

PSPA 360: Introduction to Public Affairs

Spring 2014

Class Meetings: SSA 219
Tuesday and Thursday, 1:30-2:45 p.m.

Dr. Bradley Best
Department of Political Science
Social Science and Art Hall 207
Office Hours: 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. and 1:00-2:00 p.m, on M/W/F
(other times by appointment)
Telephone: 712-749-2159
E-Mail: Best@bv.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

PSPA 360 examines the role of administrative processes in the generation of public policy in the United States. Students are introduced to a broad range of theoretical perspectives accounting for the impact of executive branch actors, organizations, and institutions on policy content. Furthermore, students acquire a clear sense of the power of administrative action in shaping the American political landscape. Consistent with the Political Science/Public Administration program's goal of instilling in students useful, "portable" knowledge of American political and policy processes, *Public Affairs* provides an introduction to techniques of policy analysis. PSPA 360 is, then, dedicated (at least in part) to the enterprise of equipping students with a framework for analyzing policy problems and choosing among alternative strategies for addressing policy problems.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. Students will deepen their familiarity with the history of the discipline of political science and the development of the public administration and public policy fields.
2. Students will describe and apply several alternative theories of the public policy process.
3. Students will describe and apply several theoretical perspectives on administrative behavior.
4. Students will describe and utilize basic techniques of policy analysis and methods of program evaluation that will contribute to their success as working professionals, public servants, educators, scholars, and citizens.

5. Students will demonstrate written communications skills through in-class writing assignments, essay examinations, and the generation of a portfolio of written work.
6. PSPA 360 pursues the *Social Science – Explorations* objective indicating that “Students are able to **think and write critically**, in ways informed by **social science theory**, about problems and questions of broad social importance.”

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Kettl, Donald. 2012. *The Politics of the Administrative Process*. Washington, D.C. CQ Press.

Bardach, Eugene. 2011. *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*. Fourth Edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

DAILY ACTIVITIES:

Assigned Readings. At each class meeting, students must have read the assigned materials and be prepared to respond to impromptu questions regarding the content of assigned readings. Failure to read assigned material will result in a loss of points on the "class participation / preparation" portion of the semester grade. The best strategy for preparing for lectures and class discussion is to complete the week's assigned reading before coming to the Monday lecture. This approach ensures that all readings can be discussed thoroughly and efficiently.

Attendance / Entering the Classroom. Attendance is recorded at the beginning of each class meeting. Students not present at the time attendance is recorded will be regarded as absent. Students are allowed three (3) unexcused absences during the semester. For each subsequent unexcused absence, the instructor will deduct two (2) points from the "class participation/ preparation" portion of the semester grade. The instructor will be the sole judge of the veracity and legitimacy of excuses for absences. Unless a prior arrangement has been made with the instructor no student may enter the lecture room after the commencement of the day's instruction. Students who violate the policy will be referred to appropriate University officials for immediate removal from the course.

Make-Up Examinations. Make-up quizzes or exams are allowed in only the most extraordinary of circumstances (e.g., profound illness, injury, family exigency, or other unforeseen circumstances). If a student is involved in a University sponsored event that conflicts with a scheduled quiz or exam date or class meeting, that student must meet with the instructor prior to the absence and arrange an alternate examination date or means of remedying an absence from a lecture. The questions of when and whether to allow a make-up quiz or exam will be answered first and finally by the instructor. In no event will the make-up quiz or exam be given prior to the scheduled examination period or after the passing of five (5) working days from the date of the scheduled examination.

Laptop Computers. From time to time, students will be asked to use laptops during classroom sessions. In all other instances, laptop computer cases must remain closed. Students should plan to bring to each class meeting adequate writing and note taking materials. Failure to observe this rule will result in referral to the appropriate University officials for immediately removal from the course.

RESEARCH PAPER / POLICY ANALYSIS PROJECT

All students must complete a research paper / policy analysis project of approximately 10 pages in length. All papers must reflect systematic application of (a) the *basic steps in the policy analysis process* outlined in class lecture and in the Bardach text; (b) awareness of multiple *theoretical perspectives* useful to social scientists; and (c) *critical thinking skills*. Students are strongly encouraged to complete the topic selection, problem definition, and initial data collection processes in close consultation with the professor. Final drafts must include a title page, bibliography (no fewer than 12 scholarly, professional grade sources), and reflect careful attention to the tenets of professional citation practices. A full explanation of grading criteria will be provided to students in the initial weeks of the term.

PLAGIARISM / ACADEMIC HONESTY

Evidence of plagiarism or a breach of academic honesty will result in a failing grade in the course. In the event that evidence of plagiarism or academic dishonesty is discovered, the instructor reserves the right to pursue remedies through administrative channels. Such remedies may include expulsion from the university. Moreover, students are expected to observe all aspects of the BVU Code of Student Conduct.

NEWSPAPERS/ NEWS PERIODICALS/ OTHER NEWS SOURCES:

Students are strongly encouraged to read a national newspaper and remain continually informed about occurrences in national policy making institutions (Congress, the presidency, the executive bureaucracy, and the courts). Doing so enriches our discussions and deepens the students' ability to evaluate the theoretical materials presented in lectures and assigned readings. *The New York Times*, *Washington Post* (including the weekly edition), and *The Chicago Tribune* are three of the many fine newspapers that provide extensive coverage of changes in the policy landscape. Other newspapers may be of similar value, depending on the student's interest and tastes.

Links to important on-line newspapers:

www.nytimes.com [New York Times – requires free registration]

www.washingtonpost.com [Washington Post]

www.chicago.tribune.com [Chicago Tribune]

Weekly magazines, radio programs, and internet sources are also highly valuable means of accessing news relevant to our study of public policy. Students may find the

Economist a valuable source of domestic and international policy news. Many students are aware of the *Nation*, and the *National Review*, and *The Weekly Standard*. These publications are often interesting and entertaining sources, yet should be read cautiously as each openly professes an ideologically liberal or conservative bent. Students may find magazines such as *The Atlantic* to be edifying and less stilted sources of information.

Public radio and public television are additional sources of national and world news. Most public radio stations broadcast the popular and award-winning "All Things Considered." The News Hour [<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/>] is an especially fine television news program, with a first-rate website, and is available for streaming on most devices. As with all news sources, students are reminded to consider the impact of publishers'/editors'/producers' ideological predispositions on the ultimate content of reporting and commentaries.

BASIS AND METHODS FOR GRADING:

- There will be six (6) quizzes. Each examination is worth 20 points. {total of **120 points** possible on quizzes} Quizzes will be typically some combination of short answer, short essay, or lengthy essay questions. Multiple choice questions are used less frequently, but may appear in some quantity on any quiz.
- The final examination is worth **50 points**. The final examination will survey major terms, concepts, ideas, and perspectives presented throughout the term.
- The research paper/policy analysis project is worth **60 points**. The specific requirements and criteria for the research paper/policy analysis project will be provided during the initial weeks of the term.
- Class participation/ preparation is worth **40 points** toward the final grade. The number of points awarded toward class participation will reflect the quality of each student's participation in class discussions and responses to invitations to analyze the content of assigned course readings. The number of points awarded for class participation will be the sole province of the instructor.
- A total of **270 points** are possible in the course. Final grades will be assigned according to the following point scheme:

<u>% of 270 Earned in the Course</u>	<u>Grade</u>
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-
59 or less	F

GENERAL COMMENTS:

Changes to the Course Calendar. The course calendar is subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances. Substantive changes to this course will be made only when a failure to do so would adversely effect the quality of instruction. Student should remain aware that depending on the progress of the class as a whole, slight variations in the course calendar may occur. Changes in the timing of readings and quizzes will be communicated in oral form prior to any such change taking effect.

SPECIAL NOTES

Conflicts in policy: In no way will any provision of this course syllabus be interpreted to conflict with the policies adopted by the faculty and administration of Buena Vista University

Academic services: Buena Vista University provides academic services through the Center for Academic Excellence (telephone 712-740-1237 or museld@bvu.edu) which serves as the university's academic support unit. Students may access tutors by logging on to: <http://www.bvu.edu/departments/academicaffairs/cae/>

Accommodating Students with special needs and/or disabilities: Students challenged by special needs or disabilities are encouraged to contact BVU's Center for Academic Excellence (telephone 712-740-1237 or museld@bvu.edu) for guidance and assistance in seeking necessary accommodations. It is the instructor's policy to do all that is feasible to assist students with special needs.

PSPA 360: Public Affairs – Course Calendar (Spring 2014)

- Week 1 (1/30) **Lecture: Administrative Action in the Public Policy Process**
- No reading assigned
- Week 2 (2/4-2/6) **Public Administration, Public Policy, and Policy Analysis**
- Kettl, Ch.1
 - Kettl, Ch. 2
- Week 3 (2/11-2/13) **Government – It’s Enterprises and Purposes / Policy Analysis – Part I**
- Kettl, Ch. 3
 - Bardach, Part I, “The Eightfold Path”
 - **Quiz #1 (20 pts)**
- Week 4 (2/18-2/20) **Organization Theory**
- Kettl and Fesler, Ch. 4
 - Supplemental Reading: Public Choice Theory
<http://www.econlib.org/library/Enc/PublicChoice.html>
 - **Research Paper Topic Proposal Due** [Problem definition, initial data/evidence, 2-3 alternatives identified.]
- Week 5 (2/25-2/27) **Managing the Executive Branch**
- Kettl and Fesler, Ch. 5
 - Watch Frontline video, “Inside Obama’s Presidency”
<http://video.pbs.org/video/2325679851/>
 - **Quiz #2 (20 pts)**
- Week 6 (3/4-3/6) **Policy Analysis – Part II**
- Bardach, Part II, “Gathering Data for Policy Research”
 - **Students: Be prepared to discuss progress on the data collection step in research paper / policy analysis project.**
- Week 7 (3/11-3/13) **Organization Problems**
- Kettl and Fesler, Ch. 6
 - Watch Frontline video, “The Man Who Knew”
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/knew/view/>
 - **Quiz #3 (20 pts)**

Week 8 (3/18-3/20)

Policy Analysis – Part III

- Bardach, Part III, “Smart (Best) Practices Research”
- Research paper consultation sessions with Dr. Best (schedule distributed in Week 6)

SPRING BREAK, 3/25-3/29

Week 9 (4/1-4/3)

Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform / Critical Thinking

- Kettl and Fesler, Ch. 7
- From the Obama Administration
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/economy/reform/resources>

Special Topic Lecture: Deploying Critical Thinking Skills in Policy Analysis

Read and review materials at:

<http://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/college-and-university-students/799>

Week 10 (4/8-4/10)

Personnel Management: Civil Service System

- Kettl and Fesler, Ch. 8
- OPM website (extensive use throughout the week)
<http://www.opm.gov/index.asp>
- **Quiz #4 (20 pts)**

Week 11 (4/15-4/17)

Decision Making

- Kettl and Fesler, Ch. 10
- Supplemental reading
~ Paul R. Shulman. 1975. “Nonincremental Policy Making.” *American Political Science Review* 69: 1354-1370.

~ Michael Cohen, James March, and Johan Olsen. 1972. “A Garbage Can Model of Organizational Choice.” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 17: 1-25.

Week 12 (4/22-4/24)

Public Budgeting

- Kettl and Fesler, Ch. 11
- Two essential websites, CBO [<http://www.cbo.gov/>] and OMB [<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb>]
- **Quiz #5 (20 pts)**

Week 13 (4/29)

Policy and Program Implementation

- Kettl and Fesler, Ch. 12

Week 14 (5/6-5/8)

Policy and Program Implementation and Evaluation

- Kettl and Fesler, Ch. 12
- GAO Website [<http://www.gao.gov/index.html>] – used many times in this portion of the course.
- **Quiz #6 (20 pts)**
- **Research Paper Due (60 pts)**

Week 15 (5/13 and 5/15)

Administrative Action and the Courts

- Kettl and Fesler, Ch. 13
- Special topic discussion: The Administrative Procedures Act Visit: <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/laws/administrative-procedure/>

Final Examination (50 pts) is scheduled for _____.