to have completed ALL readings, including those marked with a bullet (●), those marked with a box (□), as well as the background readings marked with the symbol (✳). We will also conduct several simulations and work on cases related to the topics covered.

Grading

You will be graded for your completion and performance in homework, problem sets, exams, participation and other class assignments. Course grades will be based on the following:

1. PROBLEM SETS AND REVIEW ESSAY ASSIGNMENT (30%): There will be three problem sets during the semester. You may work in small groups on a problem set; the groups can be no larger than four people. If you turn in an individual problem set, it may not be identical to another student's or group's problem set. You will also write a review essay based on one or more of the readings marked with a box (□) on the syllabus; instructions will be distributed before Spring break.

2. PARTICIPATION AND DISCUSSION OF READINGS (10%): Contribution to class discussion is a substantial component of the final grade for this class. Student are expected to complete ALL required readings (●), readings for class discussion (□) and background readings (✳) prior to class and actively participate in discussions, case assignments, simulations, and other class activities, including online discussion board. The instructor will prepare questions about the readings marked with □ on the syllabus for a seminar-style discussion in class. There will be a discussion board for each topic to continue the discussion on Canvas after class.

3. EXAM (30%): there will be a take-home exam distributed on April 8 and will be due on April 12. You will have three hours to complete the exam.

4. RESEARCH (10%): on last two weeks of class we will hold in-class debates about relevant public policy issues. You will work in groups and select a policy topic in consultation with the instructor and teaching assistants. Throughout the semester each group is expected to conduct in-depth research on the chosen topic in preparation for the presentation and class-discussion on weeks 14 and 15. This research should characterize the problem that the policy intervention addresses, identify the relevant stakeholders, their positions and the likelihood to mobilize in support or opposition to the policy, discuss the issues affecting the design, adoption, enactment and implementation of the policy, and address the expected institutional and political conditions under which the policy would be adopted. A week before the session assigned for the presentation each group will post on Canvas a list of relevant readings, publications, data sources and other relevant resources for the class to peruse in preparation for the in-class discussion.

5. FINAL ASSIGNMENT (20%): the final assignment will be to write a memo on one of the policy issues debated in the last sessions of the course. The policy memo is an individual assignment; it will be based on the group research done in preparation for the in-class presentations on weeks 14 and 15. Your policy 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 final assignment is an individual assignment and will be due at 5pm on May 6.

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READING LIST

PART I – INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL ANALYSIS

WEEK 1: JANUARY 22 – POLITICS AND PUBLIC POLICY
- Shepsle 2010, Chapter 1. It isn't Rocket Science, but…
- Wheelan 2011, Chapter 2, pp. 39–59: What is public policy?

WEEK 2: JANUARY 29 – MARKETS AND GOVERNMENTS I
- Weimer and Vining 2011, Chapter 4: Efficiency and the Idealized Competitive Market
- Weimer and Vining 2011, Chapter 5: Rationales for Public Policy – Market Failures
  CLASS DISCUSSION:
  □ Stephen Levitt and Stephen Dubner. 2005. "Chapter 4: Where Have all the Criminals Gone?" In Levitt and Dubner, *Freakonomics*. Harper Collins.

WEEK 3, FEBRUARY 5 – MARKETS AND GOVERNMENTS II
- Weimer and Vining 2011, Chapter 6: Rationales for Public Policy – Other Limitations of the Competitive Framework
- Weimer and Vining 2011, Chapter 7: Rationales for Public Policy – Redistribution and Other Goals
  CLASS DISCUSSION:
  □ Wheelan 2011, Chapter 3, pp. 80–104: Moral Hazard, Adverse Selection and Incomplete Information

PART II – POLITICAL ANALYSIS: UNDERSTANDING COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR

WEEK 4, FEBRUARY 12 – RATIONALITY AND STRATEGIC BEHAVIOR
- Shepsle 2010, Chapter 2: Rationality – The Model of Choice
  BACKGROUND READING:
  ✳ Bueno de Mesquita 2016. Appendix A
- Shepsle 2010, Chapter 8: Cooperation
  CLASS DISCUSSION:
  □ Dixit and Nalebuff 2008, Chapter 3 [pp. 64–101]

WEEK 5, FEBRUARY 19 – COOPERATION, COLLECTIVE ACTION AND PUBLIC GOODS

- Shepsle 2010, Chapter 9: Collective Action
  CLASS DISCUSSION:
  □ Mancur Olson. 1971. The Logic of Collective Action. Public Goods and the Theory of Groups. Harvard University Press. [pp. 1–22, 33–65]
- Shepsle 2010, Chapter 10: Public Goods, Externalities, and the Commons
  CLASS DISCUSSION:
  □ Elinor Ostrom et al. 1999. "Revisiting the Commons: Local Lessons, Global Challenges." *Science* 284: 278–282.
  □ Gail Buttorff et al. 2023. "Natural Disasters and Willingness to Pay for Public Goods: Winter Storm Uri as a Natural Experiment." Hobby School of Public Affairs Working Paper.

WEEK 6, FEBRUARY 26 – GROUP CHOICE

- Shepsle 2010, Chapters 3 and 4: Group Choice and Majority Rule
- Shepsle 2010, Chapter 5: Spatial Models of Majority Rule
  CLASS DISCUSSION:
  □ 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* 5(4): 773–784.

WEEK 7, MARCH 4 – ANALYZING STRATEGIC BEHAVIOR

- Shepsle 2010, Chapter 6: Sophistication, Misrepresentation, and Manipulation
  BACKGROUND READING:
  ✳ Bueno de Mesquita 2016. Appendix B
  ✳ Dixit and Nalebuff 2008. Chapters 2 and 4
  CLASS DISCUSSION:
  □ Gary W. Cox. 1994. "A Note on Crime and Punishment." *Public Choice*, 78(1): 115–124.
  □ Randall Calvert, and Richard F. Fenno, Jr.. 1994. "Strategy and Sophisticated Voting in the Senate." *Journal of Politics*, 56(2): 349-376.
  □ Jorg L. Spenkuch, B. Pablo Montagnes and Daniel B. Magleby. 2018. "Backward Induction in the Wild? Evidence from Sequential Voting in the US Senate." *American Economic Review*, 108(7): 1971-2013. [Present pp. 1971-1983; skim rest of the paper]

ANNOUNCEMENT: Instructions for review essay assignments distributed.

WEEK 8, MARCH 11 – SPRING BREAK

PART III – THE POLITICAL PROCESS

WEEK 9, MARCH 18 – ELECTORAL INSTITUTIONS

- Shepsle 2010, Chapter 7: Voting Methods and Electoral Systems
- Wheelan 2011, Chapter 6: The Political Process
  CLASS DISCUSSION:
  □ Bernard Grofman. 2016 "Perspectives on the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems." *Annual Review of Political Science* 19(1):523-540.
  □ Jong Hee Park and Nathan Jensen. 2007. Electoral Competition and Agricultural Support in OECD Countries. *American Journal of Political Science*, 51(2): 314–329.

WEEK 10, MARCH 25 – LEGISLATURES AND REPRESENTATION

- Shepsle 2010, Chapter 11: Institutions and Chapter 12: Legislatures
  CLASS DISCUSSION:
  □ 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.
  □ Roderick Kiewiet and Mathew McCubbins. 1991. The Logic of Delegation. Univ. of Chicago Press. Chapter 2.

WEEK 11, APRIL 1 – IMPLEMENTING POLICIES: DELEGATION AND AGENCY

- Shepsle 2010, Chapter 13: Bureaucracy and Intergovernmental Relations
  BACKGROUND READING:
  ✳ Bueno de Mesquita 2016, Chapter 9: The Need for Information

CLASS DISCUSSION:
- ☐ Mathew D. McCubbins and Thomas Schwartz. 1984. "Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols versus Fire Alarms." *American Journal of Political Science* 28 (1): 165–179.
- ☐ Herbert A. Simon 2000. "Public Administration in Today's World of Organizations and Markets." PS: Political Science and Politics 33(4): 749–756.

WEEK 12, APRIL 8 – IMPLEMENTING POLICIES: POLITICAL LEADERSHIP
- Shepsle 2010, Chapter 14: Leadership
  CLASS DISCUSSION:
- ☐ 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.
- Shepsle 2010, Chapter 16: Cabinet Government and Parliamentary Democracy
  CLASS DISCUSSION:
- ☐ Michael Laver and Kenneth Shepsle. 1990. "Coalitions and Cabinet Government." *American Political Science Review* Vol. 84, No. 3 (Sep., 1990), pp. 873-890

ANNOUNCEMENT: Take-home exam distributed; due on April 12.

WEEK 13, APRIL 15 – EVALUATING POLICY
- Weimer and Vining 2011, Chapter 16 Cost Benefit Analysis and Efficiency
- 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.
  CLASS DISCUSSION:
- ☐ Weimer and Vining 2011, Chapter 1: The Canadian Salmon Fishery.
- ☐ Weimer and Vining 2011, Chapter 17: When statistics count: Revising the Lead Standard for Gasoline.
- ☐ Brauner et al. 2021. "Inferring the effectiveness of government interventions against COVID-19." *Science*, Vol. 371, No. 6531.
  BACKGROUND READING:
- ✳ Arthur Lupia. 2013. "Communicating Science in Politicized Environments." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science* 110: 14048–14054.
- ✳ 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.

ANNOUNCEMENT: Groups assigned to present on April 22 should post presentations on Canvas on Friday April 19. The posting should include any new readings, information and supportive materials you have identified in your research.

WEEK 14, APRIL 22 – ANALYZING AND DEBATING POLICY I
- ☐ Group presentations and discussion

ANNOUNCEMENT: Groups assigned to present on April 29 should post presentations on Canvas on Friday April 26.

WEEK 15, APRIL 29 – – ANALYZING AND DEBATING POLICY II
- ☐ Group presentations and discussion

FINALS WEEK, MAY 6 FINAL ASSIGNMENT (POLICY MEMO) DUE AT 5PM

Announcements, UH Policies and Resources:

Syllabus changes: Please note that the instructor may need to make modifications to the course syllabus. Such changes will be announced as quickly as possible through email and Canvas. You should check UH email and Canvas periodically for announcements and updates.

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.

Academic Integrity and use of AI: We 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 here; 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. Use of AI and related LLM tools (including ChatGPT) during an exam or to generate content, entire paragraphs of assignments or final paper is strongly discouraged. Submissions will be checked on Turnitin; any passages identified as generated with AI will be considered plagiarism and result in points deducted in proportion to the content identified as AI.

Excused Absence Policy: Regular class attendance, participation, and engagement in coursework are important contributors to student success. Absences may be excused as provided in the University of Houston Graduate Excused Absence Policy for reasons including: medical illness of student or close relative, death of a close family member, legal or government proceeding that a student is obligated to attend, recognized professional and educational activities where the student is presenting, and University-sponsored activity or athletic competition. Under these policies, students with excused absences will be provided with an opportunity to make up any quiz, exam or other work that contributes to the course grade or a satisfactory alternative. Please read the full policy for details regarding reasons for excused absences, the approval process, and extended absences. Additional policies address absences related to military service, religious holy days, pregnancy and related conditions, and disability.

Recording of Class: You may not record all or part of class, livestream all or part of class, or make/distribute screen captures, without advanced written consent of the instructor. If you have or think you may have a disability such that you need to record class-related activities, please contact the Justin Dart, Jr. Student Accessibility Center. If you have an accommodation to record class-related activities, those recordings may not be shared with any other student, whether in this course or not, or with any other person or on any other platform. Classes may be recorded by the instructor. Students may use instructor's recordings for their own studying and notetaking. Instructor's recordings are not authorized to be shared with anyone without the prior written approval of the instructor. Failure to comply with requirements regarding recordings will result in a disciplinary referral to the Dean of Students Office and may result in disciplinary action.

Reasonable Academic Adjustments/Auxiliary Aids: UH complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, pertaining to the provision of reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids for disabled students. In accordance with Section 504 and ADA guidelines, UH strives to provide reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids to students who request and require them. If you believe that you have a disability requiring an academic adjustments/auxiliary aid, please contact the Justin Dart Jr. Student Accessibility Center.

University Sexual Misconduct Policy: UH is committed to fostering a safe, productive learning environment. Per the UHS Sexual Misconduct Policy, the instructor is a "responsible employe" for reporting purposes under Title IX regulations and state law and must report incidents of sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual intimidation, intimate partner violence, or stalking) about which they become aware to the Title IX office. Please know there are places on campus where you can make a report in confidence. You can find more information about resources on the Title IX website.

COVID-19 Information: Students are encouraged to visit the University's COVID-19 website for important information including diagnosis and symptom protocols, testing, vaccine information, and post-exposure guidance. Please check the website throughout the semester for updates. Consult the Graduate Excused Absence Policy for information regarding excused absences due to medical reasons.