

The Pennsylvania State University
Departments of Political Science and Sociology
PLSC 497

Protest, Social Movements, and Public Policy: A Research Seminar
Professors Frank Baumgartner and John McCarthy
Spring 2009
M, 3:35-6:35pm, 268 Willard

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This course is designed for students interested in exploring methods of research in the social sciences. We will explore particular aspects of how social movements emerge, why some issues become the objects of concern and action in public policy, and how public policies change over time in response to social forces of many kinds. Mostly, the focus will be on teaching you how to do hands-on, original research projects. In this sense the methods that you learn about how to do research will be just as important as the substance of what you learn about any particular areas of public policy. In fact, we will put more emphasis on teaching research skills.

Given the hands-on focus of the class, participation and intellectual engagement are fundamental. While the assigned readings are not particularly onerous, we have high expectations about the time and effort each student will spend on their research projects. Compared to other courses, this will be relatively time consuming and we will expect your final projects to be highly professional. Of course, we'll also teach you how to reach those standards, but be prepared for work. Also, class attendance is fundamental, as you'll see in the grading structure below.

Consider the following public policy issues / social movements:

Climate change	Nuclear power
Women's rights	Drunk driving
Smoking	Gambling
Pornography / censorship	Mandatory sentencing / 3 strikes laws
Racial profiling	Health care / insurance availability
Agricultural subsidies	Free trade / globalization
Minimum wage	Labor rights
Social Security	Contraception / family planning
Underaged drinking / binge drinking	Illegal / illicit drug use
Gun control	

Start thinking right away about what of those issues interest you particularly. Early in the semester, you'll decide if you want to participate in a group project or work only on your own.

Groups will consist of 4 or 5 students each, and each group will do coordinated research into one of these issues. Don't worry, this is not a standard group project. Rather, each of you will work on a separate part of the project, but you will coordinate your efforts. Over the semester you will each do original research into the history and development of social movements, organizations, media coverage, or public policy toward the issue you have chosen. Together with others working on the same issue, you will make presentations in class. In addition, each of you will write a separate and independent term paper focusing on your part of the group project (say, just the media coverage part, for example) and comparing it to another public policy issue. Thus, you'll actually end up doing focused research on two different issues, not just one. You'll also have other detailed assignments requiring you to get familiar with various resources for research on any public policy. If you choose not to do the group project, that's fine but you'll have to present your research on your own, and you'll need to focus more in depth on many aspects of one single policy. In any case you'll need to pick a topic immediately for your semester's study, and we will only allow you to work on a topic where we're confident you'll be able to find appropriate data covering a long range in time so that you can trace the policy over time. This eliminates some topics that may interest you, but it's important that everyone follow a similar strategy, and there are plenty of interesting topics that can be studied over time, so we'll insist that you find one.

Readings will focus on articles from the recent professional literature on the growth of interest groups and SMOs as well as on theories and indicators of policy change over time. In addition, we'll read about research methods. We'll also do overviews of a number of data resources including the Policy Agendas Project (www.policyagendas.org), the historical record of the New York Times available on line, Associations Unlimited, Lexis-Nexis electronic bibliographic resources, and other data resources. Often, we'll have assignments related to those projects.

Since each student will be researching a different topic, but using similar methodologies during the term, there is a premium upon students helping one another. Class discussions will provide a time to explain your own research projects as well as to get feedback from others. By the same token, helping other students in their research projects, through constructive criticisms and suggestions is an integral part of the class. Accordingly, when one student makes a presentation to the class, the other students should be ready to give feedback and help. This is not a class in which to sit quietly.

Assignments will be as follows:

- 20% Class participation
- 25% Small assignments / homework based on the different data sources
- 20% Your contribution to a group-based or individual presentation about a given issue
- 35% Term Paper comparing the issue from your group project to another of your choice

100% total

A note on attendance. Because the class only meets once a week, therefore just 15 times throughout the semester, skipping class without a compelling reason is just not allowed. To enforce this concept, and encourage not only attendance but also engaged participation (impossible if you are not in class), we will deduct ONE FULL GRADE if you miss class twice

during the semester (not counting university allowed absences, or serious illness). Miss class more than 4 times, grade will be no higher than a D. We realize this is draconian.

There are no required textbooks for purchase. The course web site, available through Baumgartner's home page (<http://www.personal.psu.edu/frb1/teachingmaterials.htm>) will contain links to all the relevant articles, web sites, and data sources. Any papers not available on the web site will be distributed in class.

The following information comes from the Political Science Department. We encourage you to ask questions about any parts of it that are not clear.

Academic Dishonesty

The Department of Political Science, along with the College of the Liberal Arts and the University, takes violations of academic dishonesty seriously. Observing basic honesty in one's work, words, ideas, and actions is a principle to which all members of the community are required to subscribe.

All course work by students is to be done on an individual basis unless an instructor clearly states that an alternative is acceptable. Any reference materials used in the preparation of any assignment must be explicitly cited. Students uncertain about proper citation are responsible for checking with their instructor.

In an examination setting, unless the instructor gives explicit prior instructions to the contrary, whether the examination is in-class or take-home, violations of academic integrity shall consist but are not limited to any attempt to receive assistance from written or printed aids, or from any person or papers or electronic devices, or of any attempt to give assistance, whether the one so doing has completed his or her own work or not.

Lying to the instructor or purposely misleading any Penn State administrator shall also constitute a violation of academic integrity.

In cases of any violation of academic integrity it is the policy of the Department of Political Science to follow procedures established by the College of the Liberal Arts. More information on academic integrity and procedures followed for violation can be found at:

http://www.la.psu.edu/CLA-Academic_Integrity/integrity.shtml

Disabilities

The Pennsylvania State University encourages qualified people with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities and is committed to the policy that all people shall have equal access to programs, facilities, and admissions without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please tell the instructor as soon as possible. Reasonable accommodations will be made for all students with disabilities, but it is the student's responsibility to inform the instructor early in the term. Do not wait until just before an exam to decide you want to inform the instructor of a learning disability; any accommodations for disabilities must be arranged well in advance.

Weekly class assignments, readings, and discussion topics

Week 1 January 13, 2009: Introduction and Overview

Introduction to course. We'll go over the syllabus, introduce you to the class and the policy agendas web sites, and some assignments for two weeks from now. Assignments are:

- Get familiar (very familiar) with www.policyagendas.org – do some graphs, study the topic codebook, get familiar with the site. Spend at least three hours on it. Make sure you know how to:
 - Understand the full set of topics, as this list will help you decide on your term paper
 - Graph hearings, laws, or other data on more than one topic at a time
 - Analyze the budget, and understand the budget categories available
 - Download the table that comes with a graph on the site and import it into Excel
- Follow the instructions on the web site on how to do a project about observing pedestrians. Come to class on Jan 26 with your results. You'll also need to read an article by Clark McPhail, available on the website as well.
- Read ahead as you have lots of readings and they are not all that easy.

Week 2 January 19: No class, happy Martin Luther King Day!

Note: You have a lot of readings for next week.

Week 3 January 26: Tracing Policy Change Over Time Using Quantitative Sources

- Baumgartner, Frank R., and Bryan D. Jones. 1991. Agenda Dynamics and Policy Subsystems. *Journal of Politics* 53 (November): 1044-74.
- Baumgartner, Frank R., Bryan D. Jones, and John Wilkerson. 2002. Studying Policy Dynamics. Chapter 2 (pp. 29-49) in *Policy Dynamics*. Ed. Bryan D. Jones and Frank R. Baumgartner. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- W. Lawrence Neuman. 2000. *Social Research Methods* 7th ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon. Chapter 7. Qualitative and Quantitative Measurement. Pp. 156–94.

Assignment #1 First part due in class on January 26. Come to class with your results from the pedestrian study. Being late with this is not an option, as the results will be collated in class. Collectively, you'll need to take time in class and evaluate the processes that could have lead to the distribution of results you collectively observed in your observations of pedestrians. That is, develop a *theory* to explain the *observations*.

Discussion: Be prepared in class to talk about measurement, what it means, how we talk about it, and whether the articles you've read about the policy agendas project meet a good standard of measurement and what they may miss. Also we will discuss issues of measurement in the Pedestrian Study.

Week 4 February 2: Media Coverage Over Time

- Hilgartner, Stephen and Charles L. Bosk. 1988. The Rise and Fall of Social Problems—A Public Arenas Model. *American Journal of Sociology* 94: 53-78.

- Woolley, J. T. 2000. Using Media-Based Data in Studies of Politics. *American Journal of Political Science* 44: 156-173.

Assignment # 1: Research Report on Pedestrian Study due in class.

Discussion: Using media archives for creating time-series of media attention to policy issues. What produces media attention cycles? How serious are the problems identified by Woolley?

Assignment # 2: Do your best to identify newspaper stories using the New York Times from Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe on the topic of the US inflation rate, for the period of 1980 to present, annually. Spend time debugging your search terms. Produce a graph using the spreadsheet on the class web page showing the number of hits you get. Email the results to Baumgartner by noon on the day of the next class, including the exact phrase you used as your keywords. We'll look at the various results you all come up with in the next class period. Which set of keywords worked best? What made it better than the others?

Week 5 February 9: The Development of Associations over Time

- Baumgartner, Frank R. 2005. The Growth and Diversity of US Associations, 1956–2004: Analyzing Trends using the *Encyclopedia of Associations*. Working paper. March 29.
- Martin, Andrew W., John McCarthy, and Frank R. Baumgartner. 2006. Measuring Association Populations Using the *Encyclopedia of Associations*: Evidence from the Field of Labor Unions. *Social Science Research* 35 (2006): 771-778.
- Brulle, Robert J., Liesel Turner, J. Craig Jenkins and Jason Carmichael. 2007. "Measuring Social Movement Organization Populations: A Comprehensive Census of US Environmental Movement Organizations." *Mobilization* 12: 255-70.

Assignment # 2: Due by noon (by email) the day of class.

Assignment # 3. Pick a topic area where you think you may want to do your term paper. Use Associations Unlimited on the library web site to identify all the relevant national-level associations in the US. Make a spreadsheet containing their name, creation date, staff, budget, and give a code to each group about their attitude toward the topic you are studying. (For example, if your topic were nuclear power, you would code the groups as "pro" or "anti.")

Week 6 February 16: Studying Populations of Organizations over Time.

- Singh, Jitendra V. and Charles J. Lumsden. 1990. Theory and Research in Organizational Ecology. *Annual Review of Sociology* 16: 161-195.
- Johnson, Erik and John D. McCarthy. 2005. "The Sequencing of Transnational and National Social Movement Mobilization: The Organizational Mobilization of the Global and U.S. Environmental Movements." Pp. 71-94 in *Transnational Protest and Global Activism*. Sidney Tarrow and Donatella Della Porta, eds. Boulder, CO: Rowman and Littlefield.

Assignment # 3: Due in class.

Assignment # 4: Using the article you read by Neuman in week 3, evaluate the measurement strategy in the Johnson and McCarthy article. Also evaluate your own dataset on groups that you created last week. Prepare with graphs and data showing the characteristics of the associational universe in your issue-area.

Week 7 February 23: The Founding of Social Movement Organizations/Interest Groups.

- McCammon, Holly J. 2000. Stirring Up Suffrage Sentiment: The Formation of the State Woman Suffrage Organizations, 1866-1914. *Social Forces* 80: 449-480.
- Minkoff, Debra C. 1995. Interorganizational Influences on the Founding of African-American Organizations, 1955-1985. *Sociological Forum* 10: 51-79.

Assignment # 4: Due in class.

Assignment # 5: Write a one-page paper on one of these two articles reviewing the measurement of key variables and the sources of the data. Use the vocabulary introduced in the Neuman chapter you read in week 3. Bring a revised and improved dataset to class on your own association universe.

Week 8 March 2: Protest and Policy Change

- King, BG, Bentele, KG and Soule, SA. 2007. Protest and Policy Making: Explaining Fluctuation in Congressional Attention to Rights Issues: 1960-1986. *Social Forces* 86:137-163.

Assignment # 5: Due in class.

Assignment # 6: Using the topic area that you have been working with, identify all relevant data from the Policy Agendas web site and download annual total actions into a single spreadsheet. Year in the first column, then number of hearings, number of laws, etc. in the next set of columns. If you find that your topic needs to be revised, revise it slightly so that the topic is defined in the same way when you look at the Agendas datasets, in the media news sources, and in Associations Unlimited.

Note: Spring Break, March 9–13, have fun!

Week 9 March 16: More on Media Coverage

- No readings this week.

Assignment # 6: Due in class.

Assignment # 7: Explore in detail three media sources for your topic: New York Times Historical, Lexis-Nexis, and Newsbank. Try to replicate the most appropriate key-word search for your term paper topic using all three sources, and more than one newspaper source (e.g., the New York Times plus some other one). Come to class with the spreadsheet. By now you should be expert at this kind of thing.

Week 10 March 23: Presentations, round 1.

Assignment # 7: Due in Class.

Week 11 March 30: Presentations, round 1.

Week 12 April 6: Study / research

Week 13 April 13: Presentations, The Final Round

Week 14 April 20: Presentations, The Final Round

Week 15 April 27: Presentations, The Final Round

Term papers due by email and hard copy to both professors by time of class. Early submissions appreciated.