

PUBP 6012 Syllabus

PUBP 6012, Section GK, 3 Credits

Fall 2026

Instructor Information

Instructor: Gordon Kingsley

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General Course Information

Description

This course will familiarize students with many of the fundamental concepts and theories of public policy studies. Regardless of whether your career trajectory takes you into the public sector, a private firm, academia, or something in between, this course will help you understand, anticipate, and shape public policies.

Course Learning Outcomes

You will have the opportunity to learn concepts, models, and tools to analyze public policy processes and outcomes. This course seeks to develop professional and research skills. Specifically, this course examines:

- The processes and tools by which public policies are created and implemented,
- Theoretical models of the policy process,
- Techniques of analysis appropriate for various policy issues, and
- Applications of theories and analytic techniques to substantive policy issues.

Required Course Materials

Smith, K.B. and Larimer, C.W. 2026. *The Public Policy Theory Primer, 4th Edition*. Routledge.

ISBN: 978-1041024590. Available through the Georgia Tech Barnes and Noble Bookstore.

Grading Policy

Your course grade is composed of the following parts:

Participation	10%
Exams: Midterm	25%
Final	25%
Homework Assignments:	40%

Course Grade Scale (%):

A – 100 to 89%
B -- 88 to 76%
C -- 75 to 62%
D -- 61 to 50%
F -- 49% or below

Description of Graded Components

Class Participation

Participation will be based upon the following factors: attendance, participation in class discussions, and the quality of your contributions when participating. Each week I will be assessing an overall participation grade for each student.

You are expected to complete all required readings for this class by the due date listed on the syllabus. Discussion in class will depend heavily on the readings you have completed for that day's class.

Examinations

We will have two examinations during the term: the mid-term exam and the final exam. The examinations are designed to test your comprehension of the reading assignments and to apply the vocabulary and key concepts to research designs and methods.

Mid-Term Examination

- Administered in-class
- Consists of a short-answer section and an essay section
- You will have a choice of questions in each section
- You will write the answers in class. You will have the option of using a laptop to help write the answers
- Answers will be submitted in-class or via Canvas

Final Examination

- Administered in-class
 - Consists of a short answer section, an essay section, and a section where you evaluate a proposed research design
 - You will have a choice of questions in each section
 - You will write the answers in class. You will have the option of using a laptop to help write the answers
 - Answers will be submitted in-class or via Canvas
 - While we have a longer time block for the exam, we will use the same format as the Mid-Term. You should be able to complete the exam in 90 minutes. However, you will have the entire time block at your disposal.
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Homework Assignments

There will be four homework assignments that will be required throughout the term. The homework assignments are designed to introduce you to a range of skills that are used in various branches of the policy professions. Homework due dates will be posted through the Assignment tool on Canvas. The following themes will serve as the focus for each homework assignment:

Homework 1: Identifying the Nature of the Policy Issue

Skills include conducting a legislative history, literature review, identifying the scope of the policy problems, and identifying the roles and responsibilities of policy actors.

Homework 2: Developing Policy Options

Skills include identifying the policy subsystem, identifying the actors in the policy network, identifying key values held by policy actors, identifying important coalitions, identifying the status of agenda setting for the policy issue, identifying key target populations, and identifying competing policy arguments.

Homework 3: Analyzing Policies

Skills include identifying the policy processes associated with implementation, identifying the key descriptive and analytic statistics used by actors in a policy subsystem as forecasting tools and/or performance indicators, Identifying key assumptions associated with policy analyses

conducted by actors in the policy subsystem, comparing analytic models used by different disciplines and different policy interests.

Homework 4: Analyzing and Communicating about Policy Issues

Skills include identifying the policy processes associated with implementation and identifying the key descriptive and analytic statistics used by actors in a policy subsystem as forecasting tools and/or performance indicators. Communication skills include identifying the policy communication strategies within a policy subsystem, evaluating policy briefs, conducting an elevator conversation, developing a “deck”, and preparing a policy brief. More information about the structure of each assignment and the associated due dates will be distributed in class and through the class Canvas site.

Course Policies

Attendance and/or Participation

In person attendance is required for this course. Class discussions will help you better understand course content, allow you to ask clarifying questions, and to explain concepts and ideas in your own words. In order to make those discussions most effective, we will follow some guidelines:

- You are expected to **ask questions** during our discussions. Come to class prepared to raise questions for discussion and to ask for clarification or for more examples.
- You are expected to **listen actively**. I will often ask you to paraphrase, summarize, or respond to what others have said. Active listening involves taking notes, asking questions, making eye contact, and listening to others without interrupting them.
- Doctoral students are expected to develop the ability to offer criticism of ideas, concepts, research designs, and the quality of the findings produced through research. One of the great gifts that you can offer your classmates is to provide thoughtful criticism. This can foster a powerful learning community that will help you throughout your preparations to join a research community.
- In case of any disagreements, you are expected to **disagree respectfully**. If you disagree with your peers, keep your discussion focused on the facts and the bigger question rather than on personal feelings.

Georgia Tech has a web page that describes the expectations, rights, and responsibilities of students, instructors, the Office of Student Life, and health care providers. The information is intended to give students better directions as to how they should proceed to notify instructors when they are ill and need to miss class, and what kind of documentation they should provide and to whom. Students should refer to Georgia Tech policies at the "Student Absence from Class Due to Illness or Personal Emergencies" web page at:

<http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/policies/student-absence-regulations/>

Academic Integrity

The Academic Honor Code is a student initiative that became an official Institute policy in 1996. The objective of the Academic Honor Code is to increase academic integrity and strengthen trust in the Georgia Tech community. Students enrolled at Georgia Tech signed an agreement acknowledging their awareness of the Academic Honor Code. Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. Review [Georgia Tech's Honor Code](#) and the student [Code of Conduct](#).

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarism on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations. Plagiarism is avoidable and unacceptable. Take some time to review the following website produced by Indiana University on how to recognize plagiarism: <https://plagiarism.iu.edu/overview/index.html>. While breaches of academic honesty are not expected in this course, they will be dealt with in accordance with Georgia Tech policy, should they occur.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Your experience in this class is important to me. Georgia Tech complies with the regulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and offers accommodations to students with disabilities. If you have already established accommodation with the Offices of Disability Services, please communicate your approved accommodations to me at your earliest convenience so we can discuss your needs in this course. If you have not yet established services through Disability Services, but have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations (conditions include but are not limited to mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical, or health impacts), you are welcome to contact Disability Services at 404-894-2563 or dsinfo@gatech.edu or disabilityservices@gatech.edu. Disability services offer resources and coordinate (with students and their instructors) reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities and/or temporary health conditions.

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

All assignments will be submitted electronically via Canvas. I expect that you will do your best to submit assignments on time. However, situations may arise where you may need more time to complete and submit assignments due to health-related or other issues. Email me in those situations for accommodations appropriate to your circumstance.

Course Modality and Digital Etiquette

The course will be conducted through in-person meetings with assignments completed asynchronously. If there is a need to hold classes online at any point in the semester, we will pivot to online learning. In an online learning environment, I would appreciate you turning on your

camera at the beginning of class to acknowledge and greet one another, as well as during Q&A and discussion sessions.

Wellness, Mental Health, and Stress

Graduate education can be stressful. When channeled properly stress can lead to new understanding, skill development, or discoveries. However, I want to know if you are experiencing negative forms of stress that are leading you to consider inappropriate approaches to your studies or harm to yourself or others. Georgia Tech has a variety of resources available related to student mental health including 24/7 crisis support as well as access to virtual mental (see <https://mentalhealth.gatech.edu/resources/students/student-mental-health-resources>; <https://mentalhealth.gatech.edu/clinical-services/get-help-now>) health providers.

Diversity and Teaching: Tech is committed to equal opportunity in education and employment. The Institute does not discriminate against individuals based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or veteran status in the administration of admissions policies, educational policies, employment policies, or any other institute-governed programs and activities.

Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct: To maintain a safe learning environment that fosters the dignity, respect, and success of students, faculty, and staff, Tech prohibits discriminatory harassment, which is unwelcome verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct directed at any person or group based upon race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or veteran status that has the purpose or effect of creating an objectively hostile working or academic environment.

Faculty Responsibilities for Reporting: "Responsible Employees," which includes faculty, instructors, TAs, administrators, and other persons in positions of authority, must report sexual misconduct. As a Responsible Employee, if you are aware of or told about alleged sexual harassment, sexual violence, or other discrimination, including sexual, regarding a student or another employee, you MUST report these claims to the Title IX Coordinator or one of the designated Deputy Title IX Coordinators. Similarly, I must report all concerns about students who may engage in harm to themselves or others.

Institute Values: We aim to uphold the Institute's values in this course, which will support the cultivation of a high-quality learning (<https://strategicplan.gatech.edu/values>) environment. All of this will occur with everyone's commitment to upholding these values. Be sure to give me feedback on what works as we move forward and let's aim collectively to cultivate a high-quality, supportive, and fun learning environment. Patience, kindness, respect, and other similar considerations go a long way in creating a high-quality learning environment.

Health Etiquette: I would like everyone to be generally mindful of everyone else and, as much as possible, to engage in safe and healthy practices – such as using a mask when necessary.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (School of Computer Science, Georgia Institute of Technology): I treat AI-based assistance, such as ChatGPT and Copilot, the same way we treat collaboration with other people: you are welcome to talk about your ideas and work with other people, both in and outside of class, as well as with AI-based assistants. However, all work you submit must be your own. You should never include in your assignment anything that was not written directly by you without proper citation (including quotation marks and in-line citation for direct quotes). Including anything you did not write in your assignment without proper citation will be treated as an academic misconduct case.