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329-01 Public Policy Practice

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Public Policy Practice
POLI 329  CRN 14897
Spring 2013

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CLC - 151

NOTE:  POLI 329 is part of the sophomore block for the Philosophy, Politics, and the Public honors program. POLI 246 Mass Media and Campaigns and HIST 408 Constructing the Public, offered in the fall, are prerequisites. HIST 300 Writing in Public, offered in the spring, is a co-requisite. Considerable theoretical and practical understanding of campaign politics is assumed in POLI 329. These four courses are required for the “politics track” in PPP.

Public Policy Practice

The study of Public Policy theory involves examination of the legislative, judicial, and executive structure by which policy is debated, enacted, and administered. Students study constitutions, charters, laws, rules and traditions that govern the formal policy-making process. The structures and rules by which we govern are the creation of men and women acting in conflict and in concert. It is essential to understand such governing structures and laws but actual policy-making only comes about through the cultivation and nurturing of professional and personal relationships. In other words, the practice of public policy requires the skilled use of precise, effective communication and the ability to build constructive relationships with key constituencies. This course builds these skills while providing a more complete understanding about how government structures actually work.
Students will engage the theory of public practice in this course, but the central learning comes through practical engagement in the policy process. With the assistance of the instructors, the students select, research, and advocate for a current federal, state or local public policy that will shape the future of the city, region, or state. The students become effective and reflective participants in the public policy process by acquiring expertise about the policy we chose to advocate for; developing a strategy to build public support for our policy, and executing that strategy. All of these tasks require and promote the development of the key skills of thorough and exact research, effective, precise communication, and the ability to build constructive relationships with key constituencies and policy makers.

As we identify and develop expertise about our public policy issue, students will use a variety of primary and secondary sources, which may include past legislation, judicial decisions, executive decrees and the like, along with associated debates in the public realm. Students will also have to learn the relevant formal and informal rules governing the policy area in which they work. Our analysis and strategy will become increasingly targeted as we understand who the key interest groups, activists, and decision-makers are and what influences their actions and motivates their decisions. Students will develop strategies and craft messages to enlist others in our effort. Thus, we may be working with elected officials and their staffs, administrators, policy experts in foundations or think-tanks, lobbyists and interest groups, as well as grassroots organizations and, of course, the media. Students will be charged with finding these individuals, determining how they contribute to your goal, gaining their cooperation and possibly support, and building and maintaining relationships with them.

Students will also be called on to communicate clearly and affectively in public settings, such as community council meetings, committee meetings, public hearings, and media interviews. In these forums, the student’s task may be to question, to inform, to propose, to persuade, to defend, or some combination of these in order to move the public policy in a useful direction. As with the knowledge they gained doing the analysis and execution in campaigning this past fall, students will take responsibility for becoming expert about the matters at hand.
PPP Learning Outcomes:

1. **Critical analysis** - Students demonstrate, through understanding and actions, an increasing capacity to apply a rigorous, critical analysis to policy issues and practices in real time and retrospectively. As policy advocates in the public sector, students may be barraged with an unpredictable range of ideas and arguments. They use their ability to think critically to not just understand but respond to the ideas and arguments they confront.

2. **Multidisciplinary Learning** – Students demonstrate an increasing ability to apply their interdisciplinary learning to the public policy issues and practices they observe and participate in pursuit of policy advocacy. They must learn to draw on all aspects of the learning to synthesize the ideas and arguments they confront.

3. **Group work**- Students become increasingly familiar with and adept at working in various iterations of team settings often under demanding deadlines, as well as show their ability to assume a variety of roles and responsibilities in team settings. Throughout the semester, students work in groups to study a legislative issue and plan an advocacy strategy, and throughout the year they will conduct a variety of meetings with a different team each time.

4. **Oral Presentation**- Students will demonstrate increasing proficiency at effective and appropriate oral communication skills to the diverse audiences and in venues that make up the public. This semester builds on the type of oral presentation than the Campaigns course developed first semester. Policy advocacy requires teaching students to communicate ideas in meetings - large and small, in a variety of setting - with legislators, federal agencies, think tanks, and interest groups. Students may also testify before public bodies such as State Legislative Committees, City Council and Community Council meetings, as well as appear before the print and electronic media.

5. **Written Presentation**- Students must demonstrate effective and appropriate written communication skills to the diverse audiences and venues that make up the public including, internal memos, white papers, press releases, letters to the editor, op-ed pieces, direct, written communications with elected officials and their staffs and public administrators.

6. **Research Skills**- Students will be able to utilize a full range of resource materials in researching complex issues of public importance. This includes public documents such as laws, regulations, matters of public record, and inter-office communications. In addition, common public records sources such as newspaper, magazines and pamphlets, as well as, making use of the emerging avalanche of material in the internet
and social media outlets.

7. Civic Engagement- Students must demonstrate the ability to engage in the public sphere of the communities effected by any public policy the class is advocating for.

**Political Science Outcomes:**

1. **Governmental and nongovernmental institutions**- This class reinforces and deepens, through practical engagement, students' knowledge of the structure, methods and purpose of governmental and nongovernmental institutions, and especially, the role they play in making and administering public policy in a representative democracy, including the power and limitations of such entities.

2. **Concepts, frameworks, and methods**- This course develops the students' ability to grasp and apply key concepts, theoretical frameworks, and analytical methods in U.S. politics, most especially the relationship between campaign politics and public policy.

3. **Interrogate underlying claims**- This course enhances students' ability to interrogate the assumptions underlying assertions about justice, representativeness, fairness, stability, development, conflict, and the public policy process, among other political ideas and issues.

4. **Active learning**- In providing an opportunity for students to act on what they have learned, this course challenges students to employ active learning to connect theoretical knowledge to empirical observations.

5. **Understanding of the Public** - As a course in the Philosophy, Politics, and the Public honors program, this course provides students with an opportunity to test, apply, and revise their philosophical and historical ideas through engagement with actual, existing democracy. By deepening their understanding of the formal aspects of the public realm, the course deepens, tests, and challenges their theoretical understanding of the public.

6. **Education in Professionalism** - As a course in the Philosophy, Politics, and the Public honors program, this course requires that students develop proper professional characteristics, including coherent speech, clear prose, appropriate attire, strict punctuality, and an ability and desire to make a difference in every situation in which they find themselves. This is reinforced in class preparation and tested in countless meetings with other professionals in a variety of settings, including a possible trip to Washington, D.C.
Student Assignments and Assessment:

Given the nature of this course, it is difficult to specify precise assignments before the semester begins. Much depends upon the public policy issue that becomes the focus of the semester. What follows is a general description of assignments and assessment.

1. Team and Class Participation (30%): Students are given frequent opportunities to present both as individuals and as teams (team membership shift frequently over the course of the semester): These presentations, as well as less formal discussions, allow an assessment of the students’ achievements in learning outcomes 1, 2, 3, and 4. All presentations and discussions help develop and provide an assessment of communication and research skills. Team presentations develop and provide an assessment of the ability to build working relationships.

2. Written field reports: (30%): The students compile a journal of their activities. Part of the journal will be in response to specific questions posed by the instructors, other parts will be a chronicle of specific contributions that students make to their teams and to the group at large, and part of it will be introspection about what they are learning in the practical parts of the course. Journal entries will be due every two weeks and then, as a cumulative document, at the end of the semester. This assignment helps to develop and provide an assessment of student learning outcomes 1, 2, 3, and 5. It is also the key assignment in promoting student learning outcome 4 and contributes to developing the habits essential to learning outcome 6.

3. Public Policy Communications, inter-personal, narrowcast, broadcast (30%). Students are evaluated in their effectiveness in setting up, preparing for, and participating in a host of interpersonal meetings. They are also evaluated on their contributions to a variety of written (and perhaps image-based) communications (sometimes as individuals, often as members of teams). This assignment helps to develop and provides an assessment of student learning outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. It is the key assignment in promoting student learning outcome 6.
4. Final Presentation (10%): Each student will deliver a final oral presentation that communicates their assessment of the electoral and policy process with an emphasis on the interaction between the two. Based on their engagement in and reflections on political campaigns and public policy practice, the students should clearly articulate both their individual understanding of how our U.S. representative democracy ought to function and how well our governing body functions as an arbitrator of the public interest. Students will be evaluated both on their oral presentations skills and on their ability to combine their theoretical classroom experience and practical engagement in the community from both the fall and spring semesters to form an understanding of the legislative process. This assignment requires the development of PPP learning outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7 and Political Science learning outcomes 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6.


A: Consistently excellent level of participation in every aspect of the course including research, strategy development, initiative in establishing public sector contact, and other tasks. Consistent work to support team members. Willingness to challenging yourself to work in unfamiliar environments. Consistent effort to understand and evaluate the way our government legislates and administers public policy. All assignments turned in on time.

A- to B+: Excellence in most aspects of the course stated above.

B to B-: Commitment to good quality work in all the aspects of the course listed above.

C+ to C-: Less than a consistent level of quality work in all the aspects of the course listed above.

D+ to D-: Poor quality work in most aspects of the course listed above.

F: Inadequate work in most aspects of the course listed above.

Please note the following policy from page 52 of the Xavier University Catalog (the History department and your instructors take this seriously.

“The pursuit of truth demands high standards of personal honesty. Academic and professional life requires a trust based upon integrity of the written and spoken word. Accordingly, violations of certain standards of ethical behavior will not be tolerated at Xavier University. These include theft, cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized assistance in assignments and tests, unauthorized copying of computer software, the falsification of results and material submitted in reports or
admission and registration documents, and the falsification of any academic record including letters of recommendation.

All work submitted for academic evaluation must be the student’s own. Certainly, the activities of other scholars will influence all students. However, the direct and unattributed use of another’s efforts is prohibited as is the use of any work untruthfully submitted as one’s own.

Penalties for violations of this policy may included one or more of the following: a zero for that assignment or test, an >F= in the course, and expulsion from the University.