

**Foundations of Public Policy**  
**CRN 10101**  
**4 Credit Hours**  
**Fall 2025**  
**Faculty: Michael Crow, Ph.D.**

Office: 3016 Lab I  
Office hours: By appointment  
Cell phone: (517) 410-4175  
Office phone: (360) 867-6820  
Class time: Mondays 6 – 8:50 pm  
Classroom: Seminar II E2109  
Canvas Page: <https://canvas.evergreen.edu/courses/7453>  
E-mail: [crawm@evergreen.edu](mailto:crawm@evergreen.edu)

**Course Objectives**

In the *Federalist Papers*, James Madison argued that American public policy could and should be guided by “rational deliberation”, free from the “impetuous passions” of the public. In this way, political leaders would come to develop the “best”, or socially-optimal, policies. The central question guiding us throughout this course, then, is why elected officials and policy experts disagree so much about what policies are the best? By studying the arguments that policy experts and public officials make about public policy in the United States, we will see that experts disagree about the purposes of government and the goals it should pursue; the scope of social and economic problems; the causes of problems; and what policies we should adopt to fix them. The practical value to studying policy analysis is to help you critically evaluate policy arguments and become more effective at crafting your own arguments. Such skills are crucial in careers in public service and advocacy

Our main objective in this course, then, is to develop the analytic tools you will need to make fair and persuasive arguments about public problems and policies. Fair arguments use logic and evidence to analyze the causes of social and economic problems, assess the effects of public policies on individuals and on public well-being, and develop policy alternatives to better address these problems. Persuasive arguments result from an advocate’s ability to organize, influence public opinion, and navigate the policymaking process.

By the end of this course, you will have demonstrated your ability to:

- Evaluate the effects of public policies on individuals, social groups and society
- Critique arguments about the scope and causes of social and economic problems
- Formulate alternative policies for addressing social and economic problems
- Analyze the influence of organization and policy process on policy adoption

## Communications

I encourage and expect contact from you over the quarter. The easiest way to reach me is by e-mail (crawm@evergreen.edu). You may also reach me at my office phone during business hours (9 am to 5 pm) and cell phone before 9 pm. Or you may make an appointment with me for a one-on-one meeting, Zoom conference, or phone call.

I use Evergreen's e-mail and the course Canvas system to conduct course business. If you do not use Evergreen's e-mail system, please be sure to forward messages from this account to the e-mail account that you use. I will also place course assignments, handouts, PowerPoint slides and other course materials on the course Canvas site.

## Course Materials

*Books:* No book purchases are required for this course. Course readings will be made available on the course Canvas site.

## Course assignments, credit, and assessment

You will be evaluated in this course based on your progress in meeting the course objectives described above, as assessed by the following assignments and requirements. To earn full credit for the course, students must satisfactorily complete all the following requirements:

**Course participation:** One of the primary objectives of this class is to develop your ability to critically analyze public policy issues. In class sessions and activities, we will engage in activities such as discussion and group work that will call on you to apply new ideas from the reading to policy problems. Thus, it is important for you to come to the class prepared to participate by having studied the assigned reading. Your participation will be assessed on the following criteria:

--- *Attendance:* Students are required to attend each class meeting. Attendance is especially important in this course since you must apply concepts and skills from prior class sessions to develop new skills in later class sessions. Missing a class, then, will significantly jeopardize your performance. **After one absence, make-up work may be assigned at faculty discretion, on a case-by-case basis.** Make-up work must be completed by the end of the quarter for course credit. Multiple absences may result in no credit.

--- *Collegiality:* Showing respect for your peers by being in class on time, staying through the entire session, focusing on class content, respecting the views of others in class discussion, and listening to and engaging in dialogue with guest speakers.

--- *Preparation*: Completing reading before class, coming to class prepared with assignments and reading materials, and active participation in discussion and small group work.

--- *Engagement out of class*: Our class sessions are not the only opportunity to discuss course ideas with the faculty. We want to know if you are having trouble with the material and what you like and don't like about the course. You may reach me by e-mail or phone or schedule an in-person or Zoom chat session.

**Pre-class Reading Responses:** After you complete the reading for each class session, you may be asked to prepare a response of about 500 words (1-2 pages double-spaced) to a question, problem, or prompt about that reading assignment. These responses will serve as a starting point for discussion in class. Your pre-class reading responses are due at the beginning of class on Monday at 6 pm. You must complete at least six of the eight pre-class reading responses on time to earn credit in this course.

**Analytic essays:** Over the course of the quarter, you will complete two take-home essays. In these essays, you will apply the analytic tools you learn over the course to explain or evaluate some issue in public policy. You will have one week to prepare your response to each question. Your response to the first essay question should be at least 1500 words (5 pages, double spaced). Your response is due **Sunday, November 9**. Your response to the second essay question will be at least 1500 words long (5 pages double-spaced). Your response is due **Wednesday, December 15** at 11:00 p.m.

**Policy analysis paper:** You will demonstrate your ability to make effective arguments about public policy by researching and writing a policy analysis paper on a public policy problem of your choosing. Your paper must be at least 3000 words (about 10 pages double-spaced) and

- 1) Describe the scope of the problem and who is affected, using appropriate descriptive quantitative data.
- 2) Analyze the causes of the problem or describe and evaluate the effect of these policies on the problem.
- 3) Describe and evaluate at least one policy alternative to existing policies.

An annotated bibliography of scholarly articles, books, and policy analyses is due **Sunday, October 19**. Your policy analysis paper is due at the start of the in-class mini-conference on **Monday, December 1**.

**Evaluation:** Students are encouraged to complete a self-evaluation and faculty evaluation and to participate in an evaluation conference with the faculty member. The evaluations must be submitted using the My Evergreen system ([my.evergreen.edu](http://my.evergreen.edu)).

### **Submitting Assignments**

Assignments may be submitted to me either on Canvas and/or by email to me ([crawm@evergreen.edu](mailto:crawm@evergreen.edu)). I recommend both uploading your assignment to Canvas and emailing it to me to ensure I receive it. It is your responsibility to assure that I have received your work on time.

### **Academic Integrity**

Cheating, plagiarism and other violations of academic integrity standards will not be tolerated. Any student turning in work that is in violation of Evergreen's academic integrity standards will automatically receive a No Credit in the course and the matter will be referred to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities for disciplinary action. Please be aware that including material generated by an artificial intelligence tool in work turned in for academic credit without appropriate citation or attribution is considered to be academic dishonesty. An overview of academic integrity standards and the Student Code of Rights and Responsibilities are available at <https://www.evergreen.edu/offices-services/student-affairs/student-rights-responsibilities>

### **Accessibility**

Your success in this class is important to me, and it is the policy and practice of The Evergreen State College to create inclusive learning environments consistent with federal and state law. If you have a documented disability (or need to have a disability documented), and need an accommodation, please contact me privately as soon as possible, so that we can discuss with the office of Access Services for Students with Disabilities (360) 867-6348; [accessservices@evergreen.edu](mailto:accessservices@evergreen.edu)) how to meet your specific needs and the requirements of the course. For more information, please visit the Access Services website at <https://www.evergreen.edu/offices-services/access-services-for-students-with-disabilities>

### **Bad Weather Policy**

If weather or other event makes it difficult or impossible for the class to meet in-person at our scheduled class times, the faculty may change the format for the class to remote instruction, with the class meeting occurring over Zoom. The faculty will make every effort to make you aware of this change at the earliest possible time.

If it is likely that many students or faculty will be affected by a power or internet outage, faculty may choose to cancel a class session entirely. If we do this we will make every effort to send an

all-class email by 3:00 pm. If you've not already done so, sign up to receive alerts about campus closing or other emergencies [here](#).

### **Religious Holidays**

Washington State law (RCW 28B.10.039) requires that institutions of higher education accommodate students by allowing two days of absence and make-up work for religious holidays per year. Please consult with me at the start of the quarter should you anticipate an absence owing to a religious holiday. While Evergreen moves toward putting religious holidays into the online campus calendar, check the University of Washington's [religious holidays calendar](#).

### **Other Expectations of Students and Faculty**

We commit to promoting a cooperative, supportive atmosphere within the community; give everyone opportunity for self-reflection and expression; use high standards in reading the text and preparing our papers, lectures, and comments in seminar; handle all disputes in a spirit of goodwill; respect our differences; and, discuss any problems involving others in the learning community directly with the individuals involved.

**We abide by the [social contract](#), the [student conduct code](#) and the [non-discrimination policies and procedures at TESC](#).**

All students are expected to support and contribute to a well-functioning MPA classroom learning community. Behavior that disrupts the learning community may be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the MPA program.

### **Course Schedule**

These topics and reading assignments may change throughout the course of the quarter, depending on our speed and interests. Changes will be announced in class.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic and reading assigned</b>
<b>Monday, September 29</b>	<b>Introduction to policy analysis</b> Isaacs, "Starting School at a Disadvantage: The School Readiness of Poor Children"

<p><b>Monday, October 6</b></p>	<p><b>Problem Analysis and Policy Evaluation</b>  Kraft and Furlong, "Public Problems and Policy Alternatives"  Meier, Davis, and Xu, "Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Equity Tradeoffs in Public Programs: A Citizen Experiment"  Smeeding and Thevenot, "Addressing Child Poverty: How Does the United States Compare with Other Nations"  <a href="https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6087662/">https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6087662/</a>  Thomson et al, 2022, "The Role of the Social Safety Net in Protecting Children from Poverty." <a href="https://www.childtrends.org/publications/lessons-from-a-historic-decline-in-child-poverty-role-of-the-social-safety-net-in-protecting-children-from-poverty">https://www.childtrends.org/publications/lessons-from-a-historic-decline-in-child-poverty-role-of-the-social-safety-net-in-protecting-children-from-poverty</a>  <b>Optional:</b> Behn, "Craft of Memo Writing"  <b>Optional:</b> Bardach, "The Eightfold Path" <a href="https://research-ebSCO-com.evergreen.idm.oclc.org/linkprocessor/plink?id=390464f5-42ff-32ae-b87e-45fb775edec1">https://research-ebSCO-com.evergreen.idm.oclc.org/linkprocessor/plink?id=390464f5-42ff-32ae-b87e-45fb775edec1</a></p>
<p><b>Monday, October 13</b></p>	<p><b>Tools for Evaluating Policies: The Political Economy Approach</b>  Schelling, "Micromotives and Macrobehavior"  Hobbes, selected passages from Leviathan  Axelrod, "More Effective Choice in the Prisoner's Dilemma"  Axelrod, "The Live and Let Live System in Trench Warfare in World War I"  <b>Optional:</b> Putnam, "The Prosperous Community"  <b>Optional:</b> Ostrom, "Reflections on the Commons"</p>
<p><b>Sunday, October 19</b></p>	<p><b>Annotated Bibliography due at 11 p.m.</b></p>
<p><b>Monday, October 20</b></p>	<p><b>Market failures and state failures</b>  Coase, "The Problem of Social Cost"  Hayek, "The Use of Knowledge in Society"  <b>Optional:</b> Coase, "Notes on the Problem of Social Cost"  <b>Optional:</b> Stigler, "The Theory of Economic Regulation"</p>
<p><b>Monday, October 27</b></p>	<p><b>Analyzing market failures in American health care</b>  Akerlof, "The Market for Lemons"  RAND Corporation, "The RAND Health Insurance Experiments"  Blumberg et al., 2019. "Comparing Health Insurance Reform Options: From "Building on the ACA" to Single Payer"  <a href="https://www.urban.org/research/publication/incremental-comprehensive-health-reform-how-various-reform-options-compare-coverage-and-costs">https://www.urban.org/research/publication/incremental-comprehensive-health-reform-how-various-reform-options-compare-coverage-and-costs</a>  <b>Optional:</b> Blumental et al. 2024. "Mirror, Mirror: A Portrait of the Failing U.S. Health System" <a href="https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/fund-reports/2024/sep/mirror-mirror-2024">https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/fund-reports/2024/sep/mirror-mirror-2024</a></p>

<b>Monday, November 3</b>	<p><b>Cost-Benefit Analysis</b>  Chen et al "Cost Benefit Analysis"  Munger, "Discounting I: Expected Values, Probability and Risk"  <b>Optional:</b> Mueller and Stewart, "Evaluating Increases in Homeland Security Spending"  <b>Optional:</b> Ammons, "The Time Value of Money"</p>
<b>Sunday, November 9</b>	<b>Essay 1 Due at 11 pm</b>
<b>Monday, November 10</b>	<p><b>Whose Voices Get Heard in Policymaking?</b>  Schattschneider, "The Scope and Bias of the Pressure System"  Olson, excerpts from Logic of Collective Action  Hacker and Pierson, "Winner-Take-All Politics: Public Policy, Political Organization, and the Precipitous Rise of Top Incomes in the United States"  <b>Optional:</b> Ainsworth, "Why Do Individuals Join Groups?"</p>
<b>Monday, November 17</b>	<p><b>Policymaking Process</b>  Kingdon, excerpt from Agenda, Alternatives, and Public Policies  Baumgartner and Jones, "Agenda Dynamics and Policy Subsystems"  Lindblom, "Still Muddling, Not Yet Through"  <b>Optional:</b> Sabatier, "An Advocacy Coalition Framework of Policy Change"</p>
<b>Monday, November 24</b>	<b>Fall Break (No Class)</b>
<b>Monday, December 1</b>	<p><b>FPP Mini-Conference</b>  <b>Policy Analysis Paper due at 6 pm</b></p>
<b>Monday, December 8</b>	<p><b>Wrapping up: Making Policy Arguments Persuasive</b>  Lakoff, "Framing the Dems"  Haidt, "The Moral Foundations of Politics"  Zaller and Feldman, "A Simple Theory of the Survey Response"</p>
<b>Monday, December 15</b>	<b>Essay 2 Due at 11 pm</b>
<b>Monday, December 15- Friday, December 19</b>	<b>Evaluation Week</b>