

Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Social Science and Policy Studies Department
GOV1303 – American Public Policy

Course Information

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Class: Monday/Thursday 3-4:50pm
Classroom: Stratton Hall (SH) 106
Office hours: Thursday, 2-3pm, or by appt.
#GOV1303 #ENV280X #riskassessment

Course Description

American Public Policy focuses on the outcomes or products of political institutions and political controversy. The course first addresses the dynamics of policy formations and stalemate, the identification of policy goals, success and failure in implementation, and techniques of policy analysis. Class readings then turn to case studies focused on major storms to examine the dynamics at work. More specifically, we will be engaging with the levels of government involved in risk assessment and management in the context of “extreme weather.” How do policymakers respond to natural hazards and risks? What types of policies do they create to deal with their constituents’ vulnerability? How do they address community rebuilding and resilience after a natural disaster has occurred? Who must be involved in policymaking to make it successful? Students will examine policy responses in the face of major storms from different angles, such as social, urban, energy, education, or environmental issue areas.

There is no specific preparation for this course, but a basic understanding of American political institutions is assumed.

Assessment Statement & Learning Objectives

Your understanding of the course material will be evaluated through your completed in-class activities, homework assignments, and a midterm exam. You will also be evaluated for your work in teams as stakeholders for a town hall-style meeting. At the end of the term you will be able to: hold an informed discussion on American policymaking (our institutions and processes); understand the basic concepts and theories of public policy studies; and identify public policy problems and potential policy solutions. You will apply this knowledge by producing a final report from a stakeholder position and representing those interests in a policymaking session.

Required Texts – *always bring readings and assignments to class.*

There is **no required book** for this course. Although there is no required text, the first half of the course will rely on:

- Kraft, Michael and Scott Furlong. 2013. Public Policy: Politics, Analysis, and Alternatives. 4th edition. Los Angeles: CQ Press. The textbook is identified as “PP” in the calendar.

An earlier edition of the book has also been placed on reserve at the Gordon Library, and the chapters are available on myWPI.

Additional required and suggested readings are linked in the syllabus or will be posted to [myWPI](#). Students should regularly access a news source (print, online, or television) to keep up-to-date with current affairs related to national and local concerns. Suggested sources: [The New York Times](#), [The Washington Post](#), [The Boston Globe](#), or [NECN](#).

Course Requirements

Attendance/Participation	15% of Class Grade
Plagiarism Tutorial	5% of Class Grade
Midterm Exam	15% of Class Grade
In-class Activities (6)	35% of Class Grade (5-7% for each)
Homework Assignments (3)	15% of Class Grade (5% for each)
Town Hall Prep & Position Paper	15% of Class Grade

Student Responsibilities for the Course

- 1) **Complete reading assignments** before the class meets; the assigned readings provide important background for the class lectures. As we proceed, assignments may vary from what the syllabus indicates. It is your responsibility to stay aware of any updates to the schedule.
- 2) **Attend class** meetings regularly and on time. The lectures provide a framework for understanding the public policy theories and the policymaking process, and they contain material not in the readings. Attendance will be taken daily and will figure in your course grade.
- 3) **Participate** in class discussion. Student participation allows me to evaluate reading comprehension. Class participation also reinforces the ideas and concepts in course assignments. Students who attend all classes, but do not participate in class discussion and activities will receive a maximum of 75% for their Attendance and Participation grade.
- 4) **Complete the plagiarism tutorial.** The plagiarism tutorial will help you better understand what is considered plagiarism and how to avoid plagiarizing while writing.
- 5) **Prepare for and take the midterm exam.** The exam allows me to evaluate your understanding of the basic concepts and theories of American public policy studies. This foundation will be integral in completing the second half of the term successfully.
- 5) **Complete the in-class assignments and homework.** These assignments provide another way for students to show their understanding of the material. In-class activities and homework assignments will help to build a foundation for our class discussion. They will also be important sources of feedback on your writing for your position paper.
- 6) **Complete “town hall” assignments.** Your position paper for and performance during the town hall will demonstrate your knowledge of the course material, through your application of the appropriate concepts and theories to the policy issue of major storms.

Laptop & Technology Policy

Students will not be allowed to use laptops or tablets during lectures in class. [Recent studies](#) have shown that laptops affect students' grades negatively by up to 10 percentage points. In addition, they create a distraction for other students sitting nearby, with negative consequences for classmates' grades as well. [Other research](#) has shown that students who type notes instead of writing them retain less information. Exceptions will be made for students who can show a documented need for using a laptop to take notes. Exceptions may also be made for activity sections of class time. Students are also required to turn cell phones to silent or off during class. Text messaging (or talking on one's phone) during class is unacceptable; students who use electronic devices in class will have their attendance and participation grade penalized. Students who continually violate this policy will be asked to leave the class.

Academic Honesty

Students are expected to be aware of and to adhere to [WPI's Academic Honesty Policy](#). If you have questions about what constitutes academic dishonesty, refer to the [Student Guide to Academic Integrity at WPI](#). Plagiarism will not be tolerated. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, follow [this link](#). Here's what I will do if I [suspect academic dishonesty](#).

ABSENCES	<u>Every absence</u> will be noted and will affect the final grade. <u>Students missing more than two classes forfeit all attendance and participation points.</u>
LATENESS	Lateness is not only disruptive, but also disrespectful. <u>Two lates will count as an absence.</u> Chronic lateness will not be tolerated. Students entering class after the first 15 minutes will be marked absent.
DEADLINES	All assignments <u>must be submitted by the noted deadline.</u> If you are absent and the work is to be submitted in hard copy, you may arrange to have someone else deliver it to class. Emailed assignments will <u>not</u> be accepted. If you enter class late, your work will be marked LATE, and will be penalized. The penalties are: - One grade step deduction (e.g., B+ to B, B to B-) if you arrive to class late; - Two grade steps deduction (e.g. B+ to B-) if you turn it in within 24 hours after the beginning of the class (and the assignment must be in my possession, not left in my office mailbox for it to be considered “turned in”); - Three grade steps deduction (e.g. B+ to C+) if you turn it in between 24 and 48 hours after the beginning of the class; - Four grade steps deduction (e.g. B+ to C) if you turn it in between 48 and 72 hours after the beginning of the class. No assignment will be accepted if it is more than 72 hours late, unless you have made prior arrangements with the professor.
EXAMS	No make-up exams will be administered. Missed exams will be marked as zero. At the discretion of the professor, students may have the opportunity to complete a 15 page research paper to replace a missed exam, due one week from the exam date, with a letter-grade penalty.

Writing Center

Located on the first floor of Daniels Hall (room 116), the Writing Center is a valuable resource for helping you improve as a writer. Writing Center tutors are your peers (other undergraduate and graduate students at WPI) who are experienced writers themselves and who enjoy helping others tackle thinking and writing problems. Although a single tutoring session should never be seen as a quick fix for any writing difficulty, these sessions can help you identify your strengths and weaknesses, and teach you strategies for organizing, revising, and editing your course papers, projects, and presentations. Writing Center services are free and open to all WPI students in all classes, and tutors will happily work with you at any stage of the writing process (early brainstorming, revising a draft, polishing sentences in a final draft). Visit the [Writing Center website](#) to make an appointment.

Disability Services Office (DSO)

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you have medical information to share with me, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible. If you have not already done so, students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the [Disability Services Office](#) (DSO) as soon as possible to ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. The DSO is located in Daniels Hall, 508-831-5235.

The Golden Rules of Email Correspondence

- Check your email daily.
- Always put your name & class title in the subject line, so I know who the message is from.
- Email is a *formal* means of communication in the context of school or work; please sign every message at the bottom, use polite language, capital letters, punctuation, greetings, and salutations. Please avoid abbreviations, slang, and cuteness.
- Because you may need to be reminded of an assignment, or catch up on notes from a missed class, be sure to exchange phone numbers or email addresses with your classmates. Please do not write to let me know that you were not in class (I already know) or will miss class; to ask me to summarize what we did or will do in class; or what the assignment is/was. Email a classmate instead.

<u>Calendar</u>	
	The reading assignment listed under a given day is <u>due on that day</u> , i.e. the work listed for Thursday (3/17) should be finished before class that day.
March	
MON 3/14	<u>Introduction to the course</u> Reading: none. Assignments due: none. In-class activity: What is public policy?
THURS 3/17	<u>Intro to Public Policy and Government Institutions & Policy Actors</u> Reading: PP Chapter 1-2. Assignments due: Plagiarism tutorial; pre-instruction attitudinal survey. In-class activity: none.
MON 3/21	<u>Government Institutions & Policy Actors and Public Policymaking</u> Reading: PP Chapter 2-3. Assignments due: none. In-class activity: Writing activity #1.
THURS 3/24	***Class Meeting CANCELLED*** <u>Policy Analysis</u> Reading: PP Chapter 4. Assignments due: Writing activity #2 – must be completed on myWPI by 12 noon on Thursday, 3/24. In-class activity: none.
MON 3/28	<u>Public Problems, Policy Alternatives, and Assessing Alternatives</u> Reading: PP Chapter 5. Assignments due: none. In-class activity: Writing activity #3.
THURS 3/31	<u>Assessing Policy Alternatives</u> Reading: PP Chapter 6; Assignments due: none. In-class activity: Exam review.

April	
MON 4/4	MIDTERM EXAM
THURS 4/7 Major Storms & Community Resilience, Unit 1	<p><u>Public Policymaking in Action: Disaster Preparedness</u> Reading: Vocabulary of storms and storm systems (myWPI); Government Risk Assessment Overview; Fundamentals of Emergency Management by Lindell, Prater, & Perry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Chapter 6: Hazard, Vulnerability and Risk, pages 153-191. <p>Assignments due: none. In-class activity: Pre-unit assessment survey; concept map; Probability and Comparative Probabilities of Risk Activity.</p>
MON 4/11 Major Storms, Unit 1	<p><u>Public Policymaking in Action: Emergency Management</u> Reading: Fundamentals of Emergency Management by Lindell, Prater, & Perry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Chapter 7: Hazard Mitigation, pages 192-220. <i>The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned</i> o Chapter 1: Katrina in Perspective <p>Assignments due: HVA Activity. In-class activity: Complete Probability and Comparative Probabilities of Risk Activity, class discussion of team HVAs, start HMP Activity.</p>
THURS 4/14 Major Storms, Unit 2	<p><u>Public Policymaking in Action: Determining Hazards & Risks</u> Reading: “Hurricane Sandy Retrospective Analysis from 2014 New York City Hazard Mitigation Plan (myWPI); The Science Behind Superstorm Sandy's Crippling Storm Surge; Blizzard of '93: Why Was It the Storm of the Century?; and Superstorm: Eastern and Central U.S., March 1993.</p> <p>Assignments due: Completed HMP Activity. In-class activity: Post-unit assessment survey.</p>
MON 4/18	Patriots’ Day – NO CLASSES
TUES 4/19 Major Storms, Unit 2	<p>***CONVERSION DAY: THURS SCHEDULE***</p> <p><u>Public Policymaking in Action: Hazard Mitigation</u> Reading: State of Massachusetts Hazard Mitigation Plan (myWPI); MA Press Releases (myWPI). Assignments due: Press Release Activity. In-class activity: Press Release peer review; Concept map revision.</p>
THURS 4/21	Project Presentation Day – NO CLASSES
MON 4/25 Major Storms, Unit 3	<p><u>Public Policymaking in Action: Risk Communication</u> Reading: Chapter 7 of the <i>CDC’s Crisis, Emergency, Risk Communication 2014 Edition</i> (myWPI); The Geological Society of America's Position Statement: Geoscience and Natural Hazards Policy.</p> <p>Assignments due: Press Release Revision Assignment; HMP Comment Form Assignment. In-class activity: Stakeholder brainstorming session; Debris Removal Assignment.</p>

WEDS 4/27	Stakeholder Position Papers due! Must be posted to myWPI by 3pm.
THURS 4/28 Major Storms, Unit 3	<u>Town Hall Meeting</u> Reading: All stakeholders' position papers. Assignments due: Preparation for in-class Town Hall. In-class activity: Town Hall Meeting on hazard mitigation for major storms.
May	
MON 5/3	<u>Course Debrief</u> Reading: None. Assignments due: Final copies of position papers; post-instruction attitudinal survey. In-class activity: Debrief on town hall meeting; course evaluations.