**U.S. INSTITUTIONS AND THE POLICY PROCESS**

**PUBP-730**

Spring, 2016

**Professor David M. Hart**

School of Policy, Government, and International Affairs

George Mason University

**Times, Places, and Contact Information**

Class meetings: Wednesdays, 7:20-10:00 p.m., Founders Hall TBA

Office hours: Wednesdays, 4-6 pm or by appointment

Office location: Founders Hall 609

Email (preferred): [dhart@gmu.edu](mailto:dhart@gmu.edu)

Office phone (if necessary): 703-993-2279

**Overview**

This course provides a basic theoretical and practical understanding of the principal governmental and non-governmental institutions that shape public policy at the national level in the United States. These institutions include the three branches of the Federal government, which were provided for by the U.S. Constitution, along with the states. They also include institutions that the framers did not foresee, such as political parties and regulatory agencies. The course will investigate the interactions of these institutions over time as well as their day-to-day operations.

**Learning Outcomes**

Upon completion of this course, students should have acquired:

1. Greater familiarity with the national policy-making process in the U.S., including the interaction of policy and politics,
2. Deeper appreciation of how the U.S. policy-making process compares to those of other nations,
3. Enhanced ability to analyze information and engage effectively in strategic discussions about U.S. national policy-making and its reform,
4. Stronger written and oral communication skills, and
5. More profound understanding of the ethical and moral dimensions of public policy.

**Participants**

PUBP-730 is open to all qualified graduate students and is a prerequisite for the Ph.D. in Public Policy at SPGIA.

**Course Texts and Additional Readings**

Two texts will be available in the campus bookstore:

1. Haskell, John, Marian Currinder, and Sara A. Grove, *Congress in Context*, 2nd edition (Boulder: Westview Press, 2014.)
2. Taylor, Steven L., Matthew S. Shugart, Arend Lijphart, and Bernard Grofman, *A Different Democracy: American Government in a 31-Country Perspective* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

Additional readings will be made available through the course website or linked through the syllabus to open web sources.

**Format**

The primary format for this course will be the seminar, with a significant role for students as discussion leaders and participants. The seminar format will be supplemented by faculty lectures and occasional guest speakers.

**Assignments and Grading**

1. Discussion leadership and response to weekly questions, approx. 750 words, due at two class meetings as assigned between January 27 and April 13. Two individual assignments, weighted at 10% each.
2. Weekly seminar participation. Individual assignment, weighted at 20%.
3. Policy landscape memo, approx. 2500 words/person, due April 13 in class, plus oral update with one-page handout at class meeting, due as assigned between February 10 and April 6. Team assignment, weighted at 35%.
4. Analysis of proposed institutional reform, approx. 2000 words, due May 9 at 5 p.m. Individual assignment, weighted at 25%.

Detailed handouts with instructions for each assignment will be provided well in advance of each due date.

**Late Assignments**

Late assignments, with the exception of the synopsis and critique of weekly readings, will be penalized one grade level (for instance, from A+ to A) for each calendar day or part thereof, up to a full grade (A+ to B+) each week. The synopsis and critique of weekly reading assignment will not be accepted late; students missing one of these assignments will receive an F for it.

**Class Participation**

Students need to attend regularly to participate effectively. A student who misses more than three classes will be penalized one full grade on the participation component for each additional class missed. Please consult Prof. Hart if you are in jeopardy of such a circumstance.

**Students with Special Needs**   
If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodation, please see the instructor and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 993-2474.  All academic accommodations must be arranged through the DRC.

**Read the plagiarism policy attached to the end of this syllabus. Ignorance of or failure to understand the policy will not lead to lenience in case of violation.**

**Class Schedule**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Class | Date | Topic | Reading | Assignments |
| 1 | January 20 | Introduction: Political Engineering | Taylor et al., chs. 1-2, skim ch. 3  Haskell et al., ch. 1 | None |
| 2 | February 3 | Congress | Taylor et al., ch. 7, pp. 320-324  Haskell et al., chs.3, 5-6, skim ch. 2 | Discussion leadership  Seminar participation |
| 3 | February 10 | The President | Taylor et al., ch. 8  Haskell et al., ch. 11  [Klein](http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/03/19/the-unpersuaded-2) | Discussion leadership  Seminar participation  Landscape update |
| 4 | February 17 | Political Parties, Elections, and Public Opinion | Taylor et al., chs. 5-6  Haskell et al., ch. 4 | Discussion leadership  Seminar participation  Landscape update |
| 5 | February 24 | 2016 Campaign: A Look-In  (Anna Greenberg) | [Hillygus](file:///C:\Users\dhart\Dropbox\Courses\PUBP%20730%20Spring%202016\poq.oxfordjournals.org\content\75\5\962.full)  [Pew Research Center](http://www.people-press.org/2012/05/15/assessing-the-representativeness-of-public-opinion-surveys/)  [Birnbaum](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A49971-2004Nov14.html) | Guest: Anna Greenberg  Field trip to GQRR  Seminar participation |
| 6 | March 2 | Federalism | Taylor et al., ch. 4  [Rose & Bowling](http://publius.oxfordjournals.org.mutex.gmu.edu/content/45/3/351.full)  [Conlan et al.](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2454136) | Discussion leadership  Seminar participation  Landscape update |
| NO CLASS ON MARCH 9 – SPRING BREAK | | | | |
| 7 | March 16 | The Courts | Taylor et al., ch. 9  Haskell et al., ch. 12  [Eskridge](http://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5813&context=fss_papers) | Discussion leadership  Seminar participation  Landscape update |
| 8 | March 23 | Foreign and Military Policy-Making | Haskell, pp. 339-353  [Davidson](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.mutex.gmu.edu/doi/10.1111/psq.12006/abstract)  Auerswald | Discussion leadership  Seminar participation  Landscape update |
| 9 | March 30 | The Budget Process | Haskell et al., chs. 7-8  [Fisher](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.mutex.gmu.edu/doi/10.1111/j.1741-5705.2012.04016.x/abstract) | Discussion leadership  Seminar participation  Landscape update |
| 10 | April 6 | Domestic Policy and Regulation | Haskell et al., chs. 9-10  [Rudaleveige](http://www.degruyter.com.mutex.gmu.edu/view/j/for.2014.12.issue-1/for-2014-0023/for-2014-0023.xml?format=INT) | Discussion leadership  Seminar participation  Landscape update |
| 11 | April 13 | American Exceptionalism? | Taylor et al., ch. 10 | Seminar participation  Policy landscape memo due. |
| 12 | April 20 | Reforming U.S. Institutions: Domestic Policy-Making | Haskell et al., chs. 13-14  [Bipartisan Policy Ctr.](http://bipartisanpolicy.org/library/governing-polarized-america-bipartisan-blueprint-strengthen-our-democracy/) | Guest: John Fortier, Director, Democracy Project, BPC  Seminar participation |
| 13 | April 27 | Reforming U.S. Institutions: National Security Policy-Making | [Carter](http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Transcripts/Transcript-View/Article/714145)  [CNAS](http://www.cnas.org/shaping-the-national-security-council#.Vw6u53qVlNh) | Guest: Mark Jacobson, Senior Advisor, U.S. Dept. of Defense  Seminar participation |

**Additional Readings**

Class 3:

* Ezra Klein, “[The Unpersuaded: Who Listens to a President](http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/03/19/the-unpersuaded-2)?,” *New Yorker* (March 19, 2012).

Class 5:

* D. Sunshine Hillygus, “[The Evolution of Election Polling in the United States](http://poq.oxfordjournals.org/content/75/5/962.full),” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 75:962-981 (2011).
* Pew Research Center, “[Assessing the Representativeness of Public Opinion Surveys](http://www.people-press.org/2012/05/15/assessing-the-representativeness-of-public-opinion-surveys/),” May 15, 2012.
* Jeffrey H. Birnbaum, “[Political Pollsters Don't Live on Elections Alone](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A49971-2004Nov14.html),” Washington Post, November 15, 2004.

Class 6:

* Shanna Rose and Cynthia J. Bowling, “[The State of American Federalism 2014-15: Pathways to Policy in an Era of Party Polarization](http://publius.oxfordjournals.org.mutex.gmu.edu/content/45/3/351.full),” *Publius* 45:351-379 (Summer 2015).
* Timothy Conlan, Youn Sung Kim, Mariely López-Santana, and Paul Posner, “[Unsafe at Any Speed? The Emergence of Variable Speed Federalism in the United States and the European Union](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2454136),” paper presented at the 2014 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association.

Class 7:

* William N.Eskridge Jr, "[Backlash Politics: How Constitutional Litigation Has Advanced Marriage Equality in the United States](http://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5813&context=fss_papers)," Boston University Law Review 93:275-323 (2013).

Class 8:

* Janine Davidson, “[Civil-Military Friction and Presidential Decision Making: Explaining the Broken Dialogue](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.mutex.gmu.edu/doi/10.1111/psq.12006/abstract),” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 43:129-145 (2013).
* David Auerswald, “The Evolution of the NSC Process,” in Roger Z. George and Harvey Rishikof, eds., *The National Security Enterprise : Navigating the Labyrinth* (Georgetown University Press, 2011), pp. 31-54. [Available on course Blackboard site.]

Class 9:

* Louis Fisher, “[Presidential Budgetary Duties](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.mutex.gmu.edu/doi/10.1111/j.1741-5705.2012.04016.x/abstract),” Presidential Studies Quarterly 42:754–790 (2012).

Class 10:

* Andrew Rudalevige, “[The Letter of the Law: Administrative Discretion and Obama’s Domestic Unilateralism](http://www.degruyter.com.mutex.gmu.edu/view/j/for.2014.12.issue-1/for-2014-0023/for-2014-0023.xml?format=INT),” *The Forum* 12:29-59 (2014).

Class 12:

* Bipartisan Policy Center, Commission on Political Reform, [*Governing in a Polarized America*](http://bipartisanpolicy.org/library/governing-polarized-america-bipartisan-blueprint-strengthen-our-democracy/)(2014), pp. 29-69.

Class 13:

* Ash Carter, “[Remarks on "Goldwater-Nichols at 30: An Agenda for Updating,](http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Transcripts/Transcript-View/Article/714145)" April 5, 2016
* Dafna Rand, Jacob Stokes, Julianne Smith, Shawn Brimley “[Enabling Decision: Shaping the National Security Council for the Next President](http://www.cnas.org/shaping-the-national-security-council#.Vw6uN3qVlNg),” Center for a New American Security, June 24, 2015

## SPGIA Policy on Plagiarism

The profession of scholarship and the intellectual life of a university, as well as the field of public policy inquiry, depend fundamentally on a foundation of trust. Thus, any act of plagiarism strikes at the heart of the meaning of the University and the purpose of the School of Policy, Government and International Affairs. It constitutes a serious breach of professional ethics and it is unacceptable. Plagiarism is the use of another’s words or ideas presented as one’s own. It includes, among other things, the use of specific words, ideas, or frameworks that are the product of another’s work. Honesty and thoroughness in citing sources is essential to professional accountability and personal responsibility. Appropriate citation is necessary so that arguments, evidence, and claims can be critically examined.

Plagiarism is wrong because of the injustice it does to the person whose ideas are stolen. It is also wrong because it constitutes lying to one’s professional colleagues. From a prudential perspective, it is shortsighted and self-defeating, and it can ruin a professional career.

The faculty of the School of Policy, Government, and International Affairs takes plagiarism seriously and has adopted a zero tolerance policy. This may lead to failure for the course, resulting in termination from the program and possible termination from SPGIA. This termination will be noted on the student’s transcript. For foreign students who are on a university-sponsored visa (eg. F-1, J-1 or J-2), termination also results in the revocation of their visa.

To help enforce the SPGIA policy on plagiarism, all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit a student’s work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. The SPGIA policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace it or substitute for it.

(<http://policy.gmu.edu/honorcode> )

**Professor Hart’s Addendum**

I believe deeply that intellectual integrity is a fundamental element of learning. I firmly support the School’s zero tolerance policy on plagiarism and will enforce it stringently. Ignorance is not an excuse. To avoid plagiarism, a simple rule of thumb may be of help: when in doubt, include a citation. Citations, including those to web sources, should include sufficient information to allow a reader to verify the source. Further details on when and how to cite sources will be discussed in class. However, providing a citation to a block of text taken with minimal change from a source is not sufficient to avoid plagiarism. You must put the block in quotation marks, thereby acknowledging the source’s contribution of specific words as well as ideas in the block.