



**POLI 421**  
**Framing Public Policies**  
**T, Th 3:30–4:45 pm, Murphey 112**  
**Fall 2016**

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313 Hamilton Hall, phone 962-0414  
Office hours: M, T, W, 2:30-3:30 pm and by appointment

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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 this as “spin.” 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. The concept of gay marriage was not discussed in public in 2000, but today it is the law. 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 information when it makes us comfortable and secure as compared to when it is unwelcome or challenging to our prior beliefs or expectations. We’ll start with a range of foundational literature laying out these theories. Then, with this background, we will shift attention to studying how frames change over time, and use a wide range of substantive examples throughout the semester ranging from the death penalty to income taxes. We will pay special attention to race and how that is framed in public policy debates. Given national events around race and policing, we will spend some time exploring studies about the intersections of race, police, and criminal justice and I will encourage you to think of term paper projects around this theme. The readings describe real politics and are relevant to current events, and so it should be interesting. Of course, given that it is election season, we may spend some time looking at how framing plays out in the election, especially with the issues of immigration, mass incarceration, poverty / income inequality, or trade.

This course is listed in the catalogue as Social Science (SS), Communication Intensive (CI), Mentored Research (E6), and Research Intensive. 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. 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 and quantitative 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 the course gives a small taste of the research process, which is the focus of grad school. Your term paper in this course could become your writing sample for grad school applications. 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, Kevin Roach, a PhD student in Political Science, who will assist you in the research project. The GRC Program is sponsored by the Office for Undergraduate Research (<http://our.unc.edu>), and you may be able to use this research-exposure course to meet a requirement of the Carolina Research Scholars Program (<http://our.unc.edu/students/crsp>). 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.

Throughout the semester, Kevin 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.

Your research project should involve tracing the history of 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. Some other excellent resources are ProQuest and Lexis-Nexis, available through the library web site, the Policy Agendas Project ([www.policyagendas.org](http://www.policyagendas.org)) which traces government attention, and Google N-Gram, which allows you to search google's book collection for any two-word phrase: See <https://books.google.com/ngrams>. In any 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! Sometimes great ideas just aren't feasible for reasons you might not predict; great theories often sink on the shoals of facts, evidence, and empirics... Don't let that happen to you after it is too late. Make sure before you decide on your topic that you do some dry runs to make sure you can measure key frames associated with your policy.

You have three times in the semester to turn in an initial draft or progress report on your paper. I will review and comment on your progress based on these draft assignments. Your final paper should then incorporate any feedback. I will also ask you to talk about your projects in class, and possibly to present to the others what you have found. In the end, your term paper will incorporate the feedback you have gotten during the semester. Your term paper will be more

complete and will be double-spaced 15-20 pages including bibliography and 1-inch margins, 12-point font. I will give you a template for the paper based on how I write articles for publication.

I would be more than happy if several of you choose to write your term papers surrounding common themes. You might work together, or work on separate parts of a larger project, each focusing on one part of the bigger picture. Some ideas:

- The concept of the juvenile “super-predator”
- The movement to very tough drug laws, and the consequences of that
- Mass incarceration and the post-2000 pull-back from that
- The criminal justice and welfare reform policies of President Bill Clinton and the position of candidate Hillary Clinton on those same issues
- “Three strikes” / “sentencing reform” / “truth in sentencing” laws and their aftermath
- Life Without the Possibility of Parole as the alternative to the death penalty
- The mass-incarceration / tough on crime rhetoric of Democratic and Republican presidential candidates over time
- Media racialization of crime
- Issues related to the presidential campaign, as long as they are focused on candidate framing of policy issues

Finally, let me mention that the topic of this course is the area where I do much 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.

Grades will be calculated as follows:

Participation in class discussion	10%
Short assignments and group work in class	25
Three intermediate term paper progress reports / drafts (3 x 10%)	30
Final paper	25
Final exam	10
Total	100%

Missed class and late assignments: Missing class more than a few times will certainly affect your participation 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 5 points after the class when they are due, then 5 more points each 24 hours including weekends; if you are late with the assignment, email me the paper. If you know ahead of time you will miss an assignment for some good reason, contact me so 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.

Books: There are no required books for purchase. All the readings will be on the class web site.

**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.

**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 <https://studentconduct.unc.edu/honor-system>. 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 in-class assignments asking you to get together in small groups and report on some aspect of the readings, or I will assign groups of you to present a particular reading to the rest of the class. Be prepared for this by taking notes as you read. Asking questions is part of learning, so please by my guest: come to class with questions.

### Part One: Theories of how people think and how policies are framed

**Week 1.** Aug 23, 25, Introduction and a first theory: Causal Stories

Tuesday: Introductions and overview of the course

Thursday: Stone, Deborah A. 1989. Causal Stories and the Formation of Policy Agendas. *Political Science Quarterly* 104, 2: 281–300.

**Week 2.** Aug 30, target populations

Tuesday: Schneider, Anne, and Helen Ingram. 1993. Social Construction of Target Populations: Implications for Politics and Policy. *American Political Science Review* 87, 2: 334–47.

**No class on Thursday this week; Baumgartner at the APSA meetings.**

**Week 3.** Sep 6, 8, Gaining, Losing, and Risk (Tuesday), Good and Bad News (Thursday)

Tuesday: Tversky, Amos, and Daniel Kahneman. 1973. Judgment under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases. *Science* 185 (4157): 1124-31.

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

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

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

**Week 4.** Sep 13, 15, Episodes v. Themes (Tuesday); Venues and Images (Thursday)

Tuesday: Aaroe, Lene. 2011. Investigating Frame Strength: The Case of Episodic and Thematic Frames. *Political Communication* 28: 207–26.

Thursday: Baumgartner, Frank R., and Bryan D. Jones. 1991. Agenda Dynamics and Policy Subsystems. *Journal of Politics* 53 (November): 1044–74.

**\*\*\* First assignment due in class and by email, Sept 15, as per class web site.\*\*\***

**Week 5.** Sep 20, 22, Motivated reasoning, or why it is hard to make people change their mind

Tuesday: 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.

Thursday: 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.

Kunda, Ziva. 1990. The Case for Motivated Reasoning. *Psychological Bulletin* 108(3): 480-98.

## **Part Two: Race**

**Week 6.** Sep 27, 29. A general overview, and two very troubling applications.

Tuesday: Goff, Phillip A., Claude M. Steele, and Paul G. Davies. 2008. The Space between Us: Stereotype Threat and Distance in Interracial Contexts. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 94, 1: 91–107.

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo, Amanda Lewis, and David G. Embrick. 2004. I Did Not Get That Job Because of a Black Man...: The Story Lines and Testimonies of Color-Blind Racism. *Sociological Forum* 19, 4 (December): 555-81.

Thursday: Eberhardt, Jennifer L., Paul G. Davies, Valerie J. Purdie-Vaughns, and Sheri Lynn Johnson. 2005/06. Looking Deathworthy: Perceived Stereotypicality of Black Defendants Predicts Capital-Sentencing Outcomes. *Psychological Science* 17, 5: 383-6.

Eberhardt, Jennifer L., Nilanjana Dasgupta, and Tracy L. Banaszynski. 2003. Believing is Seeing: The Effects of Racial Labels and Implicit Beliefs on Face Perception. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 29, 3 (March): 360-70.

**Week 7.** Oct 4, 6 Criminal Justice Applications

Tuesday: Boushey, Graeme. 2016. Targeted for Diffusion? How the Use and Acceptance of Stereotypes Shape the Diffusion of Criminal Justice Policy Innovations in the American States. *American Political Science Review* 110, 1: 198–214.

Thursday: Geller, Amanda, and Jeffrey Fagan. 2010. Pot as Pretext: Marijuana, Race and the New Disorder in New York City Street Policing. *Journal of Empirical Legal Studies* 7, 4: 591–633.

**\*\*\*Due on October 6: 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 11, 13. Super-predators

Tuesday: DiIulio, John J., Jr. 1995. The Coming of the Super-Predators. *The Weekly Standard*. 27 Nov.

DiIulio, John J., Jr. 1996. My Black Crime Problem, and Ours. *City Journal* n.p.

Thursday:

Gluck, Stephen. 1997. Wayward Youth, Super Predator: An Evolutionary Tale of Juvenile Delinquency from the 1950s to the Present. *Corrections Today* (59) 3: 62-64,66.

Rattan A, Levine CS, Dweck CS, Eberhardt JL. 2012. Race and the Fragility of the Legal Distinction between Juveniles and Adults. *PLoS ONE* 7, 5: e36680.

**Week 9.** Oct 18, The Superpredators idea goes out of style

Tuesday: Bazelon, Lara A. 2000. Exploding the Superpredator Myth: Why Infancy is the Preadolescent's Best Defense in Juvenile Court. *New York University Law Review* 75: 159-198.

Becker, Elizabeth. 2001. As Ex-Theorist on Young 'Superpredators,' Bush Aide Has Regrets. *The New York Times*: A19.

**\*\*\* Overview of your data collection and draft section explaining your keywords, frames, and data collection process due October 18. 5 pages single-spaced.\*\*\***

**No class on Th Oct 20, Happy Fall Break**

**Week 10.** Oct 25, 27, Punitiveness and the beginnings of a reversal

Tuesday: Enns, Peter K. 2014. The Public's Increasing Punitiveness and Its Influence on Mass Incarceration in the United States. *American Journal of Political Science* 58, 4: 857-872.

Thursday: Dagan, David, and Steven M. Teles. 2015. The Social Construction of Policy Feedback: Incarceration, Conservatism, and Ideological Change. *Studies in American Political Development* 29 (October): 127-153.

**Week 11.** Nov 1, 3 Race and Punitiveness (Tuesday); Rehab in Prison Doesn't Work, Oops (Thursday)

Tuesday: Peffley, Mark, and Jon Hurwitz. 2007. Persuasion and Resistance: Race and the Death Penalty in America. *American Journal of Political Science* 51, 4: 996-1012.

Hetey, Rebecca C., and Jennifer L. Eberhardt. 2014. Racial Disparities in Incarceration Increase Acceptance of Punitive Policies. *Psychological Science* 25, 10 (October): 1949-54.

Thursday: Martinson, Robert. 1974. What Works? Questions and Answers about Prison Reform. *The Public Interest* 35: 22-54.

Minors, Robert. 1979. New Findings, New Views: A Note of Caution Regarding Sentencing Reform. *Hofstra Law Review* 7, 2: 243-58.

**Part Three: Miscellaneous Examples of Framing Effects**

**Week 12.** Nov 8, 10 "Fetal Alcohol Syndrome" (Tuesday) and Prohibition (Thursday)

Tuesday: Armstrong, Elizabeth M. 1998. Diagnosing Moral Disorder: The Discovery and Evolution of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. *Social Science and Medicine* 47, 12: 2025-2042.

Jones, Kenneth L., David W. Smith, Christy N. Ulleland, and Ann Pytkowicz Streissguth. 1973. Pattern of Malformation in Offspring of Chronic Alcoholic Mothers. *The Lancet* 1, 7815 (9 June): 1267-71.

Thursday: Schrad, Mark Lawrence. 2007. Constitutional Blemishes: American Alcohol Prohibition and Repeal as Policy Punctuation. *Policy Studies Journal* 35, 3: 437-463.

**Week 13.** Nov 15, 17, Affirmative Action, Taxes

Tuesday: Hirschman, Daniel, Ellen Berrey, and Fiona Rose-Greenland. 2016. Dequantifying Diversity: Affirmative Action and Admissions at the University of Michigan. *Theory and Society* 45: 265-301.

Thursday: Scheve, Kenneth, and David Stasavage. 2012. Democracy, War, and Wealth: Lessons from Two Centuries of Inheritance Taxation. *American Political Science Review* 106, 1 (February): 81-102.

**\*\*\* Full outline of your paper due November 17. The more you have, the more I can give feedback on. At a minimum, theory, lit review, beginnings of your data, good bibliography. Complete drafts are certainly welcome. Double-spaced.\*\*\***

**Week 14.** Nov 22, Framing the poor: a UNC senior thesis, revised

Tuesday: Rose, Max, and Frank R. Baumgartner. 2013. Framing the Poor: Media Coverage and US Poverty Policy, 1960–2008. *Policy Studies Journal*, 41, 1: 22–53.

**No class on Thursday Nov 24, Happy Thanksgiving**

**Week 15.** Nov 29, Dec 1, Review, presentations, your own research

Tuesday: no readings, class presentations

Thursday: no readings, class presentations

**Week 16.** Dec 6, last day of class

Tuesday: Review and summary

**\*\*\* Term papers due in class Dec 6.\*\*\***

**\*\*\*Final Exam: Thursday 15 December 2016, 4-6pm, in the regular classroom \*\*\***