

PA 3350: Public Policy Process — Supplemental Module Readings

Fall 2026 (Online) — Dr. W. Scott Langford

Each module pairs its Peters chapter(s) with three short outside readings—one **News.** piece, one **Agency/Government.** report, and one **Academic.** article—so we can see the policy-process concepts at work in current events, official evidence, and scholarship. Unless noted, every reading is free; a few government links (GAO, CBO) may need to be opened in a browser rather than clicked from a PDF. Read the assigned Peters chapter first, then the three readings. For the substantive-area modules (6 and 7), a few optional domain-specific readings follow for the areas we choose for our essays.

Module 1 — Identifying a Public Policy Issue

Framing week (no Peters chapter): what turns a private condition into a public problem?

- **News.** Pew Research Center (2024). *Americans' Top Policy Priority for 2024: Strengthening the Economy.* Free
<https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2024/02/29/americans-top-policy-priority-for-2024-strengthening-the-economy/>
Why: shows how the public ranks conditions as “problems”—agenda priorities as measured data, not assertion.
- **Agency.** U.S. Surgeon General (2023). *Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation* (Advisory). U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services. Free
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK595227/>
Why: a textbook case of government declaring a private condition a public problem—dissect the causal claim (read the executive summary).
- **Academic.** Stone, Deborah A. (1989). *Causal Stories and the Formation of Policy Agendas.* *Political Science Quarterly* 104(2): 281–300. Free PDF
<https://www.uvm.edu/~dguber/POLS293/articles/stone.pdf>
Why: the foundational article on how framing a condition's *cause* determines whether it becomes a public problem.

Module 2 — Public Policy & the Structure of Policymaking (Peters Ch. 1–2)

- **News.** Kamarck, Elaine (2026). *A Patchwork Republic: Polarization and the Laboratories of Democracy.* Brookings Institution. Free
<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/a-patchwork-republic-polarization-and-the-laboratories-of-democracy/>
Why: federalism as a live constraint—states diverging on major policy—illustrating Ch. 2's “policy environment.”
- **Agency.** Congressional Research Service (2016). *Separation of Powers: An Overview* (CRS Report R44334). Free
<https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/R44334.html>
Why: a short, neutral primer on how the three branches share and check power—the institutional scaffolding of Ch. 1.
- **Academic.** Madison, James [Publius] (1788). *Federalist No. 51.* Free / public domain
https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed51.asp
Why: the canonical argument for separation of powers and federalism—“ambition must be made to counteract ambition.”

Module 3 — Explaining Policy Choices & Agenda Setting (Peters Ch. 3–4)

- **News.** Pew Research Center (2025). *Americans Continue to View Several Economic Issues as Top National Problems*. *Free*
<https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2025/02/20/americans-continue-to-view-several-economic-issues-as-top-national-problems/>
Why: a live snapshot of problem definition and agenda salience, split by party—pairs with Ch. 4.
- **Agency.** U.S. Office of Management and Budget (2003). *Circular A-4: Regulatory Analysis*. *Free PDF*
<https://www.reginfo.gov/public/jsp/E0/fedRegReview/CircularA4.pdf>
Why: the government’s own embodiment of the *rational-comprehensive* model (benefit–cost analysis)—a foil to incrementalism (read pp. 1–10).
- **Academic.** True, James L., Bryan D. Jones & Frank R. Baumgartner (2006). *Punctuated-Equilibrium Theory: Explaining Stability and Change in American Policymaking* (chapter). *Free PDF*
https://fbaum.unc.edu/teaching/articles/True_Jones_Baumgartner_2006_chapter.pdf
Why: the standard account of why policy is usually stable but occasionally lurches—core to how issues seize the agenda.

Module 4 — Legitimizing & Implementing Policy Choices (Peters Ch. 5–6)

- **News.** Wong, Erin X. (2024). *The Sweeping Impact of the Supreme Court’s Chevron Reversal*. Route Fifty. *Free*
<https://www.route-fifty.com/management/2024/07/sweeping-impact-supreme-courts-chevron-reversal/>
Why: ties legitimation (the courts) to implementation (bureaucratic discretion)—after *Loper Bright*, who interprets ambiguous statutes?
- **Agency.** U.S. Government Accountability Office (2025). *High-Risk Series* (GAO-25-107743). *Free (opens in browser)*
<https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-25-107743>
Why: a running federal catalog of the *implementation gap*—where adopted programs falter in execution.
- **Academic.** Matland, Richard E. (1995). *Synthesizing the Implementation Literature: The Ambiguity-Conflict Model of Policy Implementation*. *JPART* 5(2): 145–174. *Free PDF*
<https://selc.wordpress.ncsu.edu/files/2013/03/Synthesizing-the-Implementation-Literature-The-Ambiguity-Conflict-Model-of-Policy-Implementation.pdf>
Why: the standard 2×2 (ambiguity $\times$ conflict) framework for why implementation varies—organizes Ch. 6.

Module 5 — Budgeting & Evaluation (Peters Ch. 7–8)

- **News.** DeSilver, Drew (2025). *Key Facts About the U.S. National Debt*. Pew Research Center. *Free*
<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/08/12/key-facts-about-the-us-national-debt/>
Why: a short, chart-driven orientation to the fiscal stakes behind the budget process—pairs with Ch. 7.

- **Agency.** U.S. Government Accountability Office (2021). *Program Evaluation: Key Terms and Concepts* (GAO-21-404SP). Free (opens in browser)
<https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-21-404sp.pdf>
Why: a concise (9-page) official glossary of evaluation criteria—effectiveness, efficiency, outcomes—for Ch. 8.
- **Academic.** Campbell, Donald T. (1969). *Reforms as Experiments*. *American Psychologist* 24(4): 409–429. Free PDF
<https://www.sfu.ca/~palys/Campbell-1969-ReformsAsExperiments.pdf>
Why: the canonical case for treating policies as testable experiments—the intellectual foundation of program evaluation.

Module 6 — Substantive Areas I: Economic, Tax, Health, Welfare (Peters Ch. 9–12)

- **News.** KFF (2025). *Medicaid: What to Watch in 2025*. Kaiser Family Foundation. Free
<https://www.kff.org/medicaid/medicaid-what-to-watch-in-2025/>
Why: a plain-language explainer of the year’s biggest health-policy fight, showing policy design across federal–state lines.
- **Agency.** Congressional Budget Office (2024). *CBO’s 2024 Long-Term Projections for Social Security* (Pub. 60679). Free (opens in browser)
<https://www.cbo.gov/publication/60679>
Why: the authoritative projection of trust-fund exhaustion and the payroll-tax-vs.-benefit-cut tradeoff.
- **Academic.** Hoynes, Hilary W. & Ankur J. Patel (2015). *Effective Policy for Reducing Inequality? The Earned Income Tax Credit and the Distribution of Income*. NBER Working Paper 21340 (free full-text PDF via UC Berkeley). Free PDF
<https://gspp.berkeley.edu/assets/uploads/research/pdf/Hoynes-Patel-EITC-Income-11-30-16.pdf>
Why: uses the EITC to show how a tax-code instrument doubles as welfare policy—tying the tax and welfare chapters together.

Optional, by domain (economic & tax):

- CBO (2025). *The Long-Term Budget Outlook: 2025 to 2055* (Pub. 61270). <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/61270>
- Pew Research Center (2025). *Most Americans Continue to Favor Raising Taxes on Corporations and Higher-Income Households*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/03/19/most-americans-continue-to-favor-raising-taxes-on-corporations-higher-income-households/>

Module 7 — Substantive Areas II: Education, Energy & Environment, Defense & Law Enforcement, Social Values (Peters Ch. 13–16)

- **News.** The Texas Tribune (2025). *Texas’ New \$8.5B School Funding Bill, Explained*. Free
<https://www.texastribune.org/2025/06/04/texas-public-education-schools-funding-bill-explained>
Why: a local, current case (HB 2) for tracing how education-finance policy is actually built—with Texas State relevance.

- **Agency.** U.S. Energy Information Administration (2025). *Annual Energy Outlook 2025* (narrative). U.S. Dept. of Energy. *Free PDF*
<https://www.eia.gov/outlooks/aeo/pdf/2025/AEO2025-narrative.pdf>
Why: the government’s statutorily mandated long-range energy projection—how agencies produce the forecasts that drive policy.
- **Academic.** Levitt, Steven D. (2004). *Understanding Why Crime Fell in the 1990s: Four Factors That Explain the Decline and Six That Do Not*. *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 18(1): 163–190. *Free PDF*
<https://pricetheory.uchicago.edu/levitt/Papers/LevittUnderstandingWhyCrime2004.pdf>
Why: a readable evaluation of which crime-policy explanations the evidence supports versus popular myths.

Optional, by domain (environment, defense, social values):

- EPA (2024). *Climate Change Indicators in the United States*. <https://www.epa.gov/climate-indicators>
- Congressional Research Service (2025). *FY2025 Defense Appropriations* (IN12425). <https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/IN12425.html>
- Bureau of Justice Statistics. *Preliminary Data Release — Prisons, 2023*. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/preliminary-data-release-prisons-2023>

All links verified 2026-08-05. Government pages (GAO, CBO) may block in-PDF clicks; copy the link into a browser if needed. Citations follow no single style—adopt one consistently in your own writing.