

**San José State University**  
**Department of Political Science**  
**POLS 130 – American Public Policy**  
**Spring 2020**

**Course and Contact Information**

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<b>Office Hours:</b>	4:00p-5:45p and by appointment w/ sufficient notice (including via Skype/other web meeting tools)
<b>Class Days/Time:</b>	TR 10:30a-11:45a
<b>Classroom:</b>	Hugh Gillis Hall (HGH) 116

**Welcome!**

Welcome to where the rubber meets the road! Many of you have been learning in detail about the institutions that guide our society and the values that underlie their decisions. In this class we look at the results—public policy—and examine the material impacts public policy has on the everyday lives of everyday people.

From a policy standpoint, the past decade has been one marked by both policy gridlock and profound change. Issues such immigration reform and an increase in the federal minimum wage remain deadlocked in a divided Congress. Yet at the same time millions of people are now receiving health care coverage as a result of the Affordable Care Act, Wall Street faces new regulations in the aftermath of the Great Recession, and the country continues to quietly revamp its energy sectors despite newfound headwinds from the Trump Administration.

This is just a small sample of issues we'll cover this semester. There are plenty more. What's important to recognize is that policy making in the U.S. is unfolding in a period of nearly unparalleled political polarization in Washington DC (and to a lesser extent many U.S. states), defined by deep ideological fault lines over the size and scope of government and questions about how best to create opportunity and economic security in contemporary American life.

**Course Description**

Introduces students to the public policy making process in the American governing system. The politics of agenda setting, policy formulation, and policy implementation are examined. Students learn to analyze and evaluate public policy outcomes.

## **Faculty Web Page and MYSJSU Messaging**

Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, can be found on the Canvas learning management system course website. Please make sure you are consistently reachable via the messaging system as e-mails through the Canvas system and the student's individual e-mails are how I maintain contact with the class over the course of the semester. The responsibility for being up-to-date on developments in the class and assignments lies with the student.

By enrolling in this course you consent to all course requirements listed in this syllabus, published on our Canvas site, and announced in class. You accept responsibility for accessing the Canvas course website to download any required handouts, assignments, or readings. You also accept responsibility for checking the course website regularly for any announcements. You also accept responsibility for receiving any messages sent via the MySJSU email system. Make sure that MySJSU has your current email address. Contact me by Thursday of week one if you cannot access the Canvas website, download and read .pdf files, link to other websites, or send or receive email.

## **Communication**

It is essential that you check the class Canvas page routinely. This is a course requirement. All course materials will be posted on Canvas. I will also frequently make announcements on Canvas. I will make every effort to promptly return emails between M-F. If I do not respond within 24 hours, please feel free to send me another email. I will answer emails on the weekends and evening, though I can't guarantee prompt response at those times. I am available to meet with you by appointment if you have class or work during my regularly scheduled office hours.

## **Political Science Program Learning Outcomes (PSPLO)**

Upon completion of the Political Science major program, students should be able to demonstrate the following learning outcomes.:

1. **PSPLO1: Breadth:** Students should possess a broad knowledge of the theory and methods of the various branches of the discipline.
2. **PSPLO2: Application and Disciplinary Methods:** Students should be able to formulate research questions, engage in systematic literature searches using primary and secondary sources, evaluate research studies, and critically analyze and interpret influential political texts. Students should be able to apply these techniques to identify, understand, and analyze domestic and international political issues and organizations.
3. **PSPLO3: Communication Skills:** Students should master basic competencies in oral and written communication skills and be able to apply these skills in the context of political science. This means communicating effectively about politics and/or public administration, public policy, and law.
4. **PSPLO4: Citizenship:** Students should acquire an understanding of the role of the citizen in local, state, national, and global contexts and appreciate the importance of lifelong participation in political processes.

## Course Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students should be able to:

1. **CLO1:** Learn and apply social science theories of public policymaking and use them to explain the behavior, decisions, and outcomes of government policy.
2. **CLO2:** Demonstrate the ability to critically think about the politics of the policymaking process in the broader American federalist system.
3. **CLO3:** Develop a deeper understanding of substantive policy issues in contemporary national politics.

<b>Mapping POLS 130 Course Learning Outcomes to Political Science PLOs</b>	<b>Program Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
CLO1: Learn and apply social science theories of public policy making and use them to explain the behavior, decisions, and outcomes of government policy	PLO1, 3	Case Studies #1, #2 & #3, Midterm #1 & #2, Final Exam, Class Participation
CLO2: Demonstrate the ability to critically think about the politics of the policymaking process in the broader American federalist system	PLO2, 4,	Case Study #2, Case Study #4, Midterm #1, Class Participation
CLO3: Develop a deeper understanding of substantive policy issues in contemporary national politics	PLO2, 3	Case Study #4 and #5, Final Exam, Class Participation

## Required Texts/Readings

### Textbooks

- Kraft, Michael, and Scott Furlong. 2017. *Public Policy: Politics, Analysis, and Alternatives*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. CQ Press.  
*ISBN# 1506358667*

Other text and media will be available via the class page on Canvas.

Please note: The text is required and available at the Spartan Bookstore. Older editions of these books are acceptable to purchase though it is strongly recommended that a student not buy an edition more than five years old. Moreover, key information, page numbers and chapter numbers may vary from edition to edition. It is the student's responsibility to account for these discrepancies when they exist.

## **Course Requirements, Assignments and Schedule**

Please note: the schedule below is subject to change with fair notice. I will make every effort to avoid changes when possible. However, it is the student's responsibility to stay apprised of possible changes to the course schedule.

### **Case Study #1 – The Fight for Net Neutrality**

Are internet service providers becoming too powerful? Advocates of an unfettered internet are fighting to restore Obama-era regulations requiring Comcast, Verizon, AT&T and other internet service providers (ISPs) to treat all internet traffic equally in terms of speed, access and cost. The so-called net neutrality rules, instituted in 2015 when Democrats controlled the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), were repealed in December 2017 after Republicans regained control of the agency.

In an essay of 650-800 words, please address the following questions backed by *substantive* details from the chapter and buttressed with insights gleaned from other readings, class lectures or other sources (not just your own intuition).

- What is net neutrality? Does society have an interest in maintaining it? Why or why not?
- How does the notion of net neutrality tie in to our discussion of market failures? According to critics, what could happen to internet service provision in the absence of government intervention? Does that reflect a market failure? If so, which one?
- Why is there such fierce opposition to net neutrality? Are the concerns of opponents substantive, political or both?

### **Case Study #2 – Affordable Housing Shortage**

Can new policies increase the supply of affordable housing? The improving economy has sent millions of Americans back to work, but many cannot afford housing near their jobs. Rising demand for homes and apartments has caused prices to soar, especially in major metro areas. The problem defies an easy fix. Zoning codes and not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY) activists often block new affordable-housing projects. Land in and around urban centers is scarce and expensive, and construction costs are rising sharply, prompting developers to target new projects at higher-income renters and buyers.

In an essay of 650-800 words, please address the following questions backed by *substantive* details from the chapter and buttressed with insights gleaned from other readings, class lectures or other sources (not just your own intuition).

- What is the primary cause of housing costs being so unaffordable? Is this a failure of the government, the market or both?
- 80-100 years ago, how would you characterize the nature of the housing system previously? Was it primarily private, primarily public or a mixture? Is housing primarily

the responsibility of the federal government, the states or the localities? Do the answers to these questions give us any insights about why the housing system isn't functioning in the optimal way?

- What are some of the most commonly proposed policies to ameliorate this problem? Critically evaluate their pros and cons.

### **Case Study #3 – Financial Deregulation**

Should Congress ease up on Wall Street? The Trump administration is seeking to weaken the 2010 Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, a broad set of regulations aimed at preventing a repeat of the 2007-09 financial crisis. The law requires banks and other financial companies to set aside large cash reserves to deal with problem loans or other failures that could drag down the entire economy. In addition, Dodd-Frank cracks down on consumer loan fraud and bars financial institutions from making speculative investments with their own capital. Republicans contend that Dodd-Frank has stifled economic growth and hurt consumers by over-regulating banks, credit card companies, payday lenders and other financial services firms. Meanwhile, some analysts worry that the largest banks could still pose a threat to the nation's economy if growth slows.

In an essay of 650-800 words, please address the following questions backed by *substantive* details from the chapter and buttressed with insights gleaned from other readings, class lectures or other sources (not just your own intuition).

- According to Lowi's typologies, what is the nature of regulation as a policy instrument? Why might financial services require government intervention? Is it possible that the market would be a more effective mechanism for self-regulation than the government could possibly be?
- Generally speaking, in the lead-up to the Great Recession of 2008, had the United States been ramping up regulation on the financial services industry or drawing them down? Does that provide us any key insights as to the root causes of the crash? How does that recent historical trend frame the current debate?
- Are there any concerns about the health of the financial system moving forward? Does the financial sector appear to be generally healthier than it was 10-15 years ago? Why or why not? To what do you attribute that change?

### **Case Study #4 – Policymaking by Other Means**

On a recent episode of The Weeds podcast, RSF authors Pamela Herd and Donald Moynihan discuss their book, *Administrative Burden: Policymaking by Other Means* with senior Vox correspondent Matthew Yglesias. Moynihan describes administrative burdens as "the frictions we experience when we encounter government." Herd offers the example of the devastating effects of onerous administrative burdens in the case of 220,000 Tennessee children who lost Medicaid due to considerable obstacles to receiving coverage, including a semi-annual re-verification process that includes a 50-page application.

In an essay of 650-800 words, please address the following questions backed by *substantive* details from the chapter and buttressed with insights gleaned from other readings, class lectures or other sources (not just your own intuition).

- What is administrative burden? What is program take-up? What are the practical impacts of increasing administrative burdens? Why does that matter?
- Can changing administrative requirements be regarded as a form of policymaking? If so, why? If not, why not? How common is it to change administrative burden? According to Moynihan and Herd, what are the motivations for these changes? Are these changes generally implemented by legislative actors or executive actors? Is that different from our common understanding of how policymaking is done?
- How does administrative burden differ from other forms of policymaking in terms of public awareness? In other words, how likely is it that the general public will be aware of changing administrative burdens? How does that change the political calculus for policymaking stakeholders? What does that mean for us as citizens?

### **Case Study #5 – Charter Schools**

Do they outperform traditional public schools? Charter schools — public schools with more freedom to innovate than traditional public schools — have exploded in popularity in the past 25 years. About 6,800 charters now operate in 43 states serving 5 percent of the nation’s public school students. Advocates say charter schools provide a superior education, and as proof they cite studies showing that charters have been particularly successful in raising student achievement scores in troubled inner-city districts. Charters do more with less, they say, by eliminating bureaucracy and allowing teachers to try different educational approaches. Critics, however, say that while some charters excel, most do no better than traditional public schools and many do worse. They also accuse charters of cherry-picking the best students and say the charter movement is driven, at least partly, by the desire of for-profit charter operators to make money from public education.

In an essay of 650-800 words, please address the following questions backed by *substantive* details from the chapter and buttressed with insights gleaned from other readings, class lectures or other sources (not just your own intuition).

- What is school choice and why did that idea gain so much traction in the last 30 years or so? What is the logic of school choice? What is the logic of a public school system? What are the values that implicitly or explicitly undergird these differing conceptions? Is it possible to sustain both systems simultaneously?
- Do charter schools generally outperform public schools? Why do you think so? What are some of the difficulties with evaluating the performance of charter schools? Are there any concerns about the health of the financial system moving forward? Does the financial sector appear to be generally healthier than it was 10-15 years ago? Why or why not? To what do you attribute that change?
- The Trump Administration has been extremely supportive of charter schools and, particularly, for-profit education. What are the potential benefits of a for-profit educational system? What are the potential pitfalls?

### **Midterm Examinations (Beginning of Class, February 18<sup>th</sup> & March 10<sup>th</sup>)**

The midterm exams will consist of multiple-choice questions evaluating your ability to understand, synthesize and critique class concepts. A review sheet of relevant terms and example

questions will be provided ahead of time. The exam will assess GELOs 1 and 2. Bring a Scantron 882-E and #2 pencil.

### **Final Examination (9:45am – 12:00pm, May 18<sup>th</sup> in HGH 116)**

The final exam will consist of multiple-choice questions. A review sheet of relevant terms and essay questions will be provided ahead of time. The exam will assess GELOs 1 and 2. Bring a Scantron 882-E and #2 pencil.

### **Class Participation**

Participation is an important part of the course. Without participation from a broad cross section of students we all (including the professor) don't learn as much. Participation can be earned in a variety of ways: Asking questions, making regular comments in class, or actively participating during in-class group critical thinking exercises and, most particularly, showing up and participating in our discussions of the various case studies. This mechanism evaluates CLOs 1, 2 and 3.

Assignment & Exam Schedule	
Syllabus Quiz	January 30th
Ideology Quiz Reflection Paper	February 6th
Case Study #1	February 20th
Supporting Evidence	February 27th
Mid-term Exam	March 18th
Case Study #2	March 25th
Case Study #3	April 22nd
Policy Problem Statement	April 24th
Policy Paper	May 8th
Final Exam	May 20th

While I expect you to attend class regularly, per University Policy F-15-12 (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-12.pdf>), students will not be graded on daily attendance. One of the purposes of this class is to help simulate the stamina necessary to stick with a project day-in, day-out even as your interest in it naturally waxes and wanes. It is very, *very* unlikely that a student who misses class regularly will do well. More importantly, classroom discussion will tease out much of the important nuance in the readings. As such, regular attendance is strongly encouraged.

### **Final Examination**

The final exam will consist of 50-60 multiple-choice questions and will take place between **9:45a–11:45p on May 18<sup>th</sup> in HGH 116**. These questions will evaluate your ability to critically analyze and synthesize relevant class material; simple rote memorization will be insufficient for satisfactory achievement. A review sheet of relevant terms and essay questions will be provided ahead of time. The exam will assess CLOs 1 and 3. Bring a Scantron 882-E and #2 pencil.

## Grading Information

You will be graded on a percentage basis. All grades will be posted to the class page on Canvas. Your grade will be calculated as follows:

Grading Paradigm
97 to 100% — A Plus
93 to 97.9% — A
90 to 92.9% — A Minus
87 to 89.9% — B Plus
83 to 86.9% — B
80 to 82.9% — B Minus
77 to 79.9% — C Plus
73 to 76.9% — C
70 to 72.9% — C Minus
67 to 69.9% — D Plus
63 to 66.9% — D
60 to 62.9% — D Minus
Less than 60% — F

And assignments and exams will be weighted accordingly:

Assignment	%
Class Participation	10
Case Study #1 - Net Neutrality	5
Case Study #2 - Affordable Housing Shortage	5
Mid-term Exam #1	20
Case Study #3 - Financial Deregulation	5
Mid-term Exam #2	20
Case Study #4 - Policymaking by Other	5
Case Study #5 - Charter Schools	5
Final Examination	25

## Make-up/Late Policy

There are no make-up exams or other assignments without appropriate documentation (serious medical illness or serious medical emergency, religious holiday, pre-approved university-sanctioned event or activity, military orders, family emergency) that you were unable to complete the assignment on time.

This also applies to in-class assignments. If you are seriously ill, you must notify me as soon as possible by email that you will be unable to complete an assignment on time. Except in cases of documented medical emergency, you must notify me *before* the scheduled assignment.

Out of fairness to your colleagues, work, missing an alarm, and generally not feeling well will not be accepted excuses for missing assignments. Be sure you review the schedule of our assignments right away. If you have a vacation or similar event planned during one of these assignment days, you may want to take this course during another session or make arrangements to hand in the assignment early.

Major assignments like the policy paper will be graded if handed in late; however, these will be penalized commensurate with how late they were. If you have reason to think you will not make a deadline, always at least discuss it with me first. I can't guarantee anything, but I can guarantee a fair hearing. Communication will always, *always* lead to a better outcome for you than not communicating. The absolute worst that can happen is the grade you would have received anyway.

## **Classroom Policies and Protocol**

### **Attendance**

Although attendance is not an explicit portion of your grade, students are expected to attend all meetings for the courses in which they are enrolled as they are responsible for material discussed therein, and active participation is frequently essential to ensure maximum benefit to all class members. Attendance is fundamental to course objectives and is the responsibility of the student.

If you miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain class notes from a colleague in class. If you are late, please do not be disruptive. If you know that you need to leave early, please give me a heads up before class and sit near the door so as to draw as little attention as possible when leaving. Every student is expected to participate in class discussion regularly.

### **Cellphones, laptops, and other technology**

You may not use your cell phone in class for non-class purposes. If you need to have it on for family reasons, please let me know ahead of time, turn it on vibrate and leave it out of sight. If you must make an emergency text, feel free to step outside of class. All other texting needs to take place before or after class. Laptops, tablets, and other such technology are allowed in class but for notetaking and educational use only. I reserve the right to bar specific students from using these technologies if they are making inappropriate use of them during class time. Please see me if you have questions about this policy or questions regarding SJSU academic accommodations related to this policy. Please note, the MLK library has options for renting out laptops and tablets that can be utilized for class purposes: <https://library.sjsu.edu/scs>.

### **Recording of Lectures**

Please obtain my permission before taking an audio or video recording of lectures or other class activities. I will almost certainly grant such permission but it is common courtesy to let people know you will be recording them before you do so. Thus, out of respect to your colleagues and to me, please do not record this class without my explicit permission.

## **University Policies**

Per University Policy S16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. will be available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>

## **Succeeding in a Four-Unit Course**

At SJSU, students are expected to spend two hours outside of class for every one hour of class time. Because this is a four-unit class, you can expect to spend a minimum of eight hours per week in addition to time spent in class and on scheduled tutorials or activities. Careful time management will help you keep up with readings and assignments and enable you to be successful in all of your courses. In this class, one of the four units is an engagement unit, which consists of online quizzes and community-based assignments. You are expected to spend 45 hours this semester (both to prepare for and to complete the work) to successfully complete this unit. More details about student workload can be found in <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf>.

## **Political Science Department Writing Policy**

Students of political science should develop the ability to write in clear, grammatical English. Spelling and grammar count! Students must take care that appropriate citations are used. Direct quotations must be so indicated with quotation marks. Ideas from others must also be referenced. Failure to cite your sources constitutes academic misconduct, which carries with it serious sanctions. A tutorial on citations is available at <http://libguides.sjsu.edu/writeandcite>. The SJSU Writing Center is located in Clark Hall, Suite 126. All Writing Specialists have gone through a rigorous hiring process, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. In addition to one-on-one tutoring services, the Writing Center also offers workshops every semester on a variety of writing topics. To make an appointment or to refer to the numerous online resources offered through the Writing Center visit <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/>.

## **Useful Information for Students**

### **SJSU Counseling Services**

The SJSU Counseling Services is located on the corner of 7<sup>th</sup> Street and San Fernando Street, in Room 201, Administration Building. Professional psychologists, social workers, and counselors are available to provide consultations on issues of student mental health, campus climate or psychological and academic issues on an individual, couple, or group basis. To schedule an appointment or learn more information, visit [Counseling Services website](http://www.sjsu.edu/counseling) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/counseling>.

### **SJSU Writing Center**

The SJSU Writing Center is located in Clark Hall, Suite 126. All Writing Specialists have gone through a rigorous hiring process, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. In addition to one-on-one tutoring services, the

Writing Center also offers workshops every semester on a variety of writing topics. To make an appointment or to refer to the numerous online resources offered through the Writing Center, visit the [Writing Center website](http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter>. For additional resources and updated information, follow the Writing Center on Twitter and become a fan of the SJSU Writing Center on Facebook.

## POLS 130 – American Public Policy Spring 2020

Please note, the schedule below is subject to change with fair notice. It is the student's responsibility to stay apprised of changes to the course schedule.

### Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Readings/Media	Due
Unit #1 - The Institutions and Rationale of U.S. Policy				
1	23-Jan	The Market Failures Framework	<i>Crash Course Econ #21</i>	
2	28-Jan	The Study of Public Policy	Kraft & Furlong - Chapter 1	
2	30-Jan	The Logic of Government Intervention	Kraft & Furlong - Chapter 1 CQ Researcher - Net	
3	4-Feb	Case Study #1 - Net Neutrality	Neutrality	Case Study #1
3	6-Feb	Policymaking in a Federalist System Policymaking Institutions at the Federal	Teles - Kludgeocracy	
4	11-Feb	Level	Kraft & Furlong - Chapter 2	
4	13-Feb	Case Study #2 - Affordable Housing Shortage	CQ Researcher - Affordable Housing Shortage	Case Study #2
5	18-Feb	Mid-term #1		Mid-term #1
Unit #2 - Policymaking in Theory				
5	20-Feb	Theories of the Policymaking Process	Kraft & Furlong - Chapter 3	
6	25-Feb	Policy Instruments and Policy Typologies	Kraft & Furlong - Chapter 3	
6	27-Feb	Agenda Setting	Baumgartner & Jones	
7	3-Mar	Typologies and Theory in a Political Context	Smith & Larimer - Chapter 2	
7	5-Mar	Policy Design	Smith & Larimer - Chapter 8	
8	10-Mar	Case Study #3 - Financial Deregulation	CQ Researcher - Deregulation	Case Study #3
8	12-Mar	The Logic of Policy Analysis	Kraft & Furlong - Chapter 4	
9	17-Mar	Policy Implementation	Smith & Larimer - Chapter 7	
9	19-Mar	Mid-term #2		Mid-term #2
Unit #3 - Central Considerations in American Public Policy				
10	24-Mar	The Goals of Economic Policy; Monetary Policy	Kraft & Furlong - Chapter 7	
10	26-Mar	Budgetary Policy and Taxation	Kraft & Furlong - Chapter 7	
11	31-Mar	Spring Break - No Class!		
11	2-Apr	Spring Break - No Class!		
12	7-Apr	No Class - Case Study #4 - Policymaking by Other	<i>Vox - The Weeds</i>	Case Study #4

Means				
12	9-Apr	Immigration and Sanctuary Cities	Canvas Readings	
13	14-Apr	Housing Policy	Canvas Readings	
13	16-Apr	Healthcare Policy	Kraft & Furlong - Chapter 8	
14	21-Apr	Education Policy	Kraft & Furlong - Chapter 10	
14	24-Apr	No Class - Case Study #5 - Charter Schools	CQ Researcher - Charter Schools	Case Study #5
15	28-Apr	Welfare Policy and Social Security	Kraft & Furlong - Chapter 9	
15	30-Apr	Planning and Transportation Policy	Canvas Readings	
16	5-May	Environmental Policy	Kraft & Furlong - Chapter 11	
16	7-May	Final Thoughts	None	

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Final Exam - Monday, May 18th @ 9:45am

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