

POLA 3240
Public Policy
Spring 2025

Professor:	Josh Basseches (he/him/his) jbasseches@tulane.edu 504-862-8319
Class Meets:	Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:00pm-3:15pm
Classroom:	Norman Mayer, Room 200A
Office Hours/Location:	Tuesdays, 10:00am-12:00pm or by appointment, Norman Mayer Building 305 (or via Zoom). <i>In-person office hours appointments must be signed up for via Calendly. Zoom office hours appointments must be arranged via email. Here is the Calendly sign-up link (despite the URL name, this is for Spring 2025 sign-ups): https://calendly.com/jbasseches/basseches-office-hours-fall-2024</i>

Course Catalog Information

Credit Hours: 3

Course Description and Goals

Public policy is everywhere. We see it in the laws and regulations that govern nearly every facet of our society. In that sense, public policy provides the structure that defines “acceptable” and “unacceptable” behavior across all aspects of public life, as well as the consequences of engaging in “unacceptable” behavior. However, another way of thinking about public policy is that it is the result or outcome of, as well as the motivation for engaging in, politics. In other words, the entire reason for politics – or even for studying it, in the form of political science – is that it is what determines public policy. Public policy, in other words, is why we care about politics.

Thinking about it in this latter way brings public policy to life. It moves it from a static realm (which forms the basis of the practice of law) to a dynamic one, and it raises a whole bunch of questions about when, how, why, how often, and to what degree and form, public policy changes. When public policy *fails* to change, despite societal actors wanting it to and perhaps even organizing and mobilizing resources toward that goal, why? These questions define the study of public policy as an interdisciplinary field as well as a subfield of political science, and will be the focus of this course.

We will begin by surveying various academic theories of public policy change and stasis before moving to real-world applications of such theories to actual public policies, and policy domains, that many of you care about and perhaps motivate your own interest in politics and in studying political science. Since many of the readings presume background knowledge that you may or may not have, I will use some of class time to provide this additional context for you and to connect the readings to the “real world.” Other times, class time will be used to discuss and debate the arguments and theories that the readings advance, since just as the practice of public policy is never-ending, so too is the effort to study it.

The course proceeds through 4 major units. In the first, we are introduced to public policy and policy process. In the second, we survey the leading academic theories of policy change. In the third, we dive deeply into the role of information, and information processing, in policymaking. Finally, in the fourth, we apply everything we’ve learned to the analysis of real-world case studies of public policymaking.

Learning Objectives

After successfully completing this course, you should be able to:

- Understand what public policy is, and the leading academic theories used to explain public policy stasis and change
- Understand the interplay between public policy and politics, and be able to explain it to friends or family.
- Apply theory to actual cases of public policy development or reform
- Refine and expand your critical thinking skills, reading comprehension (and efficiency) skills, analytic writing and communication skills.
- Assess the strength and weaknesses of others’ claims and arguments and construct strong ones of your own.

Course Materials:

There is one required book for this course, *The Politics of Information: Problem Definition and the Course of Public Policy in America* (2015, University of Chicago Press) by Frank R. Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones, which is available for purchase from the campus bookstore, or online vendors such as Amazon.com.

All other reading materials will be scanned as PDFs and made available to you on the course Canvas page. Regarding the scanned materials, however, please keep in mind that these are copyrighted materials and it is unlawful to distribute them outside of the class.

Regarding the book purchase, I am sensitive to the fact that some students are more financially secure than others, and I would invite you to contact me confidentially if you cannot afford to purchase the requisite book. In such circumstances, I will be happy to make alternative arrangements so that you can access the material free of charge.

Course Requirements and Grading Policies:

There are four elements of the final grade you will receive in this course:

Question posts on Canvas (15% of final grade): Once per week, you are asked to make a short (1 paragraph max.) post on Canvas, asking a question or two based on one or more of the readings assigned for a given class. I will sometimes incorporate these questions into our class discussions. These question posts are an opportunity to demonstrate that you've completed the reading and have thought about it critically. Questions must be posted by no later than the midnight before class meets. Each student will be allowed one "make-up" Canvas post; that is, if you miss a post in a given week, you will be permitted to post twice in one future week and receive credit for both posts, thus recovering the lost points from your missed or incomplete post in a prior week.

Pop Quizzes/Attendance Checks (15% of final grade): An undisclosed number of times throughout the semester, class will begin with a "pop quiz" that will serve primarily as an attendance check, to motivate you to attend class regularly and arrive on time. The degree to which you answer the pop quiz question(s) correctly will NOT affect your grade, as its main purpose is to encourage attendance. That said, your answers will also serve as an indication to me as to whether or not you are keeping up with and properly comprehending the course material, enabling me to identify and provide extra support to students who may be struggling with the course material. Each student is permitted one "unexcused absence," meaning you can miss one of these pop quizzes without any negative repercussions for your grade.

Reflection Papers (45% of final grade; 15% each): There will be three short (4-6 pages, double-spaced) reflection papers that you will write throughout the semester, based on prompts and specific guidelines which will be provided to you. These will be typed in Microsoft Word and submitted via Canvas. These papers will assess your comprehension of course readings as well as your ability to apply theories presented in the class to particular policy cases. Guidelines and grading rubrics for each one will be provided at least a few weeks in advance of the due date.

Final Exam (25% of final grade): This will be an in-class exam during the designated final exam period, which is Wednesday, May 7 at 8:00am. It is a cumulative exam based on the content of the entire class. A study guide will be provided in advance. There will be 24 multiple choice questions, 12 short-answer questions, and 2 short essay questions. Additional details will be provided as the exam approaches.

The numerical score-to-letter-grade conversion used for your final grade in this course is:

A: 93-100

A-: 90-92

B+: 88-89

B: 83-87

B-: 80-82

C+: 78-79

C: 73-77

C-: 70-72
D: 60-69
F: 0-59

ADA/Accessibility Statement:

Tulane University is committed to offering classes that are accessible. If you anticipate or encounter disability-related barriers in a course, please contact the Goldman Center for Student Accessibility to establish reasonable accommodations. If approved by Goldman, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. I will never ask for medical documentation from you to support potential accommodations needs.

Goldman Center Contact Information:

Email: goldman@tulane.edu; Phone: (504) 862-8433; Website: <https://accessibility.tulane.edu>

Code of Academic Conduct:

The Code of Academic Conduct applies to all undergraduate students, full-time and part-time, in Tulane University. Tulane University expects and requires behavior compatible with its high standards of scholarship. By accepting admission to the university, a student accepts its regulations (i.e. [Code of Academic Conduct](#) and [Code of Student Conduct](#)) and acknowledges the right of the university to take disciplinary action, including suspension and expulsion, for conduct judged unsatisfactory or disruptive.

Academic Integrity: You are expected to produce work that is entirely your own (unless otherwise indicated, such as a group project). Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated under any circumstances. All student work in this class may be analyzed electronically for violations of the University's Code of Academic Conduct and may also be included in a database for the purpose of testing for plagiarized content. Students who plagiarize will automatically fail the course and be referred to the Dean's office for consideration of further disciplinary action.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use: In general, I strongly discourage the use of these tools for pedagogical reasons we will discuss in class. They have the potential to undermine the value of your liberal arts education. That said, some of you may find a place for their use in limited circumstances that would not violate course policies. Any use of such tools must be consistent with the University's Code of Academic Conduct. Three fundamental principles apply at all times: 1) all work submitted must be your own; 2) when you use the work, the words, or the ideas of others – including online sites – you must give full credit through accurate citations; and 3), if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment or exam, you must ask for clarification. Any “take-home” writing assignments will include a reflective “process statement” in which you must transparently describe your process for completing the assignment, whether or not Generative AI tools played a role in that process.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Statement:

Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are important Tulane values that are key drivers of academic excellence. I hope and expect that the students enrolled in this class will come from a variety of backgrounds, and have a variety of views about the topics we will discuss. All students must feel comfortable and safe expressing their perspectives in class. Any student who feels disrespected due to the views they choose to express in class, or on the basis of their race/ethnicity, religion, gender identity and/or expression, sexual orientation, age, disability, or socio-economic status, is strongly encouraged to reach out to me to discuss their concerns confidentially.

Religious Accommodation Policy:

Per Tulane’s religious accommodation policy as stated at the bottom of Tulane’s academic calendar, I will make every reasonable effort to ensure that students are able to observe religious holidays without jeopardizing their ability to fulfill their academic obligations. Excused absences do not relieve students from responsibility for any course work required during the period of absence. Students should notify me within the first two weeks of the semester about their intent to observe any holidays that fall on a class day or during the final exam period.

Title IX:

Tulane University recognizes the inherent dignity of all individuals and promotes respect for all people. As such, Tulane is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination including sexual and gender-based discrimination, harassment, and violence like sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or is experiencing these types of behaviors, know that you are not alone. Resources and support are available; you can learn more at <https://allin.tulane.edu>. Any and all of your communications on these matters will be treated as either “Confidential” or “Private” as explained in the chart below. Please know that if you choose to confide in me I am required by the university to share your disclosure in a Care Connection to the Office of Case Management and Victim Support Services to be sure you are connected with all the support the university can offer. The Office of University Sexual Misconduct Response and Title IX Administration is also notified of these disclosures. You choose whether or not you want to meet with these offices. You can also make a disclosure yourself, including an anonymous report, through the form at <https://tulane.edu/concerns>.

Confidential	Private
<i>Except in extreme circumstances, involving imminent danger to one’s self or others, nothing will be shared without your explicit permission.</i>	<i>Conversations are kept as confidential as possible, but information is shared with key staff members so the University can offer resources and accommodations and take action if necessary for safety reasons.</i>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) (504) 314-2277 ▪ The Line (24/7) (504) 264-6074 ▪ Student Health Center (504) 865-5255 ▪ Sexual Aggression Peer Hotline and Education (SAPHE) (504) 654-9543 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Case Management & Victim Support Services (504) 314-2160 or srss@tulane.edu ▪ Tulane University Police (TUPD) Uptown - (504) 865-5911 Downtown – (504) 988-5531 ▪ Office of University Sexual Misconduct Response and Title IX Administration (504) 865-5611 or titleix@tulane.edu ▪ Student Affairs Professional On-Call (24/7) (504) 920-9900
--	---

Emergency Preparedness and Response:

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATIONS: TU ALERT	SEVERE WEATHER
<p>In the event of a campus emergency, Tulane University will notify students, faculty, and staff by email, text, and/or phone call. You were automatically enrolled in this system when you enrolled at the university.</p> <p>Check your contact information annually in Gibson Online to confirm its accuracy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Follow all TU Alerts and outdoor warning sirens ▪ Seek shelter indoors until the severe weather threat has passed and an all-clear message is given ▪ Do not use elevators ▪ Do not attempt to travel outside if weather is severe <p>Monitor the Tulane Emergency website (tulane.edu/emergency/) for university-wide closures during a severe weather event</p>
ACTIVE SHOOTER / VIOLENT ATTACKER	EVERBRIDGE APP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ RUN – run away from or avoid the affected area, if possible ▪ HIDE – go into the nearest room that can be locked, turn out the lights, and remain hidden until all-clear message is given through TU ALERT ▪ FIGHT – do not attempt this option, except as a last resort ▪ For more information or to schedule a training, visit emergencyprep.tulane.edu 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Download the Everbridge app from the App Store or Google Play store ▪ The Report feature allows you to silently and discreetly communicate with TUPD dispatchers ▪ The SOS button allows you to notify TUPD if you need help ▪ The Safe Corridor button serves as a virtual escort and allows you to send check-in notifications to TUPD

Other Course Policies:

Attendance: I expect you to attend every class meeting unless formally excused. Excused absences can be due to reasons that include religious observances, university-sponsored athletic competition, and family emergencies and health. Please let me know if you are unable to attend class, and keep in mind that it is your responsibility to make up anything you have missed.

Assignment Deadlines: You are expected to submit all written work on time. Submitting writing assignments late will result in a five-point grade drop (out of 100 possible points) for each day the assignment is late, and no assignments will be accepted more than three days late. Extensions

are discouraged but possible in extenuating circumstances, and must be negotiated with me **in advance of the deadline**, on a student-by-student basis, **and through written (email) communication**.

Electronic Devices/Laptop Computers: In my teaching career, a tiny number of students have not had their laptops open in class, yet every one of these students has received an A, and the average grade in my classes is generally a B to B+. Correlation does not equal causation, but I am reporting this data to you and you can make whatever conclusions about it you wish. I will not ban the use of laptops, since I know many of you prefer to take notes on them and there are good arguments for having them available in class. However, they can also be distracting. I strongly discourage their use in class for any purpose other than note-taking.

Office Hours and Appointments: My office hours are listed at the top of the syllabus, and I'm also available by appointment if they do not work with your schedule. Please keep in mind that, while I am happy to meet outside of office hours if my office hours do not work for your schedule, it is important that you request such a meeting as far in advance as possible to ensure we are able to find a mutually convenient time to meet since I have an extremely busy schedule.

Tweaking the Readings: Unless otherwise stated, you are responsible for completing all of the required readings listed on this syllabus. While I will not add readings, I **may** remove readings, based on how the course is going and feedback I receive throughout the semester. I also may suggest skimming certain readings or certain sections of readings. If/when readings are removed or modified, this information will be announced during class—another reason why coming to class is important!

Important Dates:

January 17: Last Day to Confirm Enrollment

January 24: Last Day to Register/Add. Last Day to Drop with 100% Tuition Refund

January 31: Last Day to Drop with 75% Tuition Refund

February 7: Last Day to Drop with 50% Tuition Refund

February 14: Last Day to Drop with 25% Tuition Refund; Last Day to Drop Without Record; Last Day to Change Grading Rules for Audit

February 21: Reflection Paper #1 Due

March 15 and 16: Designated Make-Up Days (only in the event of a university closure)

April 4: Reflection Paper #2 Due

April 25: Reflection Paper #3 Due

May 7: Final Exam

Class Schedule:

Unit 1: Intro to Public Policy and the Policy Process

Week 1

Tuesday, January 14: Introduction to the Course

Readings Due: None.

Assignments Due:

- Find (and be prepared to share with the class) a news article related to public policy

Thursday, January 16: Introducing the Policy Process

Readings Due:

- Birkland (2020). *An Introduction to the Policy Process*. Chapter 1, p. 1-20.

Week 2

Tuesday, January 21: Policy Making Inputs, Outputs, and Contexts

Readings Due:

- Birkland (2020). *An Introduction to the Policy Process*. Selections from Chapter 2 (p. 33-36, 62-68) and Chapter 3 (p. 76-91).

Unit 2: Theories of Policy Change

Thursday, January 23: Multiple Streams Framework, Part 1

Readings Due:

- Zahariadis (2014). “Ambiguity and Multiple Streams.” In Weible and Sabatier’s (eds.) *Theories of the Policy Process*.

Week 3

Tuesday, January 28: Multiple Streams Framework, Part 2

Readings Due:

- Cairney (2018). “Three Habits of Successful Policy Entrepreneurs.” *Policy and Politics*.
- Abiola, Colgrove and Mello (2013). “The Politics of HPV Vaccination Policy Formation in the United States.” *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law*.

Thursday, January 30: Punctuated Equilibrium Theory, Part 1

Readings Due:

- Baumgartner, Jones, and Mortensen (2014). “Punctuated Equilibrium Theory: Explaining Stability and Change in Public Policymaking.” In Weible and Sabatier’s (eds.) *Theories of the Policy Process*.
- Baumgartner and Jones (1993). *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. Chapter 1.

Week 4

Tuesday, February 4: Punctuated Equilibrium Theory, Part 2

Readings Due:

- Koski and Workman (2018). “Drawing Practical Lessons from Punctuated Equilibrium Theory.” *Policy and Politics*.

Thursday, February 6: Social Construction Framework, Part 1

Readings Due:

- Schneider, Ingram and DeLeon (2014). “Democratic Policy Design: Social Construction of Target Populations.” In Weible and Sabatier’s (eds.) *Theories of the Policy Process*.
- Zhou (2024). “Trump Says He Supports DREAMers. His Past Actions Say Differently.” *Vox*.

Week 5

Tuesday, February 11: Social Construction Framework, Part 2

Readings Due:

- Schneider and Ingram (1993). “Social Construction of Target Populations: Implications for Politics and Policy.” *American Political Science Review*.
- Weil (2023). “State Lawmakers Organize Coordinated Wealth-Tax Bills.” *Washington Post*.

Thursday, February 13: Policy Feedback Theory, Part 1

Readings Due:

- Mettler and SoRelle (2014). “Policy Feedback Theory.” In Weible and Sabatier’s (eds.) *Theories of the Policy Process*.

Week 6

Tuesday, February 18: Policy Feedback Theory, Part 2

Readings Due:

- Campbell (2012). “Policy Makes Mass Politics.” *Annual Review of Political Science*.
- Mettler (2002). “Bringing the State Back In to Civic Engagement: Policy Feedback Effects of the GI Bill for WWII Veterans.” *American Political Science Review*.

Thursday, February 20: Advocacy Coalition Framework, Part 1

Readings Due:

- Jenkins-Smith et al. (2014). “The Advocacy Coalition Framework: Foundations, Evolution, and Ongoing Research.” In Weible and Sabatier’s (eds.) *Theories of the Policy Process*

Reflection Paper #1 Due by 5:00pm CT on Friday, February 21st. Submit via Canvas.

Week 7

Tuesday, February 25: Advocacy Coalition Framework, Part 2

Readings Due:

- Weible and Ingold (2018). “Why Advocacy Coalitions Matter and Practical Insights About Them.” *Policy and Politics*.
- Reader (2024). “The Unlikely Alliance Bringing the Tech Giants to Heel.” *Politico*.

Thursday, February 27: Narrative Policy Framework, Part 1

Readings Due:

- McBeth et al. (2014). “The Narrative Policy Framework.” In Weible and Sabatier’s (eds.) *Theories of the Policy Process*.

Tuesday, March 4: NO CLASS; MARDI GRAS/SPRING BREAK

Thursday, March 6: NO CLASS; MARDI GRAS/SPRING BREAK

Week 8

Tuesday, March 11: Narrative Policy Framework, Part 2

Readings Due:

- Peterson (2018). “Political Information Has Bright Colors: Narrative Attention Theory.” *Policy Studies Journal*.
- McMorris, Zanoocco and Jones (2018). “Policy Narratives and Policy Outcomes: An NPF Examination of Oregon’s Ballot Measure 97.” *Policy Studies Journal*.

Thursday, March 13: Policy as Power, Part 1

Readings Due:

- Hacker and Pierson (2014). “After the ‘Master Theory’: Downs, Schattschneider, and the Rebirth of Policy-Focused Analysis.” *Perspectives on Politics*.
- Hertel-Fernandez et al. (2016). “Business Associations, Conservative Networks, and the Ongoing Republican War Over Medicaid Expansion.” *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law*.

Week 9

Tuesday, March 18: Policy as Power, Part 2

Readings Due:

- Basseches (2024). “Who Pays for Environmental Policy? Business Power and the Design of State-Level Climate Policies.” *Politics and Society*.

Thursday, March 20: Policy Learning, Part 1

Readings Due:

- Bennett and Howlett (1992). “The Lessons of Learning: Reconciling Theories of Policy Learning and Policy Change.” *Policy Sciences*.
- May (1992). “Policy Learning and Failure.” *Journal of Public Policy*.

Week 10

Tuesday, March 25: Policy Learning, Part 2

Readings Due:

- Howlett (2009). “Policy Analytical Capacity and Evidence-Based Policymaking: Lessons from Canada.” *Canadian Public Administration*.
- Pattison (2018). “Factors Shaping Policy Learning: A Study of Policy Actors in Subnational Climate and Energy Issues.”

Thursday, March 27: Policy Diffusion

Readings Due:

- Karch (2007). “Emerging Issues and Future Directions in State Policy Diffusion Research.” *State Politics and Policy Quarterly*.

Unit 3: The Politics of Information

Week 11

Tuesday, April 1: The Politics of Information, Part 1

Readings Due:

- Baumgartner and Jones (2015). *The Politics of Information*. Chapters 1 and 2.

Thursday, April 3: The Politics of Information, Part 2

Readings Due:

- Baumgartner and Jones (2015). *The Politics of Information*. Chapters 3 and 4.

Reflection Paper #2 Due by 5:00pm CT on Friday, April 4th. Submit via Canvas.

Week 12

Tuesday, April 8: The Politics of Information, Part 3

Readings Due:

- Baumgartner and Jones (2015). *The Politics of Information*. Chapters 5 and 6.

Thursday, April 10: The Politics of Information, Part 4

Readings Due:

- Baumgartner and Jones (2015). *The Politics of Information*. Chapters 7 and 8.

Week 13

Tuesday, April 15: NO CLASS

Unit 4: Policy Case Studies

Thursday, April 17: Climate and Energy Policy

Readings Due:

- Elgin and Weible (2013). “A Stakeholder Analysis of Colorado Climate and Energy Issues Using Policy Analytical Capacity and the Advocacy Coalition Framework.” *Review of Policy Research*.
- Koski and Siddiki (2021). “Linking Policy Design, Change and Outputs: Policy Responsiveness in American State Electricity Policy.” *Policy Studies Journal*.

Week 14

Tuesday, April 22: Incarceration Policy

Readings Due:

- Weaver and Lerman (2010). “Political Consequences of the Carceral State.” *American Political Science Review*.
- Schoenfeld and Campbell (2023). “Early 21st Century Penal Reform: A Comparative Analysis of Four States’ Responses to the Problems of Mass Incarceration.” *Law and Policy*.

Thursday, April 24: Social Welfare Policy

Readings Due:

- Hacker, Jacob S. (2004). "Privatizing Risk without Privatizing the Welfare State: The Hidden Politics of Social Policy Retrenchment in the United States. *American Political Science Review*.

Reflection Paper #3 Due by 5:00pm CT on Friday, April 25th. Submit via Canvas.

Week 15

Tuesday, April 29: TBD

Final Exam is Wednesday, May 7th from 8:00-11:00am in the usual classroom.