POLI 2555
Approaches to Public Policy
Tuesday and Thursdays, 1:00-2:30 p.m.

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I   General Information

Instructor: Elsa Piersig
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II   Course Description

Public policy is at the heart of government action. Political actors, civil servants, interest groups, citizens, and the media all advocate for certain public policy goals and interests. However, governments' resources are limited, so these demands must be prioritized to set the public policy agenda. The competition for scarce government resources means that public policy and politics are interconnected, whether it be interest groups lobbying ministers or different branches competing to against each other for new funding within a department. This course examines approaches to public policy, the public policy-making process, and the interplay between policy making and politics. We start by examining different approaches and unpacking the public policy-making process from initiation to agenda-setting, policy formulation, legitimation, implementation, and evaluation. In the second half, we turn our attention to the key policy fields.

III   Course Format

The course is synchronous, in-person, and combines lectures and in-class group discussion activities.

IV   Learning Outcomes

1. **Professional Behaviour**: By the end of this course, you will be able to *practice* professional behaviour with an awareness of workplace expectations; appropriate formality for email communications; crediting the work of others; and time management and organization in arranging and leading meetings.

2. **Working with Feedback**: By the end of this course, you will be able to *identify* constructive feedback, judge what is needed to respond, and assess how you choose to integrate feedback into your work.

3. **Written Communication Skills**: By the end of this course, you should be able to *formulate* documents with clear and concise writing that is direct and active.

4. **Modeling a Policy Brief**: By the end of this course, you will be able to *produce* a policy brief and *synthesize* relevant evidence to analyze a contemporary issue in public policy and how it is connected core political institutions.

5. **Critical-Thinking**: By the end of this program of study, you will be able to *demonstrate* the five components of critical thinking, namely *explain* an issue, *assess* and *synthesize* evidence and underlying assumptions, *generate* a perspective or argument, and *develop* conclusions that logically flow from your argument.

6. **Content 1: Policy-Making Process and Approaches**: By the end of this course, you will be able to *differentiate* between the stages of the public policy-making process and different approaches to the study of public policy.

7. **Content 2: Major Public Policy Fields**: By the end of this course, you will be able to *identify* and *discuss* leading public policy fields and connected policy debates.

V   Texts

- Miljan, Lydia. *Public Policy in Canada*. 9th Edition. Toronto: Tophat. (Available online from the publisher here.) $67.68.
    - NOTE: Older editions of the textbook will also work).
- Additional readings as listed in the syllabus and posted on the course page.

VI   Evaluation at a Glance

Assignment/Course Component	*Assignment Due Date*	*Percentage*	*Running Total*
Participation	Throughout the semester	10%	10%
Syllabus Quiz (Quiz 1)	Friday, January 24, 2025	1%	11%
Worksheets/Exercises	Throughout the semester	10%	21%
Policy Brief: Policy Issue Overview	Friday, January 24, 2025	5%	26%
Policy Brief: Current State of Play	Friday, January 31, 2025	5%	31%
Bilateral Meeting 1	Friday, February 14, 2025	2%	33%
Policy Brief: Background and Context	Friday, February 14, 2025	5%	38%
Policy Brief: Policy Options	Friday, February 28, 2025	5%	43%
Policy Brief: Recommendations and Next Steps	Friday, March 14, 2025	5%	48%
Policy Brief	Friday, March 28, 2025	25%	73%
Reflection Assignment	Friday, April 4, 2025	5%	78%
Bilateral Meeting 2	Before the exam	2%	80%
Final Exam	Scheduled during the exam period	20%	100%

This course is designed to foster engagement and dialogue between learners and the course instructed in three ways:
1. Learners connect with the course instructor and each other through lecture, exercises/worksheets, and the two bilateral meetings (Bilateral Meeting 1 and 2).
2. The exercises/worksheets and Policy Brief submissions build off each other, providing learners with constructive feedback for upcoming submissions.
3. Learners can critically review their work from each submission of the Policy Brief components, and in the feedback inkshed exercise and the Reflection Assignment.

*** Remember, the course instructor is here to help! Please reach out through email, office hours, the Course Questions discussion forum, or schedule a meeting (make it a bi-lateral meeting by drafting up a few questions to serve as the agenda and satisfy a course assignment!).

VII   Course Evaluation in Detail

Participation – 10% of Final Grade – Ongoing (Weeks 1-12)

Learners earn participation by attending class and engaging with the lecture and group activities. All classes will include time for completing the worksheets and exercises and peer feedback sessions. Questions on course material and assignments are also welcome during lecture and group activities.

Worksheets and Exercises – 10% of Final Grade – Ongoing (Weeks 2-12)

There are ten worksheets and exercises over the course. Learners will be provided with time during class to work on the worksheets and exercises. The worksheets and exercises work through the five components of critical thinking skills and build towards the cumulative policy brief assignment. The schedule for all worksheets and exercises is listed in the Course Schedule below. Learners are expected to complete each worksheet and exercise and, if unable to attend a class, can still submit an attempt on Brightspace by 11:59pm on Thursdays.

Learners are asked to submit the completed worksheet/exercise in class or upload it a post about the exercise in an online discussion forum[1] within 24 hours of the lecture.

The worksheets and exercises are assessed out of 2: not completed (0); partially completed (1); and successfully completed (2). The instructor will provide more detailed feedback on the worksheets and on an 'as needed' basis for exercises (exercises will get discussion time in class).

Syllabus Quiz – 1% of Final Grade – Due Friday, January 24, 2025 (Week 3)

The Syllabus Quiz is a quick review of the course components and communication policies. The quiz must be completed to unlock the modules for Weeks 4 and up. Quizzes completed on time will receive 1% and all late submissions will result in a grade of 0.[2]

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[1] The exception is the Feedback Exercise. There will be a dropbox available for it to ensure privacy.

[2] The last day to register is January 17, 2025. All learners, regardless of registration date, will have until the end of the following week to complete the Syllabus Quiz.

Bilateral Meetings – 2% each of Final Grade – Due by end of Week 6 and by end of Term

Learners are required to schedule and attend **two bilateral meetings** (2% each) with the professor. The first should be before Reading Week and the second before the end of classes and the exam. These meetings are for introductions and discuss course material and *upcoming* assignments. *Meetings to review an assignment grade do not count* towards these meetings.

Learners are expected to lead the bilateral meeting by a) drawing up a brief agenda for the meeting, b) submitting it to Brightspace prior to the meeting, and c) ensuring all agenda items are covered in a timely fashion.

Policy Brief Assignment – 50% of Final Grade – Ongoing throughout the Semester

Policy briefs offer a general overview of a specific policy issue for decision-makers or public consumption. The documents can explain the policy issue, present evidence and discuss its current state of development, consider different approaches and perspectives on the policy issue, analyze possible responses, and offer advice on potential options/next steps and the implications choosing a course of action. Policy briefs can be written for different audiences and within different contexts. While they are often drafted by civil servants for senior management or ministers, they are also developed by political advisors, think tanks, policy advocates, and academics.

The Policy Brief Assignment asks learners to think of themselves as a civil servant, political advisor, or employee of a think tank or policy advocacy/interest group and prepare a policy brief on a current policy issue. The assignment should provide the intended audience with a background on the issue, discuss its context and possible options, and offer a recommendation.

Learners will develop a policy brief on a specific policy issue of their choice. Learners can either select an issue from a list of recommended options in the assignment guide or request permission from the professor for a separate topic related to course material. The policy brief will be broken down into five smaller components submitted and one larger final submission (listed in the table below). Each of these components will be short, approximately 1-2 pages, and worth 5% each. Learners assemble components for a final submission of 3-4 pages (worth 25%). If learners feel it is necessary, they can submit additional information in supporting appendices.

Component	Description	Due Date
Policy Issue Overview	Briefly introduce the policy issue. What is the problem that needs to be addressed?	Friday, January 24, 2025
Current State of Play	Discuss the current state of development for the policy issue, including relevant evidence/statistics.	Friday, January 31, 2025
Background and Context	Explain the background and context of the policy issue. This includes the causes of the issue, whether there have been previous efforts to address it, and some of the different perspectives and assumption on the issue.	Friday, February 14, 2025
Policy Options	Analyze possible policy options/responses that could address the policy issue and recommend the best course of action.	Friday, February 28, 2025

Recommendations and Next Steps	Develop the justification for the recommended course of action. What would you recommend based on the evidence or your organization's agenda? What are the implications of the recommendation? What next steps should be taken to implement the recommendation or mitigate implementation?	Friday, March 14, 2025
Policy Brief Assignment	Pull together the material collected for all five component submissions to create a final policy brief.	Friday, March 28, 2025

The Policy Brief components prioritize content/subject matter comprehension and analysis, as well as writing style. Over the course of the five submissions, we will work on clear and concise writing, the critical thinking skills components, and formatting content to improve accessibility. All submissions should be single-spaced and can involve a combination of short paragraphs and bullet points or callout boxes/sentences to highlight essential information.

All submissions will be graded use of course content, critical thinking skills, structure, and writing and grammar. As part of the evidence component of critical thinking skills, it is important to properly cite all sources employed in a submission. The final Policy Brief should also include a thesis to tie the document together (i.e. statement relating to the recommendation(s)). Learners can find additional details on policy briefs and the assignment submissions on Brightspace.

Reflection Assignment – 5% of Final Grade (Week 12)

The Reflection Assignment is due following the final Policy Brief submission. It is an informal journal entry for learners to reflect on their experience with the Policy Brief process and critically review their work and thought processes/preconceptions. The suggested length is approximately 500 words in length.

NOTE: The Policy Brief must be completed to open the dropbox for the Reflection Assignment.

Final Exam – 20% of Final Grade – Formal Exam Period (April 2025)

The Final Exam is made up of a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. Details of the exam structure will be released closer to the exam date.

The essay must feature a formal structure, including an introduction, body paragraphs (one for each supporting argument), and a conclusion. Learners will be graded on argument/thesis construction, use of course content, and structure. The introduction and conclusions should be streamlined and leave most of the essay for the supporting body paragraphs. A good introduction avoids general statements about the world and lays out the essay's main question or issue followed by a thesis that answers the selected essay prompt. The thesis statement should feature the main justifications for the argument and may list some possible consequences flowing from the thesis.

VIII   Course Schedule and Topics

Week	Topic	Description	Readings	Worksheets and Assignments
Part I: Introductory Weeks				
Week 1 Jan. 6-8	Course Overview	• Overview of the syllabus and assignments • Introduction of the Critical Thinking Skills Rubric (foundation for assignment grading rubrics) • What is public policy?	• Syllabus • Critical Thinking Skills Rubric • Miljan – Chapter 1	• Syllabus Quiz due Friday, January 24, 2025
Week 2 Jan. 14-16	Constitutional Framework	• The Constitution and federalism • The Crown and Responsible Government • Critical Thinking – Explanation	• Miljan – Chapter 3 • Berdahl and McGrane – "'Small Worlds' No More: Reconsidering Provincial Political Cultures in Canada"	• Explanation Jigsaw Exercise
Part II: The Public Policy-Making Process				
Week 3 Jan. 21-23	Theories of Public Policy	• Different approaches to the study of public policy (pluralist, public choice, Marxist) • Critical Thinking – Evidence	• Miljan – Chapter 2	• Evidence Scavenger Hunt Exercise • Syllabus Quiz Due (Friday, January 24, 2025) • PB: Policy Issue Overview (Friday, January 24)

Week 4 Jan. 28-30	Agenda Setting and Policy Formulation	• What gets put on the agenda and how is it formulated? • Critical Thinking – Influence of Context and Assumptions • Policy Briefs	• Miljan – Chapter 4 • Cairney – Policy in 500 Words	• Influence of Context and Assumptions Exercise • Policy Brief Formatting Worksheet • PB: Current State of Play (Friday, January 31)
Week	**Topic**	**Description**	**Readings**	**Worksheets and Assignments**
Week 5 Feb. 4-6	Policy Implementation and Evaluation	• How is policy implemented? What institutions, actors, and considerations are involved? • How is policy evaluated? How do we measure success?	• Miljan – Chapter 5 and 6	• Institutions/Actors Concept Map Exercise
Part III: Major Public Policy Fields				
Week 6 Feb. 11-13	Macroeconomic Policy	• Macroeconomic purpose and goals • Competing perspectives on macroeconomic policy (pluralist versus public choice and monetarist/neoliberal) • Critical Thinking – Argument/Author's Position	• Miljan – Chapter 7	• Theses and Arguments Worksheet • Bilateral Meeting 1 (Due by Friday, February 14, 2025) • PB: Background and Context (Friday, February 14, 2025)
	READING WEEK (February 17-21, 2025)			
Week 7 Feb. 25-27	Social Policy	• What is social policy? What is the welfare state? • Critical Thinking – Conclusions	• Miljan – Chapter 8	• Conclusions Worksheet • PB: Policy Options (Friday, February 28, 2025)

Week 8 Mar. 3-5	Health Policy	• Why adopt a national health care policy? What are the challenges? • Working with feedback	• Miljan – Chapter 9	• Feedback Worksheet
Week 9 Mar. 11-13	Family Policy	• Why is family policy important? Also, thinking beyond the nuclear family unit, aging families	• Miljan – Chapter 10	• Theoretical Approach and Policy Jigsaw Exercise • PB: Recommendations and Next Steps (Friday, March 14)
Week	**Topic**	**Description**	**Readings**	**Worksheets and Assignments**
Week 10 Mar. 18-20	Indigenous Policy	• The reserve system, Indigenous sovereignty and self-government, treaties	• Miljan – Chapter 11	• Major Developments Jigsaw Exercise
Week 11 Mar. 25-27	Environmental Policy	• The environment and the problems of externalities and the tragedy of the commons	• Miljan – Chapter 12	• Policy Brief (Friday, March 28)
Week 12 April 1-3	Conclusion	• Recall and review		• Reflection Assignment (Friday, April 4, 2025) • Bilateral Meeting 2 (Due by the exam)

IX   Course Procedures and Policies

Assignment Submission

- All assignments are due on Brightspace. Learners are responsible for ensuring that the correct file has been uploaded. Assignments should be uploaded as Microsoft Word documents (not PDFs) to the appropriate online dropbox by 11:59 p.m. on the due date.
- The recommended length for an assignment reflects both the expected effort of the learner and the time available to the course instructional team for providing feedback. Please respect the recommended length. Assignments over or under the expected length by 10% will receive a reduction in the assigned grade.
- Lakehead offers MS Office 365 (including Word, Excel, PowerPoint, OneNote, etc.) for free from the Technology Services Centre: Office 365 | Lakehead University.

Citation is Required!

- Citing is important for a) giving credit where credit is due (intellectual property), b) justifying evidence, and c) avoiding plagiarism. Find more about academic integrity here.
- Learners must use proper citation for all evidence and arguments derived from sources other than themselves. Citation is required for all sources beyond the course material.
- The preferred citation format is an in-text option such as MLA, Chicago Author-Date system, or the Canadian Journal of Political Science guide. Please avoid APA.

Late Penalties and Extensions

- Late papers will lose 3% per day, inclusive of weekends and holidays.
- If you yourself needing an extension, please contact the professor and *recommend a new due date before* the deadline. Learners are asked to keep in mind that many of the assignments are linked and should consider how the extension will impact other work in the course so that, if needed, an appropriate schedule can be worked out.

Communication

- Please make use of email, discussion forums, lectures, and office hours to get in touch.
- All email communication must be via official Lakehead University e-mail accounts.
- Email formatting basics:
  - Please use a formal greeting, such as 'Hi,' 'Hello,' or 'Dear' and *include the name of the person* to whom the email is addressed.
  - Use multiple paragraphs to breakout the content – doing so improves readability and highlights information!
  - Emails that look like a quickly typed text message may not get a response.
- There is no expectation of email responses for *anyone* in the course after regular business hours – both for learners and the instructor.
- Suggested communication options for questions/comments:
  - Lakehead University email for technical concerns, course procedures,
  - Lectures and office hours, or scheduled meetings for substantive questions,
  - Submit general questions to the Course Questions discussion forum,
  - Schedule a meeting with the instructor for personal questions and issues.

X   Student Mental Health

As a university student you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. This can happen to any of us, and everyone can benefit from support when feeling overwhelmed or struggling to cope. If you or anyone you know is in need of help with difficult life events, anxiety, or depression, please reach out to Student Health and Wellness. The office offers free, confidential services to Lakehead students. You can find more information here: Health Services | Lakehead University.

XII   Academic Accommodations

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. An accommodation could be needed for health, religious obligations, student activities pregnancy, or (dis)abilities. For an accommodation request, please contact me as soon as the need for accommodation is known to exist.

Accommodation for Students with (Dis)Abilities

Lakehead University is committed to achieving full accessibility for persons with disabilities. Part of this commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities and/or medical conditions to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities. If you are a student with a disability and think you may need accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and register as early as possible. For more information, please visit Student Accessibility here: Support for Students with Disabilities | Lakehead University

XII   Sexual Violence Policy

As a community, Lakehead University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and is survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Lakehead's Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Response Policy. For more information and/or support, visit: Sexual Violence | Lakehead University

XIII   Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is an essential element of a productive and successful academic career. Lakehead's Academic Integrity Code addresses academic integrity violations, including plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, misrepresentation, impersonation, withholding of records, obstruction/interference, disruption of instruction or examinations, improper access to and/or dissemination of information, or violation of test and examination rules. It is a good idea to familiarize yourself with the university's academic integrity rules.

Plagiarism

The Academic Integrity Code defines plagiarism as "presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own." This includes reproducing or

paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include, but are not limited to: books, articles, papers, websites, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, research findings, material on the internet and/or conversations.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- Any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else;
- Using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- Using another's data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement; and
- Failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's work and/or failing to use quotations marks.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

Unless explicitly permitted by the instructor in a particular course, any use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools to produce assessed content (e.g., text, code, equations, image, summary, video, etc.) is considered a violation of academic integrity standards.

Intellectual Property

Student or professor materials created for this course (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments, and exams) remain the intellectual property of the author(s). They are intended for personal use and may not be reproduced or redistributed without prior written consent of the author(s).