

**Current Controversies in Public Policy**  
PUP 3002, Sect. 7517

Department of Political Science  
University of Florida  
Spring 2007

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**Class Times:** Tuesdays 3:00pm-4:55pm (periods 8 and 9)  
Thursdays 4:05pm-4:55pm (period 9)  
**Class Location:** Anderson 134

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

What makes a public policy controversial? Citizens accept many public policies without question. Few people question the authority of a state to issue driver's licenses and to require people to carry them in order to operate automobiles. Yet other policies explode in controversy. Marriage laws have periodically sparked disputes over the age, race, and sex of who is allowed to marry. Controversies come and go. Policies over trades and tariffs once caused bitter divisions among the sections of the United States, but are now relatively minor sources of disagreement. Disputes over the treatment of African slaves and their descendants have lingered throughout the history of the republic.

This course explores the processes that generate controversy in public policy. We consider how elected leaders, bureaucrats, the media, interest groups, and policy experts think about, mold, and attempt to manipulate policy controversies. We give close attention to the framing and presentation of arguments. We focus on debates over currently controversial issues, such as the minimum wage, birth control, the U.S.-Iraq War, disaster preparedness, prescription drug safety, immigration, and the No Child Left Behind Act. We situate these current controversies within the context of the enduring tensions from which they emerge, such as equity versus efficiency.

Students learn to strategize and frame issues, with an eye toward becoming engaged participants in policy debates. The course is strongly oriented toward professional applications of political science, which are developed through memo writing, small group activities, and class presentations.

## REQUIREMENTS

1. *Class Attendance and Active Participation* (20% of grade). Students are expected to attend class regularly and to contribute constructively to class discussions and small-group exercises. “Constructive” contribution requires completing assigned readings in advance and being respectful of one’s peers. Roll will be taken to verify attendance. The reason you are taking this class in person, rather than as an on-line seminar, is order to interact with the professor and your fellow students. For this reason, these interactions will be weighed appropriately in determining your final grade.
2. *Three Policy Memos* (20% of grade) – Students are expected to write three memos (two-pages, single-spaced) in which they outline political strategies to deal with pressing contemporary policy issues. Please turn them in to [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com) on February 8, March 8, and April 5, 2007.
3. *A Midterm and Final Exam* (60% of grade; 30% each) – Students are expected to take two exams on Tuesday, February 27 (in class) and Monday, April 30 at 12:30pm-2:30pm. The exams will address both theoretical and practical issues in public policy and involve a mix of short answer and essay questions. (There will be no multiple-choice or true-false items.)
4. *E-mail*. Students are expected to provide the professor with an e-mail address that they check regularly. Announcements or updates may be sent to the class via e-mail.

## REQUIRED READINGS

The following books have been ordered for purchase through the university’s on-line textbook adoption system:

- Deborah Stone. 2002. *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making*, Revised Edition. New York: W.W. Norton.
- CQ Researcher. 2007. *Issues for Debate in American Public Policy*. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

## ACADEMIC HONESTY

All students are required to abide by the Academic Honesty Guidelines of the University of Florida. Among other things, this means: (1) Students must submit only their own, original work in fulfillment of course requirements; (2) Examinations are to be taken without the aid of notes, books, or other people; (3) Students must provide truthful representations to the professor on issues such as reasons for missing class. Violating this policy may cause a student to suffer severe grade penalties, failure of the class, academic probation, or expulsion from the university.

## **POLICY ON LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION**

Students seeking letters of recommendation are advised to seek out letters from faculty who know them well and are able to write knowledgeably on their behalf. It is my policy only to write only for students for whom I am able to submit a strong, persuasive letter.

For external letters of recommendation (e.g., letters for graduate school, law school, Teach for America), I require the following:

- I must have known the student for one calendar year at the time that the letter is written.
- The student must have successfully completed two classes with me or participated in a mentoring experience under my supervision (e.g., University Scholars, Senior Thesis). One of the two classes may be an independent study.
- It must be my judgment that the student is aptly suited for program for which the recommendation is sought.

For internal letters of recommendation (e.g., letters for the Certificate of Public Leadership, a University of Florida scholarship, residence staff position), I require the following:

- I must have known the student for six months at the time that the letter is written.
- The student must have successfully completed one classes with me or participated in a mentoring experience under my supervision (e.g., University Scholars, Senior Thesis).
- It must be my judgment that the student is aptly suited for program for which the recommendation is sought.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

- The use of wireless communication devices (such as cell phones, pagers, e-mail, and Web browsers) during class is prohibited. Please turn them off. (Do not put your cell phone on “vibrate.”) **The professor reserves the right to confiscate devices operating in violation of this policy.**
- Students requiring any special accommodation for this course are responsible for making an appointment to see the professor at the beginning of the semester. Every effort will be made to meet your needs in accordance with University guidelines.
- The lectures and handouts of this course are the intellectual property of the professor. You do not have the right to sell your notes or recordings from this class for profit without the express written consent of the professor. No recording devices are permitted in class without the consent of the professor.

# Course Outline

## Part I. Introduction to the Course

1. Tuesday, January 9 – What makes a policy controversial?
2. Thursday, January 11 – *Theory*: The Market Model vs. the Polis Model
  - Stone – Introduction and Chapter 1

## Part II. Goals

3. Tuesday, January 16 – *Theory*: Equity
  - Stone – Chapter 2
4. Thursday, January 18 – *Theory*: Efficiency
  - Stone – Chapter 3
5. Tuesday, January 23 – *Case*: The Minimum Wage; In-class Group Exercise
  - CQ – Chapter 7
6. Thursday, January 25 – *Theory*: Security
  - Stone – Chapter 4
7. Tuesday, January 30 – *Case*: Pensions; How to write Professional Memos
  - CQ – Chapter 12
  - **First Memo Assignment Handed Out**
8. Thursday, February 1 – *Theory*: Liberty
  - Stone – Chapter 5
9. Tuesday, February 6 – *Case*: Birth Control
  - CQ – Chapter 6

### Part III. Problems

10. Thursday, February 8 – *Theory*: Symbols

- Stone – Chapter 6
- **FIRST POLICY MEMO DUE to [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com) by 11:55pm,**  
Class ID: 1777868, Password: Policy

11. Tuesday, February 13 – *Theory*: Numbers; *Case*: War in Iraq

- Stone – Chapter 7
- CQ – Chapter 16

12. Thursday, February 15 – *Theory*: Causes

- Stone – Chapter 8

13. Tuesday, February 20 – *Case*: Climate Change; In-class Group Exercise

- CQ – Chapter 9

14. Thursday, February 22 – In-class Group Exercise on Memo Writing

15. Tuesday, February 27 – **In-class MIDTERM EXAM**

16. Thursday, March 1 – *Theory*: Interests

- Stone – Chapter 9
- **Second Memo Assignment Handed Out**

17. Tuesday, March 6 – *Case*: Prescription Drugs

- CQ – Chapter 3

18. Thursday, March 8 – *Theory*: Decision making

- Stone – Chapter 10
- **SECOND POLICY MEMO DUE to [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com) by 11:55pm,**  
Class ID: 1777868, Password: Policy

### **SPRING BREAK – March 10 to 18**

19. Tuesday, March 20 – *Case*: Natural Disasters; In-class Group Exercise

- CQ – Chapters 13 and 14

## Part IV. Solutions

20. Thursday, March 22 – *Theory*: Inducements

- Stone – Chapter 11

21. Tuesday, March 27 – *Case*: Education

- CQ – Chapters 1 and 2

22. Thursday, March 29 – *Theory*: Rules

- Stone – Chapter 12
- **Third Memo Assignment Handed Out**

23. Tuesday, April 3 – *Case*: Immigration; In-class Group Exercise

- CQ – Chapter 15

24. Thursday, April 5 – *Theory*: Facts

- Stone – Chapter 13
- **THIRD POLICY MEMO DUE** to [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com) by 11:59pm, Class ID: 1777868, Password: Policy

25. Tuesday, April 10 – *Case*: Energy Development

- CQ – Chapter 8

## Part V. The Process

26. Thursday, April 12 – *Theory*: Rights

- Stone – Chapter 14

27. Tuesday, April 17 – *Case*: The Death Penalty; In-class Group Exercise

- CQ – Chapter 10

28. Thursday, April 19 – *Theory*: Powers

- Stone – Chapter 15 and Conclusion

29. Tuesday, April 24 – *Next Steps*: Careers in Politics and Government

**FINAL EXAM: MONDAY, APRIL 30, 12:30pm-2:30pm**