Instructor: Dr. Stephanie Hoopes Halpin
Class Hours and location: TBA
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Course Description
Political economy is both a theoretical approach and a topic area. In this class, we will review the major theoretical frameworks used to analyze policy focusing on economic issues. We will also explore the relationship between governments and markets, and nongovernment actors including consumers, workers, non-profits and businesses. Using current local and national political issues as case studies, we will analyze and critique different theoretical approaches, policy decisions and strategies.

Course format
This course is a research seminar and thus student participation is key to our collective learning. I expect that you will learn as much, if not more, from the other students than from the professor. The format of each seminar will generally be as follows. We will start each seminar with an introduction to the topic followed by student presentations of the readings. After discussion, there will be a brief formal presentation of key concepts – if needed. Following a short break, we will spend the second part of the seminar doing group work – role playing, simulations, projects. We will close with a discussion on current issues on the week’s topic.

Student learning outcomes
• to be able to lead and manage in public governance
• to participate in and contribute to the public policy process
• to analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems, and make decisions
• to articulate and apply a public service perspective
• to communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenship

NO CELL PHONES DURING CLASS

Overview of Assignments:
• Portfolio Project (20%): You will be required to prepare a range of items for the portfolio. The format will vary and include projects, writing assignment, simulations, and presentations. Each week there will be a writing assignment based on one of the required reading due on Blackboard by noon on Monday. Twice during the semester you will present to the class – one individual reading summary and one mock interview with a partner. A sign-up sheet will be available at the first class. You can also submit a link to an article, video or other current event piece for a bonus point. Information regarding the other portfolio projects will be discussed in class and posted on Blackboard.

• Class participation (20%): Each week we will engage in the topic through discussion of the assigned readings and current events, group projects and simulations. The best way to learn new material is to ask questions and apply it to current events. Given the importance of class discussion, attendance is mandatory. Prior notice of unavoidable absences is expected, and students are responsible for missed work and assignments.

• Mid Term (30%): This in-class open notebook exam will review core theories and concepts introduced in the first half of the course. (Week 11 – March 22)

• Final paper (30%): An individual advocacy position paper, approximately 20 pages, to be submitted by the final day of class. You choose the topic, though a two page proposal and outline must be approved by Week 8. More details about the paper assignment are on Blackboard.

Note on Plagiarism and Cheating: Plagiarism is ANY form of taking others’ work without giving them credit. All quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing require formal citation. These include statistics, facts not generally known as well as ideas and opinions that are not your own. Papers may be analyzed using plagiarism software; given the way such software identifies material taken from other sources, the criterion for judging the level of plagiarism is 30%: more than 30% plagiarized material constitutes failure on the assignment.

Cheating is not acceptable, and can lead to failing the course. Forms of cheating include copying another student’s work and not contributing to a group assignment.

Books:
There is no one book for this course. There are several we will use on multiple weeks that might be worth purchasing. In order of their use:

Background Reading:
I will assume that you know most of the material in this introductory textbook. If you are not a Public Administration student, you might want a copy for background.


Another good reference book:
• = required reading for all students

**Week 1 - Welcome and Introduction**

U.S. Political system – Three branches of government  
Policy making – how to change the system


**Week 2 – The Political Economy of Disasters**

Disasters help focus government and citizens alike on what is the most important role of government. Through comparisons between Hurricane Katrina and Superstorm Sandy, we will explore the core functions of government, various means of delivery and funding.


**Week 3 - The Public Sector and their Tools for Managing the Economy**

Who makes up the public sector, and how do they operate in the United States? Specifically we will look at how they manage the economy.


**Week 4 - Market Forces**
The larger economic forces, particularly the financial, commodity, job, real estate and other economic markets, play a large role in policy making. We explore their impact on policy making and government strategies for addressing these forces.


**Week 5 - Government and Economic Development**
Is the role of government to promote or regulate business? Who really controls policy? How does this happen at the local level? at the national level? what is the impact of globalization?


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**Week 6 – Rutgers-Newark Stop of the American Whistleblower Tour**

**Note** – Wednesday, February 22, 2012 at 5:30 PM  
Multipurpose Room, Paul Robeson Campus Center, Rutgers-Newark  
“Six Stages of Whistleblowing”: Discovery, Disclosure, Isolation, Retaliation, Solidarity, and Vindication

Government Accountability Project – website for the leading whistleblower protection and advocacy organization - www.whistleblower.org


**Week 7 - Income and Inequality**
Income and wealth are unequally distributed in the United States. Should the government intervene? How does the government shift the balance between the poor and the wealthy? What other measures would make an impact?


Don Peck, "Can the Middle Class be Saved?" The Atlantic, September 2011, p.60-78.

**Week 8 - Housing**
The American Dream is often linked to owning your own home. Is this realistic? (was it ever?) What happened in the housing bubble? Who is to blame? What changes should be made?


Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, Our Perspective: Housing Finance Policy, updated June 6, 2011.


** Outline for Advocacy Paper due in class **

** Week 9 - No Class - Spring Break **

** Week 10 - Aging **
One of the biggest challenges policy makers face today is an aging population. What are the impacts on government spending, social security, business models, and the future?


- The Elder Economic Security Standard™ Index for New Jersey, the Gerontology Institute, University of Massachusetts Boston and Wider Opportunities for Women, 2009.


Ageing Societies and the Looming Pension Crisis, OECD website feature topic.


** Week 11 - Mid-term **

** Week 12 - Nuclear Policy **
For an industry that requires enormous long-term investment and complicated high technology, what role should the government play? How do you balance energy needs with safety?


**Week 13 – Financial Crisis**

Whether it is the Great Depression (or Recession), war, terrorism or hurricane, what role should government and business play during a crisis? Is the recent financial crisis typical or exceptional?


HBO movie – Too Big to Fail
**Week 14 - Economics of Defense**

Defense is an essential government service. Consuming half of the US budget, it is the greatest administrative responsibility of the government. How effective is our defense system? How efficient is it?


**Week 15 - Media**

In a democracy, is the media a business or a public good or the fourth branch of government? How has the rise in new communications technology changed the role of the media as a check on government?


