COMM330: Argumentation & Public Policy
Section WB11 | Winter 2015 | Online
Instructor: Jade Olson

Office Hours: By appointment – email me to schedule a meeting via Skype, FaceTime, phone, etc.
Email: jolson3@umd.edu

Required Materials
- Course readings are provided in PDF format through ELMS. There are no required textbooks.
- There are a few required documentary viewings. All are available on Netflix; you may also be able to view them online and/or through a different streaming service.

Learning Outcomes
- Discuss the roles of ambiguity and rhetorical interaction as inevitable components of the policymaking process.
- Understand challenges and opportunities faced by stakeholders in the process of policy formation.
- Situate the policymaking process in the context of broader conversations about public deliberation.
- Develop and present nuanced, reasoned policy arguments grounded in research.
- Analyze specific public policy debates from a deliberative perspective, assessing the argumentative choices of various interlocutors and evaluating the health of their democratic practice.

About the Course
Public policy forms the institutional and legal framework in which we live our lives. It ranges from immigration to health care, gun control, environmental protection, criminal justice, budgeting, drug regulation, workplace equity, homeland security, and domestic privacy—just to name a few topics that fall under this broad umbrella.

We will study both the deliberative process of policymaking and the rhetorical process of public policy maintenance. A policy is an enactment of values that responds to a particular societal problem and marshals financial and human resources as a solution. The public refers to those whom policies implicate, both directly and indirectly—as well as those constituencies that play a part in a policy’s development and reception. Since at least Aristotle, the study of rhetorical argument has focused on how political actors manipulate ambiguity to foster agreements, negotiate differences, and act politically in behalf of—or against—the public’s interest and judgment.

Classroom Policies

Our Online Course Space
- Respect and civility are the ground rules of our course environment. In online spaces, it can sometimes be challenging to remember that you are engaging with actual people. Listening, keeping an open mind, and treating all students and the instructor with respect are critical for discussing controversial and sometimes challenging topics in a productive and educational manner. If a student acts disrespectfully toward another student, I will intervene. If a student engages in repeated disrespectful behavior, they may be asked to withdraw from the class.
- This course is delivered asynchronously, meaning that we will not hold class sessions when everyone has to be online at the same time. Rather, each student is responsible for logging on frequently (at least every other day) to participate in discussions, read/view assigned materials, and submit assignments.
- Given the course’s online environment, staying in touch with other students and the instructor is a critical practice. All course communication will occur via ELMS. Be sure that you receive ELMS
notifications and messages as soon as they are sent, and that you check your ELMS-associated email address daily.

- If you cannot participate in a discussion or submit other required work due to an excused absence (university-approved travel, a holiday in your faith tradition, a medically documented illness/injury, or a documented emergency outside of your control), you must contact the instructor as soon as possible and submit required documentation in order for your work to be accepted without accruing a late penalty.
- For each calendar day that an assignment is submitted late, 20% of the assignment’s points will be deducted (unless the late submission is due to an excused absence—see above).

Assignment Guidelines
All assignments must be turned in on ELMS on the day that they are due. Written assignments should be typed and double-spaced with one-inch margins and numbered pages. They should include proper headings. Only submit written assignments in .doc or .docx format. You must cite your sources fully and correctly on all written assignments. You may use MLA, APA, or Chicago citation style. NB: If you neglect to cite your sources, I reserve the right to give you a zero for the entire assignment.

Academic Integrity
Forms of dishonesty in this course include, but are not limited to: (1) cheating or helping someone else cheat on an assignment or exam; (2) delivering part or all of a presentation or speech that you did not author; (3) plagiarizing part or all of someone else’s written or oral work; (4) failing to cite your sources properly; and (5) falsifying information about any topic, such as why you were absent or whom you interviewed for an assignment. You should carefully review the Code of Academic Integrity. Note that all honor code violations will be referred to the Student Honor Council. Please keep the University of Maryland Honor Pledge in mind at all times:

I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment/examination.

Resources for Students with Disabilities
The Disability Support Service (DSS) is ready to assist eligible students in determining and implementing appropriate academic recommendations. If you have a disability, please visit the DSS website to learn how to request accommodations or special testing arrangements. I am happy to work with students to ensure that needed accommodations are made.

Resources for LGBTQ Students
I support members of the LGBTQ community on our campus. There are many resources available for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer members of the University of Maryland family. As a member of the Rainbow Terrapin Network I am a committed advocate for the inclusion of LGBTQ Terps, and I am always willing to discuss issues of gender and sexuality with you. You can contact the LGBT Equity Center at 301.405.8720 to learn about relevant resources and programs.

Resources for Sexual Assault Survivors
I support sexual assault survivors in our academic community. It is up to every member of the University of Maryland community to make our campus a safer place for all students. If you have been the victim of sexual assault, there are resources available to you. Contact CARE to Stop Violence at the UMD Health Center (24-hour resource line: 301.741.3442), or contact the Office of Sexual Misconduct and Relationship Violence at 301.405.1142 or titleixcoordinator@umd.edu.
Assignments

See the calendar at the end of this document for due dates. Note: more extensive explanations and rubrics for each assignment will be posted on ELMS, and each assignment will be explained in greater depth during class lectures that will be posted on ELMS throughout our course.

Discussions (200 Points)

We will have 5 online discussions, each worth 40 points. Each submission involves two required components:

- **Original post** (20 points). Respond to the prompt (some prompts will include multiple components; be sure to respond to all elements). Explain your reasoning, and make your response persuasive by bringing in illustrative examples, demonstrating your ideas with metaphors and analogies, citing outside research, posing meaningful questions to the class, etc.
- **Response posts** (10 points each). Respond to two of your peers’ posts. Include substantial remarks, going beyond mere agreement or disagreement.

Policy Speech (250 Points)

You will give a recorded speech that proposes a change in policy at the local, state, or federal level. The speech will be informed by research, and you will present persuasive arguments to convince audience members that the policy change will lead to desired outcomes for stakeholders. There are three required components:

- Topic proposal (20 points). A half-page proposal that describes the policy change you will advocate and how you will go about researching and writing your speech.
- Outline (30 points). A two-page outline of your speech, including in-text citations and a complete bibliography that incorporates your research.
- Speech (150 points). You will record your speech, upload it to a hosting website such as YouTube or Vimeo, and post a link to the recording on ELMS.
- Peer reviews (50 points). Using a feedback rubric that will be provided, comment on two of your peers’ speeches. Each peer review is worth 25 points.

Deliberative Analysis Essay (250 Points)

You will write an 8-10 page essay that analyzes a specific deliberative episode of your choice, utilizing the concepts discussed in our class to evaluate the argumentative strengths and weaknesses of participants. “Deliberative episode” is purposefully broad—this could include a televised debate, a town hall meeting, etc. There are two required components:

- Topic proposal (50 points). A one-page proposal that describes the deliberative episode you plan to analyze and identifies at least three course concepts with explanations of how you will invoke those concepts.
- Final draft (200 points). A final draft of your paper, including correct and complete in-text citations and bibliography.

Quizzes (150 Points)

We will have five scheduled quizzes, each worth 30 points, on topics covered in the readings and video lectures.

Final Exam (150 Points)

We will end the course with a cumulative exam on course content. The exam will be made available on Wednesday, January 20, and will be due at 11:59 PM on January 22, 2016.
Course Calendar

This calendar is subject to change with notice. I will post recorded lectures in the morning on each lecture’s designated day, giving you about two class days to view the lecture before your original discussion posts are due. Readings are available in our ELMS space under “Files.” Viewings are documentary films available on Netflix. All discussion posts and assignments are due on ELMS at 11:59 PM of their respective due dates. An asterisk* next to a due date means there is a quiz on preceding content, due at 11:59 PM.

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<th>Date</th>
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<td>Course Intro &amp; Overview</td>
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<td>Rhetoric and Argumentation Basics I</td>
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<td>Jan. 7 (Thurs)</td>
<td>Constructing Guilt and Assigning Blame</td>
<td>Hogan and Rood, “Rhetorical Studies and the Gun Debate”</td>
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<td>Film: <em>The House I Live In</em></td>
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<td>Jan. 14 (Thurs)*</td>
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