



# The Policymaking Process



**Course Information**  
PSCI 4370  
The Policymaking Process

**Spring 2026**  
Tuesdays 6:30-9:30 PM

## Faculty Contact Information

**Instructor of record:** **Derek O’Leary, Ph.D.**  
Email Address: [Derek.O’Leary@UTDallas.edu](mailto:Derek.O’Leary@UTDallas.edu)  
Office hours: Tues. to Thurs. from 5 to 6 PM and by appointment

**Lecturer** **Professor Virginia Huth, MPP**  
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Office hours: By appointment

**Lecturer:** **Professor John Piazza, JD**  
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**Lecturer:** **Professor William Shute, JD**  
Email Address: [William.Shute@UTDallas.edu](mailto:William.Shute@UTDallas.edu)  
Office hours: By appointment

We enthusiastically encourage you to meet with the faculty in office hours throughout the semester. Every instructor is available to meet by appointment, either individually or with a group of students, to discuss the course as well as your academic and career development. Please reach out to faculty by email to schedule a time to meet virtually or in-person.

*Note:* Please use only your University of Texas at Dallas account to email Archer Center faculty.

## Course Description

*Course overview:* This course introduces you to the federal policymaking process. Over the span of the semester, you will work closely with each of the four instructors to examine how policy is influenced, debated, formulated, and implemented. Through a series of modules focused on civil society, Congress, and the executive branch, you will expand your knowledge of the federal policymaking process and policy career pathways while developing a range of skills through practical simulations.

*Course format:* Throughout the semester, you will be in one working group that focuses on a policy area: Education, Health, Justice, or Technology. Your working group will proceed through a series of four modules, each focused on a different component of the policymaking process: advocacy, Congress, executive rulemaking, and federal program implementation. During each of these three-week modules, you will work directly with the instructor who oversees that module.

## Learning Objectives

By the end of the semester, you will be able to:

- Explain the structure and dynamics of the federal policymaking process.
- Demonstrate in-depth knowledge and articulate nuanced analysis of a significant policy issue.
- Apply critical thinking and analytical skills to crafting effective written and verbal communication about federal policy.

## Working Groups:

Working Group	Policy Area	Law
1	Education	<a href="#">H.R. 5363 - The Future Act.</a>
2	Technology	<a href="#">Combating Sexual Harassment in Science Act enacted in the CHIPS and Science Act.</a>
3	Healthcare	No Surprises Act, within <a href="#">H.R.133 - Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021.</a>
4	Justice	Violence against Women Reauthorization Act of 2022, within <a href="#">H.R.2471 - Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022.</a>

## Calendar of Classes and Assignments

All classes meet on Tuesday from 6:30 to 9:30 PM at the Archer Center. The readings and other materials for each session are posted to the class eLearning site.

SESSION	DATE	READING	ASSIGNMENT
Introductory session	January 22, 2:30 to 4 PM at Kluge Center	We will distribute pocket Constitutions in class.	None
<b>Advocacy</b> <b>Professor Shute</b>			
SESSION	WORKING GROUP DATES	CORE READING	ASSIGNMENT

Session 1: The Concept of Advocacy	WG1: 1/27	WG2: 3/31	WG3: 3/10	WG4: 2/17	John W. Kingdon, <i>Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies</i> , Chapter 4 excerpt (2003).	Complete reading before class.
Session 2: Evaluating the Efficacy of Advocacy	WG1: 2/03	WG2: 4/07	WG3: 3/17	WG4: 2/24	<a href="#">“Using the Composite Logic Model To Articulate an Advocacy Strategy or Theory of Change”</a>	Complete reading before class.
Session 3: Developing an Advocacy Strategy	WG1: 2/10	WG2: 4/14	WG3: 3/24	WG4: 3/03	Thomas F. Sheridan, <i>Helping the Good Do Better: How a White Hat Lobbyist Advocates for Social Change</i> , Chapter 3 (2019).	Complete reading before class.  Prepare for oral presentation of draft advocacy strategy  <b>Assignment due Sunday: Written advocacy strategy memo</b>
<b><i>Simulation: Deliver oral presentation of Advocacy Strategy Plan, including identification of potential obstacles and other considerations, and craft advocacy strategy memo.</i></b>						
<b>Congress</b> <b>Professor Piazza</b>						
SESSION	WORKING GROUP DATES				CORE READING	ASSIGNMENT
Session 1: The Legislative Process	WG1: 2/17	WG2: 1/27	WG3: 3/31	WG4: 3/10	<a href="#">The Legislative Process</a> (Congress.gov). ~ 30 minutes.  <a href="#">“Introduction to the Legislative Process in the U.S. Congress”</a> (CRS, 2025). ~30 minutes.  <a href="#">“Committee</a>	Complete reading before class.

					<a href="#">Types and Roles</a> " (CRS, 2025). ~15 minutes.  <i>Optional:</i>  Congressional Management Foundation, <a href="#">State of the Congress</a> (2024).	
Session 2: Committees	WG1: 2/24	WG2: 2/03	WG3: 4/07	WG4: 3/17	Review " <a href="#">Federal Legislative History: A Research Guide for Congressional Staff</a> " (CRS). ~ 30 minutes.  <a href="#">"The Committee Markup Process in the House of Representatives"</a> (CRS). ~ 45 minutes.	Complete reading before class, learn about your member persona, and examine the legislation.
Session 3: Markup	WG1: 3/03	WG2: 2/10	WG3: 4/14	WG4: 3/24		Complete mark-up hearing memo and prepare for simulation.
<b><i>Simulation: As your member persona on a congressional committee, you will write a markup memo and participate with your caucus in the markup of a piece of legislation.</i></b>						
<h2 style="text-align: center;">Rulemaking</h2> <h3 style="text-align: center;">Professor Huth</h3>						
SESSION	WORKING GROUP DATES				CORE READING	ASSIGNMENT
Session 1: Introduction to Federal Rulemaking	WG1: 3/10	WG2: 2/17	WG3: 1/27	WG4: 3/31	<a href="#">"An Overview of Federal Regulations and the Rulemaking Process"</a> (CRS, 2021). ~10 minutes.	Complete reading before class.

					<a href="#">“The Federal Rulemaking Process: An Overview”</a> (CRS, 2013). ~60 minutes.  <a href="#">RegMap and Report</a> , Office of Management and Budget. ~15 minutes.  <a href="#">GAO Issue Summary on Federal Rulemaking</a> . ~5 minutes.  <a href="#">“Regulation: A Primer,”</a> The Mercatus Center (2012), pgs. 1-9. ~15 minutes.  <a href="#">“The End of Chevron Deference,”</a> American Bar Association, (August 2024). ~10 minutes.	
Session 2: Notice and comment	WG1: 3/17	WG2: 2/24	WG3: 2/03	WG4: 4/07	Federal rulemaking documents (varies by policy group).	Read federal rulemaking documents and prepare comment on proposed rulemaking.
Session 3: Rulemaking	WG1: 3/24	WG2: 3/03	WG3: 2/10	WG4: 4/14		Prepare for rulemaking Simulation
<b>Simulation: Write memo about notice of proposed rulemaking and determine federal rulemaking action.</b>						

# Implementation

## Dr. O’Leary

SESSION	WORKING GROUP DATES				CORE READING	ASSIGNMENT
Session 1: Who is government?	WG1: 3/31	WG2: 3/10	WG3: 2/17	WG4: 1/27	<p><a href="#">“The Study of Administration,”</a> (Woodrow Wilson, 1887). ~45 minutes.</p> <p><a href="#">“The Rise of the Bureaucratic State,”</a> (James Q. Wilson, 1975). ~45 minutes.</p> <p>Paul Light, <a href="#">“Catch-22 Government: Federal Performance in Peril,”</a> in <i>Public Service and Good Governance for the Twenty-First Century</i> (2020), pgs. 14-40. ~45 minutes</p>	Complete reading before class.
Session 2: How effective is government?	WG1: 4/07	WG2: 3/17	WG3: 2/24	WG4: 2/03	<p>Kathryn Newcomer, <a href="#">“Evaluating the Performance of Public Programs,”</a> in <i>Handbook of Public Administration</i> (2015). ~45 minutes</p> <p><a href="#">“Evidence-Based Policymaking: Practices to Help Manage and Assess the Results of Federal Efforts,”</a> skim pgs. 1-46 (GAO, 2023).</p> <p><a href="#">“Opportunities to</a></p>	Complete reading before class.



					<a href="#">Reduce Fragmentation, Overlap, and Duplication,”</a> skim pgs. 1-26 (GAO, 2025).  <a href="#">“The How we Need Now: A Capacity Agenda for 2025 and Beyond”</a> (Niskanen Center, 2024).	
Session 3: How can government perform better?	WG1: 4/14	WG2: 3/24	WG3: 3/03	WG4: 2/10	<a href="#">“How to use the Fishbone Tool for Root Cause Analysis.”</a>  <a href="#">“Five Whys Tool for Root Cause Analysis”</a>  <a href="#">“A Practical Guide to Creating a Pareto Chart as a Quality Improvement Tool”</a>  <a href="#">“Guidance for Performing Failure Mode and Effects Analysis with Performance Improvement Projects”</a>	Review root cause analysis materials and prepare for simulation.
<b><i>Simulation: Perform a team-based root cause analysis of your federal program and present findings and recommendations through a brief presentation and memo.</i></b>						

## Assignments

For each module, you will receive a grade out of 25 points. This is based on 1) your engagement in those three sessions and 2) completion of the simulation and deliverable for that module. Please consult the detailed rubric for each module in eLearning. Based on your working group, the due dates for each module will vary.



Advocacy simulation: 25 points

Congressional simulation: 25 points

Executive Rulemaking simulation: 25 points

Agency Implementation simulation: 25 points

### Attendance policy:

We expect you to arrive on time and ready to participate fully in class. If you are unable to attend class or may be delayed due to personal or professional circumstances beyond your control, please inform Dr. O'Leary as soon as possible prior to class. Voluntary attendance at professional events and personal travel are not excused absences.

Unexcused absences or lateness will diminish your grade. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to promptly contact your instructor for that module and ask how you can catch up.

## Grading Policy

Total points	Requirement
100	Individual assignments (20 points) and engagement (5 points) for each module

Dr. O'Leary is the instructor of record for this course. Your neighborhood lecturer will assess your work and report grades to Dr. O'Leary, who compiles and reviews the midterm and final grades for all students.

Midterm grades will be posted by **March 16, 2016**. Final grades will be reported to your home UT System institution by **May 16, 2026**, and posted in accordance with their respective grade submission deadlines.

*Note:* UT System campuses vary in their use of the +/- grading scale. Grades for students enrolled at campuses that do not follow this system will be reported as follows: A (90-100), B (80-89), C (70-79), D (60-69), F (59 or lower).

# Course Policies

## Classroom Citizenship

All students and faculty must adhere to the Guiding Principles for Archer Fellows.

1. Archer Fellows represent not only themselves, but their home institutions, the Archer Center, the UT System, and the State of Texas.
2. The Archer Center expects all Archer Fellows to abide by the highest standards of conduct, demonstrating the utmost integrity, character, respect, and professionalism.
3. The Archer Center is committed to ensuring an enriching cohort and learning environment by selecting students with varying interests, fields of study, and political perspectives.
4. The Archer Center is committed to bringing together students who value constructive and respectful dialogue among individuals and groups with varying ideas.
5. Archer Fellows are expected to respect varying political, personal, and religious beliefs within the cohort and throughout the program.
6. As an educational program, the Archer Center sees all aspects of the Archer Fellowship experience as an opportunity for learning, from the application and internship search process to the academic, networking, professional, and fellowship opportunities provided throughout the semester.
7. The Archer Center and Archer Fellows have a shared commitment to open, honest, and timely communication.

## Class Recordings

Unless the AccessAbility Resource Center has approved the student to record the instruction, students are expressly prohibited from recording any part of this course. Recordings may not be published, reproduced, or shared with those not in the class, or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved AccessAbility Resource Center accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

## Reporting Sexual Misconduct and Sharing Confidential Information

Students considering sharing personal information in email or in person should be aware that all University staff, faculty, teaching assistants/associates, and graduate/research assistants are required by UT Dallas policy to report information about sexual misconduct to the UT Dallas Title IX Coordinator. Per university policy, Sexual Misconduct Policy - [UTDBP3102](#), faculty have been informed that they must identify the student to the UT Dallas Title IX Coordinator. Students who wish to have confidential discussions of incidents related to sexual harassment or sexual misconduct should contact the following confidential resources, including, but not limited to:

1. the Student Counseling Center (972-883-2575 or the 24/7 Crisis Hotline at 972-UTD-TALK or 972-883-8255),
2. a health care provider in the Student Health Center (972-883-2747),
3. a clergyperson (or other legally recognized religious advisor) of their choice, or
4. an off-campus resource (e.g., a rape crisis center, doctor, psychologist).

Students who are sexually assaulted, harassed, or are victims of sexual misconduct, domestic violence, or stalking, are encouraged to directly report these incidents to the Title IX Coordinator by making a [report](#) online or by calling the Title IX Coordinator at 972-883-2306. Students may also contact the [UTD Police Department \(UTDPD\)](#) for emergency assistance; criminal reporting and investigation; information or assistance regarding protective orders or forensic sexual assault exams; or to request a police escort. In case of emergency, call 911. For non-emergency situations, students can reach the UT Dallas Police Department by calling 972-883-2222. For more information about available support and resources, students can visit the [Office of Institutional Compliance \(Support Services & Resources\)](#) webpage.

## Pregnancy and Parenting

UT Dallas is committed to providing support and resources for pregnant and parenting students, faculty, and staff in accordance with Title IX, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Texas Education Code Section 51.982, and other applicable federal and state laws. Pregnant and parenting students are encouraged to complete the [Pregnant and Parenting Self-Identification Form](#) located on the [Office of Institutional Compliance's website](#). Submitting this form allows for a coordinated University effort to help facilitate support for pregnant and parenting students, such as early registration for parenting students and accommodations for pregnant students. For more information about the services and resources available to pregnant and parenting students, visit the [Pregnant & Parenting Resources page](#) and the [Student Pregnancy and Parenting Nondiscrimination Policy](#).

## Nondiscrimination

UT Dallas prohibits all forms of discrimination (including harassment) based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, national origin, disability, genetic information, or veteran status. UT Dallas further prohibits all forms of sex-based discrimination (including sex-based harassment). Students who believe they have been discriminated against or harassed in violation of University policy, or who believe that someone else has been discriminated against or harassed, are encouraged to directly report these incidents to the Office of Institution Compliance by making a [report](#) online or by calling the Office of Institution Compliance at 972-883-2306. For more information, see the University's [Nondiscrimination Policy](#) and [Sexual Misconduct Policy](#). For additional information about available support and resources, see the Office of [Institutional Compliance \(Support Services & Resources\)](#) webpage.

## Technical Support

If you experience any issues with your UT Dallas account, contact the UT Dallas [Office of Information Technology Help Desk](#) or call 972-883-2911.

UT Dallas provides eLearning technical support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week through [UTD eLearning Helpdesk](#). The services include a toll-free telephone number, 1-866-588-3192, for

immediate assistance, Educational Technology Services (eLearning) is available by [email](#) to request services. They also have an online chat service.

## Student Conduct and Discipline

The University of Texas System [Regents' Rule 50101](#) and UT Dallas have rules and regulations for the orderly and efficient conduct of their business. It is the responsibility of each student and each student organization to be knowledgeable about the rules and regulations which govern student conduct and activities. General information on student conduct and discipline is contained in the Student Complaints Resources within the online [UT Dallas Undergraduate Catalog](#), and the [Graduate Catalog](#).

UT Dallas administers student discipline within the procedures of recognized and established due process. Procedures are defined and described in the ([Student Code of Conduct, UTDSP5003](#)). Copies of these rules and regulations are available to students in the Office of Community Standards and Conduct, where staff members are available to assist students in interpreting the rules and regulations (SSB 4.400, 972-883-6330) and online at [their webpage](#).

A student at the University neither loses their rights nor escapes the responsibilities of citizenship. He or she is expected to obey federal, state, and local laws as well as the Regents' Rules, university regulations, and administrative rules. Students are subject to discipline for violating its standards of conduct whether such conduct takes place on or off campus, or whether civil or criminal penalties are also imposed for such conduct.

## Social Media Use

The [Student Code of Conduct](#) includes behaviors conducted via any digital platform. Students may not use any digital platform to seek or provide unauthorized assistance for any assignment done for academic credit. Students may not use any digital platform to impersonate or represent any person other than themselves. Please consult with your instructor regarding authorized assistance.

## Academic Integrity

The faculty expects from its students a high-level of responsibility and academic honesty. Because the value of an academic degree depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student for that degree, it is imperative that a student demonstrates a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work. Additional information is provided within their website.

**Academic Dishonesty:** Academic dishonesty can occur in relation to any type of work submitted for academic credit or as a requirement for a class. It can include individual work or a group project. Academic dishonesty includes plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, and collaboration/collusion. In order to avoid academic dishonesty, it is important for students to fully understand the expectations of their professors. This is best accomplished through asking clarifying questions if an individual does not completely understand the requirements of an assignment.

Additional information related to academic dishonesty and tips on how to avoid dishonesty may be found [on their website](#).

## Military-Affiliated Students

At the University of Texas at Dallas, we are committed to supporting our military and veteran students and their spouses and dependents as they pursue their academic goals. Recognizing the unique challenges faced by those who have served, we strive to create a welcoming and supportive environment. Please contact your instructor if you are on active duty, called to serve, or if any aspect of your current or past military service, or your family situation, makes it challenging to meet the course requirements or affects your academic progress. Your instructor is committed to supporting you and will work with you to address any complications.

The Military and Veteran Center ([MVC](#)) offers a range of resources and referrals to campus and community partners, ensuring that our military and veteran students can access the assistance they need. Whether it is academic advising, financial aid, or personal support, the MVC is dedicated to helping our students succeed and thrive in their educational journey.

## Student Grievance Procedures

Procedures for student grievances are found in the university policy [UTDSP5005](#). In attempting to resolve any student grievance regarding disputes over grades, application of degree plan, graduation/degree program requirements, and thesis/and dissertation committee, adviser actions and/or decisions, evaluations, and/or other fulfillments of academic responsibility, it is the obligation of the student first to make a serious effort to resolve the matter with the instructor, supervisor, administrator, or committee with whom the grievance originated.

## Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The University of Texas at Dallas is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. The syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. If you are seeking classroom accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (2008), you are required to register with the [AccessAbility Resource Center \(ARC\)](#), located in the Administration Building, Suite 2.224. They can be reached by [email](#), calling 972-883-2098, or at their [website](#). To receive academic accommodations for this class, please register and request services by completing the Request for Services form with the proper documentation and meeting with the Director of ARC at the beginning of the semester.

## Religious Holy Days

UT Dallas will excuse a student from class or other required activities, including examinations and travel time, for the observance of a religious holy day for a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property tax under Section 11.20, of the *Texas Tax Code*.

Students are encouraged to notify the instructor or activity sponsor as soon as possible regarding the absence, preferably in advance of the assignment.

Excused students will be allowed to take missed exams or complete assignments within a reasonable time after the absence: a period equal to the length of the absence, up to a maximum of one week. A student who notifies the instructor and completes any missed exam or

assignment may not be penalized for the absence. A student who fails to complete the exam or assignment within the prescribed period may receive a failing grade for that exam or assignment.

If a student or an instructor disagrees about the nature of the absence [i.e., for the purpose of observing a religious holy day] or if there is similar disagreement about whether the student has been given a reasonable time to complete any missed assignments or examinations, either the student or the instructor may request a ruling from the school's vice or associate dean, who serve as the President's designees for these rules. The vice or associate deans must take into account the legislative intent of *Texas Education Code* 51.911(b), and the student and instructor will abide by the decision of the vice or associate dean.

This information is also included in the online UT Dallas [Undergraduate Catalog](#), and the [Graduate Catalog](#).