The Policymaking Process



Course Information
PSCI 4370
The Policymaking Process

Fall 2026

Faculty Contact Information

Lecturer	**Professor Virginia Huth, MPP**
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Office hours:	By appointment
Lecturer	**Professor John Piazza, JD**
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Lecturer	**Professor William Shute, JD**
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Instructor of record:	**Derek O'Leary, Ph.D.**
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Office hours:	Before class and by appointment

We enthusiastically encourage you to meet with the faculty in office hours throughout the semester. Every instructor is available to meet by appointment, either individually or with a group of students, to discuss the course as well as your academic and career development. Please reach out to faculty by email to schedule a time to meet virtually or in-person.

Note: Please use only your University of Texas at Dallas account to email Archer Center faculty.

Course Description

Course overview: This course introduces you to the federal policymaking process. Over the span of the semester, you and your policy group will work closely with each of the three instructors to examine how policy is influenced, debated, formulated, and implemented. Through a series of modules focused on advocacy, Congress, and the executive branch, you will expand your knowledge of the federal policymaking process and policy career pathways while developing a range of skills through practical simulations.

Course format: Throughout the semester, you will be in a policy group that focuses on one policy area: Healthcare and Public Health, Justice System, or Science and Technology. Your policy group will proceed through a series of three modules, each focused on a different component of the policymaking process: advocacy, Congress, and executive rulemaking. During each of these four-week modules, you policy group will work directly with the instructor who oversees that module.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the semester, you will be able to:

- Explain the structure and dynamics of the federal policymaking process
- Demonstrate in-depth knowledge and articulate nuanced analysis of topics within a significant policy area
- Apply critical thinking and analytical skills to crafting effective written and verbal communication about federal policy
- Understand how to pursue career pathways in federal policymaking

Policy Groups:

Group	Policy Area	Topics by Module	
1	Science and Technology	*Advocacy*	Federal data center policy
		Congress	PL 117-167, Combating Sexual Harassment in Science Act (included within the CHIPS and Science Act)
		Executive	FAA proposed rule, "Remote Identification of Unmanned Aircraft Systems"
2	Healthcare and Public Health	*Advocacy*	Health inequity
		Congress	PL 117-105, Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act
		Executive	Proposed rulemaking on "Minimum Care Standards at Long Term Care Facilities"
3	Justice System	*Advocacy*	Non-consensual intimate imagery
		Congress	Title X of the Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization Act of 2022, Improving Conditions for Women in Federal Custody, PL 117-103
		Executive	2013 Housing rule on

			“Disparate Impact Standards”

Calendar of Classes and Assignments

The readings and other materials for each session are posted to the class eLearning site.

SESSION	DATE	READING	ASSIGNMENT
Introductory session		None	None

Advocacy
Professor Shute

SESSION	JUSTICE	HEALTH	TECH	READING	ASSIGNMENT
Session 1: The Concept of Advocacy				John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, Chapter 4 excerpt (2003).	Complete reading before class.
Session 2				Justice: Jasmine Mithani, *The Take It Down Act is in full effect. What is it and how do you use it?* The 19thNews, May 19, 2025. Jasmine Mithani, *Senate moves to let victims of sexually explicit deepfakes sue for*	Complete reading before class.

				damages, The 19thNews, January 13, 2026. Health: *The Root Causes of Health Inequity* Communities in Action: Pathways to Health Equity, the National Library of Medicine. Baciu A, Negussie Y, Geller A, et al., editors. Jan 11, 2017. Tech: Bridges, Lauren E., *The State of Data Center Policy in the United* States, Tech Policy, June 2, 2026.	
Session : Evaluating the Efficacy of Advocacy				"Using the Composite Logic Model To Articulate an Advocacy Strategy or Theory of Change"	Complete reading before class.
Session : Developing an Advocacy Strategy				Thomas F. Sheridan, *Helping the Good Do Better: How a White Hat Lobbyist*	Complete reading before class. Prepare for oral presentation of

				Advocates for Social Change (2019). Justice: Chapter 4 Health: Chapter 1 Tech: Chapter 1	draft advocacy strategy **Simulation:** Deliver oral presentation of Advocacy Strategy Plan, including identification of potential obstacles and other considerations, and craft advocacy strategy memo**.** **Due Sunday after final class**: Written advocacy strategy memo

Congress
Professor Piazza

SESSION	TECH	JUSTICE	HEALTH	READING	ASSIGNMENT
Session 1: The Legislative Process				The Legislative Process (Congress.gov). ~ 30 minutes. "Introduction to the Legislative Process in the U.S. Congress" (CRS, 2025). ~45 minutes.	Complete reading before class.
Session 2: Committees and Members of Congress				Read: "Committee Types and Roles" (CRS,	Complete reading before class, learn about your member persona,

				2025). ~15 minutes. Review "Federal Legislative History: A Research Guide for Congressional Staff" (CRS). ~ 30 minutes. Read your policy group's assigned legislation.	and examine the legislation. **Due Sunday before class:** Submit Member background research on Canvas.
Session 3: Committee Process				"The Committee Markup Process in the House of Representatives" (CRS). ~60 minutes.	
Session 4: Markup					**Due Friday before final class**: Submit mark-up hearing memo and prepare for simulation. **Simulation:** As your member persona on a congressional committee, you will write a markup memo and participate with your caucus in the markup of a piece of legislation.

Executive
Professor Huth

SESSION	HEALTH	TECH	JUSTICE	READING	ASSIGNMENT
Session 1: Introduction to Federal Rulemaking				Selections from "The Federal Rulemaking Process: An Overview" (CRS, 2013). ~60 minutes. "Regulation: A Primer," The Mercatus Center (2012), pgs. 1-9. ~15 minutes. Prof. Huth's Glossary of Key Federal Rulemaking Terms. *Optional resources:* "An Overview of Federal Regulations and the Rulemaking Process" (CRS, 2021). ~10 minutes.	Complete reading before class.
Session 2: Notice and Comment				"The End of Chevron Deference," American Bar Association,	Complete reading before class. Justice policy group:

				(August 2024). ~10 minutes. Rulemaking case brief for your policy group. <u>HEALTH READINGS:</u> RN_LPN Staffing Studies Brief Nursing Home Ownership Brief Nursing Workforce Shortage Brief <u>HEALTH References:</u> Federal Register notice for September 6, 2023, NPRM for *Minimum Staffing Standards for Long Term Care Facilities* https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/09/06/2023-18781/medicare-and-medicaid-programs-minimum-staffing-standards-for-long-term-care-facilities-and-medicaid Posting of September 6, 2023, NPRM for *Minimum Staffing Standards for Long Term Care Facilities* for public comment at regulations.gov. https://www.regulations.gov/document/CMS-2023-0144-0001 *Nursing Home Reform Act*, enacted as part of the *Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1987* (OBRA '87), Pub. L. No. 100-203	**Public Comment assignment due** Sunday before session 2.

				It amended the Social Security Act §1919 and codified at **42 U.S.C. §1396r** https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/42/1396r	
Session 3: Policy analysis				Health Policy group: Brief: How Other Countries Care for Their Elderly: A Comparative Analysis of LTC Facilities Fortune Magazine article on nursing home ownership (~10 minutes) AV Brief: Reduce the State Directed Medicaid Payment Threshold (~10 minutes) Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health public comment guidance Wisconsin Farmer's Union public comment guidance SAMPLE COMMENT: AARP comment on Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (2025). ~15 minutes	Health and Tech policy groups: **Public Comment assignment due** Sunday before session 3. Justice: **Submit policy analysis memorandum** Sunday before session 3.
Session 4: Rulemaking				*Reference*: Policy Memorandum on Higher Education	Health and Tech policy groups: **Submit policy analysis**

					memorandum by Sunday before session 4.

Assignments

For each module, you will receive a grade out of 30 points. This is based on 1) your preparation and engagement in those sessions and 2) completion of the simulation and deliverable for that module. Please consult the detailed rubric for each module in Canvas. Based on your policy group, the due dates for each module will vary.

For each assignment, your instructor will communicate with you about effective and permissible uses (if any) of AI tools. Any other use of AI tools to complete any aspect of your assignments is not permitted.

In addition, you will receive 5 points for the completion of your start-of-semester self-assessment and 5 points for your end-of-semester self-assessment. You must complete these on time to receive credit.

Attendance policy:

We expect you to arrive on time and ready to participate fully in class. Excused absences are limited generally to personal illness, an emergency related to an immediate family member, or a religious holiday. If you are unable to attend class or may be delayed due to circumstances beyond your control, please inform Dr. O'Leary and your instructor for that session as soon as possible prior to class. If you miss class for an excused absence, it is your responsibility to promptly contact your instructor for that module and ask how you can catch up.

Your internship or other extracurricular events (such as travel and family visits) are not considered excuses to miss class. You will not be allowed to make up unexcused absences. Each unexcused absence will reduce your final course grade by 5 points (e.g. if you earn a 94 but have one unexcused absence, you will receive an 89; if you have two unexcused absences, an 84; and so on).

Grading Policy

Total points	Requirement
5 points	Start-of-semester self-assessment due Sunday, September 6
30 points	Advocacy organization simulation (20) and weekly engagement (10)

30 points	Congressional committee simulation (20) and weekly engagement (10)
30 points	Executive rulemaking simulation (20) and weekly engagement (10)
5 points	End-of-semester self-assessment due Sunday, November 29
100 points	