



THE UNIVERSITY
of NORTH CAROLINA
at CHAPEL HILL

POLI 195
Framing Public Policies
M, W, 5:00–6:15pm, Gardner 307

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Office hours: M, W, 2-3pm and by appointment

This class will focus on how public policies are framed by policy activists seeking to generate support or opposition to them. Examples to be discussed in class include the death penalty, nuclear power, and smoking. Considering that we are in the midst of a possible movement toward health-care reform, and this is going to mobilize enormous lobbying campaigns on all sides, we'll take advantage of this to test whether what we are reading in the assigned readings is true. Each of you will be assigned a particular group or political actor and you should always be prepared to explain that actor's viewpoint and actions on the health-care debate. This means following the issue in the newspapers and on the blogs. I'd recommend the *Washington Post* (<http://wpost.com/>) and the *New York Times* (<http://nytimes.com/>) as the best two sources. Call me old fashioned. We'll have a continued interest to see how the health-care debate is framed, and which actors are more successful than others in imposing the frames that they prefer.

Readings and topics are laid out in the weekly assignments at the end of this syllabus. The main idea is that you'll read first one of my favorite books in political science, even though it was published way back almost 50 years ago. While the examples are totally outdated, you'll be surprised at how much of what the author wrote still is relevant. So push through the examples about President Truman, and things that happened in 1947 and such, and focus on the ideas; you'll find those ideas are well explained and still extremely relevant. (Some of the history is interesting, too!) Then you'll read a lot of articles from the literature on framing. I'm the author of some of these articles, and hopefully you'll be able to see that as a positive rather than as a negative. Don't worry, I have very thick skin and it's fine with me if you have questions or hesitations about what I've written: You won't be the first! But it's a research university and hopefully you see the benefits of taking a class where the professor is himself one of the authors; try to take advantage of it rather than allow yourself to be intimidated. The readings will take us into many different topics, but remember we will not be reading them so much for the subject matter, but for the theoretical ideas of what is framing, who can frame things, the role of the media v. public officials, and some general ideas such as would it be possible to have a policy without framing? So we'll get into some basic issues of human cognition as well as current policy debates.

There is just one book for purchase (please get this as soon as possible and note that it was published so long ago that there are jillions of used copies available through the internet):

- Schattschneider, E. E. 1972. *The Semi-Sovereign People*. Wadsworth / Thomson Learning. [isbn 0 03 013366 1] Note: also published in 1960; either edition is fine.

Note that the bulk of the course readings are from professional journals in political science and sociology. These will be available on the course web page or through the library, especially www.jstor.org.

Assignments will be as follows: First, class participation is an absolute must. I'll expect you to be in class each time, having done the readings and ready to participate. You don't have to have understood all the readings; it's fine to come to class with questions or points where you'd like some more clarification of the ideas. But you have to do the readings ahead of time, and come to class ready to ask questions as well as to answer those questions posed by others. Sitting quietly is a very bad habit. Bring a paper copy of the readings to class so you can refer to them specifically as you ask questions or follow along as I try to explain them.

Second, you'll write four short papers, as indicated below. Papers will ask you to take a given theory from the readings and apply it to particular aspects of the health-care debate. I want you to learn how to write a good essay, developing a theme, and clearly answering the question you pose, with evidence. So we'll focus a lot on that and I'll give comments so each paper should get better over the semester.

Third, I'll often have *very* simple assignments or quizzes in class; these will be graded on a scale of 2 (full credit); 1 (half credit); 0 (unacceptable or not handed in). I'm an easy grader so if you do the assignment with any care at all you'll get a perfect grade. Then again if I have a quiz in class and you skip that day, oops, you lost two points. Such things can add up and if you note the equation below, the combination of class participation and these short assignments will make up 40 percent of your total grade. These quizzes will be unannounced and we'll have as many of them as I feel like we need, fewer if everyone seems well prepared all the time, more if there seem to be free-riders.

Finally, there will be a midterm and a final, and the emphasis here will be on the readings. I'll give short-answer questions, identifications of key terms from the readings, and short essay questions.

Summary of grading and assignments:

Class participation including attendance	20%
Four short papers (10 points each):	40
Short homework assignments or quizzes on the readings in class	20
Mid-term and Final (10 points each)	20
Total:	100%

Attendance and class participation: I may or may not take attendance on any given day, though I usually will, I will do it a lot at the beginning of the semester in order to learn your names, and I always will if attendance is low. Coming to class so you can participate in the discussions is an important element of class participation and learning. The final grade in this

course will incorporate a substantial weight for class participation, and you cannot do well in that portion of the course if your attendance is poor. Note that sitting quietly in class never with a question, never with an answer, never participating in the discussion will not get you a good grade either, even if your attendance is excellent. So attendance is a necessary condition for a good participation grade, but not a sufficient one.

A Note on Academic Honesty: As you know the UNC Honor Code prohibits lying, cheating, or stealing. As regards this course the particular element of concern is academic honesty, especially plagiarism. Here, it is especially important that you understand exactly what plagiarism is, because many cases of plagiarism are due to carelessness or ignorance of the norms of attribution for academic work, not intentional cheating. So familiarize yourself with the Honor Code by reviewing this web site (<http://honor.unc.edu/>) and the “instrument” that is included there. Any work you hand in for this course will be assumed to be your own, in accordance with the Honor Pledge. In addition, the library has an excellent web site that includes a tutorial about citations, plagiarism, and related matters. Use this link to familiarize yourself in detail with these rules, as they will be necessary in all your courses:
<http://www.lib.unc.edu/instruct/citations/introduction/>.

Students with Disabilities: I am happy to make reasonable accommodation for any disability. I only ask that you let me know of your disability status in the first week of the semester before accommodation is needed so that we can agree on a plan. Please use this web site for information about disabilities and accommodation: <http://www.unc.edu/depts/lds/index.html>. Contact the Office of Learning Disabilities and bring a letter from them indicating the type of accommodation needed. I’ll be more than happy to comply. (It is very important that you get in the habit of letting professors know right up front about any disability status. If you do not let us know until there is a problem that requires accommodation, we may not be able to make adjustments once the semester starts.)

Following the Health-care Debate: A Semester Project

As usual, this year features some pretty significant interest-group action playing out in real time on the national stage as we go through the semester. We will follow the progress (or lack thereof) of health-care reform through Congress during the entire semester. Each student will pick or be assigned a major interest group or political actor and follow their actions through major news sources and web sites, including the unfiltered web sites of the organizations themselves, so you can compare what the groups are saying with what the media and other groups are saying they are saying. In your papers you will need to explain how concepts of framing apply to the actions of the group to which you are assigned, and we’ll use this in class as well to examine who is winning the framing debate on health care, in real time as it develops over the semester. I will coordinate assignments so that each student gets one of the following groups:

Groups:

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| 1. doctors | 12. Moveon.org |
| 2. nurses | 13. Conservative social movements
(pick one) |
| 3. other medical specialists such as
anesthesiologists (pick any major
group you like) | 14. Conservative talk radio (pick one) |
| 4. insurance companies | 15. President Obama and his
administration |
| 5. hospitals | 16. House Dem leadership |
| 6. mental health professionals | 17. Senate Dem leadership |
| 7. drug companies (PhRMA) | 18. House Dem liberals |
| 8. unions (AFL-CIO) | 19. House Blue Dog Democrats |
| 9. small businesses (pick a
representative organization) | 20. House Rep leadership |
| 10. big business (Business Roundtable) | 21. Senate Rep leadership |
| 11. civil rights groups (pick one) | 22. Senate Republican moderates |

Weekly schedule and discussion topics

Note: Readings should all be done *before the Monday class*. Many of these readings are quite difficult, once we get into the journal articles. Don't worry too much about any statistical presentations that you can't understand. However, do your best, and come to class with questions. You should definitely understand and pay careful attention to the concepts and conclusions being presented. I'll occasionally have quick quizzes designed to evaluate whether you've done the readings.

Week 1, Aug 26, Introduction and overview

Week 2, Aug 31, Sep 2, A theory of "conflict expansion"

- Schattschneider Ch 1, 2

Week 3 Sep 9 (No class on Labor Day Sep 7), Health-care overview

Come to class with a list of the arguments that your group is using on the health care debate. One page, bulleted list, with a citation of the web site(s) where you got the information. I'll call on you in class and we'll get a sense of what different arguments are "out there."

Week 4 Sep 14, 16, How conflicts "socialize" and what difference that makes

- Schattschneider Ch 3, 4, 5

First paper due on Wednesday Sep 16. Take the group or political actor you have been assigned to follow through the health-care debate and explain whether they are following a strategy that makes sense given what Schattschneider's theory would lead you to expect. Are they expanding the conflict or restricting it? If they are expanding the conflict, are they using appropriate arguments? What kind of arguments? Ditto for groups that are attempting to quiet the debate down. So: Carefully explain what Schattschneider would lead you to expect, then compare the expectation from the theory with what you are observing with the group you've been assigned to cover. You may rely on the same list of arguments that you developed for the Sep 9 assignment, though you may want to expand on it.

Week 5 Sep 21, 23, Evaluations of our democratic system

- Schattschneider Ch 6, 7, 8

Week 6 Sep 28, 30, Human cognitive processes v. “rationality”

- Simon, Herbert A. 1985. Human Nature in Politics: The Dialogue of Psychology with Political Science. *American Political Science Review* 79: 293–304.

Week 7 Oct 5, 7, How people deal differently with risk in the domain of loss v. gains

- Quattrone, George A., and Amos Tversky. 1988. Contrasting Rational and Psychological Analyses of Political Choice. *American Political Science Review* 82, 3 (Sept.): 719–736.

Second paper due Wed Oct 7. Quattrone and Tversky’s prospect theory explains why fear is such a great argument in politics. Explain the theory and apply it to the current health-care debate. Which is easier: developing support for a new proposal, or sowing fear about changing the status quo? How are the health-care debaters playing out this drama? Be specific in your description of the relevant parts of prospect theory and use precise examples of arguments made by different actors, focusing on the one you were assigned, to illustrate whether this helps explain their success or failure.

Week 8 Oct 12, 14, Framing, story-telling, and how we learn

- Berinski, Adam J., and Donald R. Kinder. 2006. Making Sense of Issues Through Media Frames: Understanding the Kosovo Crisis. *Journal of Politics* 68, 3 (August): 640–56.

Midterm exam, Wednesday Oct 14

Week 9 Oct 19, 21, Causal stories and policy images

- Stone, Deborah A. 1989. Causal Stories and the Formation of Policy Agendas. *Political Science Quarterly* 104, 2 (Summer): 281–300.
- Baumgartner, Frank R., and Bryan D. Jones. 1991. Agenda Dynamics and Policy Subsystems. *Journal of Politics* 53 (November): 1044–74.

Week 10 Oct 26, 28, A model of decision-making based on information overload

- Jones, Bryan D., and Frank R. Baumgartner. 2005. *The Politics of Attention: How Government Prioritizes Problems*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press., Ch. 1, 2

Third paper due Wednesday Oct 28. Can you understand all the elements associated with health-care reform, or is it overwhelming in its complexity? Discuss the actions of the group you have been assigned with regards to their ability to develop a comprehensive reform. Do they focus on particular aspects? Why?

Week 11 Nov 2, 4, Political power as reflected in how social groups are framed

- Schneider, Anne, and Helen Ingram. 1993. Social Construction of Target Populations: Implications for Politics and Policy. *American Political Science Review* 87: 334–47.

Week 12 Nov 9, 11, Framing the death penalty: the rise of the “innocence” argument.

- Frank R. Baumgartner, Suzanna Linn, and Amber E. Boydston. 2009. The Decline of the Death Penalty: How Media Framing Changed Capital Punishment in America. In Brian F. Schaffner and Patrick J. Sellers, eds. *Winning with Words: The Origins and Impact of Framing*. New York: Routledge, forthcoming, 2009, pp 159–84.
- Review this web site, get a feel for the project:
<http://www.unc.edu/~fbaum/Innocence/Innocence.htm>

Week 13 Nov 16, 18, The North Carolina Racial Justice Act and lobbying on the death penalty

- Special guest, November 16, Mr. Jeremy J Collins, Campaign Coordinator, North Carolina Coalition for a Moratorium (<http://www.ncmoratorium.org/>). Jeremy was at the center of lobbying efforts to pass the Racial Justice Act, and is a UNC-CH political science grad.
- Special guest, November 18, Mr. Chris Hill, State Strategies Coordinator, ACLU Capital Punishment Project. Chris coordinates lobbying strategy in all 50 states for the ACLU, one of the largest groups active in capital punishment issues nationally, and he is based in Durham.

Week 14 Nov 23 It’s not that easy to reframe something!

- Druckman, James N. 2001. On the Limits of Framing Effects: Who Can Frame? *Journal of Politics* 63, 4 (November): 1041–66.

(No class on Nov 25, Happy Thanksgiving!)

Week 15 Nov 30, Dec 2, Framing crime and racial hatred

- Nelson, Thomas E., Rosalee A. Clawson, and Zoe M. Oxley. 1997. Media Framing of a Civil Liberties Conflict and Its Effect on Tolerance. *American Political Science Review* 91, 3 (Sept.): 567–583.
- Gilliam, Franklin D., Jr., and Shanto Iyengar. 2000. Prime Suspects: The Influence of Local Television News on the Viewing Public. *American Journal of Political Science* 44, 3 (July): 560–573.

Fourth paper due Wed Dec 2. Use all that you have read to analyze the debates on health care, focusing again on your assigned group. Have they succeeded in promoting the frame on this debate that suits them? Why or why not? How well do these theories deal with the competitive nature of the policy process?

Week 16 Dec 7, 9, Review, discussions, complaints about the professor (optional)

Final Exam: Friday December 11, 4pm