

POLS 4311
Urban Problems and Public Policy

Professor: Dr. M. Gritter

E-MAIL: mgritter@angelo.edu

Office: RAS 222

Office Phone: 325-942-2262

OFFICE HOURS: MW 9-1, 2:15-3:15 and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This class explores several policy areas that face urban areas and beyond. Unlike states, cities have no constitutional standing and policy is created and executed through interactions between federal, state and local government entities in addition to interest groups and private sources of capital. As a result, policy making is often difficult. The course will begin with an overview of the history of urban governance and of how public policy is made. Through focusing attention on health care, education, mass incarceration and immigration we explore issues that have been prevalent throughout urban areas across the country that will inform our study of public policy.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students completing this course will:

1. Understand the basic aspects of urban governance and federalism
2. Acquire knowledge of specific public policy areas
3. Gain the ability to critically analyze types of public policies
4. Improve written and oral communication skills
5. Demonstrate intercultural awareness and civic engagement.

This course is part of ASU's CONNECT! Initiative and we will strive to make practical applications throughout the class.

COURSE READINGS

Diane Ravitch's *Reign of Error* and Jonathan Kozol's *Fire in the Ashes* are available in the university bookstore and are available on www.amazon.com. All other readings will be available on Blackboard.

MEANS OF ASSESSMENT

Attendance and Participation (5%) This course will be based on a mix of lecture and extensive class discussions. Students will be graded on their contributions to class discussion and their attendance. Quality rather than quantity of class discussion will be graded, since some students are more comfortable participating than others that will be considered in the grade. Absences will be excused for school functions, family emergencies and documented medical problems.

Students with more than three unexcused absences will have their grades negatively impacted.

Book Review (15%) Each student will be expected to complete a 3-5 page review of the Kozol book. The review should not be merely a summary of the book but critically analyze the book.

The book utilizes personal stories and experiences to make important arguments regarding public policy. The review should be approximately three double spaced pages. Detailed instructions and a rubric will be placed on Blackboard.

Guest Speaker Paper (10%) We will have a variety of guest speakers in the course. Students will

complete a 2-3 page paper exploring two of those guest speakers. Students should outline the content of the speakers' discussion, how it enhanced their knowledge of public policy and assess the overall quality of the speaker. Instructions will be available on Blackboard.

Policy Paper (20%) Each student will write a short 2-3 page policy memo based on a list of topics distributed by the instructor. No additional research will be necessary for this assignment. Instructions will be available on Blackboard.

Options: Presentation or Midterm Exam

Students will have the option of either taking a midterm exam or leading discussion for one of the course readings.

Midterm Exam (20%) A midterm exam consisting of short answer questions will be given in class. A review sheet will be made available on Blackboard prior to the exam. **OR**

Presentation (20%) As an alternative to taking a midterm exam students can lead discussion in a 20-30 minute presentation to the class. Students selecting this option will need to do so by the second week of class. Further instructions will be available on Blackboard.

Documentary Review (10%) We will supplement class discussions and guest speakers with viewing of documentaries. Students will be responsible for writing a 2-3 page review for the documentary, *The House I Live In*.

Final Exam (20%) A final exam based on the cumulative aspects of the course will be given during the regular final exam period. A review sheet will be made available on Blackboard prior to the exam.

Late papers will be reduced by one letter grade for each day they are late.

GRADING SCALE

A - 90% B - 80% C - 70% D - 60% F - Less than 60%

SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTION

Supplemental instruction will be available this semester, more information will be forthcoming.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

Every effort will be made to accommodate all forms of religious observance in compliance with ASU OP 10.19. Students who require additional arrangements to be made should make these known in good time in order that arrangements can be made.

SPECIAL NEEDS

In accordance with OP 10.15 of ASU's Operating Policies and Procedures, persons with disabilities which may warrant academic accommodations must contact the Student Life Office, Room 112 University Center, in order to request such accommodations prior to any accommodations being implemented. You are encouraged to make this request early in the semester so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

CLASS ETIQUETTE

Behavior consistent with basic rules of courtesy contributes to a productive classroom. To minimize distractions that occasionally disturb the class, refrain from bringing food into the classroom, turn off all cell phones or other electronic devices with audible signals that would disrupt classroom presentations or activities. Students should also avoid whispering or other

disrespectful behavior. Laptops may be used for note taking only, students using laptops in a disruptive manner will be asked to put them away.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Angelo State University Honor Code http://www.angelo.edu/forms/pdf/Honor_Code.pdf :

Angelo State University expects its students to maintain complete honesty and integrity in their academic pursuits. Therefore, you are responsible for understanding the Academic Honor Code. Click on the link to access the code.

WITHDRAWAL FROM THE COURSE

The last day to drop a course or to withdraw from the University will be **April 6, 2015**.

This syllabus will be subject to change although changes will be kept to the absolute minimum.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Readings not in the two books ordered for the course will be available on Blackboard

1/21 Introduction

1/26 Urban Politics and Development

Excerpt from Dennis R. Judd and Todd Swanstrom's *City Politics: The Political Economy of Urban America*.

1/28 How Change Happens or Doesn't

Kamarck *How Change Happens or Doesn't*, Chapter 1

2/2 Making Public Policy

Kamarck *How Change Happens or Doesn't*, Chapter 2

2/4 Making Public Policy Part II

Kamarck *How Change Happens or Doesn't*, Chapter 4

2/9 Alicia Henry, *La Esperanza*

Guest Speaker #1

2/11-Why was Health Care reformed?

Jacob Hacker, "The Road to Somewhere: Why Health Care Happened." *Perspectives on Politics*. (2010)

Presentation #1

2/16-Health Care, Criminal Justice and Policymaking in Texas

Excerpt from Erica Grieder's *Big Hot Cheap and Right*

Presentation #2

2/18-School to Prison Pipeline

Linda Darling-Hammond. "Structured for Failure for Failure: Race, Resources, and Student Achievement." In Marcus and Moya, *Doing Race*

Presentation #3

2/23 The Carceral State and Voting

Excerpt from Amy Lerman and Vesla Weaver's *Arresting Citizenship*

Presentation #4

2/25-*The House I Live In* Documentary Shown in Class

3/2 -*The House I Live In* Documentary Shown in Class

3/4 Eric Sanchez, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Council for the Concho Valley

Guest Speaker #2

3/9-Introduction to Education and Education Reform

Ravitch, Chapters 1 and 2

Presentation #5

3/11 Marilyn Golightly, Adult Literacy Council of the Concho Valley

Guest Speaker #3

3/23 Testing and Achievement

Ravitch, Chapters 4 and 5

Guest Speaker Paper Due

3/25 **Midterm Exam**

3/30-Fire in the Ashes

Begin Reading Kozol Book

4/1-Fire in the Ashes

Continue Reading Kozol Book

4/6-Fire in the Ashes

Finish Kozol Book

4/8 Education Reform Part I

Ravitch, Chapter 10, 11

4/13-Education Reform Part II

Ravitch, Chapter 14, 15

Book Review Due

4/15-Education Reform Part III

Ravitch, Chapter 21, 23

4/20-The Future of American Education

Ravitch, Chapter 32, 33

4/22-Student Loans and Higher Education

Suzanne Mettler's *The Submerged State*

Presentation #6

4/27 Education and Immigration Part I

Linda Greenhouse. "What Would Justice Powell Due? The 'Alien Children' Case and the Meaning of Equal Protection." Social Science Research Network, January 5, 2009

Presentation #7

4/29 Education and Immigration Part II

Jose Antonio Vargas materials to be posted on Blackboard

Policy Paper Due

5/4 Policy as a Fight

Kamarck *How Change Happens or Doesn't*, Chapter 7

% Review for Final

The final will consist of short answer questions and an essay question and will occur on

Wednesday May 13, 2015 at 1pm.