

**NEW YORK UNIVERSITY ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC
SERVICE**

**UPADM-GP 120 – Spring 2018
Normative Issues in Public Policy**

Section 001: Monday, 2.00 PM - 4.30 PM, 60FA C12

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Office Hours: Wednesday 1:15-3:15 pm, Puck building 3rd floor, Carrel 3013-A

Course Description

This course examines competing values in the implementation of public policies, that is, in the effort to turn policy goals into realities. My focus this semester is on accountability as a normative value among democracy's demands for managing policy implementation. The aims are to understand the important trade-offs that underlie and shape policies in a variety of settings and to develop a framework for evaluating public policy implementation against a set of normative criteria. The course should prove valuable for any student interested in a better understanding of how public policies can fall short of efficiency and consensus opinion, how policies may be expressed differently across institutional contexts, and why it is complicated for politicians and public officials to say that they are giving the people what they want.

Course Objectives

1. To develop a framework for evaluating public policy implementation against a set of normative criteria.
2. To become proficient thinking about trade-offs in public values and to integrate analytical thinking about trade-offs into evaluations of public policy implementation.
3. Using an important contemporary policy area -- public education reform -- to compare state institutional contexts on the normative value of accountability.
4. To develop an understanding of how institutional context matters for policy implementation.
5. To build skills that may transfer to professional settings such as think tanks, policy offices, and government policy evaluation organizations.

Teaching Approach

To build a sophisticated understanding of the arguments we consider, you will need to engage in all components of the course. It is expected that you will complete all required readings in advance of the session for which they are listed, take notes on the material, and

be prepared to evaluate it critically. Many of these readings will be challenging for you (as, indeed, they are for me), so your questions about the claims they make are essential to your learning. You will help guide the discussion in our class meetings; your classmates are counting on you to bring your own perspective to small-group and whole-class conversations. Classes will include both lecture and discussion components – but feel free to ask pertinent questions at any point. I encourage the expression of diverse viewpoints in class and in your written work.

Grading and Assessment

Individual assignments (quiz, exams, and a case study) are worth 50% of your grade.

Team assignments (outline, presentation, and final report) are worth 35% of your grade.

Participation is worth 15% of your grade.

Quiz:	5%
Exam 1:	15%
Case study:	10%
Team project outline:	5%
Team presentation:	10%
Exam 2:	20%
Team final report:	20%
Participation:	15%

Exams. Two non-cumulative examinations will be given in class on the dates listed in the course calendar. They will be constituted of true/false, multiple choice, and questions that require short written answers.

Class Participation. This is awarded for contributing to a productive learning environment over the course of the term. All students in the course benefit from high levels of class attendance and participation, so you are expected to prepare and attend. To help measure participation, there will be for every session a sign-in sheet, which will circulate in the beginning of the class. Missing classes, being unprepared to discuss readings during sessions, and/or under-contributing to your team process will lower this portion of your grade.

An element of your participation score will be drawn from your contributions to the forum section on our NYU Classes page during Part I of the course calendar (see below), and several times during Part II. Before these sessions, I will ask a question and would like you to respond briefly to it with one or more thoughts based on the assigned reading. Please do this by 12pm noon on the day of class so that I can use some of your thoughts to frame our discussion.

NYU Classes, Readings and Assignments

All announcements will be delivered through NYU Classes. Slides will be posted after class. I may modify assignments, due dates, and other aspects of the course as we go through the term with notice provided as soon as possible through the NYU Classes course page.

Materials and assignments will be posted to NYU Classes, with two exceptions: you will

need to purchase two Harvard Business Review case studies. To access these cases, you will need to click on the following link: <https://hbr.org/store/case-studies>
You may search for each of the assigned cases by title and purchase them.

- Harvard Business case study: *Frederick Douglas Charter School: The Renewal Decision*
- Harvard Business case study: *The "Tipping Point" and Green Dot Public Schools*

What I have listed on the syllabus below is subject to change with notice provided by email.

Academic Integrity

The students and faculty at NYU are very concerned about academic integrity. Each student should have the assurance that the rules of the game are understood by everyone and enforced equally. Students are encouraged to learn and study together. Individual assignments are just that, but mutual assistance is appropriate. The Wagner School has an academic code that is available here:

<https://wagner.nyu.edu/portal/students/policies/code>.

Every student is expected to maintain academic integrity and is expected to report violations to me. If you are unsure about what is expected of you, *ask*.

Additional Administrative Details

- You are responsible for obtaining any materials distributed in or outside of class.
- Please silence cell phones and stow in bags while in class. The use of technology (including laptops, tablets and smart phones) in class is not allowed, unless you are working with your team on the team assignment or in a small work group to consult a reading. Students seem to get the best results by taking notes by hand in class and reviewing them later.
- I reserve the right to revise this syllabus as the term progresses. In Part II of the course, there may be one or two outside professionals who will speak about the charter school sector.
- Regarding lateness and absences:
 - Absences will be accepted only for medical reasons impacting the student, and acceptance requires a doctor's note signed by the following day of the absence.
 - Absences will not be accepted for reasons other than medical reasons.
 - For exams, students are only permitted to take a make-up exam if they have a prior arrangement with me or supply a note from a doctor or university dean excusing their absence due to serious illness or another family problem. Travel, conflict with another activity or job, and other nonmedical reasons are not acceptable excuses for missing exams.
 - Turning in an assignment beyond the deadline leads to an automatic grade reduction of 1 point for each calendar day (including the day of lateness and each subsequent day). This policy holds for both individual and team assignments.

-Technical difficulties uploading assignments to NYU Classes will not excuse late assignments. If NYU Classes is frozen and will not upload your assignment, then please email a copy directly to me with a timestamp before the deadline.

- Whenever you email me: please avoid beginning the email with "Hey . . ."; you can normally expect a reply within 24 hours.
- Please use my office hours!! Email me ahead of time to request a time so that I can manage the schedule.
- Regarding the team projects in Part II of the course: If there is a motivation or communication problem within your team, you will let me know early on.
- When we interact with stakeholders in the policy area of public education reform, all of our interactions will be respectful, professional and confidential.

Policy Regarding Disability Services and Programs Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities, 726 Broadway, 2nd Floor, (212-998-4980). Reasonable accommodations can be made for students with qualified disabilities, but only for students who have registered with the Moses Center and provide documentation from that office. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me in the first week of the term.

Course Design

This course is divided into two sections: Part I focuses on theory building and assembling the tools you will use to analyze normative issues of a contemporary policy issue. Part II elaborates on normative frameworks and applies what we have learned to assess U.S. states on implementation of the policy issue of public education reform, especially in regards to the value of accountability.

Course Calendar

Part I. Theories and Concepts

Session 1 (Jan 22): *Review syllabus and course*

- **Objective:** Provide an overview of the course.
- No assigned reading in advance of Session 1.

Session 2 (Jan 29): *Competing values*

- **Objective:** Understand competing values in legitimating public policy
- Bueno de Mesquita, *Political Economy for Public Policy*, pp. 13-46.

Session 3 (Feb 5): *Opaque policy implementation: 'Hypocrisy' and 'muddling-through'*

- **Objective:** Understand how political organizations are designed to handle competing public values.
- Lindblom. 1959. "The Science of 'Muddling Through.'" *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 19, No. 2.
Read: -Through section (1b), pp. 79-83
-Section (4b), first three paragraphs, p. 84
-Section (5b) through to the end, pp. 86-88.
- Brunsson. 1989. *The Organization of Hypocrisy*, pp. 19-31.

Session 4 (Feb 12): *Problems controlling policy implementation: Agency loss and the principle-agent problem.*

- **Objective:** Understand principal-agent theory and institutional variation.
- Bertelli. 2012. *The Political Economy of Public Sector Governance*. Selections:
Read: -2.1 The Principal-Agent Model, pp. 20-22
-3.4.3 Mitigating Monitoring Costs, pp. 71-75
-5.5 Some Normative Implications, pp. 143-145
Study: the delegation model on p. 81
- Gailmard, Sean. 2014. Accountability and Principal-Agent Theory. *Oxford Handbook of Public Accountability*.
Read: underlined selection.
- Berry. 2003. *A Voice for Nonprofits*, pp. 136-145.
- McCubbins, Noll and Weingast. 1987. "Administrative Procedures as Instruments of Political Control." *Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization*, Vol.3, No. 2. Selections:
Read: -Section 1 (p. 246) thru p. 255
-Section 3.1 thru Section 3.2 (pp. 264-266)
-Section 5. Conclusions (pp.273-274)
- **In-class quiz** on materials from sessions 2-3

(Feb 19) President's Day, no class

Session 5 (Feb 26): *Democracy's demands for managing policy implementation*

- **Objective:** Understand accountability as a normative concern in democratic theory
- Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government*, pp. 175-183.

- Bertelli. 2016. "Who are the Policy Workers and What are They Doing?" *Public Performance and Management Review* 40(2): 208-234.
- Przeworski, A., Stokes, S.C. and Manin, B. eds. 1999. *Democracy, accountability, and representation* (Vol. 2). Cambridge University Press. pp. 8-10. With attention to Figure I.1.

March 5: **Exam (In Class)**

March 12: Spring Recess (No Class)

Part II. Applying theories & concepts: public education reform & the charter school sector

Session 6 (Mar 19): *Groundwork for team research*

- **Objective:** Understand the charter school sector. Review our theoretical and analytic tool kit for looking at policy implementation and accountability
- Shober, A.F., Manna, P. and Witte, J.F. 2006. Flexibility meets accountability: State charter school laws and their influence on the formation of charter schools in the United States. *Policy Studies Journal*, 34(4), pp.563-587.
- Milward, H.B. and Provan, K.G. 2000. Governing the hollow state. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 10(2), pp.359-380.
- Renzulli and Roscigno. 2005. "Charter School Policy, Implementation, and Diffusion across the United States." *Sociology of Education*, Vol. 78, No. 4, pp. 344-365.
Read: thru "Intrastate Processes" section (pp. 344-350)

Session 7 (Mar 26): *Heuristic exploration of a state case*

- **Objective:** To build research skills through an in-depth class exploration of a single state case.
- Media articles (within the past year) regarding charter schools in Utah

Session 8 (Apr 2): *Analysis of formal case studies*

- **Objective:** To apply our theoretical and analytic tools to formal case studies, and to understand the taxonomy of charter implementation organizations.
- In-class case analysis: "The 'Tipping Point' and Green Dot Public Schools"

Friday April 6 at 12:00 noon, case analysis due: "Frederick Douglass Charter School: The Renewal Decision"

Session 9 (April 9): *Review how our theories and methods apply to the state settings*

- **Objective:** To have a fully functioning research team, and for the team to be collecting data.
- National Alliance for Public Charter Schools report: *Measuring Up To The Model: A Ranking of State Charter Public School Laws*.
Available at: https://www.publiccharters.org/sites/default/files/migrated/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/MODEL-Report_FINAL.pdf
- To help with group discussion: *please bring to class a printout of the case analysis assignment that you turned in on April 6.*

Session 10 (April 16): *Research team meetings*

- **Objective:** For teams to arrive at the stage of applying theoretical and analytic tools to collected data and to start organizing team reports.
- Highlights of the Government Accountability Office 18-94, a report to congressional requesters.
- **Outline of team report due in class**

April 23: No class

- Extra office hours on Thursday, April 26 (1:15-3:15 pm)

Session 11 (April 30): ***Team presentations in class***

May 7: **Exam 2 (In Class)**

May 11 at 12:00 noon: **Final team reports due**