The world of public policy is full of puzzles. Why do some issues receive public and political attention, while others do not? Why do some policy solutions succeed and make their way through the policymaking process, while others sit idly on the sidelines? What allows for some policies to undergo significant change over time, while others seem to remain etched in stone? Why do some policies meet obstacles in their implementation phase, while others are successfully executed? This course is designed to introduce students to the complexities of American public policy and to help them answer these types of questions.

We will begin by discussing topics on policymaking, starting with theories of the process by which it develops. We will dig into the politics of problem solving, reviewing various models of the policymaking process, such as problem framing, agenda setting, and policy change, and we will discuss the roles of public opinion and policy analysis in shaping policy. Throughout our exploration of these topics, we will also come back to the question of what these processes look like in moments of major political uncertainty and crisis, such as that which characterizes the current political environment.

In the second half of the course, we will focus on an important, but often overlooked, second stage of the policymaking process: policy implementation. We will consider the challenges that emerge after policies are passed, how policymakers can anticipate these challenges, the ways in which administrators engage in implementation on the ground, and what role citizens and community organizations can play in this process.

While this class aims to give students an introduction to these puzzles – and to the theories and approaches provided by policy research that seek to understand them – it will also provide students with some very practical experience in approaching and engaging with policy problems. Throughout the quarter, students will work in groups to develop and present a policy brief on a topical policy issue. Policy brief-writing and solution–development are critical activities in the policy world and students will be given the opportunity over the quarter to start to develop these important skills, both in the larger group project and in two short, independent mini-papers.
CLASS MEETING STRUCTURE

There are both synchronous and asynchronous components to this remote course. These components are outlined on each Class Page in Canvas.

- **Asynchronous components:** In anticipation of each class meeting, you will be expected to engage in several asynchronous activities (according to your own schedule). From class to class, this will include:
  - Watching short prerecorded lectures
  - Engaging in conversation on targeted topics with other students through comments on Panopto videos, and
  - Annotating and critically engaging with a set of readings through Perusall.

- **Synchronous components:** We will meet as a class over Zoom during our scheduled course time slot to synthesize and raise questions in a larger group setting. The activities during these synchronous meetings will vary from class to class and will include class discussions of readings, small group activities, guest speakers, and time to work on your group project.
  - There are five class meetings set aside for work and activities to help guide you through your group project. These classes are called "Doing Policy Analysis I-V" on the course schedule. This is a designated time for all of your group members to meet so please make every effort to be a “good” team member and be present for each meeting. This is also a time for you to receive feedback from the instructors as you progress through your project.
  - Since some of the course materials (like prerecorded lectures) are available asynchronously, we will not always meet for the entire allotted class time. Some course meetings will be as short as 40 minutes, while others (e.g. "Doing Policy Analysis" meetings) will last for the entire class time (80 minutes). We will give you estimates of the run-time for each week’s meetings in our weekly Announcements. In the meantime, students are expected to reserve the entire time bloc for each class in their calendars.

LIFE, HEALTH, AND SAFETY

We want to take a moment to recognize and acknowledge that we are all currently navigating life during a period defined by a global pandemic, high rates of unemployment, increased housing and food insecurity, and vivid daily reminders of the inequities and violence faced by BIPOC in this country. Many of us in this class may directly experience the repercussions of some or all of these threats to our health and safety. Likely all of us will at some point during the quarter face challenges to our mental health in the form of exhaustion, depression, or anxiety. Last but not least, a political transition of power will take place this quarter, and it will likely foment tensions around all of these issues.

We will be addressing and thinking about these issues head-on in this course. While many issues will make it into our synchronous and asynchronous class discussions or will feature heavily in your group
projects, we also want to create space for students to bring up questions, thoughts, or issues that they would like to discuss in the larger group setting. Each class will feature opportunities for students to engage in anonymous commenting directly on the screen via Zoom. We encourage you to use this space to think critically about the world around you and we hope to facilitate the development of a supportive environment in which to do so.

Most importantly, we want you to know that we see you and respect you as the people you are: family members, friends, and members of your communities. This means your physical and mental well-being should and will always be prioritized over class. This is just a class. If you are experiencing challenges to your physical, medical, or mental well-being, please get in touch as soon as possible so that we can work with you to develop a plan moving forward (no questions asked). If you are one of the many people currently experiencing food or housing insecurity, please contact the instructors or the Dean of Students Office so that we can connect you with any resources we have.

As the instructors in this course, we promise to offer compassion and flexibility, and to support you throughout this quarter as best as we can.

### COURSE READINGS

The readings for the course 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 this 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 .pdf version of the syllabus, in other words, will reflect the most current, up-to-date reading assignments.

There is one required book that is available for purchase via online retailers:


### ASSIGNMENTS AND REQUIREMENTS

**GROUP POLICY ANALYSIS PROJECT** (40% of grade)

Throughout the quarter, you will work in a group of 4-5 students to analyze a policy issue. At the end of the quarter, you and your group will give a policy briefing presentation (in class) and compose a policy analysis briefing paper (due at the end of the quarter). We will provide a list of possible issue topics and students will be given the chance to rate their topic preferences. Students will work with their groups throughout the quarter to develop their policy analyses. While the project groups will be given time to work on their project during class time on several occasions, the groups will need to and will be expected to meet outside of class time to complete the projects (about once a week).

- **Policy briefing presentation** (20% of grade). In-class presentations will occur on March 8th and March 10th; the assigned day will depend on the group.
• **Policy analysis paper** (20% of grade). Due March 16th at 5pm. No late papers will be accepted.

**MINI-PAPERS** (40% of grade; 20% each)

In addition to the group policy analysis project, students will have the opportunity to work independently on two mini-papers over the course of the quarter. These mini-papers (~3 pages, double-spaced) are intended to give students individual feedback on their writing, argument-composition, and analytical reasoning, and will eventually contribute to components of the larger group project. There are three mini-paper assignments. Each student must complete the first mini-paper assignment, and students must choose and complete one of the last two mini-paper assignments.

- **Mini-paper 1**: Framing the problem. Due Friday, February 5th at 11:59pm (required for all).
- **Mini-paper 2**: Developing policy solutions. Due Friday, February 19th at 11:59pm.
- **Mini-paper 3**: Planning for implementation. Due Friday, February 26th at 11:59pm.

**LECTURE DISCUSSIONS** (10% of grade)

Throughout the quarter, there will be about eight pre-recorded lectures that will supplement and set the stage for discussion and activities in our synchronous meeting. These will be available to watch according to your own schedule, but should be watched in advance of our synchronous class meeting. You will also be asked to engage in discussion with your classmates on these prerecorded lectures via the Comments tool. We will give you guiding questions to consider as you watch and respond to the lecture.

- You must post at least three comments on the video in Panopto. This can include responses to other students’ comments. You are encouraged to engage in discussion with other students.
- Students should complete their lecture discussion comments by **11am** on the day of our synchronous class meeting (late assignments will be penalized).
- The lecture discussion assignments will be graded on a check-plus (“3”), check (“2”), check-minus (“1”) basis.
  - A “check” (2) indicates that you have completed the assignment, and demonstrated active listening, critical thought, and analysis. This will be the most common grade. If you are receiving “checks,” you are doing a great job! Assignments that receive a “check” consider some of the key questions posed by the prompt and provide thoughtful analysis of the themes, theories, or evidence presented.
  - “Check-minuses” (1) are assigned to comments that lack an analytical perspective, merely repeat what the lecture says, or demonstrate a very superficial familiarity with the topics or debates discussed in the lecture. If you are receiving consistent check-minuses, please reach out to the instructors to discuss how you can improve the quality of your lecture discussion assignments.
  - Check-pluses (3) are rare and reserved for exceptional comments that go above and beyond to connect the lectures, readings, course discussion, current events, and particularly thoughtful insights and illuminations.
Students may miss up to 1 lecture discussion assignment without their grade being negatively affected, but they are still responsible for watching and thinking about the day’s lecture.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION (10% of grade).

The class participation grade will be composed of several parts:

- First, active participation in our synchronous class meetings will be 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.

- Second, attendance will be taken during each synchronous class meeting. Any unexcused absences or more than three excused absences will result in a reduction in your grade. Excused absences require notice in advance of the class in question (please email the TA). If you are experiencing life or health circumstances that preclude you from attending our synchronous class sessions regularly, please get in touch so we can collaborate on developing a plan for keeping you on track. We care about you and will make every effort to find a compassionate solution.

- Third, you will have the chance to participate asynchronously via collaborative reading annotations in Perusall. 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, compliment, or complicate those offered by other course materials you have read this quarter.

  o This is meant to be a collaborative process (you will be in a small group of 7 for each course reading), and we encourage you to use this space to engage in collaborative thinking and analysis as you digest the readings. The reading annotations component of this course is intended to help you make sense of the readings, and we encourage you to annotate in a way that is most helpful to you.

  o We are not requiring a specific number of annotations on each reading, but we ask that you tag the instructors (Ayah Kamel and Quinn Mulroy) in one reading annotation each class day, so we can get a quick sense of your thinking about the readings. You could choose to tag us on a burning question that you have that you want to make sure we address in class, on a comment that you think is particularly insightful that you would like us to see, on a comment that makes a connection to a current event that you’d love to discuss in class, etc.

  o Students must complete reading annotations by 11am on the day of our synchronous class meeting. Reading annotations will be graded on a complete/incomplete basis. Students may miss two annotation assignments (an "assignment" is the set of readings designated for each class meeting) without penalty, but you are still responsible for reading and thinking about the readings.

- And lastly, throughout the quarter, there will be in-class, synchronous activities that will draw upon your knowledge of the readings, lectures, and current events. These activities include occasional group work, debates, and discussions. The activities will be graded on a complete/incomplete basis.
EVALUATION

Grades will reflect performance on the mini-papers (20% each), final group policy analysis project (40%), asynchronous lecture discussions (10%), and active participation in both the synchronous and asynchronous components of 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+ (< 70-67), D (< 67-64), D- (< 64-61), F (< 61 and below).

LATE ASSIGNMENTS & PASS DAYS

Assignments will receive a 1/3 grade reduction for each day they are late. The first deduction begins after the due date/time and will accumulate with each 24 hour period after that. Late assignments will not be accepted more than five days after the deadline (pass days also count towards the five days; see below). The final group presentation must be completed on the assigned presentation day.

Because we are still in a pandemic and the world remains...challenging, every student will be given four (4) pass days for late assignments. These can apply to any of the assignments except the group presentation and paper. Deductions will not be applied to any late assignments until the student’s four pass days are used. We will automatically apply pass days to any late mini-papers; if you would like to apply pass days to video comments on annotation assignments, please let us know.

ZOOM ETIQUETTE

This is new territory for all of us, but we are already seeing some standardization of norms and etiquette around holding Zoom meetings with larger groups. When participating in our synchronous meetings, please:

● Keep your microphone muted in our larger class meeting unless you are speaking. Feel free to unmute in smaller group discussions in breakout rooms to facilitate ease of conversation.

● Please leave your camera on in order to facilitate class discussion and engagement. Zoom backgrounds are encouraged. If you need to turn your camera off due to a disturbance, or need to step away from your computer temporarily, of course feel free to do so. If you are unable to keep your video on on a regular basis for any reason, please get in touch with us so we can make appropriate arrangements.

● To ask a question or contribute to a class discussion, please use the "raise hand" function in Zoom. Let's make this standard practice, but if you have a very quick or immediately relevant question or comment, we trust you to use your judgment and unmute yourself to interject when appropriate.

● We will try our best to respond to questions or comments written in the Chat bar in Zoom. If you want to send a private message to the instructors, please send it to Ayah.

● When in a breakout session, please be present for your classmates. This means unmuting your mic and resuming video, if possible.
These are only initial thoughts. Please feel free to bring any comments, thoughts, requests, or concerns to our attention. Our thinking on how we would like to be present for one another in our synchronous sessions will likely evolve throughout the quarter. It is our expectation and hope that we will adapt and update this charter as we move along.

**COMMUNICATION AND AVAILABILITY**

Please do not hesitate to be in touch with any questions, concerns, or thoughts.

**Office hours:** You can sign up directly for our office hours on Calendly (no need to email in advance). On Calendly, you can reserve a 20 minute meeting time slot. If you need more time than that, please sign up for two consecutive slots. If our listed times on Calendly do not work for your schedule, please just get in touch. We will likely have other times available (especially for those of you who are out of the country and juggling time zone differences).

**Email availability:** We are available via email at the addresses above and we will do our best to respond within 24-48 hours of contact. With the move to remote work and learning over the last nine months, there is a temptation to assume this means “24-hour availability.” Please keep in mind that your instructors, fellow classmates, and project group members will be taking much needed screen- and technology-breaks throughout the day. Try to plan ahead as much as possible in order to receive responses from your instructors and classmates in a timely manner.

**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 presented but also for its clarity of expression.

**COURSE POLICIES**

- **Unauthorized Student Recording/Distribution of Course Materials:** Students are not authorized to record nor distribute any content from this course. Unauthorized student recording of classroom or other academic activities (including advising sessions or office hours) is prohibited. Unauthorized recording is unethical and may also be a violation of University policy and state law. Students requesting the use of assistive technology as an accommodation should contact AccessibleNU. Unauthorized use of classroom recordings – including distributing or posting them – is also prohibited. Under the University’s Copyright Policy, faculty own the copyright to instructional materials – including those resources created specifically for the purposes of instruction, such as syllabi, lectures and lecture notes, and presentations. Students cannot copy, reproduce, display, or distribute these materials. Students who engage in unauthorized recording, unauthorized use of a recording, or unauthorized distribution of instructional materials will be referred to the appropriate University office for follow-up.
● **Electronic Devices:** In order to foster a respectful, mindful, and engaged classroom environment, cell phones, social media, chat apps, and similar devices and applications must be silenced, put away, and/or closed throughout our synchronous class meeting times. As we switch to remote learning and work, we will all be using our computers and tablets during class, but we ask that you focus your attention on the class materials at hand and use your devices for note-taking purposes only. Please use our synchronous meeting times wisely and strategically to make significant headway on your thinking for your project and papers.

● **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.

● **Attendance:** Any unexcused absences or more than three excused absences for the quarter will result in a reduction in your grade. Excused absences require notice in advance of the class in question. Please notify the TA via email if you will be absent.

● **Academic Integrity:** Students in this course are required 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, please visit: [http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/index.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/index.html)

● **Accessibility:** Northwestern University is committed to providing the most accessible learning environment as possible for students with disabilities. Should you anticipate or experience disability-related barriers in the academic setting, please contact AccessibleNU to move forward with the university’s established accommodation process (e: accessible@northwestern.edu; p: 847-467-5530). If you already have established accommodations with AccessibleNU, please let me know as soon as possible, preferably within the first two weeks of the term, so we can work together to implement your disability accommodations. Disability information, including academic accommodations, is confidential under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.
COURSE SCHEDULE

Mon 1/11  Introduction to the Course

Key Questions: What puzzles you about the policy process?

PART 1: THE POLICYMAKING PROCESS

Wed 1/13  Why Do We Need Policy (Analysis)?

Key Questions: Why do we need good policy analysis? And what happens when we get policy 'wrong'?

Required readings:

Reminder: Submit preferences for group project topics by 5pm TONIGHT! (link to survey on Canvas)

Wed 1/20  Problem Framing and Definition

Key Questions: What is a problem definition? How can it shape the development of public policy? Who are (and who should be) the relevant actors to this process of framing the problem?

Required readings:

Mon 1/25  Doing Policy Analysis: Part I

Key Questions: What lessons do you take away from Bardach & Patashnik for your policy analysis project? What are some useful tips for framing a problem? What might be some strengths and weaknesses of these approaches?
Required readings:
  - Part I: The Eightfold Path, steps 1-2, pp. 1-18 only.

Wed 1/27  Getting on the Policy Agenda

Key Questions: How would you describe Kingdon’s model of the issue agenda? Why do some problems gain attention? Who are the main players in the policy/political stream (depending on which chapter you read)? How accurately does this model reflect your impressions of the current policy process?

Required readings:
  - Chapter 5: Problems [Everyone reads this chapter; can skim pp. 110-113]
  - Chapter 6: The Policy Primeval Soup [Half the class will read this chapter closely]
  - Chapter 7: The Political Stream [Half the class will read this chapter closely]

Week of 2/1  Group project meetings with TA

Mon 2/1  The Potential for Policy Change

Key Questions: What is the potential for new policy ideas to appear on the agenda? What is the role of “policy entrepreneurs” in this process? And what role does “timing” play?

Required readings:
- Kingdon, Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies
  - Chapter 8: The Policy Window and Joining the Streams.
Wed 2/3  Doing Policy Analysis: Part II

Key Questions: How can a policy analyst link the definition of a problem with the proposal of policy solutions? How should we use data in this process?

Required readings:
  - Part I: The Eightfold Path, step 3. pp. 16-27 only
- Lind, Dara and German Lopez, “16 Theories for Why Crime Plummeted in the US,” Vox, 10 May 2015. No need to read this one closely. Rather, get a sense of the range of arguments being used and how convincing they are.

*Fri 2/5  ** Mini-Paper 1 Due **

Mon 2/8  Putting the Public in “Public” Policy

Key Questions: What is the role of public preferences in the formation of policy? Should policy follow the dictates of the public? How do we decide?

Required readings:

Wed 2/10  Doing Policy Analysis: Part III

Key Questions: How do we identify the "right" policy instruments for addressing social problems?

Required readings:
  - Appendix B: Things governments do, pp. 155-163.
PART II: POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Mon 2/15  Social Constructions and Making Policy “Work”

Key Questions: What role do social constructions play in the policy process? How might they shape the policy tools/instruments that analysts incorporate into policy solutions?

Required readings:

**Mid-Quarter Group Project Self/Peer Evaluation Survey Due**

Wed 2/17  Doing Policy Analysis: Part IV

Key Questions: What lessons do you take away from Bardach & Patashnik for your policy analysis project?

Required readings:
  o Part I: The Eightfold Path, steps 4-7, pp. 27-72.
  o Appendix D: Strategic advice on the dynamics of gathering political support, pp. 173-179.

*Fri 2/19 ** Mini-Paper 2 Due **

Mon 2/22  Challenges to Policy Implementation

Key Questions: How is policy implemented in multi-level systems, and by multiple agencies? What does this process look like? What influence does systemic decentralization have on the implementation of policy?

Required readings:
● Pressman, J. L., & Wildavsky, A. 1984. Implementation: How great expectations in Washington are dashed in Oakland; Or, why it’s amazing that federal programs work at all, this being a saga of the economic development administration as told by two sympathetic observers who seek to build morals on a foundation of ruined hopes. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Chapter 1: Appearances
Chapter 5: The Complexity of Joint Action

Wed 2/24  Administrative Discretion and Autonomy

**Key Questions:** How do front-line government workers overcome challenges in implementing policy? What types of benefits or costs might arise from such practices?

**Required readings:**
  - Chapter 1: The Critical Role of Street-Level Bureaucrats (pp. 3-12)
  - Introduction to Section II: Conditions of work (pp. 27-28)
  - Chapter 3: The Problem of Resources (pp. 29-39)

*Fri 2/26  ** Mini-Paper 3 Due **

Week of 3/1  Group Project Meetings with TA

Mon 3/1  Private Power and Community Engagement

**Key Questions:** What is the role of private individuals and community engagement in the policy implementation process? What should it be? How can the implementation of policy shape the politics of the public?

**Required readings:**

Wed 3/3  Doing Policy Analysis: Part V

**Key Questions:** How, and to whom, do you plan to tell 'your story' for your project? What makes a successful policy briefing? How would you describe the tone, language, and organization of the PPIC briefing? What works, and does not work?

**Required readings:**
  - Part I: The Eightfold Path, step 8, pp. 72-82.
*Mon 3/8  ** Final Policy Briefing Presentations, Day 1 **

*Wed 3/10 ** Final Policy Briefing Presentations, Day 2 **

*Tues 3/16 ** Final Policy Analysis Paper Due at 5pm**

** Group Project Self/Peer Evaluation Survey Due *