The Politics of Public Policy  
Winter 2018

Class Time: M,W,F 3:00 – 3:50 pm  
Class Location: Warren Lecture Hall

Instructor: Professor Dan Butler  
Email: dmbutler@ucsd.edu  
Office Hours: MW – 1-2pm, SSB 369

Purposes

Students will learn how politics determines policy. The course will first briefly introduce students to cost-benefit analysis and then will discuss how political ideas, interests, and institutions often move policy outcomes away from those based on cost-benefit analysis.

In the course I assume you have are familiar with the material covered in a standard course on American politics and government (how the institutions and electoral system work). If you have any questions about your preparation for the course, feel free to contact me.

Class Meetings
Classes will be a combination of lecture and discussion. Mondays and Wednesdays are traditional lectures. Fridays will be focused on discussion sections. You are only required to attend four of the Friday meetings. I will take attendance.

Course Readings
The material in the course will use material from the following textbook:


Other readings are listed on the session schedule given below.

Course Requirements

1. **Attendance of Friday Sections – 10% of grade.** You are required to attend and participate in a total of four meetings over the quarter. Each of the four meetings counts as 2.5% of your grade. You do not get any extra points for attending more than 4 Friday meetings.
2. **Homework Assignments – 20% total.**
3. **Mid-term exam (February 12) – 15% of grade.** The exam will be in class and will consist of math based, short-answer, and a few multiple choice style questions.
(4) **Group Project – 30% of grade.** Students in groups of 5 will use the framework developed in class to analyze a public policy. Grade: 20% will come from the written part, and 10% will come from the presentation of the material in class.

(5) **Final exam (March 21, 3pm) – 25% of grade.** The exam will consist of essay, math based, short-answer, and a few multiple choice style questions. It will be on Wednesday, March 21, 3 pm.

Example exams are on blackboard. The instructions for the final project are also available on blackboard.

**Grades** will be based on the following scale:

- 100-94 = A
- 90-94 = A-
- 87-90 = B+
- 84-87 = B
- 80-84 = B-
- 77-80 = C+
- 74-77 = C
- 70-74 = C-
- 67-70 = D+
- 64-67 = D
- 60-64 = D-
- 0-60 = F

For those taking the course pass/fail – you need to earn at least a C-

**Extra Credit.** You may earn 1 point towards your course grade by participating in the Omnibus Political Science Survey (OPSS). You will be contacted by email during the term with information regarding the survey and how you can complete it.

As an alternative to participating in the survey, you can read and write a 1-2 page response to an article of the instructor’s choosing.

**Academic Integrity:** Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. Cheating, plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will be subject to disciplinary action consistent with University rules and regulations. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with University regulations regarding plagiarism and academic dishonesty.

**Schedule**

**SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION TO COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS**

Week 1 (Jan 8-12)

The Market as a Benchmark
- Paul Bloom. “The Case Against Empathy.” *The New Yorker*
- *Analyzing Policy*, pages 101-121

Week 2 (Jan 15-19)

**NO CLASS on Jan 15**
CBA – Discounting 1
• *Analyzing Policy* Ch. 9
• *DC Stadium CBA* (Read the executive summary, the table of contents, and then skim the rest to see what goes into the CBA report)

Week 3 (Jan 29- Feb 2)

**Jan 31: HW #1 due @ beginning of class**

CBA – Discounting 2
• *Analyzing Policy* Ch. 10 (Don’t worry about IRR)

**SECTION 2 – THE POLITICS OF PUBLIC POLICY**

Week 4 (Feb 5-9)

**Feb 7: HW #2 due @ beginning of class**

A Framework for Public Policy Analysis

Problem Definition and Agenda Setting

**Feb 9 – EXAM PREP**

Week 5 (Feb 12-16)

**Feb 12 Midterm Exam (on material from Section 1)**

Case Study on Problem Definition: Estate (or Death) Tax Repeal

Week 6 (Feb 19-23)
**Feb 19 – No Class**
Venue Shopping


Members of Congress and the Public


Week 7 (Feb 26 – Mar 2)

Can Interest Groups Effectively Represent Voters' Interest?

- *Federalist 10* and *Federalist 51*, online at [http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/federal/fed.htm](http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/federal/fed.htm)

Pivotal Politics


Week 9 (Mar 5 – 9)

**Mar 7: HW #3 due @ beginning of class**

More Pivotal Politics


Week 10 Student Presentations (Mar 12-16)

NOTE: Attendance required all three days

**Wednesday, March 21 – Final, 3-6 pm**