

Syllabus

LEGISLATIVE POLICY

A 4-credit elective in the
Masters of Public Administration Program
THE EVERGREEN STATE COLLEGE

Fall Quarter, 2011

Instructor: Karen Fraser

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Karen Fraser's background:

Currently serving her fifth term as a Washington State Senator, and is currently Chair of the Senate Majority Caucus. Her prior major Senate roles include: Chair of the Capital Budget and Chair of Senate policy committees dealing with environment, water, and energy issues. She is a former State Representative. At the local government level, she is former Thurston County Commissioner, former President of the Washington State Association of Counties, and former Mayor and City Council Member in Lacey, Washington. She formerly served in legislative and congressional liaison positions with three state agencies, and formerly lobbied on a volunteer basis for a nonprofit organization.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Class will meet together during two intensive weekends:

November 18, 19, 20

December 3, 4, 5

Times: Fridays 6-10 pm

Saturdays 9-5, Sundays 9-5

To achieve a full quarter of study,
assignments for independent work begin at the beginning of the quarter.

CLASS LOCATION

All classes will meet at the Washington State Capital Campus, in the Cherberg Building, in Conference Rooms A-B-C, on the first floor, east end.

The Cherberg Building is located immediately south/southeast of the Legislative Building.

ENTER using the north-facing door (looks toward downtown Olympia and Puget Sound) which is located at the east end of the building (the Mount Rainier side of the building).

(Looking toward the building from the north, it is on the left end.)

Capital Campus map can be found at: www.ga.wa.gov/images/campus-map.pdf

PARKING: There is ample parking adjacent to the building, as the Legislature will not be in session.

FOOD AND BEVERAGES: There will be a one-hour break for lunch on Saturdays and Sundays. Please feel free to bring food and beverages to eat in the conference room. A few casual restaurants are within a 10-minute walk.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS: Parking and building access are easily accommodated. Please call instructor for specific needs.

BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS: Having respect for others is fundamental to having open, educational dialogue. All students are expected to support and contribute to a well functioning MPA classroom learning community. Behavior that disrupts the learning community may be grounds for disciplinary action, including dismissal from the MPA program."

LEARNING GOAL

To achieve an introductory understanding of how and why state legislative policy is made.

This will include: the role of the Legislature within state government and within the intergovernmental structure in the United States; how the Legislature is organized and functions; the political context of the legislative process; influences on legislative policy-making; the role and influence of elections; roles of the Governor, other statewide elected officials, state agencies, and the judicial branch; delegation of legislative authority to state agencies; citizen involvement processes; techniques for researching legislative issues; and exploration of a variety of legislative issues.

Learning goals also include meeting general TESC expectations of thinking critically, communicating effectively, working collaboratively, treating others with respect and fairness, and more.

SCHEDULE

Friday, November 18.

Introduction to class.

Introduction to the Legislature, its roles, organization, procedures, processes.

Introduction to the political and intergovernmental context of the Legislature.

Tour of Senate Chamber.

Saturday and Sunday, November 19 and 20. **

Introduction to researching legislative issues, with presenters from the Legislative Information Services Office, the Public Disclosure Commission, and Television Washington (TVW).

The key role of a legislative standing committee, including a seminar with former State Senator Phil Rockefeller, former chair of the Senate Committee on Environment, Water, and Energy.

A tour of legislative committee public hearing rooms.

The role of elections in shaping legislative policy-making.

Discussion of reading assignments: Federalist Paper No. 10 and Public Choice Theory.

Friday, Saturday, Sunday, December 3, 4, and 5. **

Invited legislators, lobbyists, legislative staff, Governor's Office, state agencies, Redistricting Commission.

Student presentations of their legislative policy research projects.

ASSIGNMENTS

*** indicates more information to follow via email*

Please note assignments labeled "IMMEDIATELY begin" in order to maximize learning benefits.

A. PRIOR to the two intensive weekends:

Assignments turned in before "due dates" are welcomed.

- 1) ***Write introductory memo to instructor.*** Write a memo to instructor describing: a) your interest in taking the class and what you hope to gain from it; and b) your past experiences (direct or indirect) relating to the legislative process at state, federal, local, tribal, or international levels. Please indicate your feelings about whether you would be willing to share any of your class writing projects with other class members, to promote dialog and sharing of perspectives. **Due: October 18** by email or US Postal Service.
- 2) ***Read*** Article II of the State Constitution, relating to the legislative branch of government. ***WRITE*** a summary of its key provisions and your reactions to it. **Due: October 21.**
- 3) ***Read*** the State Enabling Act, particularly the sections on a) what Congress required to be included in the State Constitution in order for Washington to be approved for statehood, and b) provisions pertaining to state public lands. ***WRITE:*** A summary of this Article and your perspective on how these provisions might affect legislative policymaking. **Due: October 24.**
- 4) ***IMMEDIATELY begin attending legislative meetings.*** Begin meeting the course requirement that students attend at least three legislative meetings (in person, not watch on TVW). Check the Washington State Legislature web page for committee and task force meeting announcements. ***WRITE*** an individual memo to instructor for each meeting attended describing your observations. **Due: At least one by November 14.** Balance are due at end of quarter.**
- 5) ***Read*** two papers relating to political accountability: *Federalist Paper No. 10* ** and a description of "*Public Choice Theory*" (you can google it). ***WRITE*** a short memo on *each* paper which: a) summarizes the basic assertions and principles in each; b) describes your reaction to each regarding whether you think they are realistic and the degree to which you think they might be relevant to today's legislative process and policymaking. Optional additional assignment: compare and contrast the two papers. **Due: November 16.** **
- 6) ***IMMEDIATELY begin exploring legislatively related web pages.*** Begin familiarizing yourself with the following:
Washington State Legislature (Be sure to check for: members, committees, leadership, Democrat and Republican Caucuses, schedules, Senate and House Ways and

Means Committees, State Constitution, State Enabling Act, State statutes in the Revised Code of Washington [RCW], introduction of bills, voting records, status of bills, fiscal notes on bills, various joint select committees and independent agencies within the legislative branch of government) **

Access.wa.gov (Washington State's main web page that will allow you to access virtually all of state government) (Be sure to check the Governor's Office and the Office of Financial Management, which prepares budget recommendations for the Governor.)

Public Disclosure Commission (Be sure to check for candidate filings, candidate campaign contributions and expenditures, lobbyist reporting, state agency legislative activity reports, initiative and referendum campaign reporting.)

Secretary of State's election division, for information on filings of initiatives and referendums, and on the election process.

Washington State Redistricting Commission, for their 2011 work to redraw legislative and Congressional district boundaries.

TVW (Watch active programing and investigate their archives)

Web pages of political parties, to learn their state legislative priorities

Web pages of organizations that lobby the Legislature, to learn their legislative priorities

Maintain a journal containing brief entries about which web pages you explored to date and your evaluations of them. **Preliminary journal due: November 17.** (Final journal due end of quarter.)

- 7) **Identify research issue. BRING TO FIRST CLASS (November 18)** a one-page or less written description of which legislative issue you expect to research. This project may be undertaken either by yourself or with one or two other class members. Must be a specific legislative issue which has been actively considered during the last few years. Issue must have made significant progress in the legislative process, even if it did not become law. **
- 8) **IMMEDIATELY begin following multiple news sources.** Begin regularly following at least three news media which cover state legislative issues, and evaluating their quality. Can include: radio, TV, newspapers, blogs, etc. Be prepared to discuss in class and write a paper due at the end of the quarter. **
- 9) **Read** instructor's summary of major provisions of the US Constitution affecting state government, which will be forwarded to you. **WRITE** a memo encapsulating your observations and questions pertaining to it and your perspective on whether or how these provisions might affect legislative policy making, including the issue you are researching.
Due November 30. **

B. End of Quarter

- 1) **COMPLETE MAJOR RESEARCH PAPER---the major assignment of the class.** Select a policy issue that has been actively considered in the Legislature during the last few years. Research history of the issue, who introduced it and why, its specific history at each step of the process and the reasons for any action or inaction; roles of individual legislators and why, role of the Governor

and why, role of legislative staff, roles of the public, roles of lobbyists and interested groups and why, roles of media, fiscal considerations, relationship to state and federal constitutions, relationships to other parts of state government, relationships to other units and levels of government (federal, other states, tribal, local, international).**

Must interview at least three persons who were directly involved in the history of the issue.

May be undertaken alone or with one or two other students, identifying which student participated in each part.

Length: Maximum of 10-15 pages, with unlimited appendices allowed.

Style:

- 1) Write for a reader who is a busy public official and who therefore must absorb the most important information quickly. Use of bold headings, numbered or bullet lists, charts, and graphs are advisable. Completely accurate grammar is a must.
- 2) Must include a one-page executive summary, a bibliography, and a list of interviews.
- 3) Sources of factual information must be documented, so they are verifiable by third parties. . This can be done either as part of the narrative or through use of footnotes.
- 4) Legislative and legal citations must be complete and accurate, including for legislative documents, statutes, constitutional provisions, court decisions, and state regulations. References to courts must identify the specific court involved. Media reports must be accurately cited.

DUE DATES FOR RESEARCH PROJECT:

- 1) **November 18** - Preliminary identification of issue to instructor and class
- 2) **Weekend of December 3, 4, and 5** – Summary oral presentations to class in a Senate Hearing Room
- 3) **End of Quarter** – Final written paper

2. ATTEND LEGISLATIVE MEETINGS. Students must attend at least three legislative meetings (in person, not on TVW). These can be standing legislative committees, special legislative committees, temporary committees or task forces, or governing committees of independent agencies within the legislative branch. See Washington State Legislature web page for meeting announcements. **WRITE** an individual memo to instructor for each meeting attended describing your observations. **Due: At least one by November 15, with the balance due at end of quarter. ****

3. FOLLOW MEDIA COVERAGE OF LEGISLATURE. Must follow at least three media which cover state legislative issues. Can include: radio, TV, newspapers, blogs, etc. Be prepared to discuss in class. **WRITE** a memo identifying which media you followed and your evaluation of the quality of the coverage. **Due: End of quarter.**

4. COMPLETE ASSIGNMENTS DUE PRIOR TO FIRST INTENSIVE WEEKEND, described in “A” above.

5. COMPILE JOURNAL OF WEB SITES VISITED AND YOUR REACTIONS TO THEM. (Brief entries and evaluations, please.)

6. ATTEND CLASS SESSIONS AND PARTICIPATE IN CLASS DISCUSSIONS.

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