

# **POLS 4985: Agenda-Setting and Public Policy**

**Fall, 2018**  
**MW: 2:00-3:15**  
**Pafford 112**

## Instructor Information

Dr. Paul Rutledge

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Note: Don't call, email. Also, don't email using the Course Den tool. Email me on my Westga address, that is, if you expect a response.

## Course Description

Shift happens, or so the saying goes. As such, this course will focus on the politics of agenda-setting, and the resulting shift in public policy. The course will focus on the major policy initiatives and attention devoted to various areas of public policy over time on the state, federal, and comparative level. Political attention is a scarce resource allocated quite carefully and strategically by political institutions regardless of the context. Shifts in attention tend to occur incrementally, with intermittent bursts of flurried activity that can in turn produce dramatic changes in public policy and political systems. As such, this course will be an important component part of a student's comprehension of the public policy process.

Students will make extensive use of electronic resources as part of this course. This will include the examination and utilization of established public policy databases in order to create original research regarding attention to a public policy area (or areas) of their choosing, writing critically about existing literature, developing a theoretical justification and literature review for their independent research project, and conducting preliminary data analysis. As such, this course will also challenge students to engage in scientific academic research, perhaps for the first time, in close consultation with the instructor.

This course will involve a lot of independent research, reading, and writing. Yes, friends, you will have to actually read and actually write. If that scares you, that is why the Gods of universities created an add/drop period.

## Required Texts

None. I will provide the readings. You read them. Then you will write about them. Extensively.

## Course Evaluation

### **Assignments**

Students will participate in 4 online discussions throughout the semester. Each discussion will be worth 3 points, for a total of 12 points or 12% of the final grade.

### **Midterm Exam**

Students will complete an online midterm exam. It will be an extensive essay based exam. The midterm will be worth a total of 15 points, or 15% of the final grade.

### **Final exam**

Students will complete an online final exam. It will be an extensive essay based exam. The final will be worth a total of 15 points, or 15% of the final grade.

### **Final Paper**

Students will write a research paper on an agenda-setting topic of their choice. It could be that they will propose a new theory, compare attention levels to different policy areas, compare political attention in state and nation, compare political attention cross-nationally. In sum, the possibilities truly are endless. Students will work closely with the instructor at various points throughout the course (noted in the course schedule) to develop their research interests and produce a quality research paper. The final paper will be worth a total of 50 points, or 50% of the final grade, broken down as follows.

Topic Introduction: 3 points

Topic Presentation: 2 points

Annotated Bibliography: 5 points

Final Paper: 30 points

Final Paper Presentation: 10 points

### **Participation**

Class attendance is required.

This is a discussion based course. Participation is absolutely essential, required, expected, and demanded. If you are not prepared for class, be prepared to be called out on it and embarrassed because I will call on you if you just sit there silently during discussions.

Participation will be worth a total of 8 points, or 8% of the final grade. Note: attendance is not participation. You must not only attend, but be prepared to actively engage in class discussion based on readings.

## Grade Breakdown

Total- 100 points

A: 90-100

B: 80-89

C: 70-79

D: 60-69

F: 0-59

## Academic Dishonesty:

I take academic dishonesty very seriously, as does the University. As such, any cheating or suspicion of cheating on any assignment for this course will not be tolerated and will be

prosecuted to the fullest extent, including those authorities above me. Cheating will result in a failing grade for the course, no exceptions.

Make up assignments:

No such thing. All assignments must be done on time, or will not be accepted. Period.

Students with disabilities and Social Justice:

For information on disabilities and social justice, please go to the following link.

<http://tinyurl.com/UWGSyllabusPolicies>

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

All Readings will be available on Course Den as far in advance as I can possibly post them.

### Week 1 August 15

- Syllabus will be distributed. Warm, fuzzy feelings will be generated for all to feel.
- Assignment- Please participate in Course Den introductory discussion. Respond to the prompt, and respond to at least two of your colleagues.

### Week 2-3 August 20-29 The concepts of Power and Agenda Building

#### Reading List

#### August 20-22 (88 pages reading)

- Schattschneider, E.E. 1957. Intensity, Visibility, Direction, and Scope. *American Political Science Review* 51: 933–42.
- Bachrach, Peter and Morton Baratz. 1962. The Two Faces of Power. *American Political Science Review* 56: 947–52.
- Riker, William H. 1964. Some Ambiguities in the Notion of Power. *American Political Science Review* 58: 341–9.
- Dahl, Robert A. 1966. Further Reflections on “The Elitist Theory of Democracy.” *American Political Science Review* 60: 296–305.
- Roger Cobb and Charles D. Elder. 1971. The Politics of Agenda-Building: An Alternate Perspective for Modern Democratic Theory. *Journal of Politics* 33: 892-915.
- Downs, Anthony. 1972. Up and Down with Ecology: The Issue Attention Cycle. *Public Interest* 28: 38–50.
- Walker, Jack L., Jr. 1977. Setting the Agenda in the U.S. Senate: A Theory of Problem Selection. *British Journal of Political Science* 7: 423–45.

August 27-29 Class meets online. **Online Essay Discussions 1 and 2 Due**

August 27- Responses to online essay 1 prompt and online essay 2 prompt due.

August 29- respond to at least two colleagues in each discussion.

All posts are due by September 5 at the beginning of class.

### Weeks 3 and 4 September 3-12 Theories of the Policy Process

September 3- No class, Labor Day.

### Reading List September 5-12

- Sabatier and Jenkins Smith Advocacy Coalition Approach. Selected Chapters.
- Kingdon, John W. 1995. Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies. 2d. ed. New York: Harper Collins. Selected Chapters.
- Birkland, Thomas. 1997. After Disaster. Selected Chapters.
- Baumgartner and Jones. 1993. Agendas and Instability in American Politics. Selected Chapters.

Wednesday, September 12- Term Paper topic introduction (1 page) due to course den drop box. Each student will make a 5 minute presentation to the class to discuss their topics and solicit feedback.

### Weeks 5-6 September 17-26 Punctuated Equilibrium Extensions

#### Reading List September 17-26

- Baumgartner and Jones. 2005. The Politics of Attention. Selected Chapters.
- Baumgartner and Jones. 2015. The Politics of Information. Selected Chapters.

September 24, 26- Students will meet individually with me during class time (appointments will be made) to discuss their term papers.

### Week 7 October 1-3 Midterm Exam

Students will be given a take home midterm exam which will involve extensive writing. The assignment will be distributed on Course Den September 26<sup>th</sup>, and will be due to Course Den by the end of the normally allotted class time (3:15) on October 3<sup>rd</sup>. Class will meet online only during this week.

### Week 8-10 October 8-24 Agenda Setting and the Presidency

#### Reading List

- Paul Light. 1999. The President's Agenda. Selected Chapters.
- Cohen. 2012. The President's Legislative Agenda. Selected Chapters.
- Wood and Peake article.
- Edwards and Wood article.
- Edwards and Barrett Chapter.
- Rutledge and Larsen-Price article.
- Larsen-Price and Rutledge article.
- Peake and Eshbaugh-Soha article.
- Wood "Saber Rattling" article.
- Baumgartner et al "Popular Presidents" article.

Class will meet online October 22-24. **Respond to Online Essay Discussion 3 Prompt and at least two colleagues.**

**Annotated Bibliography for Final Paper Due October 24<sup>th</sup> on Course Den.**

Week 11 October 29-31 Agenda Setting in Congress  
Selected Readings TBA

Week 12 November 5-7 Agenda Setting and Interest Groups  
Selected Readings TBA

Week 13 November 12-14 Agenda Setting and the Supreme Court  
Selected Readings TBA

## **Thanksgiving Break November 17-25**

Week 14-15 November 26-December 5 Policy Applications/Paper Presentations  
Reading List

- Fleming, Anthony. Gun Policy in the United States and Canada. Selected chapters.
- Fleming, Rutledge, Dixon, and Peralta. When the Smoke Clears article.
- Fleming, Peralta, and Rutledge. Presidency and Gun Control article.
- Birkland Lessons of Disaster. Selected chapters.

Paper Presentations will be November 28, December 3, and December 5. Each student will be assigned a 10 minute time slot to present their final paper to the class.

### Finals Week

Final Exam will be taken on Course Den and will be due by December 10, 5pm on Course Den.