

PUAF 620 (in Washington, DC) Political Institutions and Leadership (Fall 2004)

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Library of Congress	Office Hours: Before and after class
Washington, DC 20540	and by appointment

Class Time and Place: Wednesdays, September 1-December 15 (final exam), 5:30-8:00 pm, at the USEPA-NETI facilities, room 6208, Ariel Rios Building, 12th St. and Pennsylvania Ave., NW.

Course Description¹

This course covers the federal governmental and political institutions and leadership, along with their impact on public policy and its implementation. The concentration is on the national level and its key components—the presidency, Congress, courts, and bureaucracy—which produce a system of separate institutions sharing power. The system is dynamic, with variations in power relationships among them in different eras, different policy areas, and different political arenas. Competition and tension among these institutions work to divide and separate them, while shared responsibilities and power help to foster compromise and consensus. Added to this complex mix are influences from foreign governments; subnational governments here; and the polity, by way of political parties, elections, organized interests, the media, and public opinion.

A variety of vantage points guides the course, producing views from theoretical frameworks as well as from practical and pragmatic considerations. This is an interesting and illuminating time for a course on American political institutions and leadership, especially in light of the current political environment. Prominent are the national elections in November; close split between the major political parties in the electorate and in Congress; significant political developments, both at home and abroad; and heightened conflict over particular policies. These include such major issues as social security funding and solvency, health care (especially costs for goods and services along with insurance for patients and physicians), the increasing budget deficit and trade imbalance, transformed budget priorities, immigration, security at home, and military involvement abroad, among many others. More specialized policy areas and processes—privatization and outsourcing, new rules governing the workforce and commercial access to public lands, abortion, stem-cell research, and school vouchers, to name just a few—also raise their own important policy considerations and attendant political relationships. All of us in the class, through individual study and professional experience, have something to contribute to explain these and other policies as well as the political and governmental institutions directing them.

Requirements and Grading

Grading for the course relies on three basic requirements. **1. four short memoranda** (50%) scheduled throughout the term; **2. a final exam** (25%), based largely on the readings; and **3. class participation** (25%), which presupposes attendance.

¹The syllabus relies on one for the same course, by University of Maryland Professor Christopher Foreman, in order to ensure consistency in requirements and content.

Readings

These fall into three categories: required books, handouts during the semester, and coverage of political developments and events. The readings should be completed the date they are scheduled, so that we all are on the same page, literally and figuratively.

Required Books. Six books are required for the course. These are available at the Maryland book store, in the University library system, and in other university and public libraries.

Thomas A. Birkland, *An Introduction to the Policy Process: Theories, Concepts, and Models of Policy Making*

Louis Fisher, *Presidential War Power*

Donald F. Kettl, *Team Bush: Leadership Lessons from the Bush White House*

John W. Kingdom, *America the Unusual*

Steven J. Wayne, *The Road to the White House 2004*

James Q. Wilson, *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It*

Handouts. The handouts will come from a variety of sources, including scholarly and professional journals; governmental reports, such as the recent 9/11 Commission report summary; and the news media. The different subjects and sources are intended to acquaint us with both the wide variety of policy issues and political relationships that exists as well as the wide variety of information and analysis that is available.

Coverage of Political Developments. For your own information and research, coverage of political events and developments appears in a number of periodicals that are readily available in hard copy and on-line: e.g., *Congressional Quarterly Weekly* (and *Almanac*), *Government Executive*, *National Journal*, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, and *Washington Times*.

Policy Memoranda

Four policy memoranda are required throughout the course, based on a topic of your own interest and choosing, along with the instructors consent. (This is to help make certain the topic is manageable and ties into the course's subject areas.) Each memoranda should be **four to six pages double spaced**, except for the initial issue statement of only one page, and can be submitted by e-mail before the class or in hard copy at the class when it is due. Each memorandum will be graded separately. One (but only one) of the four may be re-written; this could result in a higher grade in that instance (with a maximum of a two-notch increase, e.g., from a B- to a B+).

Each memorandum should cover the same policy issue and be self-contained, that is, understandable to a reader as it stands, without the need for other sources of information and analysis. **No footnotes or endnotes** should appear. But a **short bibliography** (4 or 5 citations) should be appended at the end of each written product (in addition to the four to six page body), so that the instructor can research the subject if necessary. These sources, which may be the same for each memorandum, can come from the news media, Internet, government reports or information and data, interest group materials, academic and professional journals, etc. but **not** the required books.

Each memorandum should succinctly address the issues involved and be written with clarity, care, and understanding. Memoranda are often written for a specific, in-house audience (e.g., an immediate supervisor, upper-echelon officials, colleagues working on the same project) but may extend more widely. Here, the recipients are policymakers—within a governmental organization, including the White House, or Congress and its committees—so that you can cover the issue facing these institutions, other actors, and their interrelationships. A description of these written products and their contents are summarized below. A “Memo on Memos,” by Professor Christopher Foreman, provides more detail and direction.

Statement of Issue Selection. State the issue selected and reasons why; and identify the projected audience, in a brief one-page statement. **(Due Sept. 22)**

Memorandum #1: Issue Description and Background. Describe the issues and options facing policymakers, stating why the issue is important and “hot” (high visibility and prominence), what its background is, where it stands now, and what its near-term future holds. **(Due Oct. 6.)**

Memorandum #2: Political Analysis. Identify and discuss the main organized interests active in the issue area. What do they want, what are their objectives? What actions are they taking to achieve it and how successful are they likely to be? What opportunities and constraints are they operating under? What strategies and tactics are they using? (Check the web sites of supporters and opponents for information and leads). Where does public opinion stand on the issue, if data is available, and how might the general public and sectors of society be affected? **(Due Oct. 27.)**

Memorandum #3: Institutional Analysis. Discuss the role and actions (and interactions) of one or more institutions in this issue area. (These are the government actors, not interest groups, which were described in #2.) Explain which institution(s) became involved, why, and how, that is, the actions they took as well as their strengths and weaknesses. **(Due Nov. 17.)**

Memorandum #4: Policy Outcomes and Recommendations. Describe and analyze what happened (or did not happen) in this policy issue during the semester. No matter what the outcome, explain why it occurred. Identify who won (if there are clear winners and losers, as in a zero-sum game) or whether compromises occurred (as in a nonzero-sum game). Explain why either of these possibilities came about. If a clear-cut victory for one side, explain why the winners won and the losers lost. In the case of a compromise, explain what produced it and what the competitors achieved. **(Due Dec. 8, the written product and a 5 minute presentation.)**

Final Examination

A take-home final exam, based largely on the readings, will be distributed at the end of the class on December 8. The completed exam must be turned in, by Wednesday, Dec.15, 5:00 (exam week).

Course Outline and Schedule

1 (September 1) Introduction and Overview: Requirements, Contents, and Participants

2 (September 8) Politics: How They Differ and What Difference It Makes

Kingdom, *America the Unusual*, entire

Illustrations of Relevant Web sites and Memoranda

3 (September 15, Rosh Hashanah) Policy Agendas, Actors, Types, and Arenas

Birkland, *Policy Process*, Chapters 1-5

9/11 Commission *Report* Summary

4 (September 22) U.S. Constitutional System—Shared Power

Issue statement due

Birkland, *Policy Process*, Chapters 6-9

5 (September 29) Congress: Institutional Capabilities and Powers

Handouts

6 (October 6) Congress: Policy Impact and Variations

Memorandum #1 due
Handouts

7 (October 13) Presidency: Institutional Capabilities and Powers

Fisher, *War Power*, Chapters 1-6

8 (October 20) Presidency: Policy Impact and Variations

Fisher, *War Power*, Chapters 7-10
Kettl, *Team Bush*, entire

9 (October 27) Polity: Interest Groups and Political Parties

Memorandum #2 due
Handouts

10 (November 3) Polity: Elections

Wayne, *The Road to the White House*, entire

11 (November 10) Bureaucracy: Structures, Organizations, and Arrangements

Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, Chapters 1-12

12 (November 17) Bureaucracy: Activities, Operations, and Controls

Memorandum #3 due
Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, Chapters 13-16

13 (November 24) Courts: Authority, Power, and Rulings

Handouts

14 (December 1) Changing the System: Reorganization, Restructuring, and Reform

Fisher, *War Power*, Chapter 11
Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, Chapters 17-20
Handouts

15 (December 8) Policymaking: A Composite of Interests and Institutions

4th Memorandum and short 5-minute presentation due
Take-home final exam distributed

16 (December 15) Take-home final exam due

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity demands honesty, from both instructors and students, of course. Instructors are to be impartial and objective in conducting the class and evaluating the students' work. Students are to observe prohibitions against cheating (e.g., copying from a classmate or a former student), stealing (e.g., plagiarizing another's work), and lying (e.g., covering up misconduct). Further specifics are in the student handbook.