**Course Title:** PSC 205: Public Policy in the United States

**Instructor:** Dr. David Fleming  
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**Class Information:** Fall 2015  
Tuesday/Thursday 8:30 – 9:45  
Johns Hall Room 101  
Course Website: FU Moodle (courses.furman.edu)

**Office Hours:** Wednesday 10:30 – 11:30  
Thursday 2:30 – 3:30  
and BY APPOINTMENT

**Required Course Materials**  

2 Green Books for exams

Other materials distributed by the instructor in class or on Moodle

Students are expected to read a major national newspaper on a daily basis (e.g., *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, or *The Wall Street Journal*).

**Course Description**  
This course provides an introduction to the study of public policy in the United States. While the focus of the course is on the federal level, we will also discuss important state and local issues. The course will proceed in four main parts. First, we will discuss the important theories used to understand public policy in the American context. We examine the important actors in the policy process, as well as how the structure and context of policymaking shape outcomes. Then, students are introduced to policy analysis. Policy tradeoffs between efficiency, effectiveness, political feasibility, and equality will be a major component of the course. Third, we discuss the different components of policymaking, tracing policy ideas from the agenda setting stage, through the legitimation and implementation stages, to policy evaluation. Lastly, we will discuss different policy areas. Special attention will be given to how the models of policymaking inform our understanding of the development of programs in these areas. By the end of the course, students should have a social scientific lens that they can use to systematically understand and evaluate public policy issues in their roles as engaged citizens.
Assessments
Assessments in this course measure both factual and analytical learning. Students will be expected to apply what they have learned in class to current political events. In order to achieve a high grade, students are expected to demonstrate a clear writing style. All assignments should be completed independently (unless you are given explicit instructions otherwise).

There are 9 assessed activities:

Policy Problem/Program Description Paper.........................................................= 5 Points
   Paper describing an important program or policy problem in the United States
Candidate Comparison Paper.................................................................= 5 Points
   Paper comparing the policy stances of Presidential candidates
Policy Alternatives/Program Evaluation Design...............................................= 5 Points
   Paper describing 4-5 policy alternatives or the research design of your evaluation
Policy in Action........................................................= 10 Points
   Paper summarizing your experience observing public policy
Policy Research Paper.................................................................= 20 Points
   Research paper on a topic of your choice through the lens of a policy analyst or program evaluator
Policy Op-Ed Paper.................................................................= 5 Points
Midterm Examination.................................................................= 15 Points
   Multiple choice, identification, short essay
Cumulative Final Exam.................................................................= 20 Points
   Multiple choice, identification, short essay
Class Participation & Assignments.................................................................= 15 Points
   Quizzes, informed/insightful participation, etc.
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Total 100 Points

Grading
93-100: A  80-82: B-  67-69: D+
87-89: B+  73-76: C  60-62: D-
83-86: B  70-72: C-  Below 60: F

Incompletes will only be given in extremely rare circumstances and are up to the discretion of the instructor.

Academic Dishonesty
Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in this course. In instances of academic dishonesty, students will be given an automatic 0 on the assignment (at a minimum) and will be prosecuted under Furman’s academic guidelines. In my time at Furman, I have failed students in my courses for academic dishonesty. In this course, I reserve the right to
use turnitin.com, a plagiarism detection service. Once submitted, your papers will become part of the online database.

According to university policy, “students, faculty, and administrators are expected to promote a culture of academic integrity. Students have the ultimate responsibility for knowing Furman’s policy and expectations regarding academic integrity, and for behaving honorably in their academic work. Ignorance of what constitutes academic misconduct is not an acceptable defense for violating the community standard.” If you have any questions about academic dishonesty or proper citation techniques, please contact me. More information on academic integrity and avoiding plagiarism is available at: http://www.furman.edu/integrity.

**Attendance/Late Work Policies**

Good performance in this class requires consistent attendance and participation. Every student is allowed three unexcused absences. For each day above three that the student is absent, the student’s final grade will drop by one-third of a letter grade. Excused absences must be cleared by the Dean’s office, and I must be notified beforehand. If you miss class for any reason, you are responsible for any announcements and material covered during your absence, and you should get notes from another student in class. If you are late for class, it counts as an unexcused absence.

All work is due at the beginning of class. Late assignments will be penalized one-third of a letter grade for each day they are late. A paper handed in after class on the due date will be penalized one-third of a letter grade.

**Students in Need of Special Accommodations**

Students in need of special accommodations should contact the Student Office for Accessibility Resources and should meet with me at the beginning of the semester.

**Community Standards**

This is a discussion-based course. Political discussions can sometimes grow contentious. All students and the instructor must be respectful of the views or opinions of others in the classroom. If you ever feel that the classroom environment is discouraging your participation, please contact me and we can work to fix it.

A respectful and participatory classroom also means that students should be focused on the class material and discussion. All cell phones and computers must be turned off and put away before you enter the classroom. If the use of a computer is part of your academic accommodations from the Student Office for Accessibility Resources, please see me at the beginning of the semester. You may not record any part of the class unless you have received permission from the instructor. Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who do not follow these rules will receive low participation grades.
THE SCHEDULE, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENTS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Course Schedule: All assignments and readings are due on the date listed below.

The Nature of Public Policy

Tuesday, Aug. 25: Introduction

Thursday, Aug. 27: What is public policy?


Tuesday, Sept. 1: Why public policy?

Due: Listen to podcast about public goods

Thursday, Sept. 3: Explaining Policy Choices

Readings: Dye Chap. 2
Due: Finding Policy Problems Assignment

Tuesday, Sept. 8: The Structure of Policymaking


Thursday, Sept. 10: Political Actors


Tuesday, Sept. 15: Role of the Public


Thursday, Sept. 17: Limits of Governmental Action

Due: Policy Problem/Program Description Paper
Policy Analysis

Tuesday, Sept. 22: Policy Analysis

Thursday, Sept. 24: Cost-Benefit Analysis


Due: Candidate Comparison Paper

Due: Ethical Dilemma (by 8:30am Monday, September 28)

Tuesday, Sept. 29: An Alternative Approach to Understanding Policy Analysis & Ethics and Public Policy


Thursday, Oct. 1: Exam

The Policy Process

Tuesday, Oct. 6: Agenda Setting & Policy Formulation


Thursday, Oct. 8: Policy Formulation: Understanding Incentives and Nudges


Due: Example Nudges

Tuesday, Oct. 13: No Class: Fall Break

Thursday, Oct. 15: Legitimating Policy Choices


Due: Listen to podcast on writing regulations

Tuesday, Oct. 20: Implementation


Due: Listen to podcast on agency capture

Due: Policy Alternatives/Program Evaluation Design

Thursday, Oct. 22: Evaluation and Policy Change

Substantive Policy Areas
(To be selected by student vote)

Tuesday, Oct. 27: Federal Budget
Thursday, Oct. 29: Federal Budget
    **Readings:** Articles on Moodle

Tuesday, Nov. 3:
Thursday, Nov. 5:

Tuesday, Nov. 10:
Thursday, Nov. 12:
    **Due:** Policy in Action Paper

Tuesday, Nov. 17:
Thursday, Nov. 19:

Tuesday, Nov. 24:
    **Due:** Policy Research Paper (electronic and paper copy)
Thursday, Nov. 26: No Class: Thanksgiving Break

Tuesday, Dec. 1:
Thursday, Dec. 3
    **Due:** Policy Op-Ed Paper

Tuesday, Dec. 8: Review for Final Exam

**FINAL EXAM:** Friday, December 11, 8:30 – 11:00, Johns Hall, Room 101
(The final exam time and date are nonnegotiable, so make your travel plans accordingly.)