

Inside Washington: Politics & Policy

Washington Internship Institute

Spring 2017

Introduction:

Welcome to *Inside Washington: Politics and Policy*. During this semester we will review the institutions of American government and a number of public policies. These policies include economic and social policies such as the budget, gun control, abortion, and the death penalty.

This course is designed as an experiential based seminar with a focus on the politics and policies in the national policymaking process. We will be visiting various organizations during the seminar. The assigned readings will complement our visits and will be useful during our discussions with public policy experts.

Learning Objectives/Outcomes:

Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

- Identify the justification for government action on public policy issues, and analyze the importance of government institutions and processes
- Analyze the politics of public policy decision making and the pros and cons of different policy options
- Evaluate theories related to the public policy process
- Apply an understanding of the public policy process to a specific policy issue
- Engage thoughtfully with public policy experts
- Develop written communication skills by completing reaction papers and a policy analysis paper

Required Texts and Materials:

Readings will be emailed to you or links are posted in the syllabus.

Course Requirements:

A. Speaker visits. It is very important that you pay close attention to these policy experts. You are encouraged to ask these speakers questions.

B. Weekly papers. A one-page typed paper is due each week. These papers are based on the readings. You will write about one idea in the readings that you found interesting. You can agree with an argument in the readings or disagree. I will focus on whether your paper includes a thesis and information from the reading materials. Your paper is due each week at the beginning of class. Late papers are marked down 5 points per day. If you miss the class, your paper is due by 10 am on the day that you missed the class. You may email your papers.

C. Site visits. You will visit Congress, the Pentagon and the Supreme Court. We will discuss these visits in class.

D. White House visit. I will try to arrange a White House tour.

E. Recount. This movie is based on the presidential election of 2000. You will write a two (2) page paper of the following topic: Based on the movie, do you think the process of recounting the votes was fair?

F. Final paper. You will write a 3-4 page position paper (750-1000 words). We will discuss this paper in more detail during the first few weeks of the class.

Final paper due Monday, April 24th.

G. Committee assignment/visit the Congress. You will visit a committee hearing and take a tour of the Capitol.

H. Final exam. A final exam is due at the end of the semester. It will include short answer questions. These questions are based on class discussions, speaker presentations and readings.

Take home final exam emailed to students on Thursday, April 20th.

Final Exam Due by 4 pm on Wednesday, April 26th.

Assignments:

1. Participation and Attendance	4
2. Speaker Questions	4
3. Reaction Papers (8 x 3)	24
4. Congress Visit (fill out committee sheet)	4
5. Supreme Court Visit (fill out Supreme Court sheet)	4
6. Movie Analysis (Recount)	10
7. Final Paper	25
8. Final Take-Home Exam	25

Grade Grid:

A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	86-89
B	82-85
B-	78-81
C+	76-77
C	73-75
C-	70-72
D+	68-69
D	65-67
F	Below 65

Course Schedule

Week 1: Wednesday, January 18th: Introduction

1. Introduction and Course Overview
2. Student Introductions
3. Review of American Politics
4. Take the Political Typology Quiz

Week 2: Wednesday, January 25th: The Trump Administration

Read: "Can Trump Unite the Country?" CQ Researcher

Speaker: Mr. Igor Volsky, War Room, Center for American Progress

Location: Center for American Progress, 1333 H Street, NW, 10th Floor

Time: 3 pm

Week 3: Wednesday, February 1st: Capitalism. Inequality

Read: "Wealth and Inequality: Does the Gap Between Rich and Poor Threaten Democracy?" CQ Researcher

Organization: Competitive Enterprise Institute

Speaker: Mr. Fred Smith

Location: Competitive Enterprise Institute, 1310 L Street, NW, 7th Floor

Time: 2:30 pm

Week 4: Wednesday, February 8th: Congress: Committee Visit

Committee Visit: 2:00 pm

Visit Committee of your choice

Tour of Capitol Hill: 3:30 pm

Visit House Gallery, get gallery pass

Metro: Capitol South

Capitolhearings.org for a list of committee meetings

Democraticwhip.gov (for House schedule)

Senate.gov (for Senate schedule and committee hearings)

Week 5: Wednesday, February 15th: Campaign Finance

Read:

1. "Campaign Finance: Does Big Money in Politics Subvert Democracy?" CQ Researcher

2. Richard. L. Hasen, Plutocrats United: Campaign Money, the Supreme Court, and the Distortion of American Elections (excerpt)

Organization: Campaign Legal Center

Speaker: Mr. Brendan Fischer, Associate Counsel

Time: 11:30 am

Location: 1411 K Street, NW, 14th Floor

Week 6: Wednesday, February 22nd: Supreme Court Visit

Advanced Reading (Review Only if of Particular Interest)

1. *The Brethren*, Bob Woodward and Scott Armstrong
2. *The Death Contract*, Grant Gilmore
3. *The Nine*, Jeffrey Toobin

Time: 2 pm

Organization: Supreme Court of the United States

Location: Capitol South Metro

Week 7: Wednesday, March 1st: Education Reform

Read: "School Choice Debate" CQ Researcher

Speaker: Mr. Robert Pondiscio

Organization: Thomas E. Fordham Institute

Time: 2:30 pm

Week 8: Wednesday, March 8th: Gun Control

Read: "Gun Control: Should Lawmakers Tighten Firearm Restrictions?" CQ Researcher

Advanced Reading (Review Only if of Particular Interest)

Speaker: Ms. Kelly Sampson, Attorney, Legal Action Project

Time: 2:30 pm

Location: Brady Center for the Prevention of Gun Violence, 840 First Street, NE, Suite 400

Metro: Union Station

Week 9: Wednesday, March 15th: Recount

Paper Question (2-3 page paper): Based on the movie, do you think the process of recounting the votes in Florida was fair? Use evidence from the movie to support your argument.

Week 10: Wednesday, March 22nd: Pentagon Visit

Time: 10 am

Location: TBD

Week 11: Wednesday, March 29th: The Budget

Read: "The National Debt: Are Higher Taxes Needed to Reduce the Debt?" CQ Researcher

Skim: Concord Coalition Budget Talk

Speaker: Mr. Michael Linden

Time: 2:00 pm

Location: Washington Internship Institute

Week 12: Wednesday, April 5th: The Death Penalty

Read: "Death Penalty Debates," CQ Researcher

Organization: Death Penalty Information Center

Speaker: Mr. Robert Dunham

Location: Washington Internship Institute

Time: 2:00 pm

Week 13: Wednesday, April 12th: Research Paper Topic

You will conduct some research on your paper this week. You will present your topic idea the following week.

Week 14: Wednesday, April 19th: Abortion

Read: “Abortion Debates: Will the Supreme Court Impose New Restrictions?”

Organization: National Right to Life Committee

Speaker: Ms. Olivia Gans Turner

Time: 2:30 pm

Location: National Right to Life Committee, 512 10th Street, NW

Week 15: Wednesday, April 26th

Take Home Final Exam due Wednesday, April 26th

Take Home Final Exam emailed to students on Thursday, April 20th

Final Paper due Monday, April 24th

Deductions from Your Final Average:

Missed Classes: Students are not allowed any absences during the term except for very good reasons (e.g., family emergency or sickness). It is very important that you communicate with me about any absences *prior* to your missing class. For the first unexcused absence, students will lose five points from their final average. The second unexcused absence will result in five additional points deducted from your final average. Three unexcused absences will be referred to the staff at the Washington Internship Institute.

Late papers are marked down five points per day.

Final Paper: If you copy any part of your final paper without attribution, I will refer the paper to the Washington Internship Institute staff.

Final Exam: The final exam is based on your readings and the information we learn from speaker visits. I do not accept information from web searches of the speakers or the organizations that we visit. I take notes during our speaker presentations and evaluate your ability to closely follow each speaker’s main points.

Classroom Etiquette:

We will make rules in the following areas during our first class.

1. Use of electronic devices during class
2. Side conversations during class
3. Speaking out of turn during class
4. Use of electronic devices during speaker visits
5. Side conversations during speaker visits