This course is designed to provide an understanding of the public policy process, with particular attention to agenda setting and policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. While considering a wide variety of policy issues, the course will engage a comparative perspective to examine policy environments and the dynamics and interactions among major governmental and non-governmental actors and institutions involved in the policy making process. Emphasis will be placed on critical thinking and analysis to develop an understanding of the public policy process in relation to different ideas, interests, and contexts, and in practical application.

The objectives of the course include enabling student to

- gain an understanding of the principal actors, institutions, and procedures involved in making public policy.
- develop an in-depth understanding of how systems of government and governance shape policy making and implementation.
- acquire knowledge of the public policy process across a range of policy issues.
- understand policy justifications for government intervention in particular areas.
- improve the ability to analyze public policy proposals and make inferences about potential for effective implementation.
- understand differences in the socio-political dynamics among different types of public policy issues and the opportunities and challenges presented at different stages of the policy process.
- understand challenges and opportunities for effective policy making in periods of crisis and shifts in public opinion.

Course Structure
The course follows a seminar format and, as such, the quality of class discussions is critical to its success. Accordingly, active and informed participation is expected of everyone in the class. All students are expected to have read and thoughtfully considered each week's assigned readings and to come to class prepared to discuss them in depth. Student presentations also are required for the class. In addition, students must attend a mandatory extra-class “Capitol Hill Day” session.

Course Requirements
All students are expected to come to class prepared, having completed the required readings for each week, and to participate in class discussions. In addition, students are each required to make one class presentation and to prepare two brief essays: one analytical essay based on a specified policy issue and a reflective essay on Capitol Hill Day. Also, students are required to write a policy brief on a selected topic. Grades are determined by class participation (20%), the presentation (25%), the essays (15% each, 30% total), and the policy brief (25%).
Required Books

Schar School Policy on Plagiarism
The professional scholarship and 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. 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 Schar School faculty 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]

Disabled Student Accommodation: If you are a student with a disability for which you need academic accommodation, please inform the professor and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be recognized and arranged through the DRC.