Readings: Weekly readings will consist of journal articles, news reports, and current policy analysis and research on the issues to be discussed in class.

Course description:

Almost daily, there are news stories about the challenges created by the aging of our population. Often, there is a tone of crisis, seeing the entitlements of the growing older population as creating a serious fiscal crisis, run-away medical expenses, and a potential for intergenerational warfare. One hears accusations of “greedy geezers,” suggesting that older persons are living far more comfortably than younger generations and that their entitlements are responsible for the high levels of poverty among children. At the same time, there are tragic stories suggesting an increase in elder abuse, poor quality of care in care homes and nursing homes, serious problems older persons face in obtaining needed medical care, families in crisis due to the burden of caring for their frail elder parents, and an increase in the proportion of older persons among the homeless.

This course focuses on the public policy issues concerning aging and long-term care. What federal and state policies and programs address the issues of aging and long-term care? Do our policies in fact benefit the older generation at the expense of younger generations? What are the policy options for reforming programs to assure their sustainability? What new issues of public policy are senior advocate organizations raising for consideration by the federal and state governments?

Course Objectives:

This course has three main objectives.

- First, it will help students understand how public policy is formed and changed.
- Students will be able to define the nature public policy and contending ideological views of the role of public policy;
- Students will understand the role of cultural values, political ideologies, interest group agendas, research evidence, and the media in shaping public policy;
Students will understand strategies of political advocacy, including framing issues, mobilizing resources, coalition formation, and legislative strategies in influencing policy decisions.

Second, it will provide an opportunity to learn about many of the major national issues surrounding aging and long-term care. 
- Students will understand the principle policies and programs affecting the older population, including Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, The Older Americans Act, and other federal and state policies and programs.
- Students will understand the consequences of these programs for beneficiaries as well as the fiscal impact on the national and state governments.
- Students will understand the current challenges facing existing programs and the policy options for reforming programs to assure their sustainability.

Third, it will focus on the current legislative issues impacting the older population in Hawaii.
- Students will learn about specific policies and programs in Hawaii, such as the Kupuna Care Program, the development of ADRC's (Aging and Development Resource Centers); and the role of adult residential care homes in long-term care;
- Students will learn about the current proposals of the Long-Term Care Commission regarding financing and restructuring the long-term care system in Hawaii;
- Students will learn about the important political advocacy groups for senior issues, the Legislative Kupuna Caucus and Aging in Place Taskforce, and legislative-appointed task forces addressing issues of the older population.
- Each student will have gained an in-depth understanding of one policy issues facing the Hawaii Legislature in 2012, including the proponents and opponents of the proposal, the advocacy efforts employed, the cultural values and ideologies employed to frame the issue, and the role of the media and of advocacy groups in affecting the outcome of the proposal.

Assignments:

Each week students will be assigned reading which they are expected to complete prior to the class. For a course project, each student will study one Hawaii aging/long-term care issue of his/her choice. The project will result in a written paper as well as an oral presentation to the class. The project will ask: Who are the advocates and opponents for the issue? What are the arguments pro and con? What political forces and strategies shape how the issue is resolved? In this way, public policy issues will come alive, as we explore them in the legislative arena of our own state.
Course Outline

Part 1 The Public Policy Process

Week 1 -- 3    January 12 -- 26

Part 2 National Policies and Programs

Week 4 -- 10    February 2 – March 15

Part 3 Hawaii Policies, Programs, and Current Issues

Week 11 – 16    March 22 – May 3

(Spring Break: March 26 – March 30)