

BC3331y: 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. General course readings provide participants with background information on political skills and the processes of government, including: incremental and comprehensive styles of decision-making, cost-benefit analysis, decision trees, the budget process, bureaucratic aspects of foreign policy-making, and negotiating techniques to build coalitions. Individualized readings for paper topics provide participants with expertise in 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.

Class time: Class will begin at 2:00 (not 2:10) and will end at 4:00. Please arrive promptly as we will start right on the hour. There will be two extra evening sessions, March 21 and April 25. Attendance at the April 25 evening session is mandatory to pass the course.

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: v-mail 854-5438 e-mail rpious@barnard.edu
408 Lehman, office hours M 1:30-2:30 and W 4-5.

Topics and Readings Schedule

January 24

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

“Briefing on World Food Crisis, January 28, 2002” (see next page)

B. Background Reading after the first class: (obtained at 408 Lehman Door)

“Overcoming World Hunger: The Challenge Ahead”
Report of Presidential Commission on World Hunger,
March 1980

“Meeting the Food Summit Target: The United States
Contribution” U.S. Government Working Paper, 1997

January 31

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

Charles Lindblom, "The Science of Muddling Through," Public Administration Review, Vol. 19 (1959) pp. 79-88 (Barnard Reserve Room)

Paul Schulman, "Non-incremental Policymaking: Notes Toward an Alternative Paradigm," American Political Science Review, December 1975 (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

February 7

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

February 16

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. (On-line using J-Stor)
(Concentrate on the experiments and conclusions, not on the mathematics.)

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

February 21

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

February 28

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

March 7

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

March 21

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

B. Background reading, not discussed in class:

Aaron Wildavsky, and Naomi Caiden, The New Politics of the Budgetary Process, 4th ed. (discussions of budget authority, appropriations)
chs. 1-3, 6

March 21 (evening session, 6:30-8:30 pm)

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

March 28

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

April 4

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

April 11

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

April 18

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

April 25

Game Simulation: voting on program proposals and final recommendations to the President.

April 25 (evening session, 6:30-8:30)

Continuation of game simulation until conclusion of voting.

**Final course papers are due by May 5, 4 PM,
in 408 Lehman or in my mailbox.**

You may hand in the final paper at my office, 408 Lehman Hall, Barnard College by 4 PM (or any time earlier). You must submit a hard copy. *Do not mail or fax the final or send it to me as an attached e-mail file.* Late papers lose credit of 5 points for each day past the date due.