

# Experts, Politics, and Public Policy

## Pol 599C, Fall 2012

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Class: MWF, Dooly Memorial 207  
Office Hours: Wednesday & Friday 11:15-12:15, & by appointment

### Description

What role do experts – especially scientific experts – play in the American political system? This course will consider the institutional context in which policy-relevant expertise is developed and examine the obstacles and opportunities for ideologically neutral expertise to influence national policy making.

### Course Materials

Baumgartner, De Boef, and Boydston. 2008. *The Decline of the Death Penalty and the Discovery of Innocence*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

All other the required reading will be made available on the Blackboard page for this class.

### Grading

The course grade will be determined by the following:

- **Class Participation and Engagement** (25 percent)
  - Arrive to class ready to discuss the assigned reading.
  - Contribute to each class meeting. I'm looking for stable participation over the semester, so participating a lot one week and then not participating the next week is not a good strategy.
  - In the (hopefully unlikely) event that students start coming to class unprepared, I will administer reading quizzes. My expectation is that this will be unnecessary but I will resort to quizzes if circumstances warrant.
  - Note that you will be evaluated on your participation, not your attendance.
- **Two Class presentations** (10 percent)
- **Midterm Exam** (30 percent)
  - Tentatively scheduled for October 19
- **Take-Home Final Essay Exam** (35 percent)

## Course Policies

- Students are expected to be courteous and considerate of the instructor and one another. This consideration includes, but is not limited to, not engaging in activities that draw your attention away from the seminar – including holding private conversations, surfing the internet, reading, doing homework, etc.
- Computers may only be used for taking course notes.
- Of course, the standard disclaimers regarding cheating, plagiarizing, and the Student Honor code all apply.

## General Reading Questions to Think About in Preparing for Class

- What question the author is trying to answer?
- Why is this question important?
- How does the author answer the question?
  - What data does he/she use?
  - What types of analysis does he/she present? Statistical, case study, historical description, etc.?
- Does the author succeed in answering his/her question? Why or why not?
  - Did the author’s evidence support his/her claims or did his/her claims and conclusions go beyond the evidence?
  - Why do you believe or not believe the findings/conclusions the author reports?
    - \* Focus on the author’s own reasoning and evidence – not your own beliefs – in thinking about this question.
- Improvements and extensions
  - If you were unconvinced, what could the author do to make the argument more convincing?
    - \* In thinking about this question it is useful to think about how you would answer the question if you faced no constraints – if you could, for example, read minds, had unlimited funds, etc. Then work from that idealized design to think up studies that a researcher could implement in the real world.
  - What new questions or research avenues does the author’s argument motivate?

## Reading Assignments

- August 22, 24: Experts and politics
  - Schudson, M. 2006. “The trouble with experts – and why democracies need them.” *Theory and Society* 35(5): 491-506.
  - Dallek, R. 2009. “All the Presidents scholarly men.” *Nature* 458(7238): 572-573.
- August 27, 29, 31: The professions, the university, and national governance
  - Abbott, A. 1988. *The system of professions: An essay on the division of expert labor*. University of Chicago Press.

- Introduction (pp. 1-31)
- Cole, Jonathan R. 2012. *The Great American University: Its Rise to Preeminence, Its Indispensable National Role, Why It Must Be Protected*. Reprint. PublicAffairs.
  - “The idea of a university” (pp. 11-44)
- September 5, 7: The role of experts in shaping public opinion
  - Zaller, John R. 1984. “The Role of Elites in Shaping Public Opinion.” Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley.
    - “Theoretical issues in elite-mass relations” (Chapter 1)
    - “Elite subcultures and the origination of new political ideas” (Chapter 3)
- September 10, 12, 14: Professionals and abortion policy
  - Luker, K. 1985. *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood*. Univ of California Press.
    - Chapters TBA.
- September 17, 19, 21: Legal experts and policy change – death penalty case
  - Baumgartner, Frank R., Suzanna L. De Boef, and Amber E. Boydstun. 2008. *The Decline of the Death Penalty and the Discovery of Innocence*. Cambridge University Press.
    - Chapters for discussion this week TBA
- September 24, 26, 28: Legal experts and policy change – death penalty case, continued
  - Baumgartner, Frank R., Suzanna L. De Boef, and Amber E. Boydstun. 2008. *The Decline of the Death Penalty and the Discovery of Innocence*. Cambridge University Press.
    - Chapters for discussion this week TBA
- October 1, 3, 5: The case of deregulation
  - Derthick, M., and P. J. Quirk. 1985. *The politics of deregulation*. Brookings Institution Press.
    - “Three cases of deregulation” (Chapter 1)
    - “Why the regulators chose to deregulate” (Chapter 3)
    - Other pages TBA
- October 8, 10, 12: Lobbying and policy change
  - Baumgartner, F. R. 2009. *Lobbying and policy change: who wins, who loses, and why*. University of Chicago Press.
    - Chapters TBA
- October 15, 17, 19: Mitem, review, and catch-up
  - No new reading for this week
- October 22, 24: Non-profit scientific lobbying organizations
  - “Nonprofit Organizations as Interest Groups: The Politics of Passivity,” in Allan J. Cigler and Burdett A. Loomis, *Interest Group Politics*, 7th ed. (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2007)
  - “Center for Science in the Public Interest,” Stanford Graduate School of Business, Case M-296.

- October 29, 31, November 2: The case of pesticide regulation

Bosso, C. J. 1988. Pesticides and politics: The life cycle of a public issue. Univ of Pittsburgh Press.

– Chapters TBA

- November 5, 7, 9: Fukushima and the nuclear power issue

Baumgartner, F. R., and B. D. Jones. 2009. Agendas and instability in American politics. University of Chicago Press.

– “The construction and collapse of a policy monopoly” (Chapter 4)

– other pages TBA

Funabashi, Yoichi, and Kay Kitazawa. 2012. Fukushima in review: A complex disaster, a disastrous response. Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists.

- November 12, 14, 16: The Vietnam War

Goldstein, Gordon M. 2009. Lessons in Disaster: McGeorge Bundy and the Path to War in Vietnam. Reprint. Holt Paperbacks.

– Chapters TBA

Gelb, L. H., and R. K. Betts. 1979. The irony of Vietnam: the system worked. Brookings Institution Press.

– Chapters TBA

- November 19, 21: The limits of expertise

Tetlock, P. 2005. Expert political judgment: How good is it? How can we know? Princeton Univ Press.

– “The ego-deflating challenges of radical skepticism” (Chapter 2)

– Other chapters TBA

- November 26, 28: Discussion and review

No new reading for this week