

BC3331x: Colloquium on American Political Decision-making

Course description: Readings and research in decision-making and policy analysis in American national government. Students simulate an ad hoc policy-making group assigned by the White House to prepare programs dealing with humanitarian and strategic food aid, and rural and community development and environmental protection in developing nations.

Course Objectives: participants will obtain background information on the processes of government, including the preparation of memos and the budget process. They will learn the following skills in decisionmaking: incremental and comprehensive styles of decision-making, cost-benefit analysis; decision trees; and negotiating techniques to build coalitions. Individualized readings for paper topics provide participants with expertise in preparing a memorandum to policymakers on an aspect of foreign economic, developmental, humanitarian, or national security policy-making.

Course requirements: Attendance at all sessions. Participants will present an initial program proposal (8-10 pages), to be followed by a revised program proposal that includes a budget with accompanying justification (10-14 pages) for comment and review by the deputies group. The final paper will consist of a further revised program proposal and budget (15-20 pages) followed by an analysis of the decision-making process and outcomes of the deputies group (15-20 pages) and a brief concluding section (5 pages). Grades will be based on class participation and presentations (one-third), and the final paper (two-thirds). The results of the game simulation played by the ad hoc policy-making group will not be a factor in calculating grades.

Course Readings: All readings are required. The textbooks are Stokey and Zeckhauser, *A Primer for Policy Analysis*, which is the classic work that provides the tools (logical and simple mathematical) for policy development and evaluation; also Deborah Stone, *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decisionmaking*, which provides the best discussion of the political setting of policy analysis, as well as a critique of formal models of decisionmaking. Both should be available at local bookstores, particularly Book Culture on 112th east of Broadway. Other readings are on reserve at the Barnard Reserve Room, Barnard Library.

**ADDITIONAL CLASS SESSION: THERE WILL BE ONE EXTRA EVENING SESSION, ON DECEMBER 5 FROM 6:30 TO 9:30 ALL STUDENTS MUST ATTEND THIS EXTRA SESSION, WHICH WILL INVOLVE THE CONCLUSION OF THE COURSE SIMULATION.**

Prerequisites: This is a limited enrollment course, which is open to undergraduate political science majors or concentrates as well as majors in environmental policy. Students are assigned to the course by the Barnard Department after application.

Contact Information: e-mail [rpious@barnard.edu](mailto:rpious@barnard.edu)  
Office Hours at 408 Lehman, Tuesday 4-5, Wed. 3-4

## Topics and Readings

### **September 4**

A. Introduction: Description of the course, selection of roles by participants, and first briefing on world food situation.

Deputies Group "Briefing on World Food Crisis" (distributed before class via e-mail)

Lester Brown "The New Geopolitics of Food" (distributed before class via e-mail)

Tarnoff and Lawson, "ForeignAid: An introduction to U.S. Programs and Policy" (distributed before class via e-mail)

B. Background Reading after the first class: (distributed via e-mail)

Food Summit Reports: US Comparative Advantage

US Global Strategy

US Contribution

### **September 11**

A. Discussion: Incremental and non-incremental decision-making

Charles Lindblom, "The Science of Muddling Through," *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 19 (1959) pp. 79-88 (distributed via e-mail)

Paul Schulman, "Non-incremental Policymaking: Notes Toward an Alternative Paradigm," *American Political Science Review*, December 1975 (distributed via e-mail. Or on-line using J-STOR. Go to Barnard library site, then "databases" then "full-text resources")

B. Deputies Group: Individual appointments to discuss policy options

### **September 18**

A. Discussion: Model of Choice

Stokey and Zeckhauser, *A Primer for Policy Analysis*, chs. 1-3

B. Deputies group: Individual appointments to discuss policy options

### **September 25**

A. Discussion: Cost-Benefit Analysis

Stokey and Zeckhauser, *A Primer for Policy Analysis*, ch. 9

George A. Quattrone and Amos Tversky, "Contrasting Rational and Psychological Analysis of Political Choice," *American Political Science Review*,

Vol. 82, No. 3, September 1988, pp. 719-736. (Distributed via e-mail. Or on-line using J-Stor)

(Note: concentrate on the experiments and conclusions, not on the mathematics.)

Deborah Stone, *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decisionmaking*, ch. 7

## **October 2**

Discussion: Uncertainty, Risk, and Forecasting

Stokey and Zeckhauser, *A Primer for Policy Analysis* ch. 12

Deborah Stone, *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decisionmaking*, ch. 10

B. Deputies group: Individual conferences on program proposals

## **October 9**

A. Discussion: Irrational Choice and Small Group Dysfunctions

Alexander George, *Presidential Decision-making in Foreign Policy*  
chs.2, 4-6, 8-12

B. Deputies Group: Individual conferences on program proposals

## **October 16**

A. Discussion: Bargaining and Negotiating

Roger Fisher, *Getting to Yes*

Deborah Stone, *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decisionmaking*, chs. 11-14

B. Deputies group: Individual conferences on program proposals

## **October 23**

A. Deputies Group: Program proposals presented by deputies -- first group

B. Background reading, not discussed in class:

Allen Schick, *The Federal Budget*, rev. edition, 2000. (discussions of budget authority, appropriations, chs. 5,6,8,9. (E-Book)

*Budget of the United States, FY 2013* (on-line)

**October 30**

Deputies Group: Program proposals presented by deputies -- second group

**November 13**

Deputies Group: Program proposals presented by deputies -- third group

**November 20**

Deputies group: Revised program and budget proposals by deputies -- first group.

**November 27**

Deputies Group: Revised program and budget proposals by deputies -- second group

**December 4**

Deputies group: Revised program and budget proposals by deputies -- third group

**\*December 5 Special evening session, 6:30-9:30**

Continuation of proposals and recommendations to the President. This will be the final session of the course.

**Final course papers are due by December 10, 11 PM**

Submit the final paper via e-mail to [rpious@barnard.edu](mailto:rpious@barnard.edu) by December 10, 11 pm to avoid lateness penalty. Late papers lose credit of 1 point per hour and a maximum of 5 points per day for each day past the date due.