

Western University
Department of Political Science
The Policy Process in Theory and Practice
Political Science 2547G
Winter 2026

Instructor: Dr. Joe Lyons
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Note: The instructor and teaching assistants will not respond to emails in the evenings or on weekends.

Course Information

Course Description: This course is about public policy in Canada. Students will be introduced to selected theories of the policy process and learn how they apply in the context of Canada's federal system.

Learning Outcomes: By the end of the course, students will be familiar with the policy cycle model and how different theories can help explain how and why policies move (or don't) from one stage to another. This knowledge will allow them to critically examine government action or inaction in any policy area. An important skill for active and informed citizenship.

Course Organization: Weekly meetings occur on Thursdays beginning at 2:30pm. Classes will consist of a combination of lectures and class discussions. Tutorials will follow, as scheduled below, at 4:30pm.

Anti-Requisites: The former Political Science 2246E and Political Science 2201G.

Readings and Materials:

Required Textbook

Wu, Xun, M. Ramesh, Michael Howlett, and Scott Fritzen. 2018. *The Public Policy Primer: Managing the Policy Process*. 2nd ed. Routledge. (Hereafter referred to as Wu et al.)

Students have full and unlimited access to this textbook through [Western Libraries](#). All other assigned readings will be available through Western Libraries, the course's [OWL Brightspace site](#), or online. Assigned reading should be done **BEFORE** the class in which it is to be discussed.

If students need assistance with Brightspace, they can seek support on the [OWL Brightspace Help](#) page. Alternatively, they can contact the [Western Technology Services Helpdesk](#) online or

by phone at 519-661-3800 for technical support. Current versions of all popular browsers (e.g., Safari, Chrome, Edge, Firefox) are supported with Brightspace; what is most important is that you update your browser frequently to ensure it is current. All JavaScript and cookies should be enabled.

Course Requirements: The final grade for this course will be composed of four main components.

1. *Tutorials.* Tutorials begin January 22nd. Students will be informed of their tutorial room assignment by January 15th. Students in each tutorial room will be divided into smaller teams based on their shared interests in a specific area of Canadian public policy. Students will remain on the same team throughout the semester. During each tutorial meeting, teams will explore the policy process dynamics of their assigned policy area by working through a list of questions provided by the instructor.

Tutorials are worth 15% of the course grade. The tutorial grade will consist of two components: *Individual Contribution* and the *Team Submission*. Tutorial attendance is mandatory and will be monitored. Students may miss **ONE** tutorial without penalty. The *Individual Contribution* grade will be based partly on peer assessment. At the end of class on April 9, 2026, each team will hand in their *Team Submission*, which will consist of their written answers to all the questions provided throughout the semester. Students who miss **three** tutorials (one absence grace + two additional absences without academic consideration) will receive a grade of zero on the *Team Submission* component. More specific information and instructions will be provided in class and on Brightspace.

*Please note that students needing to be excused from an additional tutorial – on top of their one absence grace - can request academic consideration by completing a request through the Student Absence Portal. Students **must not** make academic consideration requests to the instructor directly. Students are permitted one academic consideration request per course per term without supporting documentation.*

*Tutorial teams are expected to submit their Team Submission by the deadline of April 9th at 4:30pm. Should extenuating circumstances arise, students do not need to request academic consideration and tutorial teams are permitted to submit their assignment up to 4:30pm on April 12, 2026 (72 hours past the deadline) without a late penalty. **No Team Submission submitted more than 72 hours past the deadline will be graded.***

2. *In-Class Policy Brief Assignment.* Students must write and submit a policy brief during class time on February 26, 2026. A policy brief provides background information, outlines different options, and presents a final recommendation for the consideration of government decision makers with respect to a specific policy issue. Students will be provided with a list of possible policy issues to choose from by January 22nd. The expectation is that students will research and prepare a draft outline of their policy brief in advance of February 26th. Each student will be allowed to bring their own double-sided notes page with them to class as an assignment aid. This page will be subject to review by the instructor and/or teaching assistants and must be submitted alongside the assignment. Notes pages **must** comply with the following requirements.

-Front side: notes for policy brief (single-spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman font, normal margins). Shorthand is fine.

-Back side: reference list including at least five high-quality sources (i.e., peer-reviewed journal articles or books, news reports from credible media, and research published by advocacy groups, think-tanks, research institutes, and non-profits) and formatted according to the [Chicago Manual of Style's author-date system](#). All sources included in the reference list must be cited at least once in the text of the submitted policy brief. The back side of the notes page **must only** include reference list information. It **must not** include any assignment notes.

Notes pages that do not comply with these requirements will be confiscated. More specific information and instructions will be provided in class and on Brightspace.

*Please note that the In-Class Policy Brief Assignment is central to the learning objectives for this course. Accordingly, **students seeking academic consideration for this assessment will be required to provide formal supporting documentation through the Student Absence Portal.** Students who are granted academic consideration for this assessment will be provided with the opportunity to write a makeup test on **Friday, March 6, 2026**. Students **must not** make academic consideration requests to the instructor directly.*

3. *In-Class Test.* The *In-Class Test* will be held on **March 19, 2026**. This test will consist of short- and/or long-answer questions based on the material covered up to that point.

*Please note that students who are granted academic consideration for this assessment will be provided with the opportunity to write a makeup test on **Friday, March 27, 2026**. Students **must not** make academic consideration requests to the instructor directly. Students are permitted one academic consideration request per course per term without supporting documentation.*

4. *Final Exam.* The *Final Exam* will be held during the final examination period. The *Final Exam* will be cumulative and consist entirely of multiple-choice questions.

*If you miss the Final Exam, please contact the academic counselling office of your faculty of registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write a Special Examination. A Special Examination is any examination other than the regular examination, and it may be offered only with the permission of the Dean of the Faculty in which the student is registered, in consultation with the instructor and Department Chair. Permission to write a Special Examination may be given on the basis of compassionate or medical grounds with appropriate supporting documents. To provide an opportunity for students to recover from the circumstances resulting in a Special Examination, the university has implemented Special Examinations dates. These dates as well as other important information about examinations and academic standing can be found [here](#). Students **must not** make academic consideration requests to the instructor directly.*

Evaluation:

1. Tutorials	15%	
Individual Contribution (7%)		Ongoing beginning Jan. 22
Team Submission (8%)		Apr. 9 by 4:30pm
2. In-Class Policy Brief Assignment	30%	Feb. 26 @ 2:30pm

3. <i>In-Class Test</i>	20%	Mar. 19 @ 2:30pm
4. <i>Final Exam</i>	35%	As scheduled by the Registrar
	100%	

Missed Coursework: The university's policy on academic considerations is described [here](#). This policy requires that all requests for academic considerations must be accompanied by a self-attestation.

Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline.

Scholastic Offences: Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a scholastic offence, at the following Website:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the university for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Statement on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI): The use of generative AI tools in this course is permitted for brainstorming ideas, finding preliminary information about topics, checking for how assignments might be received by a potential grader, and improving grammar and style. The use of AI is not permitted for writing entire sentences, paragraphs, sections, or complete drafts of your assignments. The instructor may ask for an "Artificial Intelligence (AI) Declaration" to be included as part of any assignment in this course. If requested, this declaration must explain which AI tools were used, for what reasons, and acknowledge that the author has full responsibility for the contents of the assignment. Any assignment that is found to have used generative AI tools in unauthorized ways may result in a failure to receive full grades, the need to resubmit a revised version, or a grade of zero. If in doubt about acceptable AI usage, please ask the instructor for clarification.

Appeals: A student may request that a grade on a particular piece of work, or a final standing in a course or program, be changed, or a student may request an exemption from a Senate academic regulation. The subject of a request for relief can range from a waiver of progression requirements to accuracy of grades on examinations or assignments. Such a request can include questions of fairness or appropriateness of general grading practices and can be launched regardless of whether a record of the student's work exists. A student must submit their request for relief pursuant to the Procedure for Undergraduate Student Academic Requests for Relief: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/undergrad_requests_for_relief_procedure.pdf.

Religious Accommodations: When a course requirement conflicts with a religious holiday that requires an absence from the university or prohibits certain activities, students should request an accommodation for their absence in writing to the course instructor and/or the academic advising office of their faculty of registration. This notice should be made as early as possible but not later than two weeks prior to the writing or the examination (or one week prior to the writing of the test).

Please visit the Diversity Calendars posted on the university's EDID website for the recognized religious holidays: <https://www.edi.uwo.ca>.

Accessible Education: Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Accessible Education, which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities can be found at: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/AcademicAccommodation_disabilities.pdf.

Support Services: Please visit the Social Science Academic Counselling webpage for information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters: <https://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/>.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Please contact the course instructor if you require lecture or printed material in an alternate format or if any other arrangements can make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Accessible Education if you have any questions regarding accommodations: http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html.

Students must also read and abide by the policies and procedures including in the Department of Political Science's Appendix to Undergraduate Course Outlines: <https://politicalscience.uwo.ca/undergraduate/docs/outlines/2025-26/APPENDIX%20TO%20UNDERGRADUATE%20COURSE%20OUTLINES1.pdf>.

Course Schedule and Required Readings

Jan. 8 **Introduction and Overview**

- Jan. 15 **Public Policy and the Policy Process**
 Readings: Wu et al., pp. 1-10.
 Pal, Leslie. 2014. *Beyond Policy Analysis: Public Issues Management in Turbulent Times*. 5th ed. Nelson, pp. 1-25.
- Jan. 22 **Institutions and Actors in Canadian Public Policy**
 Readings: Wu et al., pp. 11-25.
 Howlett, Michael, M. Ramesh, and Anthony Perl. 2020. *Studying Public Policy: Principles and Processes*. 5th ed. Oxford University Press, ch. 3 (skim pp. 85-92).
 Pralle, Sarah. 2006. "The Mouse that Roared: Agenda Setting in Canadian Pesticides Politics." *Policy Studies Journal* 34 (2): 171–194.
 <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-0072.2006.00165.x>.
- Tutorial 1**
- Jan. 29 **Problem Definition and Agenda Setting**
 Readings: Wu et al., ch. 2.
 Henstra, Dan. 2010. "Explaining Local Policy Choices: A Multiple Streams Analysis of Municipal Emergency Management." *Canadian Public Administration* 53 (2): 241-258. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1754-7121.2010.00128.x>.
- Tutorial 2**
- Feb. 5 **Policy Formulation, Innovation, Diffusion, and Design**
 Readings: Wu et al., ch. 3.
 Shipan, Charles and Craig Volden. 2012. "Policy Diffusion: Seven Lessons for Scholars and Practitioners." *Public Administration Review* 72 (6): 789-796. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2012.02610.x>.
 Hood, Christopher and Helen Margetts. 2007. *The Tools of Government in the the Digital Age*. Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 1-20.
- Tutorial 3**
- Feb. 12 **Decision Making**
 Readings: Wu et al., ch. 4.
 Eidelman, Gabriel. 2010. "Managing Urban Sprawl in Ontario: Good Policy or Good Politics?" *Politics and Policy* 38 (6): 1211-1236.
 <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-1346.2010.00275.x>.
- Feb. 19 **Spring Reading Week – No Class**
- Feb. 26 ***In-Class Policy Brief Assignment***
- Mar. 5 **Citizen Participation and Policy Implementation**
 Readings: Bobbio, Luigi. 2019. "Designing Effective Public Participation." *Policy and Society* 38 (1):41–57. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14494035.2018.1511193>.
 Irvin, Renée and John Stansbury. 2004. "Citizen Participation in Decision

Making: Is it Worth the Effort?" *Public Administration Review* 64 (1): 55-65. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2004.00346.x>.

Wu et al., ch. 5.

Tutorial 4

Mar. 12 **Policy Evaluation**

Readings: Wu et al., ch. 6.

Wichowsky, Amber and Donald P. Moynihan. 2008. "Measuring How Administration Shapes Citizenship: A Policy Feedback Perspective on Performance Management." *Public Administration Review* 68 (5): 908-20. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2008.00931.x>.

Tutorial 5

Mar. 19 ****In-Class Test****

Mar. 26 **Advocacy Coalitions and Collaborative Governance**

Readings: Heinmiller, Timothy. 2013. "Advocacy Coalitions and the Alberta Water Act." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 46 (3): 525-547.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008423913000541>.

Doberstein, Carey. 2016. "Designing Collaborative Governance Decision Making in Search of a 'Collaborative Advantage'." *Public Management Review* 18 (6): 819-841. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2015.1045019>.

Tutorial 6

Apr. 2 **Media, Information, and Persuasion in Public Policy**

Readings: Lawlor, Andrea. 2018. "Media and Public Policy." In *Policy Analysis in Canada*, edited by Laurent Dobuzinskis and Michael Howlett. Policy Press.

McBeth, Mark and Donna Lybecker. 2018. "The Narrative Policy Framework, Agendas, and Sanctuary Cities: The Construction of a Public Problem." *Policy Studies Journal* 46 (4): 868-893. <https://doi.org/10.1111/psj.12274>.

Tutorial 7

Apr. 9 **Wrap-up and Exam Review**

Readings: Wu et al., ch. 7.