

Issues in Public Policy

Vanguard University of Southern California

Class

Semester: Fall 2018

Times: Mondays and Wednesdays, 1-2:15

Room: NMC 202A

Instructor

Kevin Walker, Ph.D.

Office Hours: MWF, 10-1 or by appointment

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Course Description

Politics is the art of living together in community. Like any art, learning it does not come to us naturally, nor does political science alone show us how to do it. The art of politics, like any skill or craft, must be *practiced*. Like any art, it involves the humility to admit that we don't know all of the answers, but only approximate opinions; that ideology is not a perfect teaching on society and government, but only a proposal for what a good society might be; and that political truth is not innate, but gained only through constructive disagreement with our fellow citizens in a spirit of charity and our desire to seek the common good. This course is a study in that great art of living in the American political community. We will examine policymaking on all levels – federal, state and municipal – involving all players – officials, administrators and interest groups. We will begin by looking at the general theories of what the common good is and how government can achieve it, and then turn to a survey of the major issues and debates, with a special emphasis on poverty. In all, we will learn from the past in order to plan for the future, and apply public policy to our own role as citizens.

Required Texts

Students are required to own the following texts (in order of reading):

Conrad, Jessemyn. *What You Should Know About Politics . . . But Don't: A Nonpartisan Guide to the Issues That Matter*. Third Edition. New York: Arcade Publishing, 2016.

Olasky, Marvin. *The Tragedy of American Compassion*. Washington D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 1994.

Course Requirements

Grades will be based on the following:

- **Participation (10%)**. Be prepared to answer the reading questions. Inability to answer questions about the text will result in the loss of *one* percentage point; not having the book will cost *two* percentage points.
- **Minor Research Presentations (5%)**. These are short presentations on various historical, contemporary and scholarly studies on American politics and public policy.
- **Midterm Exam (25%)**. This is an exam on the terms, basic concepts, and readings on the first half of the course.
- **Final Exam (25%)**. This is an exam on the terms, basic concepts, and readings on the second half of the course.
- **Research Essay (30%, Phase I 5%, Phase II 5%)**. This is a 12-14+ page research essay on a topic of your choice related to Public Policy. There will be a prompt, and it will be due in two phases. Incorrect footnote and bibliographic citations will not receive higher than a B+. Late essays will receive no higher than a B-.

Disabilities

The Office of Disability Services provides reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a temporary or permanent disability that requires classroom accommodations (this can include but not limited to; attention-related, learning, mental health, vision, hearing, physical or other health conditions), please contact The Office of Disability Services at 714-619-6550 or disabilityservices@vanguard.edu.

Writing Center

The Vanguard Writing Center is committed to helping undergraduate and graduate students in all disciplines. Students may bring any writing assignment to the center, where they will receive informed, thorough, one-on-one feedback from a peer consultant. The Writing Center can help students at any stage of the writing process, including: organizing notes, developing outlines, revising thesis statements, improving organization, or assisting with final editing. To book an appointment for a writing consultation, please visit vanguard.mywconline.com. To contact the writing center, email writingcenter@vanguard.edu or call (714) 966-6359.

Academic Integrity and Dishonesty policy

Academic dishonesty, either cheating or plagiarizing (presenting as one's own, the words or opinions of others), is regarded as a serious violation of both the academic and moral standards of VUSC. Full descriptions of the policies are in the University Catalog, pp. 59-61.

Course Outline

I. Public Policy the Common Good

Week 1 – The Purpose of Government

September 27

U.S. Constitution; Federalist Papers #45 and 46

September 29

Rexford Tugwell, "Principles of Planning and Laissez-Faire," *American Economic Review* (1932);
Milton Friedman, "Why Government is the Problem," *Essays in Public Policy* (1993)

Week 2 – The Pursuit of Happiness

September 3

Labor Day

September 5

Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein, "Libertarian Paternalism," *American Economic Review* (2003);
Charles Murray, *In Pursuit: Of Happiness and Good Government* (1997)

Research Essay Topic Chosen – Friday, September 7
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II. Public Policy Issues

Week 3 – Economics

September 10

What you Should Know, Chapter 2 – The Economy

September 12

What you Should Know, Chapter 2 – The Economy

Week 4 – Military Policy

September 17

What you Should Know, Chapter 4 – The Military
Megan MacKenzie, “Let Women Fight,” *Foreign Affairs* (2012);

September 19

What you Should Know, Chapter 4 – The Military
Marine Corps Combat Development Command,
“Analysis of The Integration of Female Marines
into Ground Combat Arms and Units” (2016)

Research Essay – Phase I Due Friday, September 21

Week 5 – Healthcare Policy

September 24

Jonathan Oberlander, “Long Time Coming: Why
Health Reform Finally Passed” *Health Affairs*
(2010);

September 26

What you Should Know, Chapter 5 – Healthcare
David Blumenthal, “Affordable Care Act at 5
Years,” *New England Journal of Medicine* (2015)

Week 6 – Energy and the Environmental Policy

October 1

What you Should Know, Chapter 6 – Energy

October 3

What you Should Know, Chapter 7 – The
Environment

Week 7 – Public Policy and Personal Freedom

October 8

What you Should Know, Chapter 8 – Civil Liberties

October 10

Exam

Midterm Exam – October 10

Week 8 – American Political Culture

October 15

What you Should Know, Chapter 9 – Culture Wars
Patrick Buchanan, “The Culture War for the Soul
of the Country” (1992)

October 17

What you Should Know, Chapter 9 – Culture Wars
Barack Obama, *Audacity of Hope* excerpt (2006)

Week 9 – Society and Security

October 22

What you Should Know, Chapter 10 –
Socioeconomic Policy

October 24

What you Should Know, Chapter 11 – Homeland
Security

Research Essay – Phase II Due Friday, October 19

Week 10 – Education Policy

October 29

What you Should Know, Chapter 12 – Education

October 31

George Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt, “The Coddling of the American Mind,” *The Atlantic* (2015)

III. The Challenge of Poverty

Week 11

November 5

Tragedy of American Compassion, Introduction and Chapters 1-2

November 7

Tragedy of American Compassion, Chapters 3-4

Week 12

November 12

Tragedy of American Compassion, Chapters 5-6

November 14

Tragedy of American Compassion, Chapters 7-8

Research Essay – Final Draft Due Friday, November 16

Week 13

November 19

Tragedy of American Compassion, Chapters 9-11

November 21

Thanksgiving

Week 14

November 26

Tragedy of American Compassion, Chapters 12

November 28

Tragedy of American Compassion, Chapters 13

IV. Presentations

Week 15

December 3

Student Panels

December 5

Student Panels

December 10

Student Panels

Final Exam – Wednesday, December 12, 1-3pm