Online Undergraduate Studies

PBA 4041: Issues in Public Policy

3 units

Fall 2026

August 31 - October 25

Online

Meeting Days:

Meeting Times:

Meeting Location:

Final Exam: (Day/Time):

Instructor: Dr. Amy Nantkes

Email: anantkes@pointloma.edu

Phone: 619-849-2460

Office Location and Hours: By appointment; reach out via email with two suggested days/times

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PLNU Mission

To Teach ~ To Shape ~ To Send

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service is an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we strive to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

Course Description

This seminar-format course is designed as an introduction to the study of public policy in the United States. Broadly, "public policy" is what we get after we have conducted elections and inaugurated representatives; under the most common definitions, policy is what Congress writes, the President approves, and the courts interpret. In this course, we will discuss theories of public policy, approaches to the policymaking process, and some of the present-day social problems that our legislators are struggling to address with substantive policy initiatives. In doing so, we'll examine the various institutions, structures, and individuals involved in policy design, implementation, and evaluation. Much of this conversation will occur through the lens of equality, liberty, and justice – in particular, we will ask: how can the policymaking process maximize these democratic ideals and produce a political system that maintains America's democratic promise? Ultimately, this course will encourage us to move beyond policy theory and analysis and venture into the real world of policymaking and problem-solving.

Course Learning Outcomes

You will:

- Interpret the theoretical foundations of the academic field of American public policy studies.
- Articulate how policy approaches, designs, and outcomes collectively impact the American political system.
- Analyze a contemporary policy issue through the lens of policy domain and framework knowledge.
- Develop a well-supported approach to policy advocacy.
- Apply a thoughtful, civil, and empirically based approach to discourse related to policy in the current American political system.

Program Learning Outcomes

Students who complete the public administration program will be able to:

- Demonstrate critical skills to lead and manage in public governance.
- Appraise pressing problems using critical thinking, ethical thinking, and analytics to consider solutions and apply best practices.
- Articulate and apply a public service perspective to their role in their institution.
- Evaluate the role of public administration officials as participants in the public policy-making and implementation process.
- Demonstrate the ability to communicate and interact productively with a diverse population with varying needs.

Required Texts and Recommended Study Resources

All readings are required, and the textbook is available at the bookstore, or you can rent it directly from the publisher. Articles and other readings are available on Canvas.

1. Kraft, M. E., & Furlong, S. R. (2025). *Public Policy: Politics, Analysis, and Alternatives* (Eighth Edition). Washington (D.C.): CQ Press. ISBN: 1071858416
2. Various articles, chapters, and media will also be assigned and posted on Canvas.

Additional Readings

As budding public servants and participants in democracy, you should regularly follow current political events at the local, national, and international levels. Make it a habit now that continues throughout your lifetime – you wake up, grab a cup of coffee, and read the news (and no, your social media outlets do not count as "news"). Explore more sophisticated news outlets, such as the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *NPR, The Economist, BBC News*, and *The Atlantic*. These sources will provide you with in-depth analysis, going beyond clickbait headlines and bullet-point details. I strongly recommend that you regularly peruse these media outlets. Also, check

out AllSides.com, which presents how different media outlets cover pressing issues. Most of these sources offer very inexpensive rates for university students (as low as $1.00 per week for unlimited access), and the PLNU Ryan Library offers free access.

Note: Students are responsible for having the required textbooks before the first day of class. Students are also encouraged to begin reading the books in preparation for the class as soon as possible.

Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law. All supplemental materials posted on this course site (including articles, book excerpts, or other documents) are provided for your personal academic use. These materials may be protected by copyright law and should not be duplicated or distributed without permission of the copyright owner.

Course Credit Hour Information

In the interest of providing sufficient time to accomplish the stated Course Learning Outcomes, this class meets the PLNU credit hour policy for a 3-unit class delivered over 8 weeks. It is anticipated that students will spend a minimum of 37.5 hours of participation per credit hour on their coursework. For this course, students will spend an estimated 13 total hours meeting the course learning outcomes. The time estimations are provided below and in the Canvas modules.

Estimated Time to Complete Course

Activity Category	*Time-to-Complete (Hours)*
Required Resources	40
Discussions	27
Policy Advocacy Portfolio	45
Total:	112

Assessment and Grading

Weighted Grades

This course uses weighted grades. Each assignment category is worth a certain percentage of the total grade (100%) for the course, as specified in the table below:

Course Assignments

Assignment Category	*Description*	*Percentage of Total Grade*
Weekly Policy Activity Discussion Boards	**These weekly activities with corresponding class discussions allow you to apply course concepts to current events outside of our course readings.**	**20%**
Weekly Interactive Lectures	**In this task, you'll participate in interactive lectures with checkpoints to enhance your grasp of important public policy concepts**	**20%**
Policy Advocacy Portfolio	**For this project, you will research a bill on an issue of your personal interest that is currently pending before the U.S. Congress, analyze the bill, articulate a comprehensive lobbying strategy, develop a legislative advocacy plan, and prepare professional-quality materials to support a successful effort towards effecting change.**	**40%**
Introduction and Mid-Course Surveys	**Getting to Know You and Mid-Course Surveys help me to learn more about you and how you learn! Please take time to**	**5%**

	complete these as they appear in your course modules.	
Policy Project Sharing Discussion Board	**Presentations will be posted to a discussion board for your classmates to view and comment on. Full instructions and rubric are posted under the assignment on Canvas.**	**15%**
Total:		**100%**

Student grades for assignments will be posted in the Canvas gradebook by midnight on Tuesday of each week, beginning in Week Two of this course. It is important to read the comments posted in the gradebook, as these comments are intended to help students improve their work. Final grades will be posted by the due date as posted in the Academic Calendar.

Grading Scale

The following grading scale will be used for all exams and final course grades:

- 93 – 100% = A
- 90 – 92% = A-
- 87 – 89% = B+
- 83 – 86% = B
- 80 – 82% = B-
- 77 – 79% = C+
- 73 – 76% = C
- 70 – 72% = C-
- 67 – 69% = D+
- 63 – 66% = D
- 60 – 62% = D-
- Below 60% = F

Student Success

The Center for Student Success supports our Graduate and Professional Studies students throughout their academic journey. We provide student services such as academic advising and planning, resource workshops, and connect students to career services, writing support, tutorial services, and wellness resources. The Center itself is located on the first floor of the Mission Valley Campus. If you have any questions about how to access resources at PLNU, please start by reaching out to the Center for Student Success by email or by phone at 619-563-2850. Please visit myPLNU Student Success for more details. If you are in the School of Education, please contact SOE Advising.

State Authorization

State authorization is a formal determination by a state that Point Loma Nazarene University is approved to conduct activities regulated by that state. In certain states outside California, Point Loma Nazarene University is not authorized to enroll online (distance education) students. If a student moves to another state after admission to the program and/or enrollment in an online course, continuation within the program and/or course will depend on whether Point Loma Nazarene University is authorized to offer distance education courses in that state. It is the student's responsibility to notify the institution of any change in his or her physical location. Refer to the map on State Authorization to view which states allow distance education outside California.

PLNU Copyright Policy

Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may

violate the law.

PLNU Recording Notification

In order to enhance the learning experience, please be advised that this course may be recorded by the professor for educational purposes, and access to these recordings will be limited to enrolled students and authorized personnel.

Note that all recordings are subject to copyright protection. Any unauthorized distribution or publication of these recordings without written approval from the University (refer to the Dean) is strictly prohibited.

PLNU Academic Honesty Policy

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when, in reality, they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for that assignment or examination or, depending on the seriousness of the offense, for the course.

For all student appeals, faculty and students should follow the procedures outlined in the University Catalog. See Adult Undergraduate Academic and General Policies for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

During the first week of class, you will be asked to submit an Academic Honesty Verification Statement. Submitting the statement is a requirement of this course. By submitting the Academic Honesty Verification Statement, you will be verifying all assignments completed in this course were completed by you. Carefully review the Academic Honesty Statement below.

Statement: "In submitting this form, I am verifying all the assignments in this course will be completed by me and will be my own work."

PLNU Academic Behavior Policy

Both faculty and students at Point Loma Nazarene University have the right to expect a safe and ordered environment for learning. Students are expected to take the initiative to learn and conduct themselves in a mature and civil manner in the classroom environment. Any student behavior that is disruptive or threatening is a serious affront to Point Loma Nazarene University as a learning community. Students who fail to adhere to these behavioral standards may be subject to disciplinary action, including removal from class or further university sanctions. For a full definition of disruptive behavior, response procedures, and the appeal process, please consult the Academic Behavior Policy in the University Catalog.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

Students are not allowed to use AI tools to generate content (text, video, audio, images) that will end up in any work submitted to be graded for this course. You may use tools such as Grammarly to conduct grammar/spelling checks and to help you gain skills to improve your writing. If you have any questions about using AI, please contact your instructor.

PLNU Academic Accommodations Policy

PLNU is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all its programs, services, and activities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students with disabilities may request course-related accommodations by contacting the Educational Access Center (EAC), located in the Bond Academic Center on the PL campus, the first floor of the Balboa campus, and the second floor of the Mission Valley campus. For all students, including the Bakersfield campus, virtual appointments are available. You can reach the Educational Access Center (EAC) by email or phone at 619-849-2533. Students can access both requests for and evidence of disability through the Accommodate link off the main page of OneLogin. Once a student's eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, the EAC will work with the student to create an Accommodation Plan (AP) that outlines approved accommodations. Professors are able to view a student's approved accommodations through Accommodate.

PLNU highly recommends that students speak with their professors during the first two weeks of each semester/term about the implementation of their approved accommodations in that particular course. Accommodations are not retroactive; as such, clarifying with the professor at the outset is one of the best ways to promote positive academic outcomes.

Students who need accommodations for a disability-related need should contact the EAC as early as possible (i.e., ideally before the beginning of the semester) to assure appropriate accommodations can be provided. In accordance with ADA, accommodations cannot constitute a fundamental alteration to course outcomes; therefore, planning ahead is vital in establishing appropriate accommodations for equal access to this course. It is the student's responsibility to make the first contact with the EAC. Students cannot assume that because they had accommodations in the past, their eligibility at PLNU is automatic. All determinations at PLNU must go through the EAC eligibility process. This is to protect the privacy of students with disabilities who may not want to disclose this information and are not asking for any accommodations.

Language and Belonging

Point Loma Nazarene University faculty are committed to helping create a safe and hospitable learning environment for all students. As Christian scholars we are keenly aware of the power of language and believe in treating others with dignity. As such, it is important that our language be equitable, inclusive, and prejudice free. Inclusive/Bias-free language is the standard outlined by all major academic style guides, including MLA, APA, and Chicago, and it is the expected norm in university-level work. Good writing and speaking do not use unsubstantiated or irrelevant generalizations about personal qualities such as age, disability, economic class, ethnicity, marital status, parentage, political or religious beliefs, race, gender, sex, or sexual orientation. Inclusive language also avoids using stereotypes or terminology that demeans persons or groups based on age, disability, class, ethnicity, gender, race, language, or national origin. Respectful use of language is particularly important when referring to those outside of the religious and lifestyle commitments of those in the PLNU community. By working toward precision and clarity of language, we mark ourselves as serious and respectful scholars, and we model the Christ-like quality of hospitality.

If you (or someone you know) have experienced other forms of discrimination, you can find more information on reporting and resources at PLNU's Nondiscrimination webpage.

Sexual Misconduct and Discrimination

In support of a safe learning environment, if you (or someone you know) have experienced any form of sexual discrimination or misconduct, including sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking, know that accommodations and resources are available through the Title IX Office. Please be aware that under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, faculty and staff are required to disclose information about such misconduct to the Title IX Office.

If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact Counseling Services or consult the list of campus pastors.

If you (or someone you know) has experienced other forms of discrimination or bias, you can find more information on reporting and resources via the Nondiscrimination and Anti-harassment Policy.

PLNU Course Modality Definitions

1. Online Courses: These are courses with class meetings where all instruction and interaction are fully online.
    1. Synchronous Courses: At least one class meeting takes place at a designated time.
    2. Asynchronous Courses: All class meetings are asynchronous.
2. Hybrid Courses: These are courses with class meetings that take place both in the classroom and online synchronously and/or asynchronously.
3. In-Person Courses: These are courses that meet in person with the instructor and students in a physical classroom setting. With approval by the area dean, this may include up to 25% of qualified class interactions through a Learning Management System (such as Canvas).

PLNU Attendance and Participation Policy

Regular and punctual attendance at all class sessions is considered essential to optimum academic achievement. Therefore, regular attendance and participation in each course are minimal requirements.

If the student is absent for more than 10 percent of class sessions, the faculty member will issue a written warning of de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent, the student may be de-enrolled without notice until the university withdrawal date or, after that date, receive an “F” grade.

Students who anticipate being absent for an entire week of a course should contact the instructor in advance for approval and make arrangements to complete the required coursework and/or alternative assignments assigned at the discretion of the instructor. Acceptance of late work is at the discretion of the instructor and does not waive attendance requirements.

Refer to Academic Policies for additional details.

Synchronous Attendance/Participation Definition

For synchronous courses that have specific scheduled meeting times (including in-person, hybrid, and synchronous online courses), absences are counted from the first official meeting of the class regardless of the date of the student’s enrollment. For courses with specific attendance requirements, those requirements are outlined in the course syllabus.

Note: For synchronous courses with an online asynchronous week, refer to the Online Asynchronous Class Attendance policy listed below.

Online Asynchronous Attendance/Participation Definition

Students taking online courses with no specific scheduled meeting times are expected to actively engage throughout each week of the course. Attendance is defined as participating in an academic activity within the online classroom which includes, but is not limited to:

- Engaging in an online discussion
- Submitting an assignment
- Taking an exam
- Participating in online labs
- Initiating contact with faculty member within the learning management system to discuss course content

Note: Logging into the course does not qualify as participation and will not be counted as meeting the attendance requirement.

Use of Technology

In order to be successful in the online or hybrid environment, you'll need to meet the minimum technology and system requirements; please refer to the *Technology and System Requirements* information. Additionally, students

are required to have headphone speakers, microphone, or webcams compatible with their computer available to use. Please note that any course with online proctored exams requires a computer with a camera (tablets are not compatible nor allowable) to complete exams online.

Problems with technology do not relieve you of the responsibility of participating, turning in your assignments, or completing your class work.

GPS Academic Resources

PLNU offers the following free academic resources virtually for Graduate Professional Studies (GPS) Students. Visit myPLNU through the links below for more information.

- **The GPS Writing Center offers:**
    - **Zoom Writers Workshops** offered each quad on a variety of helpful topics
    - **One-to-one appointments** with the Writing Coach
    - **Microlearning YouTube Video Library** for helpful tips anytime
- **Research Help Guide** to help you start your research
    - The physical office is located on the third floor of the **Mission Valley Regional Center** off the student lounge
- **Academic Writing Resources Course:** Found on your Canvas Dashboard, this course is non-credit with 24/7 access, no time limits, and self-paced content. **Watch a quick video run-through** and take time now to explore!
- **Grammarly**: Students have unlimited FREE access to Grammarly for Education, a trusted tool designed to help enhance writing skills by providing real-time feedback, identifying areas for improvement, and providing suggestions. Grammarly's Generative AI is NOT available with our student accounts.
- **Tutoring**: Students have access to 24/7 live or scheduled subject tutoring through Tutor.com, including a Paper Drop-Off Service with feedback within 12 hours.

Assignments-at-a-Glance

The course summary below lists our assignments and their due dates. Click on any assignment to review it.

Weekly Interactive Lectures

In this task, you'll participate in interactive lectures with checkpoints to enhance your grasp of important public policy concepts. Each week, during a chosen lecture, you'll come across questions to assess your understanding. This activity will strengthen your learning and help you stay on track with the material.

Weekly Policy Activity Discussions

Another goal of this class is to familiarize students with how public policy is practiced. These weekly activities with corresponding class discussions allow you to apply course concepts to current events outside of our course readings.

Policy Project Sharing Discussion Board

Each week that you complete a portion of your Policy Advocacy Project, you will share briefly with your classmates on your progress and crowdsource ideas/resources for your next steps.

Policy Advocacy Project: Portfolio

Policy decisions important to you are made daily at the local, state, and national levels. Developing and using your knowledge, values, and skills to influence these policy decisions is an important part of your role as a student and future professional.

For this project, you will research a bill on an issue of your personal interest that is currently pending before the U.S. Congress, analyze the bill, articulate a comprehensive lobbying strategy, develop a legislative advocacy plan, and prepare professional-quality materials to support a successful effort towards effecting change.

Your work will be represented by a written **Policy Advocacy Portfolio Submission and Video Presentation**. Pieces of the project will be due at different points throughout the course.

Full instructions and rubric are posted under the assignment on Canvas.

Policy Advocacy Project: Presentation

You will prepare a 5-minute "elevator pitch" (with slides) of your issue, covering the most important points of your policy issue, solutions, and how your listener can directly get involved. This presentation will be a persuasive, accurate, succinct, and concise assessment of your issue. The purpose is to get someone's attention long enough for them to want to hear more.

Presentations will be posted to a discussion board for your classmates to view and comment on. Full instructions and rubric are posted under the assignment on Canvas.

Surveys (2)

Getting to Know You and Mid-Course Surveys help me to learn more about you and how you learn! Please take time to complete these as they appear in your course modules.

Course Schedule

Course Schedule

WEEK #	TOPICS COVERED	ASSIGNED READINGS & MEDIA	ASSIGNMENTS
WEEK 1	Course Introduction Public Policy and Politics Who Makes Policy?	***Required Reading/Media:*** Kraft & Furlong Chapter 1 Kraft & Furlong Chapter 2 ***Optional Reading/Media:*** Podcast Civics 101 Starter Kit: Legislative Branch Article: Introduction to the Legislative Process (Heitshusen, 2018)	Getting to Know You Survey Class Introduction Discussion Weekly Interactive Lecture Policy Activity & Discussion Board

WEEK #	TOPICS COVERED	ASSIGNED READINGS & MEDIA	ASSIGNMENTS
WEEK 2	Understanding Public Policymaking Policy Emphasis: Economic & Budgetary Policy	***Required Reading/Media:*** Kraft & Furlong Chapter 3 Kraft & Furlong Chapter 7 ***Optional Reading/Media:*** Fiscal Policy's Link to Inequality	Policy Project Part 1 Choosing the Policy & Pre-Research Policy Project Sharing Discussion Board Weekly Interactive Lecture Policy Activity & Discussion Board
WEEK 3	Public Problems & Policy Alternatives Policy Emphasis: Health Care Policy	***Required Reading/Media:*** Kraft & Furlong Chapter 5 Kraft & Furlong Chapter 8 Video: Healthcare: is it a right or a luxury? | Tarik Sammour | TEDxAdelaide ***Optional Reading/Media:*** Podcast: Freakonomics Radio How to Fix the Hot Mess of U.S. Healthcare (49 min)	Policy Project Part 2a Fundamentals of the Policy: Background of the Bill Policy Project Sharing Discussion Board Weekly Interactive Lecture Policy Activity & Discussion Board

WEEK #	TOPICS COVERED	ASSIGNED READINGS & MEDIA	ASSIGNMENTS
WEEK 4	Policy Analysis: An Introduction Policy Emphasis: Social Policy	***Required Reading/Media:*** Kraft & Furlong Chapter 4 Kraft & Furlong Chapter 9 Podcast: NPR Consider This Could Universal Basic Income Help End Poverty? ***Optional Reading/Media:*** Video: New York Times Welfare and the Politics of Poverty	Policy Project Part 2b Fundamentals of the Policy: Policy Alternatives & Analysis Policy Project Sharing Discussion Board Weekly Interactive Lecture Policy Activity & Discussion Board Midcourse Survey
WEEK 5	Assessing Policy Alternatives Policy Emphasis: Education Policy	***Required Reading/Media:*** Kraft & Furlong Chapter 6 Kraft & Furlong Chapter 10 ***Optional Reading/Media:*** Article: KQED California Report California Struggles with Classroom Space for Transitional Kindergarten	Policy Project Part 2c Fundamentals of the Policy: Arguments & Recommendation Policy Project Sharing Discussion Board Weekly Interactive Lecture Policy Activity & Discussion Board

WEEK #	TOPICS COVERED	ASSIGNED READINGS & MEDIA	ASSIGNMENTS
WEEK 6	Advocating for Meaningful Change Part I Policy Emphasis: Environmental and Energy Policy	***Required Reading/Media:*** The Art of Advocacy Strategy p. 1-18 Kraft & Furlong Chapter 11 ***Optional Reading/Media:*** TED Radio Hour Podcast: Circular Environmental Policy Ideas	Policy Project Part 3 Communicating About the Policy Policy Project Sharing Discussion Board Weekly Interactive Lecture Policy Activity & Discussion Board
WEEK 7	Advocating for Meaningful Change Part II Policy Emphasis: Foreign Policy & Homeland Security	***Required Reading/Media:*** The Art of Advocacy Strategy p. 19-34 Kraft & Furlong Chapter 12 ***Optional Reading/Media:*** Council for Foreign Relations Backgrounder on The Contentious U.S.-China Trade Relationship	Policy Project Part 4 Advocacy Strategy Policy Project Sharing Discussion Board Weekly Interactive Lecture Policy Activity & Discussion Board
Week 8	Policy and Public Service	***Optional Reading/Media:*** Video: The Hatch Act Illustrated and Explained (USDA- for Federal Employees) Resource: State, D.C., or Local Employee Hatch Act Information Resource: U.S. Office of Government Ethics	Policy Project Part 5 Completed Portfolio Policy Project Part 6 Video Presentation Policy Project Sharing Discussion Board Lessons Learned Personal Reflection