

Political Science 130  
Making Public Policy  
Fall 2011  
DMH 149A  
M/W 10:30-11:45

Professor Gerston  
Clark Hall 451  
Office Hours: M/W 6:45-  
7:20; M/W 9:00-10:15  
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## **SYLLABUS**

### **SCOPE OF THE COURSE**

The study of public policy has become important with the evolution of complex issues and modern governments. Whether large or small, new or old, democratic or authoritarian, all nations develop public policies. Public policy focuses on the major goals, commitments and activities that emerge from political actors, government institutions and society. While the issues may change over time, the processes for making, implementing and evaluating public policies may not. Moreover, these processes occur at all levels of government, whether they are national, state or local.

Political Science 130 begins with a description of the public policy framework. Various components of the policy making process will be described to help us better understand contemporary public policy issues in the United States and the ways they are resolved (or not), with applications at the national, state and local levels.

Policy making is complex and full of uncertainties. Mere awareness of an issue does not guarantee policy response; moreover, enactment of a policy does not assure that it will be made to work. This course addresses those issues and uncertainties.

### **PROJECT CITIZEN**

We will approach public policy making from two perspectives: as students **and** participants in the political process. Content from the readings and lectures will serve as the basis of knowledge and information acquisition. Participation in Project Citizen, a pedagogical application tool, will provide “hands on” opportunities to influence the public policy process. In small groups, students will settle on a local policy problem, research that problem, determine alternatives for solving the problem, and propose the best solution.

Upon identifying the public policy issue for research, each group will submit a one-page, double-spaced proposal for approval by the class professor. The proposal is due in class on **October 17<sup>th</sup>**.

***During the Project Citizen experience, students will keep a daily journal in an 8.5 x 11 spiral binder that will be turned in when requested by the professor; the journal should ALWAYS be brought to class.*** In addition, each student will write a 4-5 page "Reflections" paper that covers his/her personal journey associated with Project Citizen. Materials will be distributed to assist with the execution of these course components.

The work associated with Project Citizen will culminate with a group presentation of the research lasting about 25 minutes, followed by a group paper approximately 25-30 pages in length.

### **REQUIRED READINGS**

Gerston, *Public Policymaking in a Democratic Society: A Guide to Civic Engagement*, second edition, 2008

Gerston, *Confronting Reality: Ten Issues Threatening to Implode American Society (and How We Can Fix It)*, 2009

*The Wall Street Journal* (special student subscription rates are available from the professor)

### **ATTENDANCE**

Because of the extensive group interaction, regular attendance in this class is **essential**. Evaluation of one's participation will be based in part on attendance.

### **CELL PHONES**

***As a courtesy to other students and the professor, please make sure that cell phones are turned OFF. If your phone rings during class, you will be asked to leave. If you text during class, you will be asked to leave. I AM VERY SERIOUS ABOUT THIS ISSUE.***

### **SPECIAL EVENING LECTURE**

There will be a special lecture on campus during the semester as part of the Don Edwards Lecture Series. Mr. Edwards served in the U.S. Congress for more than 25 years as a representative from the San Jose area. The lecture will take place at 7:00 p.m. with the date and site to be

determined. **Attendance at the lecture will be mandatory;** in exchange for attending this lecture, there will be no class on October 19.

Note: the lecture is videotaped for those with schedule conflicts.

### **EXAMINATIONS AND EVALUATION**

There will be two examinations in this course consisting of essay and short answer questions. You will be required to bring **LARGE** new blue (or green) books and pens for the exams. **Only medical problems (with physician's note) are accepted reasons for missing an exam and you must inform me in advance.**

The group project will include a class presentation and 25-30 page paper. Student participation, a journal, and an individual 4-5 page "Reflections" paper will round out the rest of the class grade.

Journals will commence with the assignment of the group projects. They must be brought to class daily. Journals will be collected, graded, and returned on a random basis.

|                   |          |
|-------------------|----------|
| First midterm:    | 25%      |
| Second midterm:   | 25       |
| Group Project     | 25       |
| Reflection paper: | 10       |
| Journal:          | 10       |
| Participation:    | <u>5</u> |
| Total:            | 100%     |

### **COURSE OUTLINE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS (tentative):**

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| August 24      | Introductory remarks; brief outline of the course and expectations                                   |
| August 24-31   | Understanding the Public Policy Framework<br><i>Public Policymaking</i> , Chapters 1, 2              |
| September 1-11 | Triggering Mechanisms and Policy Actors<br><i>Public Policymaking</i> , Chapters 3, 4,<br>Appendix B |

**September 5**

**Labor Day—no class**

September 12

Groups Meet

September 12-14

Implementation  
*Public Policymaking*, Chapter 5

September 14-22

Evaluation and Participation  
*Public Policymaking*, Chapters 6, 7

**September 21**

**Midterm Review**

September 26

**Midterm I**

September 27-  
October 2

Public Policy Issues  
*Confronting Reality*, Chapters 1-4

October 12

Project Citizen Groups Meet  
Step 1: Issues Identified

October 3-24

Public Policy Issues, cont.  
*Confronting Reality*, Chapters 5-8

**October 17**

**1 Page Proposal on Project Citizen Issue  
Due**

October 19

No Class

October 24

No Class

October 26-November 2

Public Policy Issues, cont.  
*Confronting Reality*, Chapters 9-12

October 31

Project Citizen Group Meetings  
Step 2: Information Gathered

November 2

Project Citizen Meetings

November 7

Lecture

**November 9**

**Midterm Review**

**November 14**

**Midterm II**

November 23

Project Citizen Group Meetings

November 24-25

Thanksgiving Holiday

November 28

Project Citizen Group Meetings  
Step 3: Possible Public Solutions

November 30

Presentations

December 5

Presentations

December 7

Presentations  
**Reflection Paper Handout**

**December 12**

**Project Citizen and Reflection Papers Due,  
10:00, 451 Clark Hall**