



INSIDE WASHINGTON: POLITICS AND POLICY SPRING 2018

Tuesdays, 1:00pm–4:00pm

Course Description

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, campaign finance, gun control, abortion, education, and the death penalty.

This course is designed as an experiential seminar with a focus on the politics and policies in the national policymaking process. Your informed input is extremely important. You are expected to contribute to our class discussion and to carefully follow the arguments presented by our guest speakers. The assigned readings will complement our visits and will be useful during our discussions with public policy experts.

Learning 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 online.

Course Requirements

Active Participation and Speaker Visits (14% of final grade)

Active participation in this class is essential for you to gain the most from the class and for the class to work well. It requires attention to peer comments, speaker presentations and my brief lectures and comments. Classroom behavior includes being present, considerate, and not distracted during class.

In class and during visits from speakers, you should refrain from:

- Using your phone or your laptop
- Having a side conversation with a classmate
- Interrupting a speaker or a classmate, or speaking out of turn
- Otherwise being inattentive

Inconsiderate behavior as detailed above will result in a lower participation grade; persistent inattentive or inconsiderate behavior may result in a lower final grade.

It is very important that you pay close attention to the policy experts who visit class and whom we visit. You are highly encouraged to ask these speakers questions.

Weekly Papers (27% of final grade; 9 papers at 3% each)

A one-page typed position 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. Your paper must include a thesis and use evidence from the readings to support your position.

Your paper is due each week at the beginning of class. Late papers are not accepted. If you miss the class, your paper is due by the 1pm on the day that you missed the class. You may email your papers by 9 pm the day before our class. You may not redo your papers but if your papers improve during the semester, I will take this into account when reviewing your final grade.

Site Visits (9% of final grade; 3 visits at 3% each)

You will visit Congress, the Pentagon, and the Bible Museum. I will try to get tickets for a White House visit, but this usually doesn't work out because we are limited to Tuesdays between 1 pm and 4 pm.

Recount Analysis (10%)

This movie is based on the presidential election of 2000. You will write a two-page paper of the following topic: based on the movie, do you think outcome of the 2000 election was fair?

Final Paper (20%)

You will write a four-page position paper (1000 words). We will discuss this paper in more detail in class. Paper is due on **Monday, April 23rd**.

Final Exam (20%)

Take home final exam emailed to students on Wednesday, April 18th. Final Exam Due by 4pm on Tuesday, April 24th (emailed to me).

The final exam is based on your readings, class discussions 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 speaker presentations and evaluate your ability to closely follow each of our speaker's main points.

Course Policies

Absences

Students are not allowed any absences during the term except for very good reasons (e.g., required by your internship, 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 Assignments

No late papers will be accepted, unless you make arrangements with me in advance.

Academic Honesty

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

Grade Scale

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

Course Schedule

Week 1, Tuesday, January 16: Introduction

- Introduction and Course Overview
- Student Introductions
- How to Make American Politics Less Rotten

Week 2, Tuesday, January 23rd: Inequality

- Read “Wealth and Inequality: Does the gap between the Rich and Poor threaten Democracy?” *CQ Researcher*
- Position Paper Question: What, if anything, should the government do to reduce the income gap?
- Speaker: Dr. Ryan Streater, Director of Domestic Policy Studies
Organization: American Enterprise Institute
Location: 1789 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Time: 2:30pm

Week 3, Tuesday, January 30: The Budget

- Read “The National Debt: Do Rising Deficits Threaten the Economy?” *CQ Researcher*
- Concord Coalition Budget Talk
- Position Paper Question: What actions, if any, should the federal government take to reduce the national debt?
- Speaker: Mr. Michael Linden, Managing Director, Policy and Research
Organization: The Hub Project
Location: 1601 Connecticut Avenue, NW (next to DuPont metro, above Circa), 7th floor
Time: 2:30pm

Week 4, Tuesday, February 6th: Political Polarization

- Read “Does Partisan Politics Threaten Democracy?” *CQ Researcher*

- Question: What, if anything, should be done about political polarization in the United States?
- Organization: Third Way,
Speaker: Ryan Pougiales, Senior Political Analyst (tentative)
Location: 1025 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 400
Time: 2:30pm

Week 5, Tuesday, February 13th: Congress

- Tour of Capitol and visit a Committee of your choice
Time: 1:00pm
Visit Senate Gallery after tour (5 minutes) or
Visit House Gallery after committee visit (5 minutes)
Metro: Capitol South or Union Station
Capitolhearings.org for a list of committee meetings
Democraticwhip.gov (for House schedule)
Senate.gov (for Senate schedule and committee hearings)
Capitolhearings.org for a list of committee meetings
Democraticwhip.gov (for House schedule)
Senate.gov (for Senate schedule and committee hearings)

Week 6, Tuesday, February 20th, Campaign Finance Reform

- Read “Campaign Finance: Does Big Money in Politics Subvert Democracy?” *CQ Researcher*
- Question: What limits, if any, should be placed on political spending in the United States?
- Speaker: Mr. Tyler Cole, Legislative Policy Director and Policy Counsel
Organization: Issue One
Location: Washington Internship Institute offices
Time: 2:30pm

Week 7, Tuesday, February 27th: Gun Control

- Read “Gun Control: Should Lawmakers Tighten Firearm Restrictions?” *CQ Researcher*
- Question: Should lawmakers tighten restrictions on guns?
- Speaker: To be announced

Week 8, Tuesday, March 6th: Bible Museum

Location: 400 4th Street, SW (4th & D, SW)
Metro: Federal Center, SW

Week 9, Tuesday, March 13th: Marriage Equality and Transgender Rights

Assignments and speaker(s) to be announced

Week 10, Tuesday, March 20th: The Death Penalty

- Read “Death Penalty Debates,” *CQ Researcher*
- Question: Should the United States abolish the death penalty?
- Organization: Death Penalty Information Center
Speaker: Mr. Robert Dunham, Executive Director (tentative)
Organization: Death Penalty Information Center
Location: Washington Internship Institute offices
Time: 2:30pm

Week 11, Tuesday, March 27th: *Recount*

Paper Question (2-3 page paper): Based on the movie, do you think the outcome of the 2000 election was fair? Use evidence from the movie to support your argument.

Week 12, Tuesday, April 3rd: Affirmative Action
Assignments and speaker(s) to be announced

Week 13, Tuesday, April 10th: Pentagon Visit

Week 14, Tuesday, April 17th: Abortion

- Read “Abortion Debates: Will the Supreme Court Impose New Restrictions?”
- Question: Should the United States place more restrictions on abortion?
- Organization: National Right to Life Committee
Speaker: Ms. Olivia Gans Turner
Location: National Right to Life Committee, 512 10th Street, NW
Time: 2:30pm

Week 15, Tuesday, April 24th: Final Take-Home Exam

Take-Home Final Exam due Tuesday, April 24th

Take home final exam emailed to students on Wednesday, April 18th

Final Paper Due: Monday, April 16th