

# Social Contexts of Public Policy

Public Policy Studies 2200  
Tuesday and Thursday: 11:00 - 12:15  
Commons Center 320  
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Office hours: Wednesday 11-1, or by appt.

**Course description:** In this course we will explore the sociological underpinnings and aims of public policy. We will draw on theoretical and empirical works in the fields of sociology, anthropology, political science, and economics to begin developing a sociological imagination that allows us to connect the outcomes of current and potential public policy to broader social structures, goals, and values. In the course of developing such an analytical tool set, we will cover: 1) Historical approaches to, and understandings of, public policy's purposes and effectiveness; 2) How public policies have variably impacted communities in various dimensions of social life (e.g. Urban Development and Housing; Gender Inequality; Racial Inequality, and Incarceration; Environmental Protection, Energy use, and Justice; Social movements and the State; and International Development); 3) What recent sociological research suggests might be the most appropriate policy mechanisms and approaches for addressing social problems in the various arenas of social activities listed above.

## Required texts

- ❖ Mills, C. Wright. *The Sociological Imagination*
- ❖ Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*
- ❖ Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*
- ❖ Harrison, Jill Lindsey, *From the Inside Out: The Fight for Environmental Justice within Government Agencies*
- ❖ Stiglitz, Joseph. *Making Globalization Work*.

## Recommended texts

- ❖ Bonilla Silva, Eduardo. *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America 4<sup>th</sup> Edition*.
- ❖ Omni, Michael & Howard Winant. *Racial Formation in the United States 3rd Edition*.
- ❖ Graeber, David. *Debt: The first 5000 years*
- ❖ Perez, Caroline Criado. *Invisible Women: Data Bias in a World Designed for Men*
- ❖ Jacobs, Jane. *The Life and Death of Great American Cities*
- ❖ William Domhoff. *The Leftmost City: Power and Progressive Politics in Santa Cruz*.
- ❖ Klinenberg, Eric. *Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life*

## **Course Assignments:**

**Weekly journals (40%):** Throughout this course, you will be asked to keep a weekly journal. In these journals, you will be asked to reflect on the various content explored throughout the course. The journals are due on Fridays at the end of each week by 5:00 PM on Brightspace. You are expected to write about the course readings, class discussions, in class videos, and guest speakers. There is no maximum page length for these journals. You should write as much as you think is necessary. However, to demonstrate that you are actively engaged with the readings journal entries should be at least 500 words. Journals will be graded based on how well they engage with course content and your critical reflections. A strong journal entry will engage critically with readings and other course materials and make connections between the readings, current events, your own life, and/or other course material.

**Participation (15%):** Though daily attendance is not taken, you are expected to be present and active in your learning experience. Class participation is evaluated based on a number of different criteria, including your attentiveness throughout the course, and your participation in group discussions and activities. The beginning of each class section will consist of an open discussion of the reading. You will be expected to contribute your thoughts and questions to this discussion. In order to help facilitate this process the first few minutes of class will be provided for you to discuss the reading and formulate questions with a neighbor.

**Final Paper- Thinking Sociologically About Public Policy (45%):** The final paper in for this course will ask you to expand on the various themes explored in the readings. You may choose from one of the course topics below and write an essay about the potentials and difficulties of addressing that topic through public policy. You have quite a bit of latitude here, as this may be a comparative work exploring the successes and/or failures of addressing your topic of interest using different policies in two to three historical contexts, or an analysis and synthesis of course readings and outside materials concerning your topic, and what they suggest for potential policy actions. Your paper should be no less than 2,500 words. Throughout the term there will be various assignments to help formulate and write your final research project. Each will be worth 5% of the final paper. Thus, the final paper, itself, will account for 25% of your final grade in the course. The assignments you will complete on the way to finishing your paper are as follows: 1) a research paper proposal- a 250 to 500-word document proposing your final paper; 2) a peer review of the introduction and bibliography of your final research paper; 3) a peer review of a first rough draft of the final research paper; and 4) a brief (5 minute) presentation of your research project to the class. More information about each of these can be found below, or on the class website.

### **Final Paper assignments and due dates**

- **Final Research Paper Proposal (5%)**– Due Thursday, of week 7 (February 20<sup>th</sup>). Submit a 250 - 500-word document that details what you plan to study for your final research paper. This document should identify which course topic you plan to study, and let us know if you plan on doing a historical comparative research assignment (e.g. comparing the efficacy of different policy approaches to managing the issue you identify) or a synthesis of current research on the topic arguing what the best policy approach would be. Please bring a hardcopy to class on the due date.
- **Final Research Paper Proposal Introduction and Bibliography Review (5%)**– Due Thursday of week 10 (March 17<sup>th</sup>). Submit a rough draft of your introduction and a tentative bibliography for your research paper (including items you plan on reading to complete the research). Please bring a hard copy to class on the due date. You will exchange papers with a class mate, and you will have the weekend to complete a review of the document you exchanged with your peer. The review, with feedback, is due back to your peer in class on Tuesday, March 24<sup>th</sup>.
- **Final Research Paper Rough Draft Review (5%)**– Due Tuesday of week 13 (April 7<sup>th</sup>). Submit a full rough draft of your final research paper. It is not necessary for this to be a complete paper, but it should be as close to a finished draft as is possible at this point in the term. Please bring a hard copy to class on the due date. You will exchange papers with a class mate, and you will have one week to complete a review of your peer's rough draft. The review, with feedback, is due back to your peer in class on Tuesday, April 17<sup>th</sup>.
- **Final Research Paper (25%)**– Due Friday, April 24<sup>th</sup>. Submit your final research paper on Brightspace. Be sure to include a short note (150-200 words at the end of your paper) detailing how you responded to the feedback supplied by your peer as well.

**A note on course assignment formatting-** All course assignments should be submitted in Times New Roman, 12 pt. font, with 1-inch margins unless otherwise specified. You may choose any of the following citation formats, but you must be consistent and accurate in your formatting: 1) ASA (American Sociological Association) format; 2) APA (American Psychological Association) format; 3) MLA (Modern Language Association) format; 4) Chicago/Turabian format. Please feel free to get in touch with any questions about formatting.

## Course Schedule:

### **Part 1: Sociological approaches to public policy & social contexts of policy making**

#### **Week 1: Introduction to Social Contexts and Aims of Public Policy**

Required readings:

Tuesday: Ch. 1, and 4-5 in Mills, C. Wright. 1959. *The Sociological Imagination*

Thursday: Ch. 7-8, and 10 in Mills, C. Wright. 1959. *The Sociological Imagination*

#### **Week 2: Introduction to Social Contexts and Aims of Public Policy (cont.)**

Required readings:

Tuesday: Ch. 1-3 in Harvey, David. 2005. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*

Thursday: Ch. 4 and 7 in Harvey, David. 2005. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*

### **Part 2: Public Policy in Urban Development and Housing**

#### **Week 3: Power and City Planning**

Required reading:

Tuesday: Ch. 1 and 7 in Gendron, Richard and G. William Domhoff. 2009. *The Leftmost City: Power and Progressive Politics in Santa Cruz.*

Thursday: Ch. 8 and 13 in Jacobs, Jane. 1961. *The Life and Death of Great American Cities*

Thursday: Introduction and Conclusion in Klinenberg, Eric. 2018. *Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life*

#### **Week 4: Race, Space, Housing, and Gentrification**

Required reading:

Tuesday: Hernandez, Jesus. 2009. "Redlining Revisited: Mortgage Lending Patterns in Sacramento 1930 - 2004." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 3

Tuesday: Haynes, Bruce and Ray Hutchison. 2008. "The Ghetto: Origins, History, Discourse." *City & Community* 7(4): 347 - 352.

Thursday: Sullivan, Daniel M. and Shaw, Samuel C. 2011. "Retail Gentrification and Race: The Case of Alberta Street in Portland, Oregon". *Urban Affairs Review*

Thursday: Marcuse, Peter. 2015. "Gentrification, Social Justice and Personal Ethics". *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*.

In class film, *Priced Out: Gentrification in PDX*

### **Part 3: Inequality, Race, and Incarceration**

#### **Week 5: Gender Inequality in Policy and Planning**

Required reading:

Tuesday: Introduction and Ch. 1 in Perez, Caroline Criado. 2019. *Invisible Women: Data Bias in a World Designed for Men*

Thursday: Ch. 3, 8, and 14 in Perez, Caroline Criado. 2019. *Invisible Women: Data Bias in a World Designed for Men*

#### **Week 6: Police Surveillance and the New Jim Crow**

Required reading:

Tuesday: Ch. 1 and 2 in Alexander, Michelle. 2010. *The New Jim Crow: Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*.

Thursday: Ch. 3 in Alexander, Michelle. 2010. *The New Jim Crow: Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*.

Thursday: Ross, Cody T. 2015. "A Multi-Level Bayesian Analysis of Racial Bias in Police Shootings at the County-Level in the United States, 2011–2014". *PLoS ONE* (**Skim. DO NOT READ METHODS**)

In class film, *13<sup>th</sup>*

#### **Week 7: Police Surveillance and the New Jim Crow (cont)**

Required reading:

Tuesday: Ch. 4 and 5 in Alexander, Michelle. 2010. *The New Jim Crow: Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*.

Thursday: Ch. 6 in Alexander, Michelle. 2010. *The New Jim Crow: Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*.

Thursday: Brayne, Sarah. 2017. "Big Data Surveillance: The Case of Policing". *American Sociological Review*.

- **DUE DATE**: Final research paper proposal due on Brightspace by 11:00am on Thursday. Bring a hard copy to class.

#### **Part 4: The Environment**

#### **Week 8: The Environmental Crisis and Debates Over Solutions**

Required reading:

Tuesday: Steffen, W., Rockström, J., Richardson, K., Lenton, T.M., Folke, C., Liverman, D., Summerhayes, C.P., Barnosky, A.D., Cornell, S.E., Crucifix, M. and Donges, J.F., 2018. "Trajectories of the Earth System in the Anthropocene." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 115(33), pp.8252-8259.

Tuesday: Rosa, E.A., Rudel, T.K., York, R., Jorgenson, A.K. and Dietz, T., 2015. The human (anthropogenic) driving forces of global climate change. *Climate change and society: Sociological perspectives*

Thursday: Mol, Arthur P. J. 2010. "Ecological Modernization as a Social Theory of Environmental Reform." Pp. 63-76 in *The International Handbook of Environmental Sociology, Second Edition*

Thursday: York, Richard, Eugene A. Rosa, and Thomas Dietz. 2010. "Ecological Modernization Theory: Theoretical and Empirical Challenges." Pp. 77-90 in *The International Handbook of Environmental Sociology, Second Edition*

#### **Week 9: Coronavirus outbreak occurs- classes were canceled**

#### **Week 10: The Environmental Crisis- Energy Use**

Required reading:

Tuesday: Grant, Don, Katrina Running, Kelly Bergstrand, and Richard York. 2018. "A Sustainable "Building Block"? The Paradoxical Effects of Thermal Efficiency on U.S. Power Plants' Co2 Emissions." *Energy Policy*

Tuesday: Dietz, T., Gerald T. Gardner, Jonathan Gilligan, Paul C. Stern, and Michael P. Vandenbergh. 2009. "Household Actions Can Provide a Behavioral Wedge to Rapidly Reduce Us Carbon Emissions." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

Thursday: Dietz, T., Leshko, C. and McCright, A.M., 2013. Politics shapes individual choices about energy efficiency. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 110(23), pp.9191-9192.

Thursday: Hess, David J., Quan D. Mai, and Kate Pride Brown. 2016. "Red States, Green Laws: Ideology and Renewable Energy Legislation in the United States." *Energy Research and Social Science*

**Zoom session:** Thursday 11am-12:15pm (these are optional and intended to provide you an opportunity to participate in live discussion and Q&A sessions concerning the readings with your professor and peers).

### **Week 11: Environmental Justice**

Required reading:

Tuesday: Ch. 1 and 2 in Harrison, Jill Lindsey. 2019. *From the Inside Out: The Fight for Environmental Justice within Government Agencies*

Tuesday: Bullard, Robert D., and Glenn S. Johnson. "Environmentalism and Public Policy: Environmental Justice: Grassroots Activism and Its Impact on Public Policy Decision Making." *Journal of Social Issues* 56, no. 3 (2000): 555-78. **(Skim)**

Thursday: Ch. 3 and 4 in Harrison, Jill Lindsey. 2019. *From the Inside Out: The Fight for Environmental Justice within Government Agencies*

**Due Date:** Final research paper introduction and bibliography due on Brightspace by 11:00am of Thursday. Exchange a copy with your assigned partner via Brightspace lockers.

**Zoom session:** Thursday 11am-12:15pm (these are optional and intended to provide you an opportunity to participate in live discussion and Q&A sessions concerning the readings with your professor and peers).

### **Week 12: EJ and Social Movements**

Required Reading:

Tuesday: Ch. 5 and 6 in Harrison, Jill Lindsey. 2019. *From the Inside Out: The Fight for Environmental Justice within Government Agencies*

Thursday: Ch. 7 in Harrison, Jill Lindsey. 2019. *From the Inside Out: The Fight for Environmental Justice within Government Agencies*

Thursday: Pellow, David. 2016. "Toward a critical environmental justice studies: Black Lives Matter as an environmental justice challenge." *Du Bois Review*.

***Due Date***: Return review of your peer's final research paper introduction and bibliography to them by Tuesday morning in Brightspace lockers.

### **Part 5: International Development**

#### **Week 13: International Development and Globalization**

Required reading:

Tuesday: Ch. 1 and 2 in Graeber, David. 2012. *Debt: The first 5000 years*

Thursday: Ch. 8 and 12 in Graeber, David. 2012. *Debt: The first 5000 years*

***Due Date***: Full rough draft of final research paper due on Brightspace by 11:00am on Tuesday. Exchange a copy with your assigned partner via Brightspace lockers.

#### **Week 14: International Development and Globalization: Beyond the State?**

Required reading:

Tuesday: Ch. 2 and 3 in Stiglitz, Joseph. *Making Globalization Work*.

Thursday: Ch.7-8 and 10 in Stiglitz, Joseph. *Making Globalization Work*.

***Due Date***: Return review of your peer's final research paper rough draft to them in by 11:00am on Thursday morning in Brightspace lockers.

#### **Week 16: No Class- Final Due**

***Due Date***: Final research paper due on Brightspace by 5:00pm on Friday, April 24<sup>th</sup>.



## **Classroom Policies:**

**Academic Etiquette:** Please be respectful to all members of the class. Please arrive in class on time and do not leave early (or pack up to leave early). Both arriving late and leaving early can be very disruptive. In addition, please do not talk while I am lecturing and do not interrupt other members of the class when they are talking. Of course, you should always feel free to raise your hand if you'd like to ask a question or make a comment, and you should talk freely and openly on discussion days.

**Participation:** Success in this class depends largely on your level of participation in the classroom. While I realize that not all students feel comfortable speaking in class, my hope is that we can make this an atmosphere in which everyone will feel that they can participate. Each student is responsible for attending class, being prepared for class, and contributing to the activities in class. We will frequently discuss the topics and readings covered in this course, some of which may be controversial. I hope that discussions will be lively and interesting. The beginning of each class section will consist of an open discussion of the reading. You will be expected to contribute your thoughts and questions to this discussion. In order to help facilitate this process the first few minutes of class will be provided for you to discuss the reading and formulate questions with a neighbor. I encourage, and expect, everyone to engage enthusiastically in these discussions and those that take place in the course of class lecture. I also want to ensure that we all work to make our classroom a safe environment in which all students to feel comfortable. To ensure that our discussions will be productive, it is essential that at all times you are respectful to other members of the class. Disrespectful interactions with other members of the classroom community will result in you being asked to leave for the remainder of the class section.

**Attendance:** I expect you to be in class, although I will not typically take attendance. Each of you will be responsible for any material, announcements, assignments, and/or schedule changes presented during class time. If you miss a class you will need to ask another student for details of what was covered in class; I will not repeat information in class for those who have missed classes.

**Electronic recording:** You do not have permission to record classes. Classrooms are protected spaces where learning occurs. "To record classroom interactions without the knowledge or consent of others in the classroom violates the principles of honesty and civility, and threatens the principle of scholarship. To use recordings for purposes beyond enhancing personal learning

may constitute theft (of intellectual property), undermines the collaborative pursuit of scholarship, and is inconsistent with the principle of civility.”

### **Academic Honesty:**

Vanderbilt’s Honor Code governs all work in this course. In general:

(1) You may discuss research, test preparation, and homework with other students, but you must do the work yourself (e.g., literature searches, reading and writing for assignments, preparation for oral presentations, etc.); and (2) You must properly document all sources that you use in your research project using ASA, MLA, APA, or Chicago/Turban bibliographic style. (3) You do not need to reference readings for the in-class assignments (e.g. quizzes, participation exercises, or journal entries) unless it is for an article that is not part of the assignment.

More information on the Honor Code is available here:

[www.vanderbilt.edu/student\\_handbook/chapter2.html](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/student_handbook/chapter2.html)

[studentorgs.vanderbilt.edu/HonorCouncil/infostud.php](http://studentorgs.vanderbilt.edu/HonorCouncil/infostud.php).

If you have any questions, please ask me, not another student, for clarification. Uncertainty about the application of the Honor Code does not excuse a violation.

Student-teacher relationships are built on trust. Students must trust that teachers have made appropriate decisions about the structure and content of a course, and teachers must trust that the assignments students turn in are their own. Acts that violate this trust undermine the educational enterprise. There are several types of academic dishonesty that you should be aware of for this course:

1. Copying your assignment answers from another student. You may discuss the readings with your classmates, but you should do the readings on your own, write them up on your own, and be ready to discuss them in class. Violations will be turned over to the Honor Council.
2. Copying another source in a writing assignment, such as an article or another student’s assignment, including from a previous time the course was offered, without using quotation marks and citing the reference. If the plagiarism is substantial (more than one sentence), your case may be turned over to the Honor Council.
3. Copying minor quotations of a phrase or half sentence or using the ideas of others without attribution. This is known as “patchwork plagiarism” and “theft of ideas.” I tend to treat this problem with a warning at the beginning, but if it continues, your case may be turned over to the Honor Council. When in doubt, add a footnote and a reference even for an idea that you are referencing (that is, even if you do not quote directly the source).
4. Adding to the attendance sheet the name of a student who is not in attendance, or writing offensive or derogatory comments on the attendance sheet.

5. Posting yours or others' lectures notes or making them more generally available in any way to anyone who is not part of the course (emailing, file sharing, print files, etc.), or making unauthorized recordings in any medium of the lectures. Note the sole exception: If you have been absent, you may copy the notes of another student for your personal use, or you may let another student in the class copy your notes for personal use. Your lecture notes contain the ideas of your instructor and of other students. They are the instructor's intellectual property, and sometimes they include ideas that have not yet been published. As a result, replication should only occur with permission from the instructor. If you wish to use ideas from lectures in any publications (including electronic ones), you should first get permission from the instructor and then cite the material properly

If I find that you have distributed lecture notes without my permission (except as permitted above), either during the semester or afterwards, I may report the case to the Honor Council.

**Gender Fair Language:**

Students in this course are expected to use gender fair language in their writing. Every time you use a masculine-oriented word to refer to people in general, the implicit effect, even if unintended, is to whisper: *women and gender non-conforming individuals don't count*. Classroom assignments that do not use gender fair language may be returned with a request that you rewrite them. The best way to do this is to use plural nouns and pronouns.

**Students with Special Needs:**

The course requirements will be adjusted to serve the needs and capabilities of students with special needs. You are invited to notify me about your particular situation; you should also be in contact with the Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action, and Disability Services Department (EAD). Please do so as soon as possible. In general, we expect all students in the course to devote from seven to nine hours a week to course assignments in addition to the time spent in class. You may also be encouraged to attend additional sessions with the teaching assistant so you can draw comparable value from the course. Lecture notes (powerpoint slides) will be posted for all students.

## Journal Entry Assignments

These assignments should be a ‘step up’ from the first notes a student would take while reading a text or writing in the margins. The pedagogical significance of these exercises is threefold: 1) to provide the opportunity to rehearse understanding of a reading (rather than just reading it, and moving on to something else), and to organize your ideas while at ‘home,’ quietly reading; 2) to build up study materials for the research paper; and 3) to allow me to gauge the level of reading, comprehension, and progression students make throughout the course—particularly when it comes to class discussion. Overall, this exercise is a way for me to make sure that you are not just taking notes, but digging into the readings with sufficient rigor.

The substance of these assignments will be an analysis of the week’s academic reading. Each Journal entry should have the following components: A short summary of *what you found to be* the key points, concepts or themes in the reading; and then a deeper analysis that should include questions for discussion, connect ideas to other readings and discussions, and introduce contemporary issues. As the semester wears on, the summaries are expected to become tighter and shorter, giving way to longer sections of analysis and connections. *A robust discussion of all these aspects is the goal.* Furthermore, *I am not looking for overview* (i.e., ‘So and so was born in...’) this is something that can be cut-and-pasted from the internet easily, and is inconsequential in my grading (but *very* consequential if plagiarized).

	<b>Excellent (4.5-5 points)</b>	<b>Very Good (3.5-4 points)</b>	<b>Needs Work (2.5-3 points)</b>	<b>Poor (0-2 points)</b>
<b>Summary</b>	Clearly identifies and summarizes key themes or ideas in the assigned readings and signifies its importance.	Identifies a good or interesting idea in the reading and/or inadequately discusses its significance.	Does not flag the key features of the reading, but does write about the reading in general terms.	Does not flag the key features of the week’s readings. Just read some review of the work online.
<b>Reflection</b>	Goes well beyond mere recitation of facts, but probes the deeper importance of the reading and the author’s intent.	Adequately examines the core significance of the reading.	Misses the main thrust of the argument, but discusses some of the issues.	Misses the main thrust of the argument.
<b>Connection</b>	Explicitly connects the reading to key ideas in other readings, or the main tensions of the course.	Vaguely connects the reading to key ideas in other readings, or the main tensions of the course.	Misses the key connections that are available.	Does not connect the assigned reading to other readings/ideas.
<b>Questions</b>	Offers two very good questions about the week’s reading.	Offers a good question about the reading.	Offers a poor question about the reading.	Poses no questions about the reading.
<b>Writing</b>	Careful with spelling, sentence structure, and clearly structured. Key quotes and sections are cited.	Minor spelling, grammatical, and punctuation errors. Missing citations.	Pervasive writing and citation errors.	Gross negligence in attention to writing and citation.