



**POLI 421**  
**Framing Public Policies**  
**M, W 2:00–3:15pm, Murphey 112**  
**Fall 2013**

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This class will focus on the process by which policies get framed, or defined in public discussion. Framing is focusing attention on some elements of a complex public problem rather than others. Politicians constantly attempt to frame issues in ways that are advantageous to their side of the debate, and we often refer derisively to “spin” when we see this. But framing is inevitable. Furthermore, frames sometimes change over time. Smoking was once seen as glamorous and the tobacco industry was held up as one of the most powerful lobbies in American politics. Today you can’t smoke in most public places. So the course will focus on something you see around you every day, at least if you read the newspapers and pay attention to politics.

We will begin with a review of a number of theories from political science and psychology about how we frame things, about why some frames are more powerful than others, and about how the brain processes new, unfamiliar, or unwanted information. Then we get into the core of the course, which is reading articles that document how frames change over time. We will read three books toward the end of the course. One is a study of how policies towards children are, and should be, framed. One is a study of the rise of conservative ways of talking about politics and how those became more prominent over the period from about 1950 through 2004; they were very effective! And the last is a study of the growth of the impact of conservative legal scholars through the Federalist Society; they have transformed legal analysis from very heavily left-wing and supportive of progressive views on various issues to one where powerful ideas on both sides compete vigorously. Both of these books combine analysis of framing with a discussion of the material resources – that is, money – needed to make the change in frames. So this is real politics and it should be interesting.

This course is listed in the catalogue as Communication Intensive (CI) as well as Mentored Research (E6). Communication intensive courses integrate written work, oral presentation, and processes of revision into the course subject matter in substantive and important ways. Mentored Research is a form of Experiential Education (EE), and this means that you will conduct your own research project under my supervision and that of Amy, who will serve both as a TA and as a Graduate Research Consultant (GRC). These characteristics of our course determine a lot of the assignments. These will therefore involve not just reading books and articles as you might in another course, but doing your own research project, handling statistical data, developing qualitative comparisons, and drafting your final project in parts, getting feedback on them,

presenting parts of them orally, and then incorporating feedback for the final project at the end of the semester. If you like this course, you will love grad school, as it gives a small taste of the research process. The course is probably a little harder than others because of this. Each day we will discuss a reading selection, but you will also have important work to be doing regularly on the side, throughout the semester. You can't catch up in the last week of the semester if you get behind.

In this research-exposure course, you will be working with a Graduate Research Consultant, (Amy Sentementes), who will assist you in the research project. The GRC Program is sponsored by the Office for Undergraduate Research ([www.unc.edu/depts/our](http://www.unc.edu/depts/our)), and you may be able to use this research-exposure course to meet a requirement of the Carolina Research Scholars Program ([http://www.unc.edu/depts/our/students/students\\_crsp.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/our/students/students_crsp.html)). I encourage you to visit the OUR website to learn about how you might engage in research, scholarship and creative performance while you are at Carolina.

What this means is that Amy and I will help you design a research project where you trace the framing of a public policy in much the same way as some of the authors we read in class have done. Essentially this means that you: a) pick a topic of public policy that interests you; b) identify different ways that the issue can be framed; and c) track using media or government sources how often the different frames associated with the issue have been mentioned over time or document how policy actors with different goals frame the issue selectively. Rather than just read some books or articles and write a standard term paper, you will “get your hands dirty” with some actual research. Assignments will include a number of short projects designed to push you along the way to completing an interesting and original research project. Further, we will devote some class time to go over some technical aspects of some research skills you will need, and will be available for individual consulting during office hours as well.

Your research project may involve one of two approaches. One is to trace a given policy over time, using media sources such as the *New York Times*, available for a sufficient period to observe change. The minimum acceptable is 25 years, but longer is better. The *New York Times* is available as a searchable database back to the 1850s, so you are welcome to study historical periods if that interests you. A second option is systematically to code how rival political “camps” frame their arguments around a particular policy that interests you. For example, you could study abortion, gun control, the implementation of Obamacare, North Carolina's recent Voter ID law, or any other prominent public debate and investigate whether the various sides are strategically attempting to use frames to advance their interests. In either case, you will need to pay attention to identifying a policy debate very early in the semester, and then checking whether you can use computerized sources and keyword searches to identify the major frames. So you'll need to get started early, and you may need to change your topic if you can't measure the frames accurately. Welcome to the world of empirical research!

As you will see, assignments consist of turning in parts of the research project in stages. Amy and I will review and comment on your progress based on these papers. Your final paper should then incorporate any feedback. Near the end of the semester, each student will prepare a powerpoint presentation that gives an overview of their research project, approach, methods, and findings to the class. Thus, you will learn from each other and get a sense of the research

process as well as some knowledge of the substantive issues that each one of you chooses to study in the class. In the end, your term paper will incorporate the feedback you have gotten during the semester. Your powerpoints should have a maximum of 10 slides: Title, theoretical question, research design / approach (maybe 2 slides, explaining your keywords for example), findings (up to 4 slides), conclusion. Time your presentation for 7 minutes. Your term paper will be more complete and will be double-spaced 15-20 pages including bibliography and 1-inch margins, 12 point font. Doing the presentation will force you to be sure that you know the key points of your term paper, and it should clearly lay them out.

Finally, let me mention that the topic of this course is the area where I do most of my research. So come to class with questions about how we do it. You may be surprised at how simple it is in some ways, but complicated in others. In any case, you should get a real feel for the process of political science research in this class. We will pay attention in class discussion not only to the substance of the conclusions that the authors reach about how policies have or have not been reframed over time, but also how they collect their evidence and support their conclusions.

Assignments will be as follows:

Participation in class discussion	10%
Occasional quizzes on the readings, in-class, unannounced	25
Three intermediate term paper progress reports / drafts (3 x 5%)	15
Final paper	25
Final presentation	15
Final exam	10
 Total	 100%

Missed class and late assignments: Missing class more than a few times will certainly affect your participation grade; missing class more than 5 times will lead to a full grade reduction in your final grade. Papers are due at the beginning of class on the day they are due. Any late papers / progress reports will be accepted but down-graded by 10 points after the class when they are due, then 10 more points each 24 hours including weekends; if you are late with the assignment, email me the paper. Now, all this sounds very harsh and I apologize for that. If you know ahead of time you will miss an assignment for some good reason, contact me after class, by email, or in my office hours and we may agree on an alternative, without any penalty. Similarly, if you have an illness or a university supported excuse then no penalties will apply. Just stay in touch.

Caveat: I consider the syllabus in a class to be a contract. However, I do reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus, including project due dates and test dates (excluding the officially scheduled final examination), when unforeseen circumstances occur. These changes will be announced as early as possible so that students can adjust their schedules.

Books for purchase: Three books are required for purchase; we read the books toward the end of the term but please buy them as soon as possible. All the other required readings should be on the class web site.

- Gormley, William T. Jr. 2012. *Voices for Children: Rhetoric and Public Policy*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
- Smith, Mark A. 2007. *The Right Talk: How Conservatives Transformed the Great Society into the Economic Society*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Teles, Steven M. 2008. *The Rise of the Conservative Legal Movement: The Battle for Control of the Law*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

**Disabilities:** Please let me know in the first two weeks of class if you need any accommodation for a disability. No problem. But don't delay in letting me know.

**Academic Honesty:** Study together but make sure the work you hand in is your own. For all course work, the Honor Code applies; the student's signature on her/his work confirms that the Code rules were respected. Familiarize yourselves with the Code at [http://honor.unc.edu/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=44&Itemid=71](http://honor.unc.edu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=44&Itemid=71). You also need to familiarize yourself with the concept and practice of plagiarism in order to make sure that you avoid it. Plagiarism is defined as deliberate or reckless representation of another's words, thoughts, or ideas as one's own without attribution in connection with submission of academic work, whether graded or otherwise. Take the library's tutorial at <http://www.lib.unc.edu/instruct/plagiarism/> and ask me if you have any questions.

**Effort:** Don't come to class unprepared to participate.

**Computers and cell phones:** Turn them off, period. Pay attention to the discussion. Bring paper copies of the readings, and a pad and pen to take notes. Type your notes into a computer file after class; that will help you review and learn the material.

## Weekly schedule and discussion topics

Note: Most of these readings are easy to understand but a few get technically difficult at times. 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. This will be partially based on my sense of whether people are doing the readings. So, to avoid quizzes, come with questions and comments that show you have read the material! There will definitely be a number of quizzes in each section, and on each of the 3 books at the end.

**Week 1.** Aug 21, Introduction and overview

First class, Wed Aug 21

### Part One: Theories of How People Think and How Policies are Framed

**Week 2.** Aug 26, 28 Causal stories and target populations

Monday: Stone, Deborah A. 1989. Causal Stories and the Formation of Policy Agendas.

*Political Science Quarterly* 104, 2: 281–300.

Wednesday: Schneider, Anne, and Helen Ingram. 1993. Social Construction of Target

Populations: Implications for Politics and Policy. *American Political Science Review* 87, 2: 334–47.

**Week 3.** Sep 4 How we differ when thinking of gains versus losses, misestimate risks

No class on Monday Sept 2, Happy Labor Day!

Wednesday:

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

- Slovic, Paul. 1987. Perception of Risk. *Science* 236 (4799): 280-85.

\*\*\*Note assignment due next Monday. See class web site for details.\*\*\*

**Week 4.** Sep 9, 11 Motivated reasoning, or why it is hard to make people change their mind

Monday: Lord, Charles G., Lee Ross, and Mark R. Lepper. 1979. Biased Assimilation and

Attitude Polarization: The Effects of Prior Theories on Subsequently Considered Evidence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 37 (11): 2098-2109.

Wednesday: Kunda, Ziva. 1990. The Case for Motivated Reasoning. *Psychological Bulletin*

108(3): 480-98.

- Ditto, Peter H. and David F. Lopez. 1992. Motivated Skepticism: Use of Differential Decision Criteria for Preferred and Nonpreferred Conclusions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 63 (4): 568-84.

\*\*\*Monday, Sept 9. First assignment due in class and by email, as per class web site.\*\*\*

### Part Two: Empirical Studies of How Policies are Framed

Week 5. Sep 16, 18. Two longitudinal studies

Monday: Rose, Max, and Frank R. Baumgartner. 2013. Framing the Poor: Media Coverage and US Poverty Policy, 1960–2008. *Policy Studies Journal*, forthcoming.

Wednesday: Schrad, Mark Lawrence. 2007. Constitutional Blemishes: Understanding American Alcohol Prohibition and Repeal as Policy Punctuation. *Policy Studies Journal* 35, 3: 437-464.

Week 6. Sep 23, 25. Two experimental studies

Monday: 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.

Wednesday: 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.

Week 7. Sep 30, Oct 2 Can you reframe things at will? Maybe it depends if you are attractive.

Monday: Riker, William H. 1986. *The Art of Political Manipulation*. New Haven: Yale University Press, ch. 10, Warren Magnuson and Nerve Gas.

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

Chaiken, Shelly. 1979. Communicator Physical Attractiveness and Persuasion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 37, 8: 1387-97.

\*\*\*Due on Monday: 2 pages (single spaced) including your term paper topic, your choice of design, 5 good citations, and the beginnings of your definition of the relevant frames surrounding the issue.\*\*\*

Week 8. Oct 7, 9 Negative and positive frames are not equal.

Monday: Baumeister, Roy F., Ellen Bratslavsky, Catrin Finkenauer, and Kathleen D. Vohs. 2001. Bad Is Stronger Than Good. *Review of General Psychology* 5: 323-370.

Wednesday: No readings: Lab sessions on technical details of your research projects.

### **Part Three: Liberals, Conservatives, and Framing**

Week 9. Oct 14, Do Liberals and Conservatives think differently?

Fall Break starts Oct 16 at 5, but we will work extra hard on Monday Oct 14

Monday: Graham, Jesse, Jonathan Haidt and Brian A. Nosek. 2009. Liberals and Conservatives Rely on Different Sets of Moral Foundations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 96(5):1029–1046.

Week 10. Oct 21, 23 Why is policy hostile to children even if children are positively framed?

- Gormley, William T. Jr. 2012. *Voices for Children: Rhetoric and Public Policy*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, chapters 1-2 (Monday) and 3-4 (Wednesday).

\*\*\*Monday Oct 21: Overview of your data collection and draft section explaining your keywords, frames, and data collection process due. 5 pages single spaced.\*\*\*

Week 11. Oct 28, 30 More on children the consequences of framing

- Gormley, William T. Jr. 2012. *Voices for Children: Rhetoric and Public Policy*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, chapters 5-6 (Monday) and 7-8 (Wednesday).

Week 12. Nov 4, 6. The Rise of the Federalist Society, part one.

- Teles, Steven M. 2008. *The Rise of the Conservative Legal Movement: The Battle for Control of the Law*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, ch 1-2 (Monday), 3-4 (Wednesday).

Week 13. Nov 11, 13. Federalist Society, part two.

- Teles, Steven M. 2008. *The Rise of the Conservative Legal Movement: The Battle for Control of the Law*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, ch 5 (Monday), 6-7 (Wednesday).

\*\*\*Monday Nov 11: Full outline of your paper due. The more you have, the more we can give feedback on. Complete drafts are certainly welcome. Double-spaced.\*\*\*

Week 14. Nov 18, 20. Presentations, and The “Right Talk” – Free market rhetoric in politics  
Monday: Presentations, 10 students, 45 minutes; discussion of Smith, 30 minutes Smith, *The Right Talk:* (ch 1-2)

Wednesday: Presentations, 10 students, 45 minutes; discussion of Smith, 30 minutes (ch 3-4)

Week 15. Nov 25 Presentations, and continuation with “Right Talk”

Monday: Presentations, 10 students; Smith, ch 5-7 8-9

No class on Wed Nov 27, Happy Thanksgiving!

Week 16, Dec 2, 4 “Right Talk” and conclusions

Monday: Finish up with Smith, 8-9

Wednesday: Review, comments, discussion of framing and public policy.

Last day of class, Wed Dec 4

\*\*\*Wednesday Dec 4, Term papers due.\*\*\*

Final Exam: TBA, according to the official schedule from the registrar’s office.