

Elective Politics and Policy-making: Engineering public policy change seminar

90-449 and 90-754, MINI 3 SPRING, 2021 6 Units

Time: 1:30 PM to 2:50 PM (EST)

Tuesday and Thursday

February 2 to March 11, 2021 inclusive.

INSTRUCTOR: Rick Stafford

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Office: Hamburg Hall 2107D

Office Hours: Just ask and we will schedule!

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Significant proposals in public policy at the local, state and federal level of the U.S. usually require legislation to become a reality. Enter politicians, politics, and political processes. Elected politicians, both representatives and executives, are the ultimate arbitrators and decision-makers in public policy change.

The political process can be very messy. Nonetheless, public policy change can be successfully “engineered” from an idea to a reality. This course will explore past cases involving elected officials from the Pittsburgh region and Pennsylvania to illustrate the people, politics and processes involved in policy change. Students will then be required to apply what they learn from these cases to a contemporary policy challenge facing the Pittsburgh region.

PREREQUISITES

None is required. However, students interested in state and local politics, the Pittsburgh region, and/or the state of Pennsylvania will find this course of special interest. Students who have a potential interest in running for public office and/or serving on the staff of an elected official will also find it of special interest.

CASES AND READINGS

The seminar will open by grounding students in the socio-economic-political and governmental context of the Pittsburgh region and state of Pennsylvania. Analysis and discussion of cases from Pittsburgh’s transformation from “Steel Capital” in 1980 to “Roboburgh” today will draw out “lessons learned” in producing public policy change. The lessons will follow from reading and discussion of a series of “real world cases” in state and local politics leading to policy changes.

In addition, the instructor will post several readings entitled “Rick’s Notes” dealing with several topics such as:

- Engineering public policy change

- Public policy legislative campaigns
- Influence vectors and getting the vote
- Policy proposal development
- Elected official characteristics
- Election to office campaigns
- Legislators, legislatures, and legislating
- Governors and governing
- Public opinion research
- The “rollout” of a public policy proposal

APPLYING LESSONS LEARNED

The purpose for studying actual cases and topics is to draw lessons to apply to current public policy challenges such as the social justice movement and the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. With the engagement of the instructor, each student will identify a policy challenge requiring state legislation to address. The student will investigate the issue during the mini, working towards the development of recommendations for how to win approval of the legislation. Each student will be required to submit a “policy and political strategy memo” as a final assignment. The memo will be due one week after the final class.

Key websites for research:

- Library Guide for the Course: <https://guides.library.cmu.edu/Elective-Politics>
- Pa. General Assembly website: www.legis.state.pa.us/

We will add others during the course as needed.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The goal is to provide students with insight and lessons into the processes needed to:

1. Influence the policy decisions of elected officials.
2. Plan, organize and execute a campaign to turn an idea for public policy change into a reality.

The mini should put students in a better position to serve as:

1. An elected official.
2. A staff person to an elected official.
3. An executive for an organization relying on public funding and/or public policies.
4. A consultant or private sector executive who must interact with elected public officials and processes.

CLASS MECHANICS AND GUIDELINES

Our communication platforms

Canvas will our platform for asynchronous communication. Modules will provide the general progression of the class. Assignments, class materials and/or links to relevant materials will be posted as needed. Students will post their responses to assignments to the Canvas discussion board devoted to each case.

Zoom will be our regular classroom platform for both students attending in person and those joining remotely. Instructor will host. You will find the link to our Zoom meetings in Canvas. Zoom will allow us to have synchronous presentations and discussion.

Our Zoom class sessions will be recorded and links posted. Zoom will also allow us to hold meetings outside of regular class times as needed or desired.

Google docs is another tool that may be useful especially if you choose to work with a team on the challenge assignment.

Assignments and Canvas Discussion Board

You will use the designated Canvas discussion board to submit your response to each assignment except for your final paper. Once you have submitted your response, you will be able to see all the responses of your classmates submitted to date. To enrich the discussion and learning experience, you are encouraged and should feel free to comment further on your or your classmates' submissions. Do so of course constructively and with civility.

Communications with the Instructor outside of class time

This is an unusual time. My office hours are anytime you need to schedule. I urge one on one or multiple person communication with me outside the regularly scheduled class time. Let's use telephone or Zoom for synchronous communications. Use e-mail, Canvas postings, and e-mail asynchronously. Frequent communication will make the class experience valuable to you, your classmates, and the instructor.

One addition. I will be available for class 10 minutes early and 15 minutes after for discussion on any topic of interest.

Guidelines for class discussions

The maximum benefit of this course will be realized through active open discussion. Students must:

- Participate.
- Respect each other.
- Respect each other's views.
- Listen to understand.
- Debate and disagree gracefully rather than combatively.

- Ask questions...the only bad question is the one not asked.
- Respond when asked...even if the response is another question.
- Allow free expression, keep what is said in class... in class.
- Others can be added as suggested....

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Required readings and any written assignments will be posted well ahead of each class.

Grades will be awarded based on:

1. Class attendance and participation: 25%
2. Written assignments: 3 at 15% each for 45%
3. Final paper: 30%

See the Heinz Student Handbook for the grading regimen.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards inside and outside the classroom. You are responsible for knowing and adhering to all University policies on academic integrity. It is your responsibility to ensure that all sources are cited appropriately in your work.

If you are not clear on how to do this, please visit <https://www.cmu.edu/gcc/handouts-and-resources/index.html> (See Citing Sources). The University policies on academic integrity will be followed and can be found here: www.cmu.edu/policies/documents/Cheating.html . Any cheating or plagiarism will result in failure in the course, and your case will be referred to the Associate Dean, who may decide to take further action.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you have a disability and have an accommodations letter from the Disability Resources office, please discuss your accommodations and needs with the instructor as early in the semester as possible. The instructor will work with you to ensure that accommodations are provided. If you have a disability and would benefit from accommodations but are not yet registered with the Office of Disability Resources, we encourage you to contact them at access@andrew.cmu.edu .