



Course Descriptions

Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public
Affairs

LBJ Washington Center Course Descriptions

Course: PA 680WA/WB: *Policy Apprenticeship*

In this course, students apply an understanding of federal policy development and implementation in the setting of an extended Policy Apprenticeship (PA) in a federal government or DC-based nongovernmental organization through the interdisciplinary lenses developed in first year LBJ School course work. Students will be expected to demonstrate knowledge and skills developed in core courses in an immersive, professional context. During the Policy Apprenticeship, students will enhance skills in leadership, teambuilding, and sensitivity to the cultural and operational challenges of the workplace, political acumen, and policy diversity as well as develop mastery over analytical communication and networking skills.

The term of the Policy Apprenticeship is 32 hours a week (Monday-Thursday, reserving Fridays, some weeknights and a few Saturdays for graduate school coursework at the LBJ Washington Center) during the summer and fall semesters.

Course requirements: Beyond fulfilling the hours required, the student will meet the work requirements established by the PA supervisor. Students will also submit a weekly 1-2 page Policy Apprentice Journal describing their workweek, including specific projects and activities, professional networking, new lessons learned, and how their coursework at LBJ was applied. The student will submit evaluations at the end of the summer and fall semesters that (1) summarize the substantive contribution made by the student to the mission of the organization, and (2) critically reflect on the student's performance in applying skills developed in LBJ School courses. PA supervisors will also submit student performance evaluations at the end of each semester.

Valid Policy Apprentices are those approved by the Director of the LBJ Washington Center. The work the students undertake should be relevant and timely to current policy deliberations and require graduate school-level skills. Illustrative examples of appropriate Policy Apprenticeships include:

- Policy staff within the executive or legislative branches of the federal government.
- Staff in a private public policy organization.
- Staff in selected policy shops, operational or evaluation units of nonprofits or international organizations.
- Staff in think tanks.

LBJ Washington Center Course Descriptions

Course: PA 381W: Foundations of Policymaking

Section Title: *How the U.S. Congress Works*

This course examines how the U.S. Congress operates in both its legislative and oversight capacities. The students will learn how policymaking is affected by the organizational and structural make-up of the legislative branch and how congressional members and staff operate within the congressional environment. The course will examine the role of the Congress in affecting policies at the state and local levels as well as in the international arena.

The course requires students to prepare and conduct various oral and written presentations offered in a range of congressional settings, such as a town hall, formal committee hearings, mark-ups, models/official travel, oversight visits, etc.

Topics include:

- The governance of Congress, its rules, leadership, and the processes it uses to affect policy
- The interaction of the Congress with the executive and judicial branches of government in all phases of the legislative process
- The role of the Congress in developing international policies
- The relationship of the Congress to policies generating from state and local governments as well as national policies that require state and local implementation
- The relationship between the Congress and non-federal government institutions such as state and local authorities, non-governmental/ business institutions, organizations that lobby, think tanks, etc.
- Organic authorizing statutes
- Drafting committee report language
- Writing legislative briefs for Members and staff
- Presenting testimony
- The role of committees in the work of the Congress
- The ability of the Congress to establish legislative agendas
- The changing role of leadership in the House and Senate
- The way Congress obtains and uses information
- The range of functions undertaken by congressional staff
- The unique roles of Legislative Branch Agencies: Government Accountability Office, the Congressional Budget Office, the Congressional Research Office, and the Government Printing Office

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Course Descriptions

Course: PA 381W: Foundations of Policymaking

Section Title: *Federal Budget and Government Finance*

Students will learn about the role of the President's budget, how it is developed, defended and executed. The course also will teach students about the congressional appropriations processes from the time the Congress receives the President's budget to the time final appropriations legislation is passed, including the role of Congressional appropriations subcommittees and full committees, funding mechanisms, congressional budget procedures, etc. This course will build on the traditional LBJ School public financial management course, focusing on the federal budget process as a policy process involving the executive and legislative branches of government.

Topics include:

- Budget as Policy
- Fiscal Structure of Government in the U.S.
- Mechanisms of Intergovernmental Finance
- Overview of Public Budgeting & the Budget Cycle
- Federal Budget Formulation Process (OMB and the Executive Agencies)
- Congressional Budget and Appropriations Processes
- Federal Deficit Reduction
- U.S. Debt
- Cost Analysis
- Budgeting examples, including for national security and foreign aid
- Use of Price Indices for Deflation and Inflation
- Tax Evaluation Criteria
- Income Tax
- Understanding Interest Rates
- How to Evaluate a Government Budget
- Budget Reforms in the U.S.

LBJ Washington Center Course Descriptions

Course: PA 381W: Foundations of Policymaking

Section Title: *Institutions, Processes and Negotiations*

The course is designed to educate students on three key elements to federal policymaking. First, it examines institutions and actors that inhabit the DC policy world, ranging from the U.S. Federal system, to the multilateral institutions, think tanks, non-profits, and private sector actors, and agencies (e.g. consulting and lobbying firms) that comprise the various sources of authority, influence and information that shape U.S. domestic and foreign policy. Second, it addresses processes that transform ideas into public policies and programs, ranging from political campaigns and lobbying strategy, to design of legislative formats and implementation strategies. Third, students will be introduced to the potential challenges of working in the political environment of Washington DC, including the development of an understanding of power and influence of factions within the policy community and how best to assess the role of these factions in policymaking. Students will be exposed to the ethical dimensions of public administration and policy that arise regularly in Washington DC, often without public awareness. Students are expected to bring to the course a good understanding of the ideological spectrum of U.S. politics from their previous coursework.

(A) Institutional Participants in the Capital Political Landscape

Surrounding public officials in the legislative and regulatory processes is a political ecological system in which problems are framed or disregarded, solutions are promoted or opposed, and both the general public and the elected officials are influenced.

(B) Processes in National Politics and Policymaking

The management of political process is an important aspect of national policymaking. While not all policy professionals are involved in political management as their technical expertise, all need basic understanding of these processes.

(C) Intersection of Rules, Ethics, Norms, and Personal Practice

The understanding of the institutional structure and political process in national policymaking will enable students to develop their own personal ethical and moral beliefs and standards of integrity in a professional setting.

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Course: PA 381W: Foundations of Policymaking

Section Title: *Survey of Contemporary Policy Issues*

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to a variety of issues on the national policy agenda. Students in this program are expected to develop through their Policy Apprenticeship specialized knowledge and professional expertise in a specific policy area. At the same time, it is important for career development in national policymaking to have basic exposure to issues across a broad policy spectrum and how they are related in national politics. This course offers that exposure.

The course has a modular design, with three or four topical modules of about three weeks each. The overview segment covers generic policy concepts and tools used to secure international cooperation (economic sanctions and incentives, formal alliances, defense cooperation and exchanges, intelligence sharing, diplomacy, etc.) or effect federalism in domestic policy (grant-distribution formulas, “hold harmless” provisions, directives v. guidance, etc.). The intent is to develop an understanding of the working relationship between the U.S. national government and other countries and international organizations on the one hand, and state and local governments on the other.

The modules features a faculty member with expertise in a broad policy area. The areas covered will naturally vary from year to year as a function of the national policy agenda, but as examples they might include: economic and trade policy, immigration policy, education policy and human capital development, foreign and defense policy, health and social policy, natural resource and technology policy, transportation and infrastructure policy, federal regulation, and other policy areas as deemed appropriate in a given year.

Each module will use about half of the time to offer a broad survey of the existing programs and issues in that general policy area, and dedicate the other half of the time to more in-depth discussion of a selected few issues, covering failed attempts as well as successful adoption of reform in the past, nature of on going controversies, and empirical analytic evidence as well as the political outlook for innovation.

The course incorporates a capstone experience in the form of integrative presentations, where class members will have the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge across a spectrum of policy issues and discuss their political implications for national policymaking.

LBJ Washington Center Course Descriptions

Course: PA 188S: Advanced Topics in Public Policy

Section Title: *Professional Preparation and Development*

This course is designed to improve critical thinking and communication skills so that students will be prepared to participate in the job market in Washington DC.

Course elements include how to:

- Select an appropriate career path through self-assessment and discussion. Writing assignment: prepare a five-year career plan.
- Write a resume and cover letter, and accompanying professional material. The course will assist the students in framing these materials to achieve visibility to an employer. Writing assignment: prepare a resume and other job-seeking materials.
- Identify and use professional networks (e.g., alumni, professors, conferences, previous employers, etc.) to learn about job opportunities. Writing assignment: prepare a plan to network to secure a position.
- Secure and undergo interviews, including screening interviews and those leading to the final interview. Writing assignment: prepare a draft letter seeking a position and a list of over 100 addresses of venues where the student would like to work in Washington, DC.
- Students will learn how to anticipate questions and conduct themselves in professional interviews and job seeking opportunities, including the presentation of self, dress, etiquette, etc. They will also learn how to prepare appropriate questions for both human resource personnel and hiring officials and undergo several mock interviews. Writing assignment: prepare and complete an evaluation document to assess your performance in an interview.
- Negotiate for a position, including work conditions, salary, job tasks and responsibilities. Writing assignment: list the parts you wish to negotiate in your job discussions with a potential employer and strategies for addressing them.

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Course: PA 188S: *Exemplars in Policymaking*

In this one-credit course, current and former federal policymakers will discuss their experience developing policy, highlighting the challenges and successes they encountered and the lessons learned. Students will participate via class discussions informed by prior in-depth research on each policymaker.