



Hobby School of Public Affairs
UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

POLC 6320 – SPRING 2023
POLICY ANALYSIS II: POLITICAL ANALYSIS

DAY, TIME; LOCATION:	Monday, 5:30–8:30pm	S-101 (Old Science Bldg.)
INSTRUCTORS:	Gail Buttorff	Pablo M. Pinto
EMAIL	gjbuttor@central.uh.edu	ppinto@central.uh.edu
OFFICE HOURS:	Mon 1–3pm on zoom bit.ly/OHButtorff	Wed 1–3 pm at S-242 or by appointment
TEACHING ASSISTANT:	Lauren Fuller	lafuller@cougarnet.uh.edu

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.

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 (●) as well as those marked with a box (□). We will also conduct several simulations and work on cases related to the topics covered.

GRADING

Course grades will be based on the following:

- I. CLASS PARTICIPATION, HOMEWORK AND ASSIGNMENTS (20%): You will be graded for your completion and performance in homework, in-class quizzes, policy simulations, and other class assignments. Contribution to class discussion is substantial component of the final grade for this class. You 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, including online discussion board.

2. **PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF READINGS (20%):** Every week different groups of students will present to the class one of the readings marked with □ on the syllabus. Each student is expected to participate in the presentation of readings at least twice during the semester. The distribution of readings for each week will be done by the class, making sure that all the readings are covered, and send the list of assignments to the instructors by noon on Friday, January 27. All members of a group assigned to a specific reading are expected to contribute to the presentations. After the presentation the instructor will prepare questions about the reading and the topics covered for the class to discuss. Note that all students are expected to have read the papers and be ready for the class discussion. There will be a discussion board for each topic to continue the discussion on Canvas after class. The presenting teams will upload their presentations and questions to the corresponding discussion board.
3. **TAKE-HOME EXAMS (20%):** two take-home exams will be distributed on March 6 (due on March 9) and April 24 (due on May 3). The exams will cover all topics and readings from weeks 1 through 14.
4. **POLICY DEBATES AND MEMOS (20%):** throughout the semester we will hold in-class debates about relevant public policy issues. In preparation for the class discussion, students will work individually or in small groups; each group is expected to conduct in-depth research on the topic: 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 when the class debates the policy 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 debate. After the debate, each group will submit a policy memo about the topic.
5. **FINAL ASSIGNMENT (20%):** your final assignment will be to write a memo on one of the policy issues debated in the last session of the course. The memo will be based on the research done in preparation for the final public policy debate. 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 8.

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READING LIST

PART I – INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL ANALYSIS

WEEK 1: JANUARY 23 – 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 30 – 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

STUDENT PRESENTATION:

- Stephen Levitt and Stephen Dubner. 2005. “Chapter 4: Where Have all the Criminals Gone?” In Levitt and Dubner, *Freakonomics*. Harper Collins.

WEEK 3, FEBRUARY 6 – 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

STUDENT PRESENTATION:

- Wheelan 2011, Chapter 3, pp. 80–104: Moral Hazard, Adverse Selection and Incomplete Information

Gail

PART II – POLITICAL ANALYSIS: UNDERSTANDING COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR

WEEK 4, FEBRUARY 13 – 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

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS:

- Dixit and Nalebuff 2008, Chapter 3 [pp. 64–84]
- Dixit and Nalebuff 2008, Chapter 3 [pp. 84–101]



WEEK 5, FEBRUARY 20 – COOPERATION, COLLECTIVE ACTION AND PUBLIC GOODS

- Shepsle 2010, Chapter 9: Collective Action
STUDENT PRESENTATION:
 - Mancur Olson. 1971. The Logic of Collective Action. Public Goods and the Theory of Groups. Harvard University Press. [pp. 1–22, 33–65]
 - Benjamin A. Olken. 2010. “Direct Democracy and Local Public Goods: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Indonesia.” *American Political Science Review* 104 (2): 243–267.
- Shepsle 2010, Chapter 10: Public Goods, Externalities, and the Commons
STUDENT PRESENTATION:
 - 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 27 – GROUP CHOICE

- Shepsle 2010, Chapters 3 and 4: Group Choice and Majority Rule
- Shepsle 2010, Chapter 5: Spatial Models of Majority Rule
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*.

Gail

WEEK 7, MARCH 6 – ANALYZING STRATEGIC BEHAVIOR

- Shepsle 2010, Chapter 6: Sophistication, Misrepresentation, and Manipulation
STUDENT PRESENTATIONS:
 - 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. 1917–1983; skim rest of the paper]
- BACKGROUND READING:
 - * Bueno de Mesquita 2016. Appendix B
 - * Dixit and Nalebuff 2008. Chapters 2 and 4

ANNOUNCEMENT: First take-home exam distributed; due on March 9

WEEK 8, MARCH 13 – SPRING BREAK

WEEK 9, MARCH 20 – ANALYZING AND DEBATING POLICY I

POLICY DEBATE: TRADE POLICY IN THE UNITED STATES

- In-class debate on voting for fast-track authority in Congress.
- Readings, background material and instructions will be distributed by the instructor prior to the debate.
- The policy memo as a communication instrument.

BACKGROUND READING:

- * Arthur Lupia. 2013. “Communicating Science in Politicized Environments.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science* 110: 14048–14054.

ANNOUNCEMENT: Instructions for first policy memo distributed; due on March 24.

PART III – THE POLITICAL PROCESS

Gail

WEEK 10, MARCH 27 – ELECTORAL INSTITUTIONS

- Shepsle 2010, Chapter 7: Voting Methods and Electoral Systems
STUDENT PRESENTATIONS:
 - Wheelan 2011, Chapter 6: The Political Process
 - Bernard Grofman. 2016 “Perspectives on the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems.” *Annual Review of Political Science*

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 11, APRIL 3 – LEGISLATURES AND REPRESENTATION

- Shepsle 2010, Chapter 11: Institutions
- Shepsle 2010, Chapter 12: Legislatures

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS:

- 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 12, APRIL 10 – POLICY DEBATES: PUBLIC POLICY AND THE ENERGY TRANSITION

- Progress report on research for policy debate on public policy and the energy transition

BACKGROUND READING:

- ※ 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.
- ※ Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo, 2009. “The Experimental Approach to Development Economics.” *Annual Review of Economics*, Annual Reviews 1(1): 151–78.

ANNOUNCEMENT: Students should post on Canvas the readings, background information and other relevant materials identified in their independent research no later than April 7.

WEEK 13, APRIL 17 – IMPLEMENTING POLICIES: DELEGATION AND AGENCY

- Shepsle 2010, Chapter 13: Bureaucracy and Intergovernmental Relations

RECOMMENDED READING:

- ※ Bueno de Mesquita 2016, Chapter 9: The Need for Information

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS:

- Mathew D. McCubbins and Thomas Schwartz. 1984. “Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols versus Fire Alarms.” *American Journal of Political Science* 28 (1): 165–179.

Gail

WEEK 14, APRIL 24 – IMPLEMENTING POLICIES: POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

- Shepsle 2010, Chapter 14: Leadership

STUDENT PRESENTATION:

- 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

STUDENT PRESENTATION:

- Michael Laver and Kenneth Shepsle. 1990. “Coalitions and Cabinet Government.” *American Political Science Review* Vol. 84, No. 3 (Sep., 1990), pp. 873-890

ANNOUNCEMENT: Second take-home exam distributed; due on May 3 at noon

WEEK 15, MAY 1 – POLICY DEBATES: PUBLIC POLICY AND THE ENERGY TRANSITION

- In-class presentations and discussion

ANNOUNCEMENT: You should post your presentation on Canvas no later than April 28; include any new readings, information and supportive materials you have identified since the progress report.

FINALS WEEK, MAY 8 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. Notice of 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.

CONTACTING INSTRUCTOR: Please use email to contact me with any issues. In your email use an informative heading in the subject heading including course number (e.g. POLC 6320–Question about Monday’s class).

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.

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.

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: Students 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.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: 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 at: <https://uh.edu/provost/policies-resources/honesty/>; 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.

REASONABLE ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENTS/AUXILIARY AIDS: The University of Houston 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: The University of Houston 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.