Social Policy 351:
Policy in Times of Political Transformation
Northwestern University, School of Education and Social Policy

Winter 2020 – Tuesday/Thursday 2-3:20p
Annenberg G02

Professor Quinn Mulroy
qmulroy@northwestern.edu
Annenberg 217
Office Hours: calendly.com/qmulroy

TA: Ayah Kamel
ayahkamel@u.northwestern.edu
Office location: Annenberg 233
Office Hours: Thurs 1-2pm in Annenberg G27 or by appointment.

Overview

In this course, we will take the opportunity to attend to the policy consequences of the recent election—one which marks a potentially critical juncture in American and world history. Throughout the developed world, we are currently observing a political shift toward nationalist populism. Such waves can change what is “possible” in international and domestic policy and therefore deserve careful analytic treatment. This course will focus on how the distinctive institutions and culture of the U.S. shaped the American experience in the last such wave—during the global economic and democratic crises of the 1930s and 40s. Decisions made during this period led directly to policy and institutional changes that we take for granted today—an international system with liberal, democratic norms, American military pre-eminence, and a distinctive set of domestic social policies like Social Security, wage regulations, and the GI Bill. But these outcomes were highly contingent, and not assured at the time. What led to these differences, and what features of American politics contributed to these developments? And how can we use these lessons to approach and understand contemporary policy debates?

The course will be split into two parts. First, we will spend some time with theoretical treatments of institutional and policy change, the relationship between state and society, and the dominance of modes of American political thought such as the western liberal tradition. We will use these tools to analyze the strength and capacity of the American state, both from a historical and comparative perspective, and consider what consequences this has for the character of U.S. social and economic policy.

Second, we will engage in an analysis of contemporary readings on our current policy landscape, in tandem with historical, first-hand accounts of the policy and institutional debates that dominated the New Deal period. We use this period as a lens through which to understand the results of the recent election and impending policy discussions in the U.S., as well as the electoral, partisan, and institutional shifts currently occurring around the globe.

These theoretical and practical perspectives will act as a jumping off point for students to engage in their own on-the-ground research of how policy actors and organizations are addressing the uncertainty and new political and legal landscapes in which they operate. Students will complete a group project (as well as a two short papers) on an issue area, producing research on the policy area’s history, conducting interviews with actors in the field, and providing expectations and recommendations on how policy actors should respond to these current global and national trends.
COURSE READINGS

The readings are available on the course website on Canvas. Since we will aim as much as possible in this course to link to current events as they unfold over the course of the quarter, while the current syllabus provides a broad outline for the course, specific adjustments to and announcements about the reading assignments for each week will be available on Canvas. The Canvas site, rather than the original syllabus, in other words, will reflect the most current, up-to-date reading assignments.

ASSIGNMENTS AND REQUIREMENTS

GROUP FIELD PROJECT (20% presentation, 20% paper)

Throughout the quarter, you will work in a group (of 2-3 students) to analyze real-world policymaking from the perspectives of the themes of the course and present a short synopsis (in class presentation, 20% of grade) and compose a group analysis paper (due at the end of the quarter, 20% of grade). For this project, your group will investigate the strategies of an organization or set of actors working toward the adoption (or obstruction) of specific policy proposals in anticipation of the developing political and institutional climate. Each group will focus on a specific policy area, and conduct interviews with members of political, policy, or interest-group organizations. Students will work with their groups throughout the quarter to develop their analyses. While the groups will be given time to work on their project during class time on several occasions, the groups will need and be expected to meet outside of class time to complete the projects (about once a week).

- In-class presentation (20% of grade). In-class presentations will occur on March 10th and 12th
- Policy analysis paper (20% of grade). Due March 17th by 5pm. No late papers will be accepted.

MINI-PAPERS (20% of grade each)

In addition to the group policy analysis project, students will have the opportunity to work independently on two short mini-papers over the course of the quarter. These mini-papers (~3 pages, double-spaced) are intended to give students an opportunity to receive individual feedback on their writing, argument-composition, and analytical reasoning throughout the quarter, but also to give early feedback to your group as you progress through your research project. There are three mini-paper assignments. Each student must complete the first short paper assignment, and students must choose and complete one of the last two short paper assignments. Late papers will receive a deduction of 1/3 of a letter grade for each 24 hour period they are late; no papers will be accepted 3 days after the deadline.

- Mini-Paper 1: Analysis of policy development. Due February 1st at 11:59pm. (Everyone must complete this paper)
- Mini-Paper 2: Policy landscape scan. Due February 22 at 11:59pm.
- Mini-Paper 3: Challenges to policy goals. Due February 29 at 11:59pm.
DISCUSSION POSTS (10% of grade)

For each class meeting, students are required to post responses to the assigned readings on the discussion board on the course Canvas site. We will provide reading prompts and questions for each class on Canvas. We suggest that you take a look at the prompt first to help guide your thinking and promote active engagement with the readings. As you approach the readings, consider what critiques or thoughts you have in response to the arguments presented, and consider how the arguments speak to, conflict with, complement, or complicate those offered by other course materials you have read this quarter.

- Students must complete the post by **10pm** the day before each class (late posts will be penalized).
- Students **may miss up to 4 posts** without their grade being negatively affected, but they are still responsible for reading and thinking about the day’s readings.
- The posts need not be long (~1-2 paragraphs), but they do need to be substantive and thoughtful.
- The posts will be graded on a check-plus (3), check (2), and check-minus (1) basis.
  - Check-minuses (1) are assigned to posts that lack an analytical perspective and merely repeat what the reading says or demonstrate a very superficial familiarity with the reading.
  - Posts that receive a “check” address some of the key questions posed by the prompt and go beyond a mere summary of the readings and provide thoughtful analysis of the themes, theories, or evidence presented. Please note that a grade of "check" (2) will not count toward your final grade as a 67%. A check is a good grade!
  - Check-plus (3) will be rare and reserved for exceptional posts that go above and beyond to connect the readings, course discussion, current events, and thoughtful insights.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION (10% of grade)

The class participation grade will be composed of several parts.

- First, **active participation** in class will be heavily dependent on your command and familiarity with the readings. It is critical that you read the materials actively, identifying issues, questions, and debates as they relate to the readings before class time so that we can go over them together in class. If it is becoming apparent that students are not reading the required materials, we will randomly assign pop quizzes on the readings (which will test your familiarity with – rather than your mastery of – the readings).
- Second, **attendance** will be taken during each class. Any unexcused absences or more than two excused absences for the quarter will affect your grade. Excused absences require instructor permission in advance of the class in question.
- And lastly, throughout the quarter, there will be several **in-class exercises** that will draw upon your knowledge of the readings, lectures, and current events. These exercises include occasional group work, debates, and discussions. Please notify the TA (and instructor too if you like) via email.
EVALUATION

Grades will reflect performance on the mini-papers (20% each), final group policy analysis project (20% paper, 20% presentation), discussion posts (10%), and active participation in class (10%).

The grade distribution is as follows: A (100-94), A- (< 94-90), B+ (< 90-87), B (< 87-84), B- (< 84-80), C+ (< 80-77), C (< 77-74), C- (< 74-70), D (< 70-64), D- (< 64 to 61), F (< 61 and below).

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

The mini-papers will receive a 1/3 grade reduction for each day they are late. Deductions will begin after the beginning of class on the due date and will accumulate with each 24-hour period after that. No papers will be accepted more than 3 days after the deadline. We will not accept late submissions of the final group policy project paper or presentation.

COMMUNICATION

The instructor and TA are generally available via email at the addresses above and will do our best to respond within 24 hours of contact. In addition to making office hours by appointment, there will likely be time at the end of each class meeting to discuss individual issues. Please do not hesitate to be in touch with any questions or concerns.

ON WRITING...

While the main objective of the course is to encourage students to think critically and constructively about ideas—their own and others’—students should also aim to clearly express their ideas in writing. This is seldom straightforward or easy, but good writing allows the reader to understand the argument at hand, while bad writing often reveals muddled thinking or masks good thinking. Flawless grammar and correct spelling are minimum requirements for acceptable writing, and written work in this course will be evaluated not only for the ideas but for clarity of expression.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

In order to foster a respectful, mindful, and engaged classroom environment, the use of laptops and tablets is allowed in class *for note-taking purposes only, with the wireless connection turned off* and is permitted at the instructor's sole discretion. Cell phones and similar devices *must* be silenced and put away throughout class time. The internet, in its magnificent glory, has transformed our consciousness and, sadly, challenges the potential for concentration. If students are found to be consistently distracted—or distracting—by use of any and all technologies, the use of these technologies will be appropriately restricted.

STUDENT SUPPORT

Students can find useful resources for safety and security, academic support, and mental and physical health and well-being at the NUhelp website and app.
RESPECTFUL DISCOURSE

This course will at times engage with potentially challenging political topics. At all times, class participants are required to engage with others in a sincere, well-intentioned, and respectful manner. Intellectually, this means engaging in arguments from a reasoned, evidenced-based perspective and being intellectually open to new ideas. Personally, this means being mindful of how statements, questions, and arguments might be received by other classmates. We are a community of co-learners and our conversations must reflect that. If any student has a concern about violations of these norms by either fellow students or instructors, please bring these matters to the attention of Professor Mulroy.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

Students in this course are expected to comply with the policies found in the booklet, “Academic Integrity at Northwestern University: A Basic guide.” All papers submitted for credit in this course must be submitted electronically unless otherwise instructed by the professor. Your written work may be tested for plagiarized content. For details regarding academic integrity at Northwestern or to download the guide, visit: http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/index.html.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with AccessibleNU (accessiblenu@northwestern.edu; 847-467-5530) and provide professors with an accommodation notification from AccessibleNU, preferably within the first two weeks of class. All information will remain confidential.

COURSE SCHEDULE 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Key Questions</th>
<th>Required Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tues 1/7</td>
<td>Introduction to the Course</td>
<td></td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurs 1/9</td>
<td><del>CLASS CANCELLED</del></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun 1/12</td>
<td><em>Submit project topic preferences in Canvas</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Note that this outline may be revised over the course of the semester. Updates on the course website on Canvas will take precedence over what is assigned here in this document. Optional readings are just that: optional. Written assignments are marked with "**".
PART 1: MODELS OF STATE, SOCIETY AND TRANSFORMATION

Tues 1/14 **Political Transformation: Do We Know It When We See It?**

Key questions: How should we conceptualize the current policy and political landscape, at home and abroad? What observations can we draw from the Inaugural Address you read for today (a speech that is often used to outline an incoming president's proposed policy regime)? Are there hints or indications of political transformation in the speech? How do we know? What evidence are you looking for?

Required readings:

In-class:
- Class 2 activity on political transformation

Thurs 1/16 **Doing Policy Work I**

Key questions: What is the current institutional environment of the policy area you are investigating in your group project? What are the current terms of political debate on the policy? What about the history of this policy area, specifically, is instructive for anticipating future policy developments?

Required readings:
- In preparation for Mini-Paper 1, dive in and begin to research the history of your policy area, the current proposals on the table, and the (new? fairly stable?) institutional and political environments in which the issue will operate over the next several years.
- Read and prepare a summary for your group of one piece of research on your policy area.

In-class:
- Meet your project group.
- Complete your group work plan and a list of potential issue foci and interview subjects.
Models of the Reach of “the State”

Key questions: What is ‘the state’? In this piece, the Nettl reading presents a revised definition of the state - a concept that was out of vogue for some time in the study of American politics. What are the four dimensions of 'stateness' that he identifies? Why might it be useful (or not so useful) to break down 'the state' into these dimensions? Which dimensions are operating in Peters' NYTimes piece?

Required readings:

Optional readings:
- “The growth of the state: Leviathan stirs again,” The Economist, January 21, 2010

In-class:
- Class 4 activity on organizations

Cultural Foundations: The (Lockean) Liberal Tradition

Key questions: What is the "American liberal tradition," according to Hartz? Of what is it composed and what role (if any) does it play in explaining the form that American politics assumes today? Are you convinced by Hartz’ portrayal of American political culture?

Required readings:

Institutional Foundations: Structure and Timing

Key questions: While Hartz is fixated on culture and ideas, these readings are focused on America's institutional structures. What are the 'distinctive' features of the American state that the King & Lieberman and Huntington readings identify? How are they reflected (or not) in the policy area you are researching for your group project?
Required readings:


Optional readings:


**Thurs 1/30 Doing Policy Work II**

Key questions: Using the Weiss reading as guidance, how are you selecting your interview subjects for your group project? According to what criteria? Think strategically about ways that you might leverage this selection to uncover useful insights into your hypotheses about the development of your group's policy issue area.

Required readings:


In-class:

- Class 7 activity on interview question generation

**Sat 2/1** **Mini-Paper 1 Due – 11:59pm**

**Tues 2/4 State Transformation: Emergency and Exception**

Key questions: What conceptual and practical role is played by crises in processes of state transformation? What is a ‘constitutional dictatorship’? What form do these processes take in the U.S., historically? How would you characterize the claims made in Roosevelt’s Inaugural Address?

Required readings:

- Roosevelt, Franklin. Inaugural Address, March 4, 1933.
Optional readings:

Thurs 2/6  Democracy in Crisis

Key questions: According to these contemporary readings, what is the appeal of more authoritarian forms of governance? What are the markers of fascism? To what degree does this political period, or our current one, reflect these markers?

Required readings:

Optional readings:

Tues 2/11  *Mid-Quarter Group Feedback Due – 2pm*
**Tues 2/11  Doing Policy Work III**

Key questions: What lessons from the Weiss reading do you plan to incorporate into your project work as your group develops interview protocols? What are some possible sticking points that you anticipate along the way? How do you plan to address them?

Required reading:
  - Read pp. 39-57, 61-83 for class.
  - Read on through pg. 119 if you would like to see some examples of good interviewing.

In-class:
- Class 10 activity on interview protocols

**Thurs 2/13  Populism and the State**

Key questions: How should we define populism? What role does it play in state transformation and different models of governance? What are its benefits, limits, and/or dangers?

Required readings:
- Review of Jan-Werner Müller's *What is Populism?* (2016)

Optional readings:
Tues 2/18  **Parties and Coalitions**

Key questions: What role can parties, coalitions, and elections play in processes of political and state transformation? To what degree are they stabilizing or destabilizing forces?

Required readings:

Optional readings:

Thurs 2/20  **Race, Region and Policy Regimes**

Key questions: How do these readings begin to complicate and/or revise the American liberalism thesis? What is the "ascriptive tradition" that Smith introduces to us? What do you find useful/not so useful about this framework?

Required readings:
Optional readings:

- Harris, Peter. "Trump's Views are Illiberal. But are They UnAmerican?" Newsweek, January 11, 2016.

* Sat 2/22  ** Mini-Paper 2 Due – 11:59pm**

Tues 2/25  **Doing Policy Work IV**

Key questions: What are the key insights emerging from your interviews with informants? What makes them important? Are there any differences emerging between the informants? Speculate, using your research and/or readings from the class, on why these actors take different or similar stances.

Required readings:

- None

In-class:

- Class 14 activity on data analysis

Thurs 2/27  **A Transformed State? Economic Policy**

Key questions: What models of state economic intervention are suggested by Tugwell? To what degree do we see them operating in Katzenelson? Do we see evidence of these economic models operating today? How so/how not?

Required readings:

  - Read: Chapter 3 - Rules for Work
Optional readings:


** Sat 2/29 **

** Mini-Paper 3 Due – 11:59pm **

**Tues 3/3**

**A Transformed State? Social Policy**

Key questions: What insights does Katznelson offer on the role of liberalism, federalism, and (democratic institutions such as) the legislature during moments of crisis? Can you identify some examples of similar concepts, interests, norms, or institutions that are present in today’s policy debates?

Required readings:

  - Read Chapter 5 – White Veterans Only

Optional readings:

- Chapter 2 - Welfare in Black and White
**Thurs 3/5**  
*A Transformed State? Military and International Policy*

Key questions: How would you characterize policy concerning military and international matters during the New Deal period? How did it differ from domestic policy, and why? What lessons can we carry over into the understanding of our current foreign policy?

**Required readings:**

**Optional readings:**
- Eisenhower, Dwight. Inaugural Address, January 20, 1953.

**Tues 3/10**  
**Group Project Presentations, Day 1**

**Thurs 3/12**  
**Group Project Presentations, Day 2**

**Tues 3/17**  
**Final Group Project Paper Due – 5pm**

*End-of-Quarter Group Feedback Due – 5pm*