**POLITICAL SCIENCE 311**

**Contemporary Issues in American Public Policy**

**Spring 2016**

Instructor: Dr. Rebecca Shafer

Class Meets: Does not meet

Room: Online Only

Office Hours: contact me via email

Email: rshafer@utk.edu

**Course Description from Undergraduate Catalog**:

Selected public policy issues confronting the nation, including the background, nature, and effects of present policies, and options for the future. Writing-emphasis course.

**Nature of the Course:**

This class provides an introduction to the process of public policy-making in the United States. Models of the policy-making process are examined and applied to a broad range of substantive policy issues. In short, we will discuss the major issues confronting American society and American government through the lens of a systematic framework for policy analysis.

**Program level learning objectives that the course supports:**

*Students who successfully complete this course will demonstrate ability to:*

1. Understand the context of public policymaking in America;

2. Identify the major approaches to explaining public policy;

3. Explain the different stages of the policy process;

4. Analyze the impact of federalism on policy development and implementation.

5. Describe different types of public policies;

6. Think critically about the major challenges and opportunities confronting public servants in the United States;

7. Understand how public policies are evaluated;

8. Appreciate the contributions of political ideology to discussions of policy analysis;

9. Describe how the separation of powers affects the public policy process;

10. Discuss the impact of public opinion on public policymaking;

11. Explain the major issues with economic, healthcare, social welfare, educational and foreign policy and homeland security policy;

12. Write policy analysis papers.

**University/College/Departmental Curricular Requirements Met:** This class is a designated U.S. studies course for the upper level distribution requirement for those in the College of Arts and Sciences. It has a writing requirement. For the political science major, it falls under American Politics/Public Administration.

**Required Text:**

Kraft and Furlong. *Public Policy: Politics, Analysis, and Alternatives* (5th edition). There MAY be additional readings posted on Blackboard.

**Required instructional technology:**

Knowledge of Blackboard Instructional System.

**Student Assessment and Evaluation Methods:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Discussion Board Posts | 20 (10 x 2 points each) |
| 2 Current Events | 5 points each  |
| Mid-Term Exam  | 20  |
| Final Exam | 20 |
| 2 Papers | 15 points each  |

**Attendance and Participation: You will not be successful in this class unless you keep up. There are weekly assignments that you read at least one chapter of the textbook plus participation in discussion board on Blackboard.**

**Discussion Board:**

Each week there will either be a video to watch with questions related to the video and/or a set of questions for discussion that will be administered through Blackboard. All students will be graded for their contribution to blog postings. You must answer all the questions assigned as well as addressing at least one part of another student’s post. Hint: A posting of “I agree” won’t provide you any points. Comments are to be civil, although you are welcome to disagree. Our class is intended to be a safe, intellectually stimulating, collaborative space for learning, where we respect each other’s thoughts and process, and everyone’s voice and experiences are important.

You have until Sunday midnight of the assignment week to post your answers and comments. You are not allowed to gain points by going back to earlier weeks. You can earn a maximum of 20 points on these weekly postings.

**Current Events:**

Students will be required to submit 2 current event assignments during the semester. The assignment needs to be **AT LEAST** one page in length and follow the format that will be posted on Blackboard. The first current event must be on a policy issue at the **state level** and the second current event must be on a policy issue at the **national level**. This must be submitted no later than 11:59 pm of the due date or students will lose 1 point for every day late.

**Exams:**

There will be a mid-term and a final exam. You will have a week to complete each of these exams. The mid-term will be posted on February 29th and must be submitted to me no later than March 6, 11:59 pm on Blackboard. It will cover chapters 1-6 in your textbook. The final exam will be posted on May 3rd and is due no later than May 10th, 11:59 pm. The final exam will cover the entire book, although the focus will be on the material covered after the mid-term. The exams will be multiple choice, true/false, and short answer /short essay.

Exams turned in late will be penalized 1 point for every day they are late.

**Papers:** Two papers are assigned in this class.Each paper is to be 4-6 double-spaced pages, using a 12 point font, with 1 inch margins all around. There must be citations given within the paper and references at the end. Any commonly accepted style for papers (for example, APA or MLA) may be used. Descriptions of these papers are given on Blackboard.

Due dates for the papers are February 7 & April 3. Papers must be submitted on Blackboard no later than 11:59 pm of the due date or students will lose 2 points for every day late.

**Grading Scale**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A  | 93 – 100%  |
| A -  | 90 – 92%  |
| B +  | 87 – 89%  |
| B  | 83 – 86%  |
| B -  | 80 – 82%  |
| C +  | 77 – 79%  |
| C  | 73 – 76%  |
| C -  | 70 – 72%  |
| D +  | 67 – 69%  |
| D  | 63 – 66%  |
| D -  | 60 – 62%  |
| F  | Less than 60%  |

**COURSE CALENDAR**

*Week of:*

Jan 18 Ch. 1 Public Policy and Politics

Jan 25 Ch. 2 Government Institutions and Policy Actors

Feb 1 Ch. 3 Understanding Public Policy Making

**Paper #1 due on Sunday, February 7**

Feb 8 Ch. 4 Policy Analysis: An Introduction

Feb 15 Ch. 5 Public Problems and Policy Alternatives

Feb 22 Ch. 6 Assessing Policy Alternatives

*The* ***Mid-Term Exam*** *will be posted on February 29; it must be submitted no later than March 6, 11:59 pm to SafeAssignment (Chs. 1-6).*

Mar 7 Ch. 7 Economic and Budgetary Policy

**Current Event #1 due on Sunday, March 13**

Mar 14 **SPRING BREAK**

Mar 21 Ch. 8 Health Care Policy

Mar 28 Ch. 9 Welfare and Social Security Policy

**Paper #2 Due on Sunday, April 3**

Apr 4 Ch. 10 Education Policy

Apr 11 Ch. 11 Environmental and Energy Policy

**Current Event #2 due Sunday, April 17**

Apr 18 Ch. 12 Foreign Policy and Homeland Security

Apr 25 Ch. 13 Politics, Analysis, and Policy Choice

*The* ***Final Exam*** *will be posted on May 3rd; it must be submitted no later than May 10, 11:59 pm to SafeAssignment*

**Academic Integrity**

All rules concerning academic honesty as set out in the current edition of *Hilltopics* will be enforced. Particular attention should be paid to the section on plagiarism. Students are reminded of their obligation to abide by the UTK Honor Code: “An essential feature of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville is a commitment to maintaining an atmosphere of intellectual integrity and academic honesty. As a student of the university, I pledge that I will neither knowingly give nor receive any inappropriate assistance in academic work, thus affirming my own personal commitment to honor and integrity.”

**Disabilities that Constrain Learning**

Any student who feels he or she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 865-974-6087 in 2227 Dunford Hall to document their eligibility for services. ODS will work with students and faculty to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

**The Student’s Role in Improving Teaching and Learning through Course Assessment**

At UT, it is our collective responsibility to improve the state of teaching and learning. During the semester, you may be requested to assess aspects of this course either during class or at the completion of the class. You are encouraged to respond to these various forms of assessment as a means of continuing to improve the quality of the UT learning experience.

**University Civility Statement**

Civility is genuine respect and regard for others: politeness, consideration, tact, good manners, graciousness, cordiality, affability, amiability and courteousness. Civility enhances academic freedom and integrity, and is a prerequisite to the free exchange of ideas and knowledge in the learning community. Our community consists of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and campus visitors. Community members affect each other’s well-being and have a shared interest in creating and sustaining an environment where all community members and their points of view are valued and respected. Affirming the value of each member of the university community, the campus asks that all its members adhere to the principles of civility and community adopted by the campus: http://civility.utk.edu/.

**Communication of Announcements:**

Announcements will be sent via e-mail to students’ official UTK e-mail addresses and/or posted on Blackboard. Reminder: Students are responsible for monitoring their UTK e-mail account and the course Blackboard site.

**Alteration of this Syllabus:**

The instructor reserves the right to revise, alter and/or amend this syllabus, as necessary. Students will be notified by email and/or Blackboard of any such revisions, alterations and/or amendments.