David S. Busch

***History of American Public Policy***

History 79-300, Summer 2018

**Course Description:** This course will introduce you to the basic elements of American public policy making and its history. Students will describe and analyze aspects of the development of public policy in the United States, focusing specifically on debates regarding civil rights, welfare policy, and immigration. For the purposes of this course, public policy will be defined as the making of rules and laws and their implementation by government in response to citizen advocacy efforts. This course assumes that the public policy landscape is complex but still comprehensible given the proper set of analytical frameworks and appropriate historical background. Particular emphasis will be placed on social movements and mass politics and the responses by state officials and representatives. This course asks two central questions: How have social movements shaped public policy? And how have governments responded to and/or limited social movements’ policy proposals?

**Course Objectives**

Students will:

* Describe past domestic public policy debates in the United States
* Describe some aspects of the expansion and contraction of federal intervention in American social and economic life over the past 200 years
* Evaluate and critique policy approaches, techniques, and responses

Students will also develop specific ways of “thinking” historically:

* Identify the strengths and weaknesses of historical sources
* Craft historical arguments via analytical, evidence-based writing
* Communicate your ideas clearly and persuasively via public speaking and writing

**Learning Activities and Evaluation**

**15%** Class Participation

**25%** Policy Debate

**30%** “Takeaway” Responses (1 page)

**30%** Policy Brief (2-3 Pages)

**Class Format, Readings, and Participation**

This course combines seminars, in-class primary documentary analysis, and student-led discussion.

Readings are assigned for each class. Readings are one of the most important building blocks of the course; successful fulfillment of other course requirements depends on the conscientious completion of course readings.

You are expected to read critically. When reading secondary sources, you should:

1. Identify the authors’ main arguments, or how they interpret and make sense of the subject they are studying.
2. Assess whether they provide good evidence to support their argument and whether their reasoning is logical and cogent.
3. Find weaknesses in arguments by identifying unstated assumptions or comparing arguments across readings. When comparing authors’ arguments, consider: Do the authors have the same interpretation of the topic? If not, can you reconcile them or is one stronger?

When reading primary sources, you should:

1. Think about what you can and cannot learn about the past from this document. All historical documents were written by people with a certain stake in the subject and this influenced what they wrote. For example, a journalist, a college president, and a student would have been likely to have different views on an issue in the early twentieth century and you could learn different ideas from their accounts.
2. Try to discern how the author’s purposes shaped that document. You should try to think about who the intended audience was and how that influenced what was said.
3. Think about the author’s relation to the events or issues discussed and decide whether they are a reliable authority or not. Consider the author’s assumptions about their subject.

**Assignments**

The assignments are designed to develop a student’s personal and public voice as writers and citizens. The writing assignments and policy debates will build upon each other: the response papers will prepare you for the debates and the debates will prepare you for the policy brief.

**#1. “Takeaway” Response Papers (3)**

After each case study, students will write a short 1 page (max) response that identifies and explains what they see as the key issue(s) related to a given policy (civil rights, welfare, and immigration). Students will be given a writing rubric and will be graded on an A,B,C,D, F grading scale.

**#2. Policy Debate**

You will be placed in a group where you will debate policy solutions. You will use your responses and other course material to develop and defend your policy choice. The last week will be devoted to mock debates around the issues. Your group will take two (or more) sides and debate in class. The other students will observe and ask questions upon the completion of the debate.

Grading: Students will be graded upon preparation, use of class material, and post-debate reflections. Students will be graded on an A,B,C,D, F grading scale.

**#3 Policy Brief**

This assignment asks you to use the history of a given case study (civil rights, welfare, or immigration) to develop a policy recommendation. You can either use the position you took during the debate or take a different approach.

Policy Brief Structure (2-3 Pages)

1. Title
2. *Executive Summary:* 1 paragraph that provides an overview of the problem and includes concise policy action
3. *Policy Alternatives*: 1 paragraph that discusses current and previous policy approaches
4. *Policy Recommendation*: 1-2 Paragraph detailed explanation of the concrete steps to be taken to address the policy issue.

Grading: Student policy briefs will be 2-3 pages in length, present a clear argument or problem, and use evidence from readings and class material to support the main claims. Students will be graded on an A,B,C,D, F grading scale.

**#4. Class Participation**

I believe we all learn best in a supportive environment, in which you are listening actively, not only to me but also to your fellow students. In addition to the above assignments, class discussion and activities will be a crucial component of this course. The success of the course relies upon students’ engagement with activities and content. Excellent class participation involves raising thoughtful questions, building on the ideas of others, and synthesizing ideas across readings and discussions. Use the in-class activities as an opportunity to express your ideas and concerns. What did you find compelling or confusing? With what did you most strongly agree or disagree? What were the most important passages or arguments and why? Think deeply, ask questions, and challenge ideas. The best learning is when we learn from each other.

Grading: Class participation will be based on a variety of factors, including: active listening (e.g. asking clarifying questions), speaking up and sharing ideas during discussion and activities, taking notes, and sharing post-class reflections with D. Busch (via email). Students will have the opportunity to give input on their participation grades at mid-semester and end of the semester. For class participation, students will be graded on an A,B,C,D, F grading scale.

**Communicating with Me**

I encourage you to communicate with me throughout the course over email or during office hours. No question is too small or too large.

**Community, Ethics, and Etiquette**

One of the goals of this course is to create community through shared experiences. It is useful to set some parameters for us in order to be successful in building an effective, accountable, and honest community.

*Attendance:* A strong community starts with commitment and showing up to class. Attendance is thus crucial to this course. Chronic tardiness or multiple unexcused absences affects the growth of community and will be reflected in your participation grade.

*Technology:* Community is also built through face-to-face interactions. While some class activities will encourage the use of laptops and other forms of technology, I find that the over-use of technology in the classroom can inhibit learning and community building. I greatly prefer for students to take notes with pen and paper rather than with laptops. My experience is that laptops disrupt the ability of students to participate in class discussion. Smart phones and other electronic devices are equally distracting. Please turn them off before entering class. If you need to use a laptop to take notes, please see me individually.

*Assignments:* Community is dependent upon accountability and honesty. **All assignments must be submitted on the day they are due.** An assignment will be considered late otherwise. If late, your grade for an assignment will be lowered by a full letter grade. Requests for extra time due to legitimate conflicts (illness, family tragedy, etc.) must be made in advance and must be documented. It is each student’s responsibility to be familiar with the University’s policies on plagiarism, cheating, and academic integrity. You can review these policies via the following link: http://www.cmu.edu/policies/documents/Cheating.html

**Disability Accommodations**

If a student needs to request an accommodation due to a disability, it is the student’s responsibility to communicate such a request to me as soon as possible.

**SCHEDULE**

**Week 1: Political Protest and the American Constitution**

* May 22: Introduction: What is policy? Who makes policy?
* May 23: The American Constitution
* The U.S. Constitution
* Thurgood Marshall, 1987 Constitutional Bicentenial Speech
* Antonin Scalia, 1996 Speech at Catholic University of America on Constitutional interpretation
* May 24: A Theory of Public Policy
* Laurel Weldon, “Movements, Representation, and Marginalization” from *When Protests Make Policy: How Social Movements Represent Disadvantaged Groups*
* Mettler, Suzanne and Joe Soss. 2004. “The Consequences of Public Policy for Democratic Citizenship: Bridging Policy Studies and Mass Politics.” *Perspectives on Politics* 2(1): 55-73.

**Week 2: Civil Rights Policy**

* May 27: Seminar: Race and American Liberalism
* Megan Ming Francis, “Rethinking Civil Rights and American Political Development,” from *Civil Rights and the Making of the Modern American State*
* May 28: Overview of Civil Rights Legislation and Policy in the United States
* May 29: The Grassroots in the Civil Rights Movement
* Secondary Reading: Charles Payne, “View from the Trenches”
* May 30: The Government in the Civil Rights Movement
  + Secondary Reading: Thomas J. Sugrue, “All Politics is Local: The Persistence of Localism in Twentieth Century America.”
* May 31: Contemporary Issues

**Week 3: Welfare Policy**

* June 3: Seminar: Poverty Knowledge
* Alice O’Connor, “Introduction” from *Poverty Knowledge*
* June 4: Overview of Welfare Policy in the United States
* June 5: The New Deal
* Lizabeth Cohen, “Workers Make a New Deal,” from *Making a New Deal*
* June 6: Conservatives and the Private Market
* Lisa McGirr, “The Conservative Worldview at the Grassroots,” from *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*
* June 7: Contemporary Issues

**Week 4: Immigration**

* June 10: Seminar: Dividing Lines
* Secondary Reading: Daniel J. Tichenor and Philip H Knight, “Introduction,” from *Dividing Lines*
* June 11: Overview of Immigration Policy in the United States
* June 12: Chinese Exclusion
* Secondary Reading: Erika Lee, “The Chinese Exclusion Example: Race, Immigration and American Gatekeeping, 1882-1924,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 21, no. 3 (2002): 36-62.
* June 13: Labor and Mexican Immigration
* Secondary Reading: David Gutierrez, “Economic Development and Immigration, 1890-1920,” chapter 2 in *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (University of California Press, 1995), pp. 39-68.
* June 14: Contemporary Issues

**Week 6: Contemporary Movements and Policy Debates**

* June 24: Fishbowl Debate #1, Is reparations a policy solution?
* Carol A. Horton, “The Broken Promise of Liberal Revolution” from *Race and the Making of American Liberalism*
* Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations,” *The Atlantic,*
* David Fume, “The Impossibility of Reparations,” *The Atlantic,*
* Kyle Smith, “Why Reparations Wouldn’t Work,” *Forbes,*
* June 25: Fishbowl Debate #2, How do you effectively address poverty?
* Alice O’Connor, “The End of Welfare and the Case for a New Poverty Knowledge,” from *Poverty Knowledge*
* “Federal Job Guarantee”
* “A Basic Income for Everyone?”
* June 26: Fishbowl Debate #3, What should be the basis of immigration policy?
* Daniel Tichenor, “Two Faces of Expansion,” from *Dividing Lines*
* Immigration Proposal, 2018 (Chart)
* June 27: Writing/Feedback Session
* June 28: Writing/Feedback Session