COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Policy connects diverse parties—many of which never interact personally or directly—and which are dispersed among multiple arenas of interaction, triggered or touched by policy processes across place and time. How do we study policy when many parties (players and social networks, government agencies, corporations, think tanks, grassroots organizations, and other NGOs) are involved in designing and implementing policy and when an equally wide array of actors respond to and are affected by it?

This course introduces an innovative approach to that question—one that has become especially urgent in today’s rapidly changing environment. Grounded in social anthropology, this approach departs conceptually and methodologically from prevailing approaches to public policy. The course trains students to analyze “wicked” problems—that is, most complex collective issues and processes of policy and governance—through “mapping.” These problems and processes cannot be fully understood through the cost-benefit analysis, survey research, quantitative methods, and modelling that dominate policy schools: Abstract models with variables whose values and interactions are pre-specified are ill-equipped to capture them; unforeseen variables combine in unforeseen ways, often creating unforeseen consequences.

“Mapping” provides an antidote. It is a real-world approach that begins by identifying the parties (players, networks, organizations) to a policy problem or process. It then examines such factors as the parties’ assumptions and agendas, their interactions, the larger circumstances of power and resources in which they operate, the dynamics of power and influence, and how all these factors interact to shape outcomes. It involves such methods as interviewing; ethnography; examination of relevant sources, documents, and records; and analysis of big data.

Versions of this course have been taught, and work equally well, in diverse environments—be they “stable” Western democracies or rapidly changing or post-conflict settings where authority is contested. The course germinated first as a series of workshops with scholar-practitioners from and in post-war Yugoslavia—in which we charted processes of policy and governance in new, fledgling states and “ungoverned spaces.” Its underlying theory and method have been further honed through years of teaching and research in the United States, where many government functions are outsourced to private actors and governance can be dispersed. Whether we are talking about policy and governance pertaining to finance, defense, energy, or health care in the United States, or about how refugees are managed today in the United States, European countries, or elsewhere, myriad parties may be involved—from state entities, corporations, and international agencies to consulting firms, NGOs, and think tanks to individual players and networks. All of these problems and processes lend themselves to analysis through mapping.
OBJECTIVES: The Objectives of the course include learning to

- Map governance and policy processes
- Unpack the framing of policy questions and debates
- Observe and analyze social structure, organization, “culture,” social networks, and informal practices
- Conduct semi-structured and open-ended interviewing
- Carry out basic participant-observation
- Anticipate unintended consequences of policies and amend policy design and implementation to avoid them

REQUIREMENTS:

Thinking Points (20%): Three written thinking points (two single-spaced pages each, with paragraph breaks) are expected of each student for Topic 1 and two other topics of your choice for which readings have been assigned. All readings are available on Blackboard or hard-copy reserve in the Arlington library. Thinking points should address the question or questions specified in the syllabus, and in the process, critically review the readings. If possible, a hard copy of your assignment should be put under my office door by 6:00 pm on the day before they are due or emailed to me. Please include the following information on the top of each assignment: (1) your full name; (2) course number; (3) phone number and e-mail address; and (4) readings covered in your essay.

Mapping Assignment (30%): Written assignment should be about 10 single-spaced pages (with paragraph breaks), not including notes and appendices. It is due on the final session. Please include the following information on the top of the assignment: (1) your full name; (2) course number; and (3) phone number and e-mail address.

Please note: Your Mapping Assignment idea is due the second week of class. Please provide two to four sentences about what you might do. This assignment is not graded; it is for your feedback only.

Effort and Approach (20%): As you cannot participate without being present, class attendance is paramount. As the professor, I will complete this part of the evaluation after the final class, based on my observations and our interactions over the semester. With regard to your participation in class, the amount of speaking time should be balanced with the need for others to have it, the quality of listening, efforts to build on the contributions of others, asking questions of each other and of me, thoughtfulness of comments, and other contributions made to the creation of a mutual learning space. I keep weekly notes on students’ participation for grading at the end of the semester.

Late submission of assignments:
For each week an assignment is turned in late, the grade will be reduced by a half-letter grade, such as from an A to an A-.
REQUIREMENTS - Continued:

Exam (20%): A short, in-class exam will be given to test knowledge of the readings.

Composition of Final Grade:

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READINGS:

Unless otherwise noted in the syllabus, all articles, essays, and portions of books are available on Blackboard (E-Reserves) under “course content.” Books are available on hard-copy reserve in the Arlington library.

To access, log into your Blackboard account and go to the “course content” page. Further details regarding reserves are located here: http://library.gmu.edu/reserves. Should the Blackboard technology fail, please contact Course Support: http://coursessupport.gmu.edu/Students/. If Blackboard is working and you are not seeing a reserve item that should be there, please contact ereserve@gmu.edu.

If you encounter further problems, please contact the Arlington Campus library. Megan McDonnell is the Access Services Supervisor (kmcdonn1@gmu.edu).
**Schar School Policy on Plagiarism:**

Faculty in the Schar School have no tolerance for academic dishonesty and will strictly enforce Mason’s honor code.

The profession of scholarship and the intellectual life of a university as well as the field of public policy inquiry depend fundamentally on a foundation of trust. Thus any act of plagiarism strikes at the heart of the meaning of the university and the purpose of the Schar School of Policy and Government. It constitutes a serious breach of professional ethics and it is unacceptable.

Plagiarism is the use of another’s words or ideas presented as one’s own. It includes, among other things, the use of specific words, ideas, or frameworks that are the product of another’s work. Honesty and thoroughness in citing sources is essential to professional accountability and personal responsibility. Appropriate citation is necessary so that arguments, evidence, and claims can be critically examined.

Plagiarism is wrong because of the injustice it does to the person whose ideas are stolen. But it is also wrong because it constitutes lying to one’s professional colleagues. From a prudential perspective, it is shortsighted and self-defeating, and it can ruin a professional career.

The faculty of the Schar School takes plagiarism seriously and has adopted a zero tolerance policy. Any plagiarized assignment will receive an automatic grade of “F.” This may lead to failure for the course, resulting in dismissal from the University. This dismissal will be noted on the student’s transcript. For foreign students who are on a university-sponsored visa (e.g., F-1, J-1 or J-2), dismissal also results in the revocation of their visa.

To help enforce the Schar School policy on plagiarism, all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit student’s work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. The Schar School policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace it or substitute for it. ([http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/handbook/aD.html](http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/handbook/aD.html))

**Statement on Special Needs of Students:**

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the DRC.

**New Voices in Public Policy:**

I will consider nominating the very best papers in this course for publication in *New Voices in Public Policy*. New Voices is a student-and faculty-reviewed journal that shares SPGIA’s finest student work with the rest of the world.

**Style Manual:** Please use the most recent version of the *Chicago Manual of Style, Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, or some similar widely accepted standard.
TOPICS AND READINGS:

August 27 Introduction to the Subject and Overview of Course

September 3: Topic 1 Conceptualizing Policy; Refining Concepts to Address “Wicked” Policy and Governance Questions; Student Workshop

Required Readings:

Further Resources:

Thinking points:
- What are the characteristics of “wicked problems”?
- According to Sartori, why is it important to reflect on the concepts and methods employed in research?
- How does the approach outlined by Shore contribute to the understanding of public policy processes? How does it differ from other approaches to policy analysis with which you are familiar?

Assignment due: Thinking Points for Topic 1

Assignment due: Mapping idea assignment (see below)
Mapping Policy and Governance Processes: Guiding Questions

1. Who are the parties (players, social networks, and organizations) involved in an issue, problem, or conflict? (While it is useful to distinguish those players who have formal, stated power from those who wield informal power or influence, both are critical to identify and chart.) Who are the sponsors? Who has the power or influence to be a player in shaping outcomes and on what does that depend (for instance, being part of a certain network, access to particular resources, informal or moral authority, formal position, professional or reputational standing)?

2. What are these parties’ respective interests, agendas, incentives, goals, motivations, operating assumptions, and expectations with regard to the issue, problem, or conflict? (Clue: how do the players define what is going on or frame what they want?)

3. What are the larger context/circumstances of power and resources in which the parties are embedded? How do features of the larger context/circumstances constrain, enable, or otherwise affect the parties involved in the issue, problem, or conflict?

4. What is the organizational ecosystem in which the players operate? What government or corporate organizations are the players connected to, and how do they use them as vehicles of influence? What entities do they set up or empower and employ as vehicles of influence?

5. What are the “culture(s)” and mindsets of the professional or social milieus, organization(s), or venues in which the parties are operating? (Clue: how do people frame what they want or define what is going on?) How do these “culture(s)” and mindsets influence the parties’ actions?

6. Do the formal and informal players assume the same roles in one issue that they might have taken on in a previous issue, problem, or conflict, or have they “flexed” into a new role, with a new set of motivations that could influence outcomes?

7. How do the parties use media and simulacra to enhance their power and message?

8. How do all of these factors interact to shape outcomes?

9. Is the structure becoming institutionalized even if it remains informal (unincorporated) and the players change over time?

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September 10: Topic 2 Discussion of Method and Introduction to Mapping

Required Viewing and Reading:
- Film: Kitchen Stories – to be watched in class

Further Resources:
- Moses, Jonathan W. and Torbjorn L. Knutsen, Ways of Knowing: Competing Methodologies in Social and Political Research, Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, Chapters 1, 2, 7, 8. Book is available on reserve in the Arlington library; selected chapters are on Blackboard.

Thinking points: Which social science methods most lend themselves to mapping? Which approaches and methods does Burawoy critique, and what middle ground does he establish?

September 17: Topic 2 – Continued Fieldwork; Discussion of Fieldwork and Mapping; Student Workshop
September 24: Topic 3  Perspectives on Governance and Policy in Practice; Student Workshop

Required Readings:

Further Resources:

Thinking points:
Focusing on policy provides a window into the emergence over the past several decades of new forms of governance and ways of brokering power and influence.
- What perspectives on governance and policy are presented in the readings?
- What concepts are helpful?
- How can we best examine the interactions between public policy and private interests and relationships among state, corporate, and nongovernmental players and entities that help shape policy?

October 1: Topic 4 Examining Governance and Policy in Practice; Student Workshop

Required Readings:

Further Resources:

Thinking points:
- What are “informal practices,” and what are examples of such practices?
- In what ways are state and private actors and interests sometimes intertwined?
October 8: Topic 5  Policy from Below and Responses to Policy; Student Workshop

Required Readings:

**Thinking points:** What do you regard as policy from below? How would you define it? What is its significance? How does this perspective differ from others you encounter in public policy?

October 15  NO Class

October 22: Topic 6  Policy Travel; Policy Translation and Assemblages; Cases from Policies Involving Social Programs, Foreign Aid, and Anti-Corruption

Required Reading:
- Jamie Peck, Nikolas Theodore, Fast Policy: *Experimental Statecraft at the Thresholds of Neoliberalism*, University of Minnesota Press, 2015, Book is available on reserve in the Arlington library; selected chapters are on Blackboard.

Further Resources:

**Thinking points:** Discuss how policies travel. Who are the potential actors involved? What are the ways and means through which policy is often transformed as it is introduced into and implemented into a new context?
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30 (Please note: This week class meets on WEDNESDAY, Room TBA.)

Topic 7 Mapping: Social Network Analysis and Net-Map; Student Workshop
Guest Speaker: Dr. Amitaksha Nag

Required Reading:
- History and basic tools of social network analysis; networks within and across organizations, communities, groups, and nations
- Uses of social network analysis: charting relationships of influence, corruption, business-government, global governance, corporate governance, terrorism, sexually transmitted disease

Further Resources:

Thinking points: What are the basic tools of social network analysis? Is network analysis a theory or a method? What kinds of problems is it suited to address? How can studying social networks help us understand the workings of terrorism or organized crime and their potential links to the state? How can social network analysis shed light on governance in “ungoverned,” as well as “governed” spaces?
November 5: Topic 8 Reading “Performance” for Consumption by Media, Auditors, and Policymakers

Required Readings:
• “Performance”:
• Media:
• Metrics and Audit Culture:

Further Resources:
• McIntyre, Michael E. “Audit, Education, and Goodhart’s Law Or, Taking Rigidity Seriously.”

Thinking points: Discuss the role of “performance” in policy today.

November 12: Topic 9 Fieldwork Meets Data Analytics; Student Workshop

This session concentrates on integrating up-close investigation (ethnography, open-ended interviewing, document analysis, narrative analysis) with big data mining, analysis of datasets, and digital methods.

Required Readings: TBA
November 19: Topic 10  Mapping: Studying Across Levels and Processes; Studying Through; Student Workshop

Required Readings:

Thinking points: Policy connects diverse actors—many of which never interact personally or directly—and which are dispersed among multiple arenas of interaction that are triggered or touched by policy processes across place and time. How do we study a policy issue when many players, communities, and entities (governmental and nongovernmental) are involved in designing and implementing policy and when an equally wide array of actors respond to or are affected by it?

November 26  EXAM; Student Workshop

December 3  Final Session Wrap Up: What Have We Learned and How Will We Use It?

Assignment due: Mapping Assignment