



Inside Washington: Federal Policy Making from The Ground Up

Course Information

PA 8330

Inside Washington: Federal Policy Making from The Ground Up

Summer 2026

Tuesday or Thursday, 6:30 to 9:30 PM

Professor Bill Shute

Professor Contact Information

Professor: Bill Shute
Email Address: William.Shute@utdallas.edu
Office Hours: By appointment

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

Course Description

The course will focus on key elements of federal policymaking through assigned readings, classroom discussion, multimedia sources, case studies, external speakers, written assignments, and a final group exercise. After an initial review of the separation of powers and original constitutional intent, the course will delve into federal policymaking by examining historical and contemporary cases, including the roles of internal and external actors.

Student Learning Objectives

Upon completion of the course, you will be able to:

- Understand the structure of the federal government and the operation of federal policymaking.
- Analyze the various factors that influence and complicate federal policymaking.
- Devise an effective advocacy strategy and reflect critically on ethical considerations at stake in policy advocacy.

Course materials

All readings are available through eLearning.

In addition, you must read *Helping the Good Do Better: How a White Hat Lobbyist Advocates for Social Change* by Thomas Sheridan (TwelveBooks, 2019).

Calendar of Sessions and Assignments

Each class meets weekly for three hours at the Archer Center or other locations as noted. You have been assigned to one of two groups for the class.

Orientation: Course Introduction	
Group 1	May 27, 9 to 12 PM at the Kluge Center
Group 2	May 27, 9 to 12 PM at the Kluge Center
Preparation	Kingdon, John. <i>Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies</i> . New York: Longman, 1994. Chapter 4, pp. 83-89. Igan, Deniz, Mishra, Prachi, and Tressel, Thierry. A Fistful of Dollars: Lobbying and the Financial Crisis . NBER Macroeconomics Annual, 2012.

Assignment	None
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Week 1: Constitutional Foundation of Policymaking

Group 1	June 2, 6:30 to 9:30 PM
Group 2	June 4, 6:30 to 9:30 PM
Reading	<p>US Constitution, Articles I-III.</p> <p><i>How Congress Works</i>, http://www.aacom.org/advocacy/advocacy-resources/how-congress-works.</p> <p>“Introduction to the Legislative Process in the U.S. Congress” (CRS, 2025)</p> <p>Justice Gorsuch concurring opinion in Supreme Court of the United States Nos. 24–1287 and 25–250. <i>Learning Resource v. Trump</i>. February 20, 2026.</p> <p><i>Supplemental reading:</i></p> <p>Smith, Hedrick. <i>The Power Game: How Washington Works</i>. New York: Random House, 1988. Chapter 6, “Life Inside the Beltway.”</p>
Assignment	None

Week 2: Policy development across the branches of government

Group 1	June 9, 6:30 to 9:30 PM
Group 2	June 11, 6:30 to 9:30 PM
Reading	<p>US Constitution, Articles I-III.</p> <p>James Madison. Federalist Paper No. 51, (Feb 6, 1788).</p> <p>Noonan, Peggy. “A Republic, but Can We Keep It?” <i>Wall Street Journal</i>, Oct. 23, 2025.</p> <p><i>Supplemental reading:</i></p> <p>Furlong, Scott R. and Kerwin. Cornelius M. “Interest Group Participation in Rule Making: A Decade of Change.” <i>Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory</i>, July 2005.</p> <p>Goodwin, Liz. “Why Congress keeps handing Trump its power.” <i>Washington Post</i>, March 10, 2026.</p> <p>VanSickle, Abbie. “For Landmark Test of Executive Power, Echoes of a 1930s Supreme Court Battle.” <i>New York Times</i>, December 7, 2025.</p>

Assignment	None
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Week 3: Separation of Powers	
Group 1	June 16, 6:30 to 9:30 PM
Group 2	June 18, 6:30 to 9:30 PM
Preparation	<p>Reading:</p> <p>Kessler, Charles R. <i>What Separation of Powers Means for Constitutional Government</i>. Heritage Foundation First Principles Series. 2007.</p> <p><i>Supplemental reading:</i></p> <p>Rehnquist, William H. "Judicial Independence Dedicated to Chief Justice Harry L. Carrico: Symposium Remarks." <i>University of Richmond Law Review</i>. 2004. 38: 579–596.</p> <p>Barnes, Robert. "Roberts Recalls Another Chief Justice and Reveals a Little About Himself." <i>The Washington Post</i>. November 23, 2015.</p> <p>Caldeira, Gregory A. "Public Opinion and The U.S. Supreme Court: FDR's Court-Packing Plan." <i>The American Political Science Review</i>. Vol. 81, No. 4 (Dec. 1987), pp. 1139-1153.</p>
Assignment	None

Week 4: Advocacy and Coalitions	
Group 1	June 23, 6:30 to 9:30 PM
Group 2	June 25, 8 to 9:30 PM
Reading	<p>Sheridan, Thomas F. <i>Helping the Good Do Better: How a White Hat Lobbyist Advocates for Social Change</i>. TwelveBooks, 2019.</p> <p>Listen to episode 1.7 of the podcast, <i>80-Proof Politics</i>, "Helping the Good Do Better through social advocacy with Tom Sheridan..."</p>
Assignment	Prepare to discuss Sheridan book in class.

Week 5: Policy and Public Perception	
Group 1	June 30, 6:30 to 9:30 PM
Group 2	July 2, 6:30 to 9:30 PM
Reading	Jay Rosen, <i>Why Political Coverage Is Broken</i> . Jay Rosen's Press Think, August 26, 2011.

	<p>Schultz, David. <i>What Is a Fact? The Scientific versus Political Definition</i>. The Hill. March 11, 2017.</p> <p><i>Supplemental reading:</i></p> <p><i>Elections 101 - The Role of Social Media in U.S. Elections</i>. A moderated conversation with Professor Patrick Egan, NYU. February 28, 2020.</p> <p>Obar, Jonathan A., Zube, Paul, and Lampe, Clifford. <i>Advocacy 2.0: An Analysis of How Advocacy Groups in the United States Perceive and Use Social Media as Tools for Facilitating Civic Engagement and Collective Action</i>. Journal of Information Policy, 2012.</p>
Assignment	None

Week 6: Deeper Exploration of Policy Development			
Group 1	July 7, 6:30 to 9:30 PM		
Group 2	July 9, 6:30 to 9:30 PM		
Reading	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p><i>Group 1:</i></p> <p>History and Timeline of the Affordable Care Act. Ehealthinsurance.com. October 24, 2020.</p> <p>Reynolds, Molly E. <i>On the ACA, Don't Just Watch Congress – Watch Interest Groups, Too</i>. Brookings Institution. March 8, 2017.</p> <p>Eaton, Joe. Lobbyists Swarm Capitol to Influence Health Reform. Public Integrity. May 19, 2014.</p> <p>“7 Ways to Modernize Your Government and Public Affairs Teams” (2020).</p> <p>Talking Points memo, Example 1.</p> <p>Talking Points memo, Example 2.</p> </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p><i>Group 2:</i></p> <p>Parfomak, Paul W., et. al. <i>Keystone XL Pipeline Project: Key Issues</i>. Congressional Research Service. December 2, 2013.</p> <p>Manga, Vipal. <i>What is the Keystone XL Pipeline and Why Did President Biden Issue an Executive Order to Block It?</i> The Wall Street Journal. January 21, 2021.</p> <p>“7 Ways to Modernize Your Government and Public Affairs Teams” (2020).</p> <p>Talking Points memo, Example 1.</p> <p>Talking Points memo, Example 2.</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p><i>Group 1:</i></p> <p>History and Timeline of the Affordable Care Act. Ehealthinsurance.com. October 24, 2020.</p> <p>Reynolds, Molly E. <i>On the ACA, Don't Just Watch Congress – Watch Interest Groups, Too</i>. Brookings Institution. March 8, 2017.</p> <p>Eaton, Joe. Lobbyists Swarm Capitol to Influence Health Reform. Public Integrity. May 19, 2014.</p> <p>“7 Ways to Modernize Your Government and Public Affairs Teams” (2020).</p> <p>Talking Points memo, Example 1.</p> <p>Talking Points memo, Example 2.</p>	<p><i>Group 2:</i></p> <p>Parfomak, Paul W., et. al. <i>Keystone XL Pipeline Project: Key Issues</i>. Congressional Research Service. December 2, 2013.</p> <p>Manga, Vipal. <i>What is the Keystone XL Pipeline and Why Did President Biden Issue an Executive Order to Block It?</i> The Wall Street Journal. January 21, 2021.</p> <p>“7 Ways to Modernize Your Government and Public Affairs Teams” (2020).</p> <p>Talking Points memo, Example 1.</p> <p>Talking Points memo, Example 2.</p>
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Assignment	<p>Talking points memo due:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friday, July 10 for group 1 • Sunday, July 12 for group 2 		

Week 7: Evaluating Policy	
Group 1	July 14, 6:30 to 9:30 PM
Group 2	July 16, 8 to 9:30 PM
Reading	<p><i>Policy Basics: Introduction to the Federal Budget Process.</i> Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Updated October 24, 2022.</p> <p><i>Supplemental reading:</i></p> <p>Rosenthal, Lawrence. <i>Approach-Avoid: Understanding the Tea Party and the Presidential Election of 2012.</i> The Huffington Post. September 26, 2012.</p> <p>Lang, Marissa, and Kindy, Kimberly. <i>Destructive protests by anarchists and extremists signal divided left as Biden administration begins.</i> The Washington Post. January 23, 2021.</p> <p>Ackley, Kate and McMinn, Sean. <i>K Street Reinvents Itself in the Era of Trump.</i> Roll Call. February 15, 2018.</p> <p>Marcus, David. <i>From Occupy To AOC: The Rise Of The New Progressives.</i> Forbes, June 2019. Part 1, 2, and 3.</p>
Assignment	<i>Due Sunday, July 19:</i> Preparation for In-class Appropriations Committee Markup

Week 8: Congressional Budget Committee Markup	
Group 1	Monday, July 20, 6:30 to 9:30 PM
Group 2	Monday, July 20, 6:30 to 9:30 PM
Reading	None
Assignment	Prepare for committee markup simulation

Attendance and Participation

You must prepare for class, arrive on time, and actively participate during class. In particular, you are expected to read the assigned material in advance, report on assigned readings, and ask questions of external speakers. Therefore, overall class participation will be a significant part of our class environment. After each class, I will assess each student's participation. Given the importance of class participation, you must give advance notice if you will miss a class, and supplemental work may be assigned.

You are expected to attend all class sessions. If you are unable to attend a session, it is your responsibility to give advance notice as soon as possible. Excused absences are limited

generally to personal illness, an emergency related to an immediate family member, or a religious holiday. Your internship or related events are not considered excuses to miss class.

Each unexcused absence will reduce your final course grade by 5-points (e.g. if you earn a 94 but have one unexcused absence, I will record an 89; if you have two unexcused absences, I will record an 84; and so on).

Assignments

Writing assignments consist of critical analyses, a talking-points memo, and material prepared for a class simulation. Papers must be single-spaced, 12-point font on single-sided paper with one-inch margins. The final presentation materials must be coordinated in advance with the professor.

Writing assignments must be submitted on eLearning by midnight on the due date. Writing assignments must be submitted by midnight of the posted deadline. Late submissions will be subject to grade reduction. A one-time exception may be permitted at the professor's discretion, if coordinated in advance of the deadline and submitted shortly thereafter.

Grading Policy

Points	Assignment
20	Class participation
10	Weekly reading discussion
20	Talking Points memo
20	Sheridan book discussion
10	Appropriations Committee member profile
20	Appropriations Committee markup

Final grades will be reported to your home UT System institution by July 31, 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

I hope it goes without saying that we all must treat each other with courtesy and grace. We come from different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives, and they will affect how we understand and process our roles as interns, Fellows, and citizens of DC this semester. Being polite and thoughtful in our interactions with each other is absolutely required.

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](#).