Introduction to Public Policy Analysis
Political Science 160AA

Fall Quarter 2013	**MWF 9:00-:50 AM**

Instructor: Justin Levitt   Room: Pepper Canyon Hall 121
Email: jlevitt@ucsd.edu
Office Hours: M 12-2 (Formal in SSB 447) & MW 10-11 (Informal at Price Center)
TA(s): TBA

Course Purpose

This class serves as an introduction to public policy and policy analysis. The material combines the building of practical skills and an understanding of what policy makers seek through policy analysis with a more theoretical treatment, with emphasis on methods and theories applicable across policy spheres. While this course does not require it, a background in basic economics and/or statistics may be useful.

Required Textbooks (available at the Bookstore):

1. *Contemporary Policy Analysis* by Michael Mintrom (Oxford University Press)—this will be the primary textbook used in the course
2. *Lobbying and Policymaking* by Ken Godwin, Scott Ainsworth, and Erik Godwin (SAGE/CQ Press)
3. *Writing Public Policy* by Catherine F. Smith (Oxford University Press)—this is a great handbook on writing for policy makers that will prove useful to anyone working in the field.
4. Other readings will be available on the Course Website

Requirements and Grades:

- Your grade will be broken down as follows:

  Final Portfolio—60% (DUE Wednesday, December 11th 2013 at 11am)

  For the course, you will complete a policy portfolio on a single policy issue in American Politics (this can be a Federal, State, or Local policy issue, but must be an issue here in the USA). The portfolio will contain several components, which mirror forms used by practitioners. More specific information on formatting will be provided in class. The point breakdown will be as follows:

  5%: Topic Selection. You are required to submit your idea to myself or one of the TAs on or prior to **Friday, October 25th**. You MUST receive approval for your topic. Please note that policy areas ("US-China trade policy," "standardized testing reform") are not sufficient—you need to be specific ("Softwood lumber imports from Canada" or "Adoption of a standard national curriculum" are better).

  10%: 1-2 page Executive Summary. This is your sales pitch! In 1-2 pages, convince me that your solution is right. Eschew long paragraphs and caveats here and highlight the key points.

  10%: 2-3 page Legislative History. This component should highlight current laws and previous attempts to deal with your policy problem. This may be in the form a bulleted list or subtitled sections (see examples in Smith, Ch. 5 or on http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/).

  5%: 1-2 page Letter of Support. Taking the stance of an interest group supporting your alternative, write a memo or letter of support for your policy position. You may include a message of "support if amended," with specifics for what amendments you'd like to see. Take a look at examples in Smith, Chapters 9-10.

  30%: 8-10 page comparison between a proposed solution and two alternatives. The heart of the assignment. This must explain the problem and its origins as well as why each option is a valid

strategy. You should have a 1-2 page cost-benefit/comparison table included in the page limit. Be sure to fully explain why your preferred alternative is superior as well as provide ways of providing accountability. This paper must be properly cited with standard formatting.

Midterm—35% (Wednesday, November 6th)
The midterm will be a bluebook exam designed to test your ability to think logically and creatively about policy problems using the strategies presented in the class. The exam will require you to use basic algebra. A practice problem set will be distributed approximately one week before the exam.

In-class Exercises—5% (Throughout)
We will occasionally be doing activities in class that will be turned in for participation credit.

- Students considering entering a PhD program in the Social Sciences should contact me before October 25th to discuss an alternate final assignment.

Academic honesty

From the UCSD Statement on Academic Integrity: "Integrity of scholarship is essential for an academic community. The University expects that both faculty and students will honor this principle and in so doing protect the validity of University intellectual work. For students, this means that all academic work will be done by the individual to whom it is assigned, without unauthorized aid of any kind."

In plain English, you may not have someone else complete an assignment for you. Let's be real here. Asking someone to proofread your paper is okay, but if they're telling you what to say, that's too far. If you are unfamiliar with the University's policy on academic integrity, please see
http://students.ucsd.edu/academics/academic-integrity/policy.html.

Learning disabilities

Students with University-documented learning disabilities should inform me as soon as possible.

Course Schedule (Subject to change due to the availability of guest speakers)

Week 0: Introduction

F 9/27—Introduction: The Five Things Not To Ignore In Policy Analysis

Week 1: Approaching the Policy Arena

Readings: Mintrom 1, 4; Godwin 3; Smith 1-3
M 9/30—What makes a problem a *public* problem?
W 10/2—Who's involved: Players and Groups
F 10/4—The Policymaking Process

Week 2: Strategies for Analyzing Policy

Readings: Mintrom 3, 8, 13; Godwin 1-2, 4; Smith 4-5
M 10/7—Policy Options
W 10/9—Power, Institutions, and Processes
F 10/11—Introduction to Cost/Benefit Analysis

Weeks 3-5: States and Markets: When Assumptions Go Bad

Readings: Mintrom 9-12, 16; Godwin 5, 8; Smith 6-8
(10/21) "The Elements of Strategic Thinking: Decision Tree and Game Theory," by Dipak K. Gupta. Chapter 13 in Analyzing Public Policy, 2nd Ed..

M 10/14—Gathering Data
W 10/16—Econ 101 Review: The Market System
F 10/18—Market failure and externalities
M 10/21—The Public Face of Choice
W 10/23—Voting
F 10/25—(Final Topics DUE)
M 10/28— Estimating Costs and Benefits
W 10/30—Information Asymmetry
F 11/1—Redistribution and taxation

Week 6: The Midterm
M 11/4— Midterm Review: Putting the pieces together
W 11/6— Midterm
F 11/8— Possible Guest Speaker or In-Class Activity

Weeks 7-8: Gaining Context: Beyond the Economics
Readings: Mintrom 14, 15; Godwin 7; Smith 9-10
(11/18)"Welcome to Sales Tax Canyon," by William Fulton. Chapter 10 in The Reluctant Metropolis..
(11/20) "Environmental Policy," by David M. Konisky and Neal D. Woods. Chapter 15 in Politics in the
American States: A Comparative Analysis, 10th Ed.. Virginia Gray, Russell Hanson, and Thad Kousser, Eds.
M 11/11—NO CLASS/Veteran's Day
W 11/13—Organizational Psychology and Sociology
F 11/15—Symbolic Politics
M 11/18—Historical and Legal Context
W 11/20—Looking Around: Policy Diffusion
F 11/22—Interest Groups: Getting Involved

Week 9-10: Doing Public Policy: Ethics and Professional Standards
Readings: Mintrom 2, 5-7, 17; Godwin 6; Smith Conclusion
M 11/25—Policy Documents: Making Yourself Clear
W 11/27—Possible Guest Speaker (Otherwise no class)
F 11/29—NO CLASS/Thanksgiving
M 12/2— Ethics I
W 12/4— Ethics II
F 12/6—Course review/Final questions

Final Exam Due: Monday, December 11th, 2013 (Happy Holidays!)