

**PUBLIC POLICY 6113 (Fall 2007)**  
**AGENDA SETTING AND POLICY FORMATION**

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Office: Old Main 439  
Hours: Tuesday 9-11 A.M.  
(or by appointment)

**Texts Available for Purchase**

Tatalovich, Raymond and Byron Daynes. 2005. *Moral Controversies in American Politics*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe.

Baumgartner, Frank and Bryan D. Jones. 1993. *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Rocheftort, David A. and Roger W. Cobb. 1994. *The Politics of Problem Definition: Shaping the Policy Agenda*. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press.

Gaventa, John. 1980. *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Cobb, Roger W. and Marc Howard Ross. 1997. *Cultural Strategies of Agenda Denial*. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press.

Kingdon, John. 1995. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*. New York: Addison, Wesley, Longman. (If you can find the 1984 edition, get it. It will be cheaper.)

Arnold, R. Douglas. 1990. *The Logic of Congressional Action*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

**Course Description**

This course is a seminar on agenda setting and policy formation. We will focus on the classic theoretical and empirical literature and raise some of the central questions of interest to public policy scholars and practitioners. The course is designed to introduce graduate students to a variety of theories, typologies, concepts, and ideas relating to the study of agenda setting and policy formation. We will address important questions such as: (1) what are the different types of public policy? (2) why do government decision makers focus on some policy problems and ignore others? (3) how are policy problems defined? (4) why are some proposed courses of action for dealing with a public problem acceptable (either politically, substantively, or both), while others are not? and (5) how is support for a specific proposal developed so that a policy can be legitimized/authorized by the relevant political and social institutions? This list of questions is not exhaustive.

**Course Requirements and Expectations**

This course is a seminar and will be treated as such. Each student is expected to do the assigned readings and to be prepared to discuss them. Your participation is essential to the success of the class and will thus determine 15% of your final grade.

Each student will be responsible for chairing a portion of the seminar. Depending on the final number of persons enrolled, some days with especially heavy reading may be co-chaired. The seminar chair (or chairs) will be responsible for leading the discussion and critique on the readings, and will write

a critical analysis (or in some cases a critical synthesis) on the readings. To satisfy this assignment each student will write a single-author paper. Under no circumstances will coauthored papers be accepted. This paper shall be no longer than 6 pages, typed and double-spaced. The paper shall include a clear, identifiable introduction, and a clear, identifiable conclusion with headings for each that read "Introduction" and "Conclusion." The sections between the introduction and conclusion shall also be marked with headings. The paper shall also include at least three discussion questions for seminar members. The seminar chair (or chairs) will be responsible for providing copies of their paper(s) to all class members. If you do not volunteer for a session the first night of class, one will be assigned to you. If too many people volunteer for the same topic, I reserve the right to make the final assignment. This paper will account for 20% of your final grade.

Each student is expected to write a term paper on an important, yet unaddressed (or under addressed) policy problem. You should select an important policy problem, preferably in your area of substantive expertise, that you think needs to be corrected/addressed. The details of this assignment will be provided in a separate handout. The paper should be about 20 pages long (double-spaced). I will be available to meet with you individually as you work on your paper, which will count for 27.5% of your final grade.

During the last four weeks of the course each student will give an oral presentation over their term paper project. These presentations will be conducted in the same manner as conference panel presentations. Each of the four panels will consist of a chair, the paper presenters, and two or three discussants. Presentations by paper authors should be no longer than 15 minutes and will account for 10% of your final grade. Each student will also serve once as a panel chair or discussant. The percentage of the final grade derived from the chair/discussant assignment is 5%.

Finally, there will be a final exam consisting of broad questions on agenda setting and policy formation similar to those you might find on your Ph.D. comprehensive exams. The exam will count for the remaining 22.5% of your final grade.

The readings (except for books that are available for purchase) should be available through services such as JSTOR.

**Inclement Weather Policy** - If the university declares that the inclement weather policy is in effect (or if the university closes), we will not hold class. The reading scheduled for the day the inclement weather policy (or closure) is in effect is **automatically** moved to the next class day.

## Course Outline

**August 20 - Introduction and Get Acquainted: The Study of Public Policy (What is a policy problem? What is public policy? Why study public policy? Why is theory important?)**

**August 27 - Types of Public Policy I - (The need for general classifications, attempts at classification, critique of attempts at classification)**

Lowi, Theodore. 1972. "Four Systems of Policy, Politics, and Choice." *Public Administration Review* 32:298-310.

Steinberger, Peter. 1980. "Typologies of Public Policy." *Social Science Quarterly* 61:185-197.

Kellow, Aynsley. 1988. "Promoting Elegance in Policy Theory: Simplifying Lowi's Arenas of Power."

*Policy Studies Journal* 16:713-724.

Smith, Kevin B. 2002. "Typologies, Taxonomies, and the Benefits of Policy Classification." *Policy Studies Journal* 30:379-395.

**September 3 – Labor Day (No Class)**

**September 10 – Types of Public Policy II**

Tatalovich, Raymond and Byron Daynes. 2005. *Moral Controversies in American Politics*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe. (read all except for chapters 3 & 7)

**September 17 - Agenda Setting I: The Concept of Non-decisionmaking**

Bachrach, Peter and Morton Baratz. 1962. "The Two Faces of Power." *American Political Science Review* 56:947-952.

Merelman, Richard. 1968. "On the Neo-Elitist Critique of Community Power." *American Political Science Review* 62:451-460.

Wolfinger, Raymond. 1971. "Non-decisions and the Study of Local Politics." *American Political Science Review* 55:1063-1080.

**September 24 - Agenda Setting II: The Empirical Study of Non-decisionmaking**

Gaventa, John. 1980. *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

**October 1 - Agenda Setting III: Policy Alternatives & Policy Formation**

Kingdon, John. 1995. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*. New York: Addison, Wesley, Longman. (First edition was published in 1984.)

**October 8 - Agenda Setting IV: Problem Definition**

Rochefort, David A. and Roger W. Cobb. 1994. *The Politics of Problem Definition: Shaping the Policy Agenda*. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press. (Read entire book except Chapters 2 & 3).

Stone, Deborah. 1989. Causal Stories and the Formation of Policy Agendas. *Political Science Quarterly* 104:281-300.

Scheberle, Denise. 1994. Radon and Asbestos: A Study of Agenda Setting and Causal Stories. *Policy Studies Journal* 22:74-86.

**October 15 - Agenda Setting V: Agenda 'Denial'**

Cobb, Roger W. and Marc Howard Ross. 1997. *Cultural Strategies of Agenda Denial*. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press. (Read entire book except Chapters 3 & 8).

**October 22 – Discuss Term Paper Projects (no assigned reading)**

**October 29 - Agenda Setting VI: Agenda Change/Instability**

Baumgartner, Frank and Bryan D. Jones. 1993. *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Birkland, Thomas. 2004. 'The World Changed Today': Agenda Setting and Policy Change in the Wake of the September 11 Terrorist Attacks. *Policy Studies Journal* 21:179-200.

**November 5 - Institutions and the Policy Process (Policy Formation)**

Arnold, R. Douglas. 1990. *The Logic of Congressional Action*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. (Read Chapters 1-6 and 10; skim Chapters 7-9).

Allison, Graham T. 1969. "Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis." *American Political Science Review* 63:689-718.

**November 12 – Panel Presentation**

**November 19 – Panel Presentation**

**November 26 – Panel Presentation**

**December 3 – Panel Presentation**

**Term Papers Due**

**Distribution of Final Exam**

**December 10 – Final Exams Due by 4:00 P. M.**