**Syllabus**

**George Mason Govt 467**

**Issues in Economic Policy**

**University of Pennsylvania Pol. Sci. 398**

**How Washington Really Works**

**Spring, 2022**

**Fridays, Noon – 3:30 PM**

**Penn Biden Center**

**101 Constitution Ave. at C Street, NW**

**Suite 600 W**

**Washington, D.C.**

**Professors**

**Dr. Ezekiel Emanuel (Penn) ([zemanuel@upenn.edu](mailto:zemanuel@upenn.edu))**

**Steven Pearlstein (GMU) ([spearls2@gmu.edu](mailto:spearls2@gmu.edu) )**

**Teaching Assistants**

**Patricia Hong (Patricia.Hong@pennmedicine.upenn.edu)**

**Amaya Diana (Amaya.Diana@pennmedicine.upenn.edu)**

**Matt Guido (Matt.Guido@pennmedicine.upenn.edu)**

**Prof. Pearlstein Office Hours**

**Tuesdays 2-3:30 (Fairfax Campus)**

**Fridays 11-11:45 (Biden Center)**

**and by appointment**

**Assistant: Sharon Wood (swood8@gmu.edu)**

**Prof. Emanuel Office Hours**

**By appointment only**

**Course Description**

The purpose of this course is to provide students with an understanding of how decisions and policy are really made in Washington. Through eight case studies, the course will explore post-World War II policy debates, political dealing, institutional dynamics and the personalities, motivations, and ambitions of the people involved in enacting legislation and operating the federal government. The role of interest groups, think tanks and the media will also be examined. The course will use Socratic-style lectures, class discussions, and weekly class speakers to explore these issues. In the final weeks of the course, students working in groups of politically-like-minded colleagues will be tasked with coming up with comprehensive, politically-realistic policy proposals to regulate big tech, reduce poverty and secure the promise of racial justice. To enroll, students should have familiarity with, and interest in, modern American politics and government.

**Two Schools, One Course**

This course will be offered jointly to students from both the University of Pennsylvania and George Mason University and co-taught by one professor from each school. The course will be held on neither campus, but rather at Penn’s Biden Center located at the base of Capitol Hill in Washington D.C. Students from both schools will attend the same class sessions, read the same materials and be evaluated in the same manner. To accommodate differences in academic calendars, students at both schools will be required to make slight adjustments to their schedules at the beginning and the end of the semester and during spring break (see Class Schedule, below). The course will meet Fridays from noon until 3:30, with a half hour break for lunch.

Course materials—this syllabus, some of the assigned readings, lecture slides, presentation group assignments,, periodic announcements—through Canvas, the normal course platform for Penn students to which Mason students will also have access for this course. Mason students can find much of the same material, as well as their quiz and paper grades, at the Govt 467 site on Blackboard.

Amtrakattend all class sessions held at the Biden Center. Trains will leave from Philadelphia’s 30th St. Station shortly after 9:30 amand from Washington’s Union Station shortly after 4:00 pm.

which can be picked up from Sharon Wood in Prof. Pearlstein’s office (East Building, 207) Monday through Thursday during the first week of semester between 8 am and noon The Biden Center is a short walk from the Metro Red Line stations at Union Station.

**Class Sessions**

Class sessions will be held in the Biden’s Center main conference room. Students should alternate weekly between sitting at the large table at the center of the room and sitting in the chairs arrayed along the sides of the room. Please do NOT sit at the conference table two weeks in a row.

On entering the room, students should retrieve their name cards from the conference table and either place them on the table in front of them, or raise them when they want to speak during the class session. That’s how we’ll get to know each other’s names. Return name cards to the table at the end of each class session.

After a brief quiz, class sessions will generally begin with a 50-minute Socratic lecture by one of the professors on one of eight case studies from recent American history. Students are expected to have done the assigned reading for the week and be able to respond to questions posed by the professors.

After the lecture, a complimentary lunch will be served on the penthouse terrace. Students with dietary restrictions should indicate those on the survey emailed to students in mid-January, prior to the start of classes.

At 1:30, students will return to the conference room to hear a guest speaker from the Washington policy community. fromarethoughtful

Following the guest speaker, there will be a 45-minute class discussion about that week’s case study.

During the final three weeks of the course, class sessions will be entirely given over the group presentations by students.

There will also be a video recording of each class session posted on Canvas, along with the slides used in the lectures. Otherwise, use of computers, cell phones and other recording devices are not permitted during class sessions.

**Covid Protocols**

We take Covid precautions seriously. All students must be vaccinated and boosted. Complimentary N-95 masks will be provided to all students to be worn at all class sessions. The conference room at the Biden Center will be equipped for four special air filters.

Students who have been exposed to Covid, or are experiencing symptoms of the virus, should avail themselves of the free PCR tests available on campus before attending any class session. Those who test positive should isolate themselves for xxxx days and should not return to class until they have obtained a negative test result. Please also inform the teaching assistants of any positive test results.

**Reading and Quizzes**

At the beginning of each class session, there will be a very short, three-question, multiple-choice and short-answer quiz on the week’s assigned reading. If you’ve done the reading, the quiz will be easy. There will be no makeup quizzes, but the worst two quiz grades will be dropped from consideration in calculating final course grades.

Fair warning: this course involves significant reading – as many as 250 pages per week. Students are encouraged to purchase used copies of books that are available at reasonable cost from online sellers (several are no longer in print). Virtually all of the books are written by journalists who understand Washington and can write a compelling narrative that is sophisticated, accessible, and fascinating to general readers. Whenever possible, we have eliminated non-essential portions of books from the assigned reading. Because that was not always possible, however, students should learn to skip over less relevant passages that get too far into the weeds or shed little light on the way Washington works. Knowing when and how to skim is a good life skill to learn.

**Midterm Essay**

Midway through the course,students will be required write an essay of roughly six (6) pages that will ask them to apply one of themes of the course to a present-day policy debate. Although the paper may require a modest amount of research at news sites, the primary purpose is to give students a chance to apply what they have learned from readings, lectures and discussions to a current topic. The essays should be sent as an email attachment to TA Matt Guido (Penn students) or Prof. Pearlstein (Mason students) by the end of the combined spring break, which is Monday, March 21.

**Group Presentations**

Early in the course, students will be divided into nine presentation groups based on their political leanings and their interest in three topics: tech policy, poverty and racial justice. Prior to the start of the course, students will be asked to complete and return a brief questionnaire on their ideological leanings and policy interests and their topic preferences. The survey will be used to make the group assignments.

The task for each group will be to come up with an effective five-point policy proposal for a hypothetical presidential candidate on one of the three topics. The plan should be both politically viable and consistent with the group’s ideological leanings. During each of the final three class sessions, the three groups assigned to that week’s topic will give a 20-minute presentation explaining their proposals. Group members will then respond to questions from professors and other students. All group members should have at least some speaking role.

Groups will be evaluated on their presentations by the professors and a third guest judge drawn from the Washington political and policy community. Scores will be based on the thoroughness of research, the clarity with which they define the problem, the sophistication and originality of their proposal to solve it, the soundness of the policy and political logic and the quality of the oral and graphic presentation. For the presentations, groups may use up to 10 slides. Each group should provide a one-page printed summary of their plan that the rest of the class can use to follow along with the presentation.

Although groups should try to operate by consensus, each should select one student to moderate its deliberations, assign tasks and communicate with the teaching assistant assigned to assist that group.

Groups will meet during the lunch break on Jan. 28 and any subsequent lunch break they think necessary. They will also meet for two hours during both the Penn and Mason spring breaks at the normal class time (see schedule below). spring breakmandatoryplease If groups find it necessary to meet outside of class time, virtual sessions can be arranged by the teaching assistants.

By Feb. 25, groups should submit to teaching assistants a rough outline of their policy proposal and a work plan, with individual assignments, for how the proposal will be researched and turned into a polished presentation.

Each group will receive a grade and a detailed written evaluation of its presentation prior to the next class session.

**Final Policy Memos**

For their final paper, each individual student will write his or her own 15-page “policy memo” (including charts and graphs) on the topic of their group’s presentation. Like the presentation, the memos should define the problem, outline a five-point plan for solving it and include a discussion of the policy and political tradeoffs and logic behind the plan. This memo need not be the same as the presentation group plan. Rather, this memo should reflect the student’s individual concerns, policy preferences and political calculus—not necessarily those of the entire group. Significantly, these memos can also incorporate feedback to the group presentations, as well as additional thought and research. Criteria for the papers will be the same as for the presentation. Papers will be due 10 days after the group presentation. Hard copies can be brought to the final class or sent as an email attachment to Matt Guido (Penn students) or Prof. Pearlstein (Mason students) by May 2.

**Class Discussions and Free Expression**

Discussion and debate are at the heart of this course, and the course will only be successful if all students contribute to that discourse. Fully 20% of each student’s grade will be determined by the quality and quantity of your class participation.

Courses about public policy and politics inevitably involve sensitive and controversial topics about which reasonable people disagree. Students are likely to read or hear opinions that are different from their own. Part of becoming an educated person is to learn how to engage with divergent perspectives. Thus, in class and during group discussions, all students should feel free to express thoughts and opinions that may be at odds with those of professors or other students, or which challenge currently prevailing social views. The only requirement is that everyone try to express their viewpoints as best they can and be respectful of the diversity of values, opinions, and reasoned arguments of others in the class. We are all trying to formulate our settled positions. Any student unwilling to accept these basic rules of free, open and respectful discussion should not enroll in this course.

**Course Evaluation**

**Quizzes 20%**

**Class Participation 20%**

**Midterm Essay 20%**

**Group Presentation 20%**

**Policy Memo 20%**

**Class Schedule**

**Jan. 14**  **No Class Session**

**Jan. 21 Introduction (Noon-2)**

Online Zoom session for both Penn and Mason students

“Reading” Assignment:

Movie: “All the Way,” directed by Jay Roach (see Blackboard and Canvas for details on how to access)

**Jan. 28 Lyndon Johnson and the Civil Rights Act of 1957**

Reading:

Robert Caro, *Master of the Senate, The Years of Lyndon Johnson*, Ch. 8, 15, 19, 21, 25, 33, 34, 37-41 (Vintage)

Speaker: Elisabeth Bumiller, Washington Bureau Chief, New York Times

**Feb. 4 Ronald Reagan, Tip O’Neill and the Tax Reform Act of 1986**

Reading:

Jeffrey Birnbaum and Alan S. Murray, *Showdown at Gucci Gulch: Lawmakers, Lobbyists and the Unlikely Triumph of Tax Reform* (Vintage)

Speaker: Josh Bolten, former White House Chief of Staff (HW Bush) and president of Business Roundtable

**Feb. 11 John Kennedy and the Cuban Missile Crisis**

Reading:

Michael Dobbs, *One Minute to Midnight, Kennedy, Khrushchev and Castro on the Brink of Nuclear War,*  (Vintage), Chapters 1-5, 8-10, 13

Speaker: Tom Donilon, former National Security Adviser (Obama)

**Feb. 18**  **Bill Clinton Welfare Reform**

Reading:

Jason DeParle, *American Dream: Three Women, Ten Kids and the Nation’s Drive to End Welfare* (Penguin), Chapters 1, 4-9, 12, Epilogue

Speaker: Tom Daschle, former Senate Democratic/Majority Leader

**Feb. 25 George Bush, Joe Biden and Nomination of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court**

Reading:

Jane Mayer and Jill Abramson, *Strange Justice, the Selling of Clarence Thomas* (Houghton Mifflin)

Speaker: Neal Katyal, former Solicitor General (Obama) **[TBC]**

**Mar. 4 Bill Clinton, NAFTA and the China Trade Deal**

Reading:

John R. McArthur, *The Selling of Free Trade, NAFTA, Washington and the Subversion of American Democracy* (Univ. of California), Chapters 2-6

Jordan Weissman, “Waking the Sleeping Dragon,” Slate, Sept. 28, 2016 (on Canvas)

Speaker: Emily Haber, German Ambassador to the United States

**Mar. 11** **No In-Person Class Session** (Penn Spring Break)

**Presentation Groups Meet on Zoom Noon - 2 PM**

**Mar. 18** **No In-Person Class Session** (GMU Spring Break)

**Presentation Groups Meet on Zoom, Noon – 2 PM**

**Mar. 21 Midterm Papers due**

**Mar. 25 Barack Obama and the Affordable Care Act**

Reading:

Jonathan Cohn, *The Ten-Year War*, *Obamacare and the Unfinished Crusade for Universal Coverage*, Ch. 9-17 (St. Martin’s Press)

Speaker: Neera Tanden, former president, Center for American Progress, adviser to HHS Secretary (Obama),

White House Staff Secretary (Biden) **(TBC)**

**April 1 George Bush, Barack Obama and the Auto Bailout (2009)**

Reading:

Steven Rattner, *Overhaul, An Insider’s Account of the Obama Administration’s Emergency Rescue of the Auto Industry* (Mariner)

Speaker: Tim Geithner, former Secretary of Treasury (Obama)

**April 8 Group Presentations: Tech Policy: Privacy, Decency & Disinformation**

Reading: Rana Foroohar, Don’t Be Evil (Currency)

**April 15 Group Presentations: Poverty**

Reading:

Isabel Sawhill, *The Forgotten Americans* (Yale) (Ch. 1-5)

**April 22** **Group Presentations: Affirmative Action, Reparations and Racial Justice**

Readings:

Ta-Nahisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations,” *The* *Atlantic,* June, 2014

David Frum, “The Impossibility of Reparations,” The Atlantic, June 2014

Nicholas Lemann, “Can Affirmative Action Survive,” *The New Yorker*, July 26, 2021

Kimberly Reyes, “Affirmative Action Shouldn’t Be About Diversity,” *The Atlantic*, Dec. 27, 2018

Amy Wax, “The Perpetual Reign of Racial Preferences,” *Law and Liberty*, August 12, 20

**After Final Class: Visit to Capitol followed by BBQ at professors’ residences [TBC]**

**April 29 Wrap-up and Course Evaluation (Noon –2)**

In person on Fairfax campus for Mason students, Horizon Hall, Room **[TBD]**

Streaming on Zoom for Penn students

**May 3 Last of Policy Memos Due**

**May 6** **No Class Session**.

**ABOUT THIS COURSE:** This course is funded in part by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) Paideia Program at Penn, which serves as a hub for civic dialogue in undergraduate education. SNF Paideia designated courses examine the theory and practice of dialogue across differences from diverse disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives. They also explore the interplay among dialogue, citizenship, service, as well as individual and community wellness. Collectively, they are intended to provide students with the scholarly and applied knowledge, skills, ethical orientations, and experiences necessary for integrating their personal, professional, and civic identities – that is, for “educating the whole person.” You can get more involved at <https://snfpaideia.upenn.edu>.

We are also indebted to Penn’s Biden Center and its staff for making it possible for us to use their fabulous facility.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**: If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodation, please see your school’s professor on the first week of class. Mason students should also contact the Disability Resource Center at 703-993-2474. Penn. students should contact Student Disabilities Services. at https://wlrc.vpul.upenn.edu/sds/.

**HONOR CODE:**

1. No help may be given or received by students when taking quizzes, test or examinations, unless the instructor specifically permits.

2. All work submitted to fulfill course requirements is to be solely the product of the individual(s) whose name(s) appear on it. Except with permission of the instructor, no recourse is to be had to projects, papers, lab reports or any other written work prepared by another student.

3. Except with permission of the instructor, no paper or work of any type submitted in fulfillment of the requirements of another course may be used a second time to satisfy a requirement of this course.

4. No assistance is to be obtained from commercial organizations that sell or lease research help or written papers.

5. With respect to all written work, proper footnotes and attribution are required. Plagiarism is a violation of academic and intellectual integrity.