# POLI 421
# Framing Public Policies
## M, W 2:30–3:45 pm, Phillips 228
## Spring 2019

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Office hours: M, W 4-5pm, T 2:30-3:30 pm and by appointment

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 applications of these theories in the realm of public policy. We'll look at some things with which you may be familiar: race, criminal justice, capital punishment. But we'll also look at some frames that have not (yet?) caught on: Should there be legal protections for ugly people? Should we ban male circumcision (since babies can't give informed consent)? Should we ban fully autonomous robots in war zones? Should we give advantage to healthy people? These are frames that have not caught on. But then again, gay marriage didn't catch on until it caught on.

Since framing is politics and politics is about framing, we will be discussing the political and public policy debates occurring during the semester. I will encourage this, but in an atmosphere where we follow some rules: First, we are not collectively in favor or against any particular frame or argument. Here, we want to know what works and why. Second, we will seek to "pull back" from the headlines to understand what is going on, why, and whether it might be effective. So, we'll put the Science into Political Science. But we'll stay interested in politics.

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.

Throughout the semester, I will help you design a research project where you trace the framing of a public policy over time or analyze the framing efforts of a given side in a policy debate. 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 either c) track using media or government sources how often the different frames associated with the issue have been mentioned over time, or d) trace how actors on the different sides promote their preferred arguments, and their success in doing so. Option d) might be good for studying very current controversies, such as the campus controversy about the eventual placement of the Confederate memorial. Option c) is good for studying things that have been with us for a long time, such as support for harsh v. rehabilitative criminal justice policies.

Depending on your approach, you might use 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 UNC library, the Policy Agendas Project (https://www.comparativeagendas.net/) which traces government attention, Google N-Gram, which allows you to search google's book collection for any two-word phrase (see https://books.google.com/ngrams), or other sources. Or, you may look at public documents from policy actors from their web sites, public statements, and so on.

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, or whether you can retrieve relevant documents from public sources in order to get the raw materials for your study. You'll need to get started early, and you may need to change your topic if you can't measure the frames accurately or find enough documents to study. 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 are welcome to work on your own or in a group. If you work in a group, you should coordinate your work so that each member of the group is clearly responsible for a particular task. For example, if you are interested in how pro-immigration advocates frame their arguments, and another student is interested in how anti-immigration advocates do the same, you could combine your efforts to do a joint paper. I encourage you to think about this, as you will all learn

more by doing coordinated work. But you will each be responsible for your own part of the project, and I will grade you separately.

You have four times in the semester to turn in or present something about your project. First is telling me about your topic; second is a draft of the first sections; third is a more complete draft; fourth is an oral presentation to the class. I will review and comment on your progress based on these draft assignments. Your final paper should then incorporate any feedback. 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 10 pages, plus a bibliography, with 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:
- How do policy actors manipulate emotions such as anger, fear, or identity-group membership? Pick a debate and show how this is done.
- The concept of the juvenile "super-predator": how that rose and fell, and the consequences.
- The movement to very tough drug laws, and the consequences of that.
- The last-minute deal in December 2018 to enact criminal justice reforms.
- Media racialization of crime.
- "Criminal aliens" and hostile frames associated with immigration.
- Dreamers and positive frames associated with immigration.
- Confederate monuments, how they are construed, and how this had changed over time.
- Gay marriage and how that happened.
- Gun control and the likelihood that the Parkland students and others will change this debate.
- Safety in schools: Guns, "resource officers", and other approaches.
- "Stand your ground" laws, "good guy with a gun" frames, and other pro-gun frames.
- Any other issue that interests or motivates you, including issues that have not yet caught on.
- Note you can study things in American politics, international relations, or in other counties. Framing is everywhere.

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:

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|---|---|
| Participation in class discussion, including attendance | 10% |
| Two intermediate term paper progress reports / drafts (2 x 10%) | 20 |
| Visiting me in office hours as neededto develop a feasible research project | 15 |

| Presentation in class | 20 |
|---|---|
| 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 (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 off your phones, for sure. Computers are ok if used for note-taking and referring to the articles. I strongly prefer that you bring actual old-fashioned paper copies of the readings and take notes with pen and paper, so that your attention is directed only at the course material, not your social media. If I see anyone on an irrelevant web site, I'll mark you down a full letter grade in the class, so please do not do that.

## 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. Jan 7** Introductions and overview of the course
      <u>Wednesday</u>: First day of class, Jan 9

**Week 2. Jan 14. Two Theories: Causal Stories, and Target Populations**
      <u>Monday</u>: Stone, Deborah A. 1989. Causal Stories and the Formation of Policy Agendas. *Political Science Quarterly* 104, 2: 281–300.
      <u>Wednesday</u>: 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. Jan 21. Gaining v. Losing, Misunderstanding Risk**
      <u>Monday</u>: Happy MLK, Jr. Day, no class
      <u>Wednesday</u>: 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.

**Week 4. Jan 28. Good News, Bad News, Fear, and Anger**
      <u>Monday</u>: Baumeister, Roy F., Ellen Bratslavsky, Catrin Finkenauer, and Kathleen D. Vohs. 2001. Bad Is Stronger Than Good. *Review of General Psychology* 5: 323-370.
      <u>Wednesday</u>: Huntsinger, Jeffrey R. 2013. Anger Enhances Correspondence Between Implicit and Explicit Attitudes. *Emotion* 13, 2: 350–7.
      Lerner, J.S., and D. Keltner. 2001. Fear, anger, and risk. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 81, 1: 146–49.

**Week 5. Feb 4. Believing What We Want: Motivated Reasoning**
      <u>Monday:</u> 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.
      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.
      <u>Wednesday</u>: 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.

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

**Note: Your term paper project is due today: One page explaining your topic and approach, due in class on Wed Feb 6. (Not graded)**

**Week 6. Feb 11. Episodes v. Themes**
<u>Monday</u>: Aaroe, Lene. 2011. Investigating Frame Strength: The Case of Episodic and Thematic Frames. *Political Communication* 28: 207–26.
<u>Wednesday</u>: Iyengar, Shanto. 1990. Framing Responsibility for Political Issues: The Case of Poverty. *Political Behavior* 12, 1: 19–40.

**Part Two: Applications to Politics and Public  Policy**

**Week 7. Feb 18. Target Populations Really Matter: Criminal Justice Applications**
<u>Monday</u>: Kreitzer, Rebecca and Candis Watts Smith. 2018. Reproducible and Replicable: An Empirical Assessment of the Social Construction of Politically Relevant Target Groups. *PS: Political Science and Politics* 51, 4: 768–774.
<u>Wednesday</u>: 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.

**Week 8. Feb 25. Causal Stories about Race and Disadvantage**
<u>Monday</u>: 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.
<u>Wednesday</u>: 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.

**Note: Your first draft is due today: Five pages (double-spaced) explaining your theory, literature, and case. The more you give about the research the better, but I don't expect much yet. This should focus on background about the case.**

**Week 9. Mar 4. Empathy, Hostility, and Capital Punishment**
<u>Monday</u>: Johnson, Sheri Lynn, Amelia Courtney Hritz, Caisa Elizabeth Royer, and John H. Blume. 2016. When Empathy Bites Back: Cautionary Tales from Neuroscience for Capital Sentencing. *Fordham Law Review* 85: 573–598.
<u>Wednesday</u>: 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.

**Spring Break, March 9-17**

**Week 10. Mar 18. "Lookism": Should we have legal protection for ugly people? Is it Fair to Favor Attractive People?**
> Monday: Warhurst, Chris, Diane van den Broek, Richard Hall, and Dennis Nickson. 2012. Great Expectations: Gender, Looks and Lookism at Work. *International Journal of Work Organisation and Emotion* 5, 1:72–90.
> Warhurst, Chris, Diane van den Broek, Richard Hall, and Dennis Nickson. 2009. Lookism: The New Frontier of Employment Discrimination? *Journal of Industrial Relations* 51, 1: 131–136.
> Wednesday: DeCastro-Ambrosetti, Debra, and Grace Cho. 2011. A Look at "Lookism": A Critical Analysis OF Teachers' Expectations Based on Students Appearance. *Mulitcultural Education* (winter): 51–54.

**Week 11. Mar 25. Healthism: Should We Discriminate in Favor of the Healthy? Do we?**
> Monday: Roberts, Jessica L., and Elizabeth Weeks. 2018. *Healthism: Health-Status Discrimination and the Law*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Ch. 1-2, pp. 1-53.
> Wednesday: **Should Freedom from Circumcision Be a Fundamental Human Right?** Carpenter, Charli. 2014. *"Lost" Causes: Agenda Vetting in Global Issue Networks and the Shaping of Human Security*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, Ch. 6, "His Body, His Choice", pp. 122–147.

**Note: Your second draft is due today: It should include improvements to the part I reviewed already, based on my feedback, and also a draft of your data / analysis section. It might have some missing elements, but the structure should be complete. It should be about 10 pages or so.**

**Week 12. Apr 1. We Hate Land Mines, Why Not War Robots? Civilian Deaths of Women, but not Boys. What the Heck?**
> Monday: Carpenter, R. Charli. 2011. Vetting the Advocacy Agenda: Networks, Centrality and the Paradox of Weapons Norms. *International Organization* 65, 1: 69–102.
> Wednesday: Carpenter, R. Charli. 2005. "Women, Children and Other Vulnerable Groups": Gender, Strategic Frames and the Protection of Civilians as a Transnational Issue. *International Studies Quarterly* 49, 2: 295–334.

**Week 13. Apr 8. Presentations**
> Monday: Group A.
>
> Wednesday: Group B.

**Week 14. Apr 15. Presentations**
> Monday: Group C.
>
> Wednesday: Group D.

**Week 15. Apr 22. Review and Summary**

      <u>Monday</u>: Q&A about the course, summary of what we have learned.

      <u>Wednesday</u>: Review for exam.
      **Term papers due in class, Wed April 24.**


**Final Exam: Tuesday May 7, 8:00am**