**GOVT/PPOL 382W, Spring 2017**

**Topics in Public Policy: College Financing**

**KJ 109, T/Th 2:30pm-3:45pm**

**Instructor: Sam Rosenfeld**

**Office: KJ 137**

**Office hours: Tuesdays 9:30-11:00am, Wednesdays 12:00-2:00pm and by appointment**

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This is a lab-style clinical course, in which students tackle a major public policy issue in today's society. Our topic is the costs of higher education in the U.S. We will collectively design plans for the state of New York or the U.S. federal government related to financing access to undergraduate education. The plan must be detailed, comprehensive, ethically sound, economically and politically viable, and backed by compelling empirical evidence. The goal is to produce a report that rivals those produced by government commissions at the state and federal levels.

The first half of the semester will involve detailed attention to the history, politics, and economics of higher education financing in America. In the second half, you will work in committees, investigating possible reform proposals and drafting sections of the final report. Our class will culminate in a panel discussion in which you will present your collective plan to a group of experts in this area for review and engagement, and then revise the report based on their feedback.

READINGS:

The following required texts are available at the bookstore for rental or purchase. All readings not included in the volumes below will be posted on Blackboard—any updates or adjustments to the reading will be done with ample notice.

* Beth Akers and Matthew M. Chingos, *Game of Loans: The Rhetoric and Reality of Student Debt* (Princeton, 2016)
* Eugene Bardach and Eric M. Patashnik, *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving* 5th Ed. (CQ Press, 2016)
* William G. Bowen and Michael S. McPherson, *Lesson Plan: An Agenda for Change in American Higher Education* (Princeton, 2016)
* Sara Goldrick-Rab, *Paying the Price: College Costs, Financial Aid, and the Betrayal of the American Dream* (University of Chicago, 2016)

PARTICIPATION, ASSIGNMENTS, AND GRADING:

Your grade will be based on six components:

**1. Papers**: two short papers (4-6 pages long) will be assigned during the course and will correspond to readings and discussions in the class. They should prepare you to conduct research and write policy recommendations that will help you take on the report in the second half of the class. The papers will be worth **25% of your final grade** (10% and 15%, respectively) and will be graded individually.

**2. “Mini-midterms”:** two short in-class tests, lasting 40 minutes each, will assess your knowledge of both empirical and conceptual information from the reading and class discussions. The tests will be worth **20% of your final grade** (10% apiece) and will be graded individually.

**3. Rough Draft of Report:** The work on this draft will be divided up amongst your committee and each individual will be responsible for an equal share of the draft. While each student will be graded for her/his individual work, committees should coordinate and work together to make sure all areas are being covered and repetition is being avoided. The draft will be put together as a group and submitted before the final presentation and presented to the panel of experts. The Draft will be **15% of your final grade.** Your grade will be based on both your individual section (85% of this grade) and as a collective committee (the remaining 15% of this grade).

**4. Presentation of Report:** This will be a group project where each student presents a portion of the report to a panel of experts and answers their questions. Your role in the presentation will be **10% of your final grade.**

**5. Final Report:** This will be re-written in the same manner as the rough draft. You will divide the workload in your committee and each person will be responsible for re-drafting their section which incorporates comments you received from both the professor and the panel. The Final Report will be **20% of your final grade** (again, 85% of this grade will be based on your individual work and 15% of the grade will be based on the collective work of your committee).

**6. Peer Evaluations:** A survey will be given to your peers to grade your work on the Report Project. These grades will be averaged and will be **10% of your final grade**.

This course is part of Hamilton’s Writing Intensive Program, which seeks to help students write well across disciplines and throughout their time in college. Students are **strongly** encouraged to visit the [Nesbitt-Johnston Writing Center](http://www.hamilton.edu/writing) for assistance and feedback on their assignments throughout the semester. Additionally, given that you will be presenting your report in person before a panel of experts, I strongly encourage all of you to make use of the [Oral Communication Center](https://www.hamilton.edu/academics/centers/oralcommunication) and its resources.

CLASSROOM POLICIES:

* Attendance is mandatory. We are a small class and we will be covering a lot of material. The course will be based, to a large extent, on participation and discussion. If you are not here you cannot contribute to the course and the class, as a whole, will not be as effective. Three class absences lacking documented excuses (such as a medical issue, family emergency, or religious observance) will reduce your course grade by 1/3 of a letter.
* Cell phones, tablets, and laptops are prohibited in class during the first half of the semester. We will be making this a laptop-free class not merely because the internet presents temptations for distraction, but also because [research has indicated](http://www.vox.com/2014/6/4/5776804/note-taking-by-hand-versus-laptop) that we absorb and retain information more effectively when taking notes by hand instead of by computer. If this policy presents a hardship for you, please discuss it with me during my office hours or by appointment.
* I expect you to abide by the [Hamilton College Honor Code](http://www.hamilton.edu/student-handbook/studentconduct/honor-code). Violations will be reported to the Honor Court.
* Hamilton College will make reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. I request that any student needing academic adjustments or accommodations speak with me during the first two weeks of class. All discussions will remain confidential. Students with disabilities should also contact Allen Harrison in the Dean of Students Office (Elihu Root House; ext. 4021), who coordinates services for students with disabilities.

Finally, a note on group work and its centrality to this course, in the words of Professor Gary Wyckoff:

The public policy major, like most majors at Hamilton, requires a progression from memory-based learning about past policies and existing critiques of policy to more creative and more demanding student-devised policy proposals and student- created evaluations of policy. In other words, you need to progress from learning about how others create and critique policy to doing these things on your own. This is a difficult transition, one of the most difficult tasks in the major. This course is the hinge pin of that transition, the pivot point. When you first begin the daunting task of performing policy analysis and policy creation, it is very helpful to have the help and support of a group of students in the same situation. After you have done this kind of work in a group, you will be prepared to do it individually in your senior thesis.

In the real world beyond Hamilton, most tasks and projects are just too big and too complex to tackle individually. For this reason, group work has become the norm in both the public and private sectors. In looking for new hires, employers seek out people who can work successfully in groups. This course will provide a supportive environment in which to learn how to do this kind of work.

Of course, there are dangers to group work, including personality conflicts and attempts to shirk work and shift burdens to others. We will combat these problems in five ways:

1. By keeping the groups small – no more than six members.

2. By providing opportunities for feedback from group members, in the middle and at the end of the semester.

3. By providing guidelines each week about what the group should be doing and how to divide tasks.

4. By including visits from the professor to each group to assess group dynamics.

5. By grading sections of the final report individually as well as for the group as a whole.

If at any point in the semester you feel unhappy with your group’s interactions and performance, it is vital that you speak up about it, to your fellow group members and to me. Group conflicts do no typically solve themselves, so you need to take early, proactive steps to address any group problems that arise. Learning to do this is a critical skill that you will undoubtedly use in your subsequent career.

**CALENDAR:**

1/17 Introduction and Course Overview

* Bardach and Patashnik, Introduction
* Jesse McKinley, “Cuomo Proposes Free Tuition at New York State Colleges for Eligible Students,” *New York Times*, January 3, 2017

1/19 Grants, Loans, Costs, Prices: The Basics of College Financing

* Akers and Chingos, Chs 1-2
* Goldrick-Rab, Introduction and Ch 1

1/24 American Higher Education and Its Financing: Historical Overview

* John Thelin and Marybeth Gasman, “A Historical Overview of American Higher Education”
* Akers and Chingos, Ch 3
* Goldie Blumenstyk, *American Higher Education in Crisis?*, Part 1

1/26 Why is College So Expensive?

* Goldie Blumenstyk, *American Higher Education in Crisis?*, Part 2
* Baumol and Bowen, “On the Performing Arts: The Anatomy of their Economic Problems,” *American Economic Review (*1965)
* Martin and Hill, “Baumol and Bowen Cost Effects on Research Universities,” SSRN working paper, 2014

1/31 The Students’ Experience: College Costs

* Goldrick-Rab, Chs 2-7

2/2 FIRST MINI-MIDTERM

The Students’ Experience: Debt

* Akers and Chingos Chs 4-6

2/7 The Role of Government

* Goldrick-Rab, Chs 8, 9
* Suzanne Mettler, “Equalizers No More,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2014
* Dylan Matthews, “The Tuition is Too Damn High,” Parts IV and VII, *Washington Post* 2013

2/9 Is College Worth It, and If So, Why?

* Sawhill and Owen, “Should Everyone Go To College?,” Brookings Institution, 2013
* Dylan Matthews, “The Tuition is Too Damn High” Part II, *Washington Post*, 2013
* Goldin and Katz, “The Race Between Education and Technology,” NBER 2007
* Marshall Steinbaum, “Who’s Afraid of the Student Debt Crisis?”

2/14 Redefining the Problem, I: Broadening the Scope

* Bowen and McPherson, Parts I and II

2/16 Redefining the Problem, II: Paradigms

* Stone, *Policy Paradox* (2003), Chs 1-3
* Rana Faroohar, “How the Financing of Colleges May Lead to Disaster,” *New York Review of Books*, 2016

--Paper 1 due Sunday, February 19, 11:59PM--

2/21 Toward Solutions: How-To’s of Policy Analysis

* Bardach and Patashnik, Parts I and III

2/23 Visions of College Financing Reform

* Akers and Chingos, Ch 7
* Goldrick-Rab, Ch 10

2/28 Tackling Costs by Reforming Universities

* Bowen and McPherson, Part III
* Paul Fain, “The End of College?,” *Inside Higher Ed*, 2015
* Audrey Watters and Sara Goldrick-Rab, “Techno Fantasies,” *Inside Higher Ed*, 2015

3/2 SECOND MINI-MIDTERM

The “Free College” Debate

* Fact sheet, Hillary Clinton’s New College Compact
* Fact sheet, Bernie Sander’s College For All Act
* Tracey McMillon Cottom, Mike Konczal, Matt Bruenig, debate over free college, *Dissent* (Fall 2015)
* Kevin Carey and Mike Konczal, debate over free college, *Democracy* (June 2016)

3/7 Approaching Research and Empirical Assessment

* Bardach and Patashnik, Parts II, IV, and Appendix A

3/9 Organizing for the Report

* Bardach and Patashnik, Appendices B-D

--Paper 2 due Friday, March 31, 5:00PM--

--SPRING BREAK--

The rest of the semester will be devoted to committee work researching and drafting the report.