

HILLSDALE COLLEGE  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

**Political Science 402**  
**Public Policy**

Dr. David J. Bobb  
Lecturer in Political Science  
Director, Allan P. Kirby, Jr. Center for Constitutional Studies and Citizenship  
Heritage Fdn. Intern Center

**Course Summary**

“Every species of government has its specific principles,” Thomas Jefferson wrote. “Ours perhaps are more peculiar than those of any other in the universe. It is a composition of the freest principles of the English constitution, with others derived from natural right and natural reason.”

By what principles should American public policy be judged? According to what criteria do we differentiate good from bad—just from unjust—public policy? What, in short, is the common good, and how do we achieve it?

This course seeks to examine public policy questions such as these with a point of departure in the American founders’ conception of the common weal. What is a commonwealth? What ends ought it to serve?

The second part of the course examines the contemporary process of public policy formation. How does an idea become a bill? How does a bill become a law? And how does a law, in turn, become a bill (of a very different sort) charged to taxpayers? Public opinion, constitutional questions, and inquiries into political economy will be addressed in preparation for confronting policy case studies.

The third part of the course focuses on three major case studies in public policy formation:

- 1.) the recent debate over health care reform, with specific attention to entitlement spending;
- 2.) the “American Recovery and Reinvestment Act” of 2009; and
- 3.) ongoing deliberation over the re-authorization of the “No Child Left Behind Act.”

**Course Readings**

Texts for the course are provided, and include the following:

- Handouts distributed in class or posted on Blackboard; and
- Eugene W. Hickok, “Why States? The Challenge of Federalism,” First Principles Series (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 2007).

**Academic Integrity**

As stated in the “Academic Honor Policy” of the *Hillsdale College 2009-2010 Catalog*, all students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. I encourage you to discuss the readings with your classmates and friends. However, all work submitted must be your own and must have been prepared exclusively for this course.

It is essential to academic and intellectual inquiry to learn from others. In preparing your writing assignments you will draw upon the work of others. Nevertheless, you must give credit where credit is due. Failure to give proper attribution to words, concepts, and evidence borrowed from

others constitutes plagiarism, which is a serious academic offense. If you have questions about proper attribution, please consult the instructor prior to turning in academic work.

### Course Assignments

<b>Class Participation</b>	10%
<b>Mid-term Examination</b>	25%
<b>Short Papers</b>	30% (15% each)
<b>Final Examination</b>	35%

#### **Class Participation (10%)**

Students should arrive at class having read the assigned texts attentively. Students should be ready to engage the assigned readings, other students, and the instructor in course discussion. Attendance is essential. Absences will be excused only for verifiable illness, emergencies, and extenuating family circumstances (please send an e-mail to the instructor noting the reason for an absence). Exams may be made up after the class session only for these reasons. If you must be absent from a class please contact the instructor as soon as you know you will be absent. Please kindly remove hats during class.

#### **Mid-term Examination (25%)**

The mid-term exam is an oral exam.

#### **Short Papers (30%)**

Two papers will be submitted by students on topics to be assigned by the instructor. Papers should be double-spaced, paginated in the upper right corner, typed in 12-point Times or Times New Roman font, and stapled. Papers are due at the beginning of the assigned class. Papers turned in after that time will be considered late and will be penalized. If you do not attend class, are unexcused, and do not submit your paper, the paper is considered late.

#### **Final Exam (35%)**

The written final exam is cumulative.

### Explanation of Grading

The following are the standards of judgment for work completed for this course:

#### **“A”:** Excellent

Work meriting an “A” grade is excellent. It demonstrates unusually thorough preparation, genuine comprehension and synthesis, insight, and even originality. Work is written with great clarity and attention to detail. The grade signifies not simply very good work but exceptionally fine work. An “A” grade is rare.

#### **“B”:** Good

Work meriting a “B” grade is good. It demonstrates thorough preparation, a grasp of the subject matter and a command of the materials of the course. It may not show any special insight or originality, but it demonstrates clear understanding of the material with comprehensive answers presented in a clear and logical manner.

#### **“C”:** Average or Acceptable

Work meriting a “C” grade is average or acceptable. The work demonstrates an adequate, though not comprehensive, grasp of the subject matter. Significant information may be overlooked, and the work may not display a full appreciation of the meaning or implication of a question. Answers may be too brief to allow sufficient development. An essay may appear to be derived wholly from lecture or discussion material, ignoring relevant readings or reference to readings.

**“D”: Poor**

Work meriting a “D” grade is poor. The student demonstrates some knowledge, but the work is shoddy and shows lack of careful preparation. Most information has been overlooked, and the meaning or implication of a question largely has been overlooked. An essay barely covers the assigned topic, and almost completely neglects to address the most significant issues involved.

**“F”: Unacceptable**

Work meriting an “F” grade is unacceptable for academic credit, and denotes failure. Many facts or references are missing or are misunderstood entirely. There is little or no analysis, and the style is poor, confused, or incomprehensible. A student may attend classes and submit assignments and yet earn an “F” if the product does not reflect some minimal command of the materials of the course.

**Course Schedule****Week 1****The Common Good**

Introduction and Overview

Michael Leahy, “House Rules,” a profile of freshman Congressman Joe Courtney (*Washington Post* magazine, June 10, 2007)

**Week 2****The Common Good, Part II**

Matt Bai, “Taking the Hill,” on the Obama administration’s relationship with Congress (*New York Times Magazine*, June 7, 2009)

Abraham Lincoln, “Address Before the Young Men’s Lyceum of Springfield, IL” (1838)

Virginia Bill of Rights, Section 15 (1776)

Massachusetts Constitution, Section XVIII (1780)

Jeffrey Sachs, “The Case for Bigger Government” (*Time*, Jan. 8, 2009)

Peter Wehner and Paul Ryan, “Beware of the Big-Government Tipping Point” (*Wall Street Journal*, Jan. 16, 2009)

**Week 3****Constitutional Ends and Means**

James Madison, “Property” (1792)

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, “State of the Union Address” (1944)

**Week 4****The Presidency and Congress**

George Washington, “First Inaugural Address” (1789)

Andrew P. Napolitano, *Wall Street Journal*, “Most Presidents Ignore the Constitution” (2008)

Blackboard readings

**Week 5****Federalism**

James Madison, *Federalist* 39 (1788)

Eugene W. Hickock, “Why States? The Challenge of Federalism,” excerpts

**Week 6****How an Idea Becomes a Bill**

Paper #1 due (topic to be distributed by instructor)

Amy Black, *From Inspiration to Legislation: How an Idea Becomes a Bill*, excerpts

Blackboard readings

**Week 7****How a Bill Becomes a Law;  
How a Law Becomes a Bill**

“How Our Laws Are Made,” U.S. Government Printing Office, excerpts  
Blackboard readings

**Week 8****Budgeting 101**

Oral exams (10-12 minutes for each student) will precede regular class meeting.  
No additional readings.

**Week 9****Case Study I: Health Care/Entitlements**

Northwest Ordinance (1787)  
Readings on the General Welfare and Spending Clauses of the Constitution  
Blackboard readings

**Week 10****Case Study I: Health Care/Entitlements, cont.**

Blackboard readings

**Week 11****Case Study II, Stimulus Spending**

Homestead Act (1862)  
Readings on the Necessary and Proper Clause of the Constitution  
Blackboard readings

**Week 12****Case Study II, Stimulus Spending, cont.**

Paper #2 due (topic to be distributed by instructor)  
Blackboard readings

**Week 13****Case Study III, NCLB**

Land Grant Colleges Act (1862)  
Readings on the Interstate Commerce Clause of the Constitution  
Blackboard readings  
Peter Baker, “An Unlikely Partnership Left Behind” (*Washington Post*, Nov. 5, 2007)

**Week 14****Case Study III, NCLB, cont.**

Blackboard readings