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Shaping Policy: Political Institutions in the United States

PPAI 1700O

Spring 2009

Wednesdays, 5:30pm to 7:50pm

Smith-Buonanno Hall 207

Course Description:

The American polity is multifaceted. The policy process is complex. This course examines how various institutional features of the American political system and organizational actors within that system influence policy development. Through a thorough examination of political parties, interest groups, the judiciary, Congress, elections, the media, the presidency, and the bureaucracy, this course provides students with a clear understanding of the forces that shape public policy in contemporary American politics. This course begins by outlining an analytical framework which the class will employ to assess the role particular institutions play in policy development. Then the course focuses on specific institutions and explores all the ways they might or might not influence public policy. Finally, the course ends by examining case studies of policy development in order to observe how various features of the American polity interact and actually shape public policy.

Course Organization and Requirements:

This course will be conducted seminar style. Student must attend regularly, do all the readings, and be prepared for intensive and participatory discussion. Students must also email to the entire class a 1-page memo. These memos should not summarize the readings. Rather they should offer a critical analysis of course materials. On occasion, I will ask students to respond to specific discussion questions. Together, class participation and weekly memos will constitute 30% of your final grade.

A short paper (4-5 pages) will be due during midterms. Students will write an essay that focuses on the role that the public opinion/elections or the media play in shaping public policy. Given your knowledge of the policy making process and key political institutions, explain how public opinion/elections or the media could influence policy development and offer your opinion as to whether public opinion/elections or the media actually drive policy development. This paper constitutes 30% of your final grade.

A longer paper (8-10 pages) will be due April 29. Students should select a specific, contemporary policy debate and assess the role that two or three institutions or organizational actors played in the development of that policy. These papers should also assess whether particular factors played a significant or insignificant role. This paper constitutes 40% of your final grade.

Required Texts:

John W. Kingdon. 2002. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*. Longman. **ISBN-10:** 0321121856

Frank R. Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones. 1993. *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. University Of Chicago Press. **ISBN-10:** 0226039390

Thomas E. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein. 2008. *The Broken Branch: How Congress Is Failing America and How to Get It Back on Track*. Oxford University Press. **ISBN-10:** 0195368711

Richard E. Neustadt. 1991. *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan*. Free Press; Revised edition. **ISBN-10:** 0029227968

R. Shep Melnick. 1994. *Between the Lines: Interpreting Welfare Rights*. Brookings Institution Press. **ISBN-10:** 081575664X

Alan Murray and Jeffrey Birnbaum. 1989. *Showdown at Gucci Gulch*. Vintage. **ISBN-10:** 0394758110.

R. Douglas Arnold. 1992. *The Logic of Congressional Action*. Yale University Press. **ISBN-10:** 0300056591

Recommended Texts:

Michael Nelson. 2005. *The Presidency and the Political System*. CQ Press. **ISBN-10:** 156802875X

Course Schedule

January 21: American Democracy, Power, and Public Policy Development

Federalist 10

Federalist 51

Roger W. Cobb and Charles D. Elder. 1971. "The Politics of Agenda-Building: An Alternative Perspective for Modern Democratic Theory," *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (Nov., 1971), pp. 892-915

January 28: Theories of Policy Development-Part 1

John W. Kingdon. 2002. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*. Chaps. 1, 7-9.

February 4: Theories of Policy Development-Part 2

Frank R. Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones. 1993. *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. Part 1 and Part II.

February 11: Elections and Public Opinion

James A. Stimson. 2005. *Tides of Consent: How Public Opinion Shapes American Politics*. Chaps. 1-2.

Robert S. Erikson, Michael B. Mackuen, and James A. Stimson. 2002. *The Macro Polity*. Chapter 8

February 18: Media

Lawrence R. Jacobs and Robert Y. Shapiro. 2000. *Politicians Don't Pander: Political Manipulation and the Loss of Democratic Responsiveness*. Part 1 and Part III

Martin Gilens. 2000. *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy*. Chaps. 5-6.

February 25: Interest Groups

Robert H. Salisbury. 1990. "The Paradox of Interest Groups in Washington: More Groups, Less Clout," in *The New American Political System*, rev. ed., ed. Anthony King, 203-229.

Berry, Jeffrey M. 1989. "Subgovernments, Issue Networks, and Political Conflict." In *Remaking American Politics*. Edited by Richard A. Harris and Sidney Milkis.

Jeffrey Berry. 1999. "The Rise of Citizen Groups" in *Civic Engagement in American Democracy*. Eds. Theda Skocpol and Morris P. Fiorina.

March 4: Congress

R. Douglas Arnold. 1992. *The Logic of Congressional Action*. Chaps. 1-7.

March 11: Political Parties

Gary W. Cox and Mathew D. McCubbins. 1993. *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House*. Part II.

Thomas E. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein. 2006. *The Broken Branch: How Congress Is Failing America and How to Get It Back on Track*. Chaps 1, 4-5.

March 18: The Presidency

Richard E. Neustadt. 1991. *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan*. Chaps. 1-5

Paul J. Quirk and Bruce Nesmith. 2003. "Divided Government and Policymaking: Negotiating the Laws." In Nelson, Michael (Ed.) *The Presidency and the Political System*.

March 25: Spring Recess

April 1: The Bureaucracy

Hugh Heclo. 1978. "Issue Networks and the Executive Establishment," in *The New American Political System*, ed. Anthony King. Chapter 3.

Daniel P. Carpenter. 2001. *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy: Reputations, Networks, and Policy Innovation in Executive Agencies, 1862-1928*. chaps. 1-3.

April 8: The Judiciary

R. Shep Melnick. 1994. *Between the Lines: Interpreting Welfare Rights*. chaps. 1-3, pp. 3-61.

April 15: Tax Policy—Part 1

Alan Murray and Jeffrey Birnbaum. 1998. *Showdown at Gucci Gulch*. Selected sections.

April 22: Tax Policy—Part 2

Bartels, Larry M. 2005. "Homer Gets a Tax Cut: Inequality and Public policy in the American Mind." *Perspectives on Politics* 3: 15-32.

Hacker, Jacob S., and Paul Pierson 2005. "Abandoning the Middle: The Bush Tax Cuts and the Limits of Democratic Control." *Perspectives on Politics* 3: 33-53

Lupia, Arthur, Levine, Adam S., Menning, Jesse O. and Sin, Gisela. 2007. "Were Bush Tax Cut Supporters 'Simply Ignorant?': A Second Look at Conservatives and Liberals in 'Homer Gets a Tax Cut.'" *Perspectives on Politics*. 5(4): 773-784

April 29: Final Paper Due