



Department of History and Political Science

POL 4041: ISSUES IN PUBLIC POLICY

4 units

Spring 2025

Semester Meeting Schedule:

Tuesday/Thursday 3:30-4:45 pm
Evans 121

Instructor and Contact Info:

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Office Location and Office Hours:

Colt Hall 115
Tuesday/Thursday 11:00 am-1:00 pm
(Additional hours available by appointment)

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 becomes an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we aspire to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND POLITICAL SCIENCE MISSION

As followers of Christ, the Department of History and Political Science promotes wisdom and scholarship about historical contexts and political systems, so that graduates can become local and global leaders in the service of Christ and humanity.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This seminar-format ¹ 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 look at the many institutions, structures, and people 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? Finally, this course will push us to move beyond policy theory and analysis and venture into the real world of policymaking and problem solving.

THE BIG PICTURE: WHY DOES THIS ALL MATTER?

This course will have you actively applying – to real social problems – the theoretical concepts and approaches that dominate the field of American public policy studies. In doing so, the goal is to inspire you to become active political participants in the American policy process – as conscious observers, thoughtful commentators, dedicated problem solvers, and civil-minded activists. Whether or not you choose to pursue a career in public

¹ “In a seminar course, students do assigned reading and then... grapple aloud with the ideas they’ve read. They learn to form arguments and support them with facts; they learn to communicate coherently and courteously with those who disagree” (Stanford Teaching Commons, 2018).

service, the goal is that you emerge from this course as an engaged citizen, eager to contribute to this country's democratic tradition of collective problem-solving. Still not convinced? Consider this – the qualities just mentioned make you not only an “ideal citizen” but also an ideal job candidate. Indeed, in a recent study of employers (business and non-profit leaders), 93% said that a college graduate's “demonstrated capacity to **think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems** is more important than [a candidate's] undergraduate major.”² In addition, more than 75% of employers said they “want *more emphasis* on 5 key areas including: **critical thinking, complex problem-solving, written and oral communication, and applied knowledge in real-world settings.**” This course aims to help you hone these skills and prepare you for the “real-world” of messy politics, fuzzy policies, grayish laws, deepening partisan polarization, enduring social problems, growing inequities, changing demographics, and a slightly apathetic and cynical populace.

COURSE READINGS

All readings are required, and the textbook is available at the bookstore, or you can rent it directly from the publisher. You must have access to the current edition of the text. Articles and other readings are available on Canvas. **Please bring your readings to class.**

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

COURSE FORMAT AND EXPECTATIONS

This course will meet twice per week. To maximize your learning process, it is in your best interest that you attend each class session. It is also **essential** that the readings be completed prior to coming to class as the lecture and discussion will usually expand on and draw from the readings. Class time activities will vary, but will often include a combination of lectures, discussion, group activities, writing, and videos.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Specifically, the course learning outcomes (CLOs) include the following:

- Students will demonstrate a keen understanding of the theoretical foundations of the academic field of American public policy studies.
- Students will evaluate and articulate the ways in which policy approaches, policy design, and policy outcomes collectively impact the American political system.
- Students will employ the vocabulary used to describe public policymaking in the United States.
- Students will critically analyze the power dynamics at work in public policymaking and policy outcomes.
- Students will analyze a contemporary policy issue, demonstrating policy domain and framework knowledge through papers and oral presentations.
- Students will engage in thoughtful, civil, and empirically based discussions about particular policy areas in the current American political system.

And for political science majors, this course assesses the following **program learning outcomes** (PLOs):

- Develop an appreciation of the field of politics (PLO 1).
- Understand and critically assess the processes, theories, and outcomes of political institutions and political behavior (PLO 3).
- Demonstrate social scientific information literacy (PLO 4).
- Demonstrate oral communication abilities, particularly to convey complex ideas, recognize diverse viewpoints, and offer empirical evidence of an argument (PLO 6).

² Association of American Colleges and Universities. 2013. “It Takes More than a Major: Employer Priorities for College Learning and Student Success.” Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities and Hart Research Associates.

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 4 -unit class delivered over 15 weeks. It is anticipated that students will spend a minimum of 37.5 participation hours per credit hour on their coursework. For this course, students will spend an estimated 150 total hours meeting the course learning outcomes. The time estimations are provided in the Canvas modules.

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 online (distance education) outside of California.

COURSE POLICIES & SUPPORTS

LATE ASSIGNMENT POLICY

All assignments are to be submitted by the due dates posted and will be considered late if submitted after midnight Pacific Standard Time on the day they are due. If an assignment is submitted late, the points possible for the assignment decrease by 10% each day for four days after the due date. **Any assignment or deliverable submitted more than four days late will not be accepted. Presentations, Exams, and Reading Responses cannot be "made up" and must be completed on the due date.**

All deliverables for the course, including assignments, projects, presentations, papers, etc., must be turned in by 11:59 pm on the last day of the course. No extensions or incompletes will be given to students to complete course requirements.

If you believe you have an extenuating circumstance, such as illness or family emergency, please send Dr. Nantkes an email or come talk to me as soon as possible so that we may speak about your options. With abundant notice I'll be as accommodating as possible, as long as it does not compromise fairness for all.

FINAL EXAMINATION POLICY

Successful completion of this class requires taking the final examination **on its scheduled day**. The final examination schedule is posted on the Class Schedules site. No requests for early examinations or alternative days will be approved.

CLASSROOM CIVILITY POLICY

Respect for the views and values of others is an essential characteristic of a thriving learning community. Although it is likely that we may not agree with everything that is said or discussed in our course, we will behave and express our viewpoints in a manner that is courteous and professional. Disagreement and challenging of ideas in a respectful and profound manner is encouraged. Our emphasis will be on engaging in the mutual exploration of topics as presented in the course as scholars, using research and data to defend our assertions. We will develop Class Norms in Week 1 of the course and will keep each other mutually accountable to our commitment to productive and respectful discourse.

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 on any of the above. You may report an incident(s) using the [Bias Incident Reporting Form](#).

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 at pointloma.edu/Title-IX. 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 at counselingservices@pointloma.edu or find a list of campus pastors at pointloma.edu/title-ix.

CONTENT WARNING

I acknowledge that each of you comes to PLNU with unique life experiences. This contributes to the way you perceive various types of information. Our course content, including that which may be intellectually or emotionally challenging, has been intentionally curated to achieve the learning goals for this course. The decision to include such material is not taken lightly. These topics may include war, poverty, and assault, and domestic violence. If you are a trauma survivor and encounter a topic in this class that is triggering for you, you may feel overwhelmed or panicked and find it difficult to concentrate. In response, I encourage you to take the necessary steps for your emotional safety. This may include leaving class while the topic is discussed or talking to a therapist at the Counseling Center.

Should you choose to sit out on a discussion of a certain topic, know that you are still responsible for the material, but we can discuss other methods for accessing that material and assessing your learning on that material. Class topics are discussed for the sole purpose of expanding your intellectual engagement in Political Science, and I will support you throughout your learning in this course.

PLNU POLICIES

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 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. Faculty should follow and students may appeal using the procedure in the university Catalog. See [Academic Policies](#) for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) POLICY

Students may not use AI tools to generate content (text, video, audio, images) that will end up in any work submitted to be graded for this course unless the use of AI is expressly stated in the assignment. 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 (EAC@pointloma.edu or 619-849-2486). 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 allowed accommodations. The EAC makes accommodations available to professors at the student's request. PLNU highly recommends that students speak with their professors during the first two weeks of each semester/term about the implementation of their AP in that particular course. Accommodations are not retroactive so 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 should contact the EAC as early as possible (i.e., ideally before the beginning of the semester) to assure appropriate accommodations can be provided. 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 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 special accommodations.

PLNU ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION POLICY

Regular and punctual attendance at all class sessions is considered essential to optimum academic achievement. 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 drop date or, after that date, receive the appropriate grade for their work and participation. In some courses, a portion of the credit hour content will be delivered **asynchronously** and attendance will be determined by submitting the assignments by the posted due dates. See [Academic Policies](#) in the Undergraduate Academic Catalog. If absences exceed these limits but are due to university excused health issues, an exception will be granted.

SPIRITUAL CARE

Please be aware that PLNU strives to be a place where you grow as a whole person. To this end, we provide resources for our students to encounter God and grow in their Christian faith.

If students have questions, a desire to meet with the chaplain, or have prayer requests, you can contact the [Office of Spiritual Life and Formation](#).

USE OF TECHNOLOGY

In order to be successful in the online 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 compatible with their computer available to use. If a student is in need of technological resources please contact student-tech-request@pointloma.edu. Problems with technology do not relieve you of the responsibility of participating, turning in your assignments, or completing your class work.

ASSESSMENTS & GRADING

Assignment Distribution by Percentage

Discussion Guides	25%
Policymaking Case Study & Presentation	15%
Board of Supervisors Meeting Analysis	15%
Course Surveys	5%
Policy Advocacy Portfolio Team Project	40%
TOTAL POSSIBLE	100%

Grade Scale

Standard Grade Scale Based on Percentage of Points Earned				
A	B	C	D	F
A 93-100	B+ 87-88	C+ 77-79	D+ 67-69	F < than 59
A- 90-92	B 83-86	C 73-76	D 63-66	
	B- 80-82	C- 70-72	D- 60-62	

ASSIGNMENTS

Discussion Guides

As a policy student, it is essential to engage deeply with course material and bring critical thinking to every class. Discussion Guides are weekly assignments that help you analyze and reflect on what you read, watch, or listen to in preparation for our time together. They are also a valuable tool for staying organized and synthesizing material throughout the semester. A template is available on Canvas.

Policymaking Case Study and Presentation (1)

Another goal of this class is to familiarize students with how public policy is practiced. This activity provides you the opportunity to check your learning, understanding, and ability to apply course concepts to current events outside of our course readings.

During the semester, you will share an **analysis of public policymaking** as it is currently happening in a specific policy domain in the United States and moderate the discussion that week. (You will choose from the list of policy domains on the first day of class when we review the syllabus.) You may cover a current specific policy in the domain or what is happening generally now in the policymaking process in the domain.

Discussion Instructions: In class, you will share a 5-minute analysis of a current (within the last 30 days) set of 3 news articles on your topic. The purpose of asking you to analyze stories from the last month is that you should be reading quality news *throughout this course*, continuously analyzing how the course relates to current events. The articles/reports must come (one each) from Left, Center, and Right sources listed on the [All Sides Media Bias Chart](#). Prepare at least one group discussion question of substance that incorporates themes/ideas from our course and facilitate a 5-minute discussion.

San Diego County Board of Supervisors Meeting Analysis (1)

As a class, we will watch a meeting of the San Diego County Board of Supervisors. You will write 2-3 pages (in Chicago style format) analyzing the key aspects of policymaking as you observed it at the meeting, focusing particularly on the meeting process, the quality of dialogue and deliberation, the relationship between constituents and Board members, and the overall quality of democratic decision-making. Our observation of this meeting will provide a bridge between our more theoretical discussions of public policy and our understanding of how policy is decided “on the ground”.

Policy Advocacy Portfolio Team Project (1)

Students will form teams of 2-3 members each. The team will work together throughout the semester to research a bill currently pending before the U.S. Congress, analyze the bill and attendant landscape, articulate a comprehensive lobbying strategy, engage in legislative advocacy, and prepare professional-quality materials to support a successful lobbying effort. Pieces of the project will be due at different points throughout the semester.

A completed written Portfolio will represent the team’s work. Except for a final reflection (which is completed individually), all team members will receive a single grade based on the quality of the final product. Full instructions and rubric are posted under the assignment on Canvas.

Policy Advocacy Portfolio Team Project Presentation (Final Exam)

This presentation is a summary of your policy project and will be 8-10 minutes in length. Slides should be academic, clear, free of errors, and easy to follow. Presentations will be made in class as your final exam. 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				
*Note: weekly readings and assignments can change at the professor’s discretion. See Canvas for the most up-to-date information and direct links/downloads for readings.				
WEEK	DATE	TOPIC OF SESSION	ASSIGNED READING/MEDIA	ASSIGNMENTS
PART I: FOUNDATIONS OF PUBLIC POLICY				
WEEK 1	Tuesday January 14	Course Introduction	No reading, preview syllabus and Canvas	
	Thursday January 16 *Please be prepared to be outdoors as a class today	Building our Classroom Community	Article: Rising Above the Gridlock to Govern (Steele, n.d.)	Getting to Know You Survey
WEEK 2	Tuesday January 21	Public Policy: What is it and why do we need it?	Kraft & Furlong chapter 1	Discussion Guide
	Thursday January 23	Who Makes Policy? Part I: Federal Legislation	Kraft & Furlong chapter 2 Podcast Civics 101 Starter Kit: Legislative Branch	
WEEK 3	Tuesday January 28	Who Makes Policy? Part II: Crash Course on Local and State Legislation	Groups will read assigned chapter of <i>VanVechten’s California Politics and teach our class (creatively!) on their topic</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group 1: Chapter 3 on Direct Democracy Group 2: Chapter 4 on the State Legislature 	Discussion Guide

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC OF SESSION	ASSIGNED READING/MEDIA	ASSIGNMENTS
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group 3: Chapter 5 on the Executive Branch Group 4: Chapter 7 on Other Governments 	
	Thursday January 30	Policy Emphasis: Economic & Budgetary Policy	Kraft & Furlong chapter 7 The Economic Lowdown Podcast: Fiscal Policy's Link to Inequality (19 min)	
WEEK 4	Tuesday February 4	Applying Policymaking Theories/Frameworks (Part I)	Kraft & Furlong chapter 3	Discussion Guide
	Thursday February 6	Policy Emphasis: Criminal Justice Policy	<p>Article: Prison Policy Initiative Mass Incarceration: the Whole Pie 2024</p> <p>Optional Reading/Media: Justice Policy Institute: <i>Sticker Shock 2020: The Cost of Youth Incarceration</i></p> <p>PBS Origin of Everything Video: Why do we have private prisons?</p> <p>Off-Kilter Podcast: How Mass Incarceration Became a Poverty Trap</p>	
WEEK 5	Tuesday February 11	Applying Policymaking Theories/Frameworks (Part II)	<p>Stone article</p> <p>Schneider & Ingram article</p> <p>Kreitzer & Smith article (skim)</p>	Discussion Guide
	Thursday February 13	Policy Emphasis: Foreign Policy & Homeland Security	Kraft & Furlong chapter 12	SD County Board of Supervisors Meeting Reflection (due Sunday)
WEEK 6	Tuesday February 18	Policy Advocacy Portfolio Team Brainstorm and Policy Choices	Reading on your own about policy issues of your concern in preparation for class brainstorm	Discussion Guide
	Thursday February 20	Policy Emphasis: Social Welfare and Social Security Policy	<p>Kraft & Furlong chapter 9</p> <p>Podcast: NPR Consider This Could Universal Basic Income Help End Poverty? (11 min)</p>	Policy Advocacy Portfolio Team: Project Policy Choice Assignment (Due Sunday)

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC OF SESSION	ASSIGNED READING/MEDIA	ASSIGNMENTS
			Optional Reading/Media: Video: New York Times Welfare and the Politics of Poverty	
WEEK 7	Tuesday February 25	Agenda-Setting and Policy Formulation (Part I) Collective Action	Anderson chapter 3	Discussion Guide
	Thursday February 27	Policy Emphasis: Health Care Policy	Kraft & Furlong chapter 8 Podcast: Freakonomics Radio How to Fix the Hot Mess of U.S. Healthcare (49 min)	
WEEK 8	Tuesday March 4	Agenda-Setting and Policy Formulation (Part II) The Role of Interest Groups and Think Tanks	Kingdon chapter 6 NPR Podcast: Understanding the Impact of Citizens United (17 min)	Discussion Guide
	Thursday March 6	Policy Emphasis: Education Policy	Kraft & Furlong chapter 10 Hattie article (skim section, assigned by team)	Complete Mid-Course Survey
SPRING BREAK MARCH 10-14 NO CLASSES				
WEEK 9	Tuesday March 18	Policy Adoption	Anderson chapter 4	Discussion Guide
	Thursday March 20	Policy Emphasis: Environmental and Energy Policy	Kraft & Furlong chapter 11 TED Radio Hour Podcast: How Can We Create a Thriving Economy for Ourselves and The Planet? (12 min)	Policy Advocacy Portfolio Team Project: Fundamentals of the Policy Assignment (Due Sunday) <i>Midterm Grades Distributed</i>
WEEK 10	Tuesday March 25	Policy Implementation	Anderson pgs. 225-249	Discussion Guide
	Thursday March 27	*NO CLASS MEETING TODAY		

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC OF SESSION	ASSIGNED READING/MEDIA	ASSIGNMENTS
WEEK 11	Tuesday April 1	Policy Analysis: Part I	Kraft & Furlong chapter 4	Discussion Guide
	Thursday April 3	Policy Emphasis: Immigration Policy	American Immigration Council Article: How the United States Immigration System Works (2024)	
PART II: POLICY TARGETS AND GOALS				
WEEK 12	Tuesday April 8	Policy Analysis: Part II	Kraft & Furlong chapter 5	Discussion Guide
	Thursday April 10	Policy Emphasis: Voting and Elections Policy	Bipartisan Policy Center: The Federal Role in U.S. Elections Visualized Bipartisan Policy Center: The State of State Election Policy in 2024 Four Directions Video: Native Americans Sue to Get to the Polls (7 min)	Policy Advocacy Portfolio Team: Communicating about the Policy Assignment (Due Sunday)
WEEK 13	Tuesday April 15	Assessing Policy Alternatives	Kraft & Furlong chapter 6	Discussion Guide
Easter Recess NO CLASS April 17-21				
WEEK 14	Tuesday April 22	Analyzing Policy Goals: Equity, Efficiency, Welfare, Liberty, Security	One chapter <i>assigned to groups for sharing in class</i> Group 1: Stone Chapter 3 Group 2: Stone Chapter 4 Group 3: Stone Chapter 5 Group 4: Stone Chapter 6	Discussion Guide
	Thursday April 24	Policy Evaluation Methods Workshop	Anderson chapter 7 (pg. 290-311 only) Savitz et. al (RAND logic modeling materials)	Policy Advocacy Portfolio Team: Strategy for Policy Advocacy (Due Sunday)
PART III: WRAPPING UP				
WEEK 15	Tuesday April 29	Policy Team Meetings	No Reading	Course Reflection Complete Course Evaluation
	Thursday May 1	Policy Advocacy Team Final Presentations	Due on Canvas at 3:00 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Advocacy Portfolio • Presentation Slides • Personal Reflection 	

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC OF SESSION	ASSIGNED READING/MEDIA	ASSIGNMENTS
			In Class at 3:30 pm <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Team Final Presentations	
