

MPP 507 and POLS 315
U.S. Public Policy in a Capitalist World
Simmons University

I. Course Information

MPP 507 and POLS 315: U.S. Public Policy in a Capitalist World
Dr. Gregory P. Williams, C-330M, gregory.williams@simmons.edu.
Office hours: Thursdays, 12:00 to 1:30pm, and by appointment

II. Course Catalog Description

This course explores the historical roots of the modern interstate capitalist system and its relationship to U.S. public policy. It examines the theories and histories of the modern state as well as the connections among capitalism, beliefs about public policy, and the creation of public policy.

III. Learning Outcomes

As a result of taking this course, students should be able to do the following: define the modern state within the framework of global capitalism (covering, for example, the state's ability to make war, tax, and create bureaucratic institutions); differentiate eras of U.S. support for business in the evolution of American political development (covering, for example, the tariff system, monopoly legislation, and investor-state dispute settlement clauses); compare U.S. trading relations between developed and underdeveloped nations; and, critically examine capitalism and public policy, in writing in oral presentations.

Graduate students should be able to do the following, in addition to the undergraduate learning outcomes: analyze and critique scholarly debates about development, modernization, and/or globalization; and, explore the ways in which public policy options are constrained or enabled by critical historical junctures.

IV. Representative Book List

The following books are available at the bookstore (lower level, Main College Building—A):

1. Haley Sweetland Edwards, *Shadow Courts: The Tribunals that Rule Global Trade* (New York: Columbia Global Reports, 2016).
2. David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
3. Thomas J. McCormick, *America's Half-Century*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).
4. Michael Sandel, *The Tyranny of Merit: What's Become of the Common Good?* (New York:

Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2020).

V. Course Outline

Week 1: Society, a System or a Set of Sets?

Course introduction and trust falls

Week 2: Before the States System

Leonid Grinin and Andrey Korotayev, "Chiefdoms from the Beginning Until Now," in *Chiefdoms, Yesterday and Today* (Clinton Corners, NY: Eliot Werner Publications, 2017, 3-14).

(Optional): Fernand Braudel, pp. 461-514: "Social Hierarchies," In *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century II: The Wheels of Commerce*, trans. Siân Reynolds (New York: Harper & Row, 1982). Part 5: "Society: 'A Set of Sets.'"

Week 3: States and Capitalism: Competitors or Collaborators?

Christopher Chase-Dunn, "Interstate System and Capitalist World-Economy: One Logic or Two?" *International Studies Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (1981): 19-42.

(Optional) Charles Tilly, "Reflections on the History of European State-Making," in *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1975): 3-83.

Week 4: American Tariff System

[Article(s) on the tariff system, elite support for business, government innovation in manufacturing]

Week 5: World War I and the Income Tax

[Article(s) on income tax, new ways of raising revenue, expenses in WWI, and connection b/w expansionism and domestic well-being (i.e., the Wisconsin School/ William Appleman Williams argument)]

Week 6: Interactions Between Domestic and Foreign Policy

McCormick, chapters 2 and 3

Week 7: Hegemonic Anxieties and the Gold Standard

McCormick, chapters 6-8.

Helen Thompson, "The Bretton Woods rescue," in *Might, right, prosperity and consent: Representative democracy and the international economy 1991-2001* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 75-143.

Week 8: The American Century

McCormick, chapters 9-10

Week 9: Neoliberalism Abroad

Harvey, first half

Week 10: Neoliberalism and the State

Harvey, second half

Week 11: Neoliberalism at home

[Article(s) on domestic economy following Ronald Reagan]

Week 12: Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS): New Meanings of “Property”

Sweetland-Edwards, pp. 1-45

Week 13: ISDS: New Meanings of “Profit”

Sweetland-Edwards, pp. 46-121

Week 14: The American Ideology

Sandel, first half

Week 15: Same Capitalism, New Public Policy

Sandel, second half

VI. Assessment Methods

1) Papers (60%). Twice you will hand-in papers. More information will be provided closer to the first deadline. Paper topics are different for graduate and undergraduate students. The first paper will be due halfway through the semester, and the second paper will be due at the end. (Each is roughly equivalent in significance, but, in cases whereby the second paper is a substantial improvement upon the first, the second will be given more weight upon final consideration of the final grade.)

2) Critical Summary and Critical Questions (20%). On two occasions, you will present to the class your impressions of the reading for that week. One will be a critical summary of the material, and the other will be critical questions.

The weeks you present summary and questions are very much about your thoughts and impressions of the readings. Yes, you should faithfully present the reading to the class, but I and the rest of the class are interested in how you have interpreted the readings. Perhaps there was one idea that was central to the rest of the reading. Or perhaps there was a common theme in two or three readings. Or perhaps there were contrasting views in the readings.

However you approach the assignments, think about how you would present it to someone not in the course. What main ideas do you want to say to this person, and how do you want them to think about the topic?

You will present twice this semester. When it is your week to present a summary:

- Write a 2-3 page (double spaced) summary that critically reviews the readings.
- Post the summary under assignments on Moodle by Sunday.
- Write notes for a 5 minute presentation.
- On Monday, give the class a five minute presentation.

When it is your week to present questions:

- Write 4-6 questions. Each one should take a sentence or two to introduce the topic, present a question for discussion, and take a stab at answering your own question.
- Post on Sunday.
- Present on Monday.

Pro Tip: Do the readings early, and then write an e-mail to me or meet with me to talk about your ideas for your presentation. I cannot read whole drafts of your assignment, but I can give feedback on the general approach you intend to take. Feel free to send a short paragraph on what your summary will include, or, feel free to send a sample question. The earlier you write to me, the better the odds of good feedback.

Common Question: “Things are busy this week. May I present the same material next week?” To this, my answer is always the same: no. There are lots of reasons for this, but the short version is that these discussions are really for the benefit of the class, not for the presenter.

3) In-Class Participation (20%). Grades are holistic and non-formulaic, based on the quality of your comments in class. Students with excellent participation may, in addition, see a 1/3 letter grade benefit at the end of the semester. This participation requirement presumes that students will attend all class meetings of this in-person course. Missing more than one or two class sessions will substantially harm one’s ability to participate and cause students to miss out on large portions of the course material.

VII. Submission and Grading Policies

As will be noted on the first assignment, students may use any established citation style, such as Chicago, APA, or MLA. Professional journals and publishing houses in the fields of political

science and public policy tend to use variations on Chicago, but not uniformly and always with “house style” variations.

Plagiarism is using another’s words or ideas without proper attribution. Plagiarized work may result in disciplinary action. For more on plagiarism, please talk to Professor Williams, click on the dropdown in the link below §VIII(a), or try this direct link: <https://internal.simmons.edu/students/academics/academic-integrity>.

The use of ChatGPT and other machine learning programs, even as a first draft, is considered plagiarism. Writing is hard, and it is only through practice that one becomes a strong writer. The writing process begins by staring at a blank page.

As will be noted on the individual assignments and on Moodle, work shall be submitted in Word (.doc or .docx) or PDF (.pdf) formats. Google docs and other formats will not be permitted, though most—including Google docs—can be easily converted to PDF. Work will all be scanned using plagiarism software, such as TurnItIn.

VIII. Other Policies and Notes

(a) Students are expected to treat one another with respect and hold themselves to high academic standards. Follow this link for Simmons University’s policies on academic integrity, student resources, accessibility, and gender-based misconduct (such as sexual harassment): <https://internal.simmons.edu/students/academics/syllabus-policies>.

(b) Letter grades will be assigned to averages as follows: >93= A; 90-92.9= A-; 86-89.9= B+; 83-85.9= B; 80-82.9= B-; 76-79.9= C+; 73-75.9= C; 70-72.9= C-; 66-69.9= D+; 63-65.9= D; 60-62.9= D-; <60= F.

(c) This course does not have any pre-requisites. Yet it nonetheless requires a great deal of energy and effort expended outside of class. Given the readings and written work, in addition to the complexity of the topics, this course requires several hours of work outside of class. Students tend to find the workload manageable by dedicating time to prepare multiple days each week.

(d) Simmons University and Professor Williams are committed to equal access to programs and learning opportunities. Students who believe they may be entitled to an academic accommodation should consult with the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS) at access@simmons.edu.

(e) This syllabus is not a contract. The instructor reserves the right to alter course requirements and/or assignments based on new materials, class discussions, or other legitimate pedagogical objectives.

(f) The course materials are the intellectual property of the instructor and Simmons University. Students may not share, in person or online, course material (such as notes, the syllabus, paper prompts, and tests). Unauthorized copying of courses materials violates the Simmons Honor Code and federal copyright laws. Students may not record lectures or class discussions without explicit permission of the instructor (unless recordings are permitted by a student's accommodation).

(g) Want to talk politics? Please write to me at gregory.williams@simmons.edu with questions (both worldly and practical) or with your ideas about how politics works. To me and to most folks my age or greater, including employers, e-mails are more like letters than text messages. E-mails should have a greeting/salutation, a message, and a closing. I try to respond to messages within one business day.