Public Policy and Black Communities: Education, Poverty, and Crime, Spring '24, PSCI 217

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This course examines some of the major public policy issues affecting the Black community. We begin with a survey of the public policy making process at the federal level. The rest of the course deals with the specific groups, conflicts, institutions, and structural constraints governing the formation of public policy in the areas of education, poverty, and crime. We will ask questions about the origin and nature of the problems in these areas, the explanations of why some policies and not others have been adopted, and the strengths and weaknesses of competing policy solutions.

Readings:

I expect students to come to class, to have read the material assigned for that day, and to be ready to discuss it. Most of what you will get out of this, or any course, depends on this. I will supply all of the readings for this class through a social e-reader called Perusall. There is a link to Perusall at the bottom of the course homepage on Blackboard. Once in Perusall, you will see a list of the reading assignments for the course. Most of the work for this course will involve reading the assignments, reflecting upon them, and discussing them with your classmates (on Perusall and in class). I've given more details about how Perusall works below.

Grades are based on:

Two three-page papers, 10% for the first, and 10% for the second
Midterm (take-home), 10%
Final (take-home), 30%
Perusall, 20% (I'll explain what this is in class)
Participation, 20%

Late papers will be penalized a half letter grade a day.

Some points about your papers:
1. Establish a focus. A good paper has a thesis, a central idea or claim that it is making, and it presents an argument supporting that thesis. You should be able to make an outline of your paper, which will at the same time be the skeleton of the argument you are making. It is often helpful to write out the outline – in sentence form, not simply as a list of topics – before writing the paper or, at least, the final draft. A good way to think about your paper is to ask yourself, "What do I want my readers to believe after they have read my paper? What reasons can I offer them to think that?" If you can answer these questions succinctly, you're off to an excellent start.
2. Title. The title should express the main idea or focus of your paper, preparing your reader to see immediately what you're going to say, and why it's interesting.
3. Structure and organization. The paper should have a clear structure, with an introduction presenting the central question or problem you are addressing, a body that sets out a logical development of the reasons and evidence you are offering, and a conclusion that ties the paper together. In the longer paper it is often useful to provide section headings. The introduction should generally state your main thesis, and provide an overview of the structure of the

argument, to make it easier for your reader to follow it.
4. Style. I expect your papers to be well-written. Your sentences should be simple and clear. You should avoid obvious errors; use spell check. You should write more than one draft. And you should proofread them before handing them in.
5. Guides. There are a number of excellent guides for good writing. Strunk and White *The Elements of Style* is a classic, especially for grammar and word usage; it also offers a useful set of "principles of composition." I especially recommend Joseph Williams, *Style: Toward Grace and Clarity*. His work is particularly helpful in offering examples of how awkward passages can be rewritten, using rules or principles that are fairly concrete and address specific issues such as clarity, cohesion, emphasis, etc. (these are all chapter headings in his book). Anthony Weston, *A Rulebook for Arguments*, offers a helpful discussion of how to develop (and express) an argument in a tight, logical way.
6. Grading. "B" papers will fulfill the foregoing criteria adequately. "A" papers will do more. They will not only be clearly and forcefully written, but they will show evidence of deep engagement with the issues. They will argue something interesting, and thought-provoking.

How Perusall Works

I have not placed any book orders with the bookstore. I will be supplying the books for this course (with a few exceptions – in some courses, there will be one or two books you need to buy) through an online reading software package called "Perusall." All of the reading assignments for the semester must be completed through this online software package, which you can access by clicking on the Perusall link on the bottom of the course's Blackboard homepage.

Reasons I am doing this: *Perusall* helps you master readings faster, understand the material better, and get more out of the class. To achieve this goal, you will be collaboratively annotating the readings with others in the class. The help you'll get and provide your classmates (even if you don't know anyone personally) will get you past confusions quickly and will make the process more fun. While you read, you'll receive rapid answers to your questions, help others resolve their questions (which also helps you learn), and advise me, the instructor, how to make class time most productive. You can start a new annotation thread in *Perusall* by highlighting text, asking a question, or posting a comment; you can also add a reply or comment to an existing thread. Each thread is like a chat with one or more members of your class, and it happens in real time. Your **goals** in annotating each reading assignment are 1. to stimulate discussion by posting good questions or comments, 2. to help others by answering their questions, and 3. to identify and evaluate the main claims in the piece.

Rubric: Research shows that by annotating thoughtfully, you'll learn more and get better grades, so here's what "annotating thoughtfully" means: Effective annotations *deeply engage points/arguments in the readings, stimulate discussion, offer informative questions or comments, and help others by addressing their questions or confusions.* To help you connect with classmates, you can "mention" a classmate in a comment or question to have them notified by email (they'll also see a notification immediately if online), and you'll also be notified when your classmates respond to your questions. For each assignment I will evaluate the annotations you submit on time (see below). Based on the overall body of your annotations, you will receive a score for each assignment as follows

> 10 = demonstrates **exceptionally thoughtful and thorough reading of the entire** assignment; student has engaged with others, asked questions others want answered, answers questions, and made important insights.
> 7-9 = **demonstrates thoughtful and thorough reading of the entire assignment**; occasionally engages with others, asks questions, and so forth. Some comments state the obvious or are the equivalent of saying "amen" or just free associating, as when someone says, "based off of what he said, I think" and then goes on to talk about something only tangentially related to the question or issue at hand.
> 4-6 = demonstrates superficial reading of the entire assignment Or thoughtful reading of only part of the assignment; comments state the obvious, are trivial, often irrelevant.
> <4 = demonstrates superficial reading of only part of the assignment; comments state the obvious, are trivial, often irrelevant.

How many annotations do I need to enter?

When I look at your annotations I want them to reflect the effort you put in your study of the text. It is unlikely that that effort will be reflected by just a few thoughtful annotations per assignment. At the other extreme, 30 per assignment is too many, unless a number of them are superficial or short comments or questions (which is fine, because it is OK to engage in chat with your peers). Somewhere in between these two extremes is about right and, thoughtful questions or comments that stimulate discussion or thoughtful and helpful answers to other students' questions will earn you a higher score for the assignment. Note, also, that to lay the foundation for understanding the in-class activities, you must familiarize yourself with each assignment *in its entirety*. Failing to read and annotate across the entire assignment will result in a lower score.

What does "on time" mean?

The work done in class depends on you having done the reading in advance, so it is necessary to complete the reading and post your annotations before the deadline to receive credit. I allow a late annotation period of two days during which the credit for your annotations linearly decreases from 100% at the deadline to 0% at the end of the late annotation period. Similarly, to encourage you to talk to each other, there is a reply window after each deadline during which you can continue to reply, for full credit, to questions posted by others. However, the number of additional points you can earn after the deadline is capped at the credit you receive for annotations made on that assignment before the deadline.

Jan 17 Introduction

Racism, Politics, and Public Policy: There is not enough time to examine the dynamics of the public policy process. If we had unlimited time, we'd look at models trying to explain why governments in general and in the United States in particular adopt some policies and not others. So, we'd look at the role of elites, interest groups, voters, and bureaucrats in determining public policy. But we don't have unlimited amounts of time.

Jan 19 Rogers Smith, Desmond King, and Philip Klinkner, "Barack Obama & American Racial Politics," in *Daedalus*, Spring 2011.

Jan 22 "The New Racism: The U.S. Racial Structure since the 1960s," ch. 2 of Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists*, 6th ed.(New York: Roman & Littlefield), 2022.

Jan 24 Mariel Lemonik and Mikaila Arthur. 2007. "Racism, Structural and Institutional." *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*. George Ritzer (Ed.).

Pager and Shepherd, "The Sociology of Discrimination: Racial Discrimination in Employment, Housing, Credit, and Consumer Markets," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2008. 34:181-209.

Jan 26 Adolph Reed, "Race, Class, Crisis: The Discourse of Racial Disparity and Its Analytical Discontents," in Walter Benn Michaels & Adolph Reed Jr., *No Politics But Class Politics*, (London: Eris), 2022.

Poverty – What are the main causes and effects of inner city poverty? What sorts of policies could help?

Jan 29 Julia Lynch, "A Cross-National Perspective on the American Welfare State," in *The Oxford Handbook of Social Policy*

Jan 31 Martin Gilens, "How the Poor Became Black: the Racialization of Poverty in the Mass Media," in *Race and the Politics of Welfare Reform,* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press), 2003.

Feb 2 Chs. 1-2, William Julius Wilson, *When Work Disappears*, (New York: Vintage Books), 1997.

Feb 5 chs. 3-4, *When Work Disappears*

Feb 7 chs. 5-6, *When Work Disappears*

Feb 9 chs. 7-8 , *When Work Disappears*

Feb 12 Orlando Patterson, "The Social and Cultural Matrix of Black Youth," in *The Cultural Matrix*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 2013.

Feb 14 Patrick Sharkey, "The Intergenerational Transmission of Context," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 113, No. 4 (January 2008), pp. 931-969.

Feb 16 William Darity, "The New (Incorrect) Harvard/Washington Consensus on Racial Inequality," Du Bois Review, 8:2 (2011) 467–495.

Feb 19 James Rosenbaum, "Changing the Geography of Opportunity," *Housing Policy Debate,*

Volume 6, Issue 1, 1995.

Feb 21 — Owen Fiss, "What Should Be Done for Those Who Have Been Left Behind?" in *A Way Out: America's Ghettos and the Legacy of Racism*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 2003.

Feb 23 — Part II of *A Way Out*

Feb 26 — Lane Kenworthy, ch. 1-5, *Progress for the Poor*, (New York: Oxford University Press), 2011.

Feb 28 — Kenworthy, chs. 6-11

Mar 1 — Conclusion

Education and Family – effects of class, parenting practices, and schools on academic achievement.

Mar 4 — Jack Schneider, "What School Funding Debates Ignore," *Atlantic,* January 22, 2018.

Mar 6 — Robert Putnam, chs. 1-2, *Our Kids*, (New York: Simon and Schuster) 2015.

Mar 8 — Putnam, ch. 3, *Our Kids*

Mar 9-17 — **Spring Break!**

Mar 18 — "Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families," Annette Lareau, *American Sociological Review* 67 (5): 747-776

Mar 20 — Part 1, James Heckman, *Giving Kids a Fair Chance*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), 2013.

Mar 22 — Heckman, finish

Mar 25 — Putnam, ch. 4, *Our Kids*

Mar 27 — Abigail Thernstrom, "The Racial Gap in Academic Achievement" and James Traub, "What No School Can Do," *New York Times Magazine*, January 16, 2000

Mar 29 — Richard Rothstein, "Schools that 'Beat the Demographic Odds," and "Reforms that could narrow the gaps," in *Class and Schools*, (Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute), 2004.

Mar 31 — Conclusion

Crime – Few areas of public policy are more inflected with the politics of race. We begin by looking at the origins of the current politics of race/crime. Next, we try to develop a basic picture of the causes of crime, the explanation of racial differentials in the commission of crime. We end by considering strategies to prevent it.

Apr 1 — Vesla Weaver – " Frontlash: Race and the Development of Punitive Crime Policy," *Studies in American Political Development*, 21 (Fall 2007), 230–265.

Apr 3	Christopher Jencks, "Crime," in *Rethinking Social Policy*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 1992.
Apr 5	Janet Lauritsen and Robert Sampson, "Minorities, Crime, and Criminal Justice," in Michael Tonry, ed., *The Handbook of Crime and Punishment*, (New York: Oxford University Press), 1998.
Apr 8	Robert Sampson and William Julius Wilson, "Toward a Theory of Race, Crime, and Urban Inequality," Sampson, Robert J, and William Julius Wilson, *Crime and Inequality*, edited by John Hagan and Ruth D Peterson, 37-56. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995.
Apr 10	James Q. Wilson and George Kelling, "Broken Windows," *The Atlantic*, March 1982
Apr 12	James Q. Wilson, "Penalties and Opportunities," in *Thinking About Crime*, rev. ed., (New York: Basic Books), 1983.
Apr 15	Patrick Sharkey, chs. 1-3, *Uneasy Peace: The Great Crime Decline, The Renewal of City Life, and the Next War on Violence,* (New York: Oxford University Press), 2020.
Apr 17	Sharkey, chs. 4-6
Apr 19	Sharkey, chs. 7-8
Apr 22	Sharkey, chs. 9-10
Apr 24	Michael Tonry, chs. 6-7, *Doing Justice, Preventing Crime*
Apr 26	Tonry, ch. 8
Apr 29	Conclusion