

KNOWLEDGE INTO ACTION, SENIOR CAPSTONE  
TOPIC: PANDEMIC POLITICS AND POLICY

**Purpose:** This two-credit senior seminar invites students (1) to explore the ways in which the Pandemic has affected politics and policy in the United States and (2) to derive actionable lessons and/or solutions that can guide public policy makers and bring about meaningful change. Students are required to engage in collaborative work and problem-solving *in a team setting*. Although the seminar will have a few common readings, the bulk of the semester's work will be organized around group projects that will require students to draw on relevant academic literature, available data, and community expertise.

**Student Learning Outcomes:** Students will be able to:

- 1) Enhance their academic skills: reading and thinking critically; researching effectively; speaking competently; and writing persuasively.
- 2) Identify relevant policy-making organizations and stakeholders and the relationships among them in order to assess potential strategies for change;
- 3) Clearly communicate a problem and proposed solution in both writing and in oral presentation.
- 4) Work constructively in a collaborate group environment as part of a team.

**Remote Rules:** This course will be entirely remote and you are required to have your video on during class and in group meetings with me. Please use "gallery view" during class. If for some reason, technological or otherwise, you are not able to have your video on during a given class period or meeting, you should notify me of that fact before or during class.

**Workload expectations:** As a capstone experience, our class time is relatively minimal. You are expected to do the work of this course largely independently and with your other team members outside of class. *Expect to work 20 hours per week on this project.*

**Course Requirements (due dates, assignments, and percentages may—and likely will--be adjusted during the semester):**

- 5% Annotated Bibliography, Due Feb 15
  - 10% Work in progress, oral presentation on March 1 and 3
  - 15% Draft of Research Report, Due March 12 (10-15 pages)
  - 10% Work in progress, oral presentation on March 29 and 31
  - 15% Draft of Lessons Learned/Policy Solutions, Due April 7 (10 pages)
  - 10% Final Public Presentations, between April 19-28
  - 25% Final Report (15-25 pages), Due May 4
  - 10% Interview transcript/notes (5% for first interview; 5% for follow-up or second interview)
- Written and oral work will generally include self and peer evaluation components

**Office Hours:** My office hours this semester are by appointment. Email me ([rellis@willamette.edu](mailto:rellis@willamette.edu)) and we will set up a time to meet on Zoom.

**Please Note:** Failure to attend and prepare for scheduled classes and team meetings and turn in work on a timely basis will result in grade reductions.

**Academic Integrity:** Students of Willamette University are members of a community that values excellence and integrity in every aspect of life. As such, we expect all community members to live up to the highest standards of personal, ethical, and moral conduct. Students are expected not to engage in any type of academic or intellectually dishonest practice and encouraged to display honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility in all they do. Plagiarism and cheating are especially offensive to the integrity of courses in which they occur and against the College community as a whole. These acts involve intellectual dishonesty, deception, and fraud, which inhibit the honest exchange of ideas. Plagiarism and cheating may be grounds for failure in the course and/or dismissal from the College.  
<http://willamette.edu/cla/catalog/policies/plagiarism-cheating.php>

**Commitment to Positive Sexual Ethics:** Willamette is a community committed to fostering safe, productive learning environments, and we value ethical sexual behaviors and standards. Title IX and our school policy prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, which regards sexual misconduct — including discrimination, harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. We understand that sexual violence can undermine students' academic success, and we encourage affected students to talk to someone about their experiences and get the support they need. Please be aware that as a mandatory reporter I am required to report any instances you disclose to Willamette's Title IX Coordinator. If you would rather share information with a confidential employee who does not have this responsibility, please contact our confidential advocate at [confidential-advocate@willamette.edu](mailto:confidential-advocate@willamette.edu). Confidential support also can be found with SARAs and at the GRAC (503-851-4245); and at WUTalk - a 24-hour telephone crisis counseling support line (503-375-5353). If you are in immediate danger, please call campus safety at 503-370-6911.

**DACA/Undocumented Student Advocate:** Willamette is committed to supporting our DACA/Undocumented students in a variety of ways. This year, Delia Olmos-García is the contact person for all DACA/undocumented students can provide those students with a number of external and internal resources that are available. Her contact information is email: [dolmosga@willamette.edu](mailto:dolmosga@willamette.edu), Office: FAW 232B, Phone: 503-370-6371.

**Diversity and Disability Statement:** Willamette University values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. My goal is to create a learning environment that is usable, equitable, inclusive and welcoming. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion or accurate assessment or achievement, please notify me as soon as possible. Students with disabilities are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Services office in Matthews 103 at 503-370-6737 or [Accessible-info@willamette.edu](mailto:Accessible-info@willamette.edu) to discuss a range of options to removing barriers in the course, including accommodations.

***This is a very tentative Schedule of Class/Group Meetings and Topics and Readings where applicable; It will be modified, often significantly as we go along.***

1.1 (Jan. 20) Introduction

2.1 (Jan. 25) Epidemics and the Law

John Fabian Witt, *American Contagions: Epidemics and the Law: From Smallpox to COVID-19* (Yale, 2020)

2.2. (Jan. 27) Pandemic Ethics

Stuart Thompson, "Find Your Place in the Vaccine Line," *New York Times*, Dec. 3, 2020,

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/12/03/opinion/covid-19-vaccine-timeline.html?searchResultPosition=8>

Sarah Elizabeth Richards, "Who will get the vaccine first? Here's where you might land in line," *National Geographic*, October 14, 2020, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/10/who-is-first-in-line-coronavirus-vaccine/>

Chris Bauch, Madhur Anand, and Peter Jentsch, "Which age group—old or young—should get the COVID-19 vaccine first may depend on timing," *The Conversation*, Dec. 9, 2020,

<https://theconversation.com/which-age-group-old-or-young-should-get-the-covid-19-vaccine-first-may-depend-on-timing-150412>

Christopher Cox, "The Vulnerable Can Wait. Vaccinate the Super-Spreaders First," *Wired*, Nov. 10, 2020, <https://www.wired.com/story/covid-19-vaccine-super-spreaders/>

Danielle Allen, "Incarcerated people are suffering from covid-19 more than most. They should be among the first vaccinated.," *Washington Post*, Dec. 9, 2020,

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/incarcerated-people-are-suffering-from-covid-19-most-they-should-be-among-the-first-vaccinated/2020/12/09/4f6dff56-3a57-11eb-9276-ae0ca72729be\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/incarcerated-people-are-suffering-from-covid-19-most-they-should-be-among-the-first-vaccinated/2020/12/09/4f6dff56-3a57-11eb-9276-ae0ca72729be_story.html)

Danielle Zoellner, "FDA panel faces dilemma of what happens to placebo trial volunteers ahead of Pfizer vaccine vote," *The Independent*, Dec. 10, 2020,

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/fda-pfizer-covid-vaccine-placebo-b1769576.html>

Abby Goodnough and Jan Hoffman, "The Elderly vs Essential Workers: Who Should Get the Coronavirus Vaccine First?" *New York Times*, December 15, 2020,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/05/health/covid-vaccine-first.html>

Andrea Salcedo, "In New Jersey, smokers can now get the coronavirus vaccine before teachers or public transit workers," <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2021/01/15/newjersey-smokers-covid-19-vaccine/>

Leana Wen, "On Vaccines, Americans must balance speed and equity," *Washington Post*, Jan. 15, 2021 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/01/15/vaccines-america-must-balance-speed-equity/>

3.1. (Feb. 1) (How) Will the Pandemic Change Public Policy and Politics?

Nicholas Christakis, "Things Change," in *Apollo's Arrow: The Profound and Enduring Impact of Coronavirus on the Way We Live* (Little, Brown, 2020), 247-294

Also read at least *three* of the ten paired readings below:

a. Will the Pandemic Change the Way we Deliver K-12 Education?

"Will the Pandemic Change the Way we Deliver K-12 Education," *State Legislatures Magazine*, October 6, 2020, <https://www.ncsl.org/research/education/will-the-pandemic-change-the-way-we-deliver-k-12-education-magazine2020.aspx>

“Coronavirus means school food is free across the U.S. What if it stayed that way?”

<https://hechingerreport.org/coronavirus-means-school-food-is-free-across-the-u-s-what-if-it-stayed-that-way/>

b. Will the Pandemic Change the Way we Work?

“Coronavirus: How the world of work may change forever,” October 23, 2020,

<https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20201023-coronavirus-how-will-the-pandemic-change-the-way-we-work>

“Labor after the Pandemic: Will we still work Eight Hours,” <https://strelkamag.com/en/article/labor-after-the-pandemic-will-we-still-work-eight-hours>

c. Will the Pandemic Change the Way we Treat the Environment?

Beth Gardiner, “Why COVID-19 will end up harming the environment,” June 18, 2020,

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/06/why-covid-19-will-end-up-harming-the-environment/#close>

Olivia Wintersgill, “The pandemic is a crisis and a tragedy—but there have been environmental benefits to the lockdown,” July 6, 2020, <https://eia-international.org/blog/the-pandemic-is-a-crisis-and-a-tragedy-but-there-have-been-environmental-benefits-to-lockdown/>

d. Will the Pandemic Change the Way we do Democracy?

“Mail Voting and COVID-19: Developments and Potential Challenges,” April 23, 2020,

<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IN/IN11356>

Amanda Zoch, “COVID-19 Brings Historic Changes for Citizen Initiatives,”

<https://www.ncsl.org/blog/2020/05/27/covid-19-brings-historic-changes-for-citizen-initiatives.aspx>

e. Will the Pandemic Change the Criminal Justice System?

“Criminal Justice System Responses to COVID-19,” <https://www.ncsl.org/research/civil-and-criminal-justice/criminal-justice-and-covid-19.aspx>

Cid Standifer and Frances Stead Sellers, “Prisons and jails have become a ‘public health threat’ during the pandemic, advocates say,” [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/coronavirus-outbreaks-prisons/2020/11/11/b8c3a90c-d8d6-11ea-930e-d88518c57dcc\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/coronavirus-outbreaks-prisons/2020/11/11/b8c3a90c-d8d6-11ea-930e-d88518c57dcc_story.html)

f. Will the Pandemic Change the Way we Think about Privacy?

Casey Ross, “After 9/11, we gave up privacy for security. Will we make the same trade-off after COVID-19,” <https://www.statnews.com/2020/04/08/coronavirus-will-we-give-up-privacy-for-security/>

Eli Hager, “Where Coronavirus is Surging—and Electronic Surveillance, Too,” Marshall Project,

<https://www.themarshallproject.org/2020/11/22/where-coronavirus-is-surging-and-electronic-surveillance-too>

g. Will the Pandemic Change Homelessness and Housing?

“COVID-19 is a ‘crisis within a crisis for homeless people,” August 24, 2020,

<https://www.modernhealthcare.com/safety-quality/covid-19-crisis-within-crisis-homeless-people>

“COVID-19 Best Practice Information: Homeless Sheltering,”

[https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/fema\\_covid\\_bp\\_homeless-sheltering.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/fema_covid_bp_homeless-sheltering.pdf)

h. Will the Pandemic Change Health Care?

James King, “COVID-19 and the Need for Health Care Reform,”

<https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp2000821>

“Responding to COVID-19 and building stronger health systems for universal coverage,”

<https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/responding-to-covid-19-and-building-stronger-health-systems-for-universal-health-coverage>

i. Will the Pandemic Change the Treatment of Mental Health?

“Bridging the Gap to Youth Mental Health During COVID-19,”

<https://www.ncsl.org/blog/2020/04/17/bridging-the-gap-to-youth-mental-health-during-covid-19.aspx>

“The Biden coronavirus task force has a mental health problem,”

<https://thehill.com/opinion/healthcare/527317-the-biden-coronavirus-task-force-has-a-mental-health-problem>

j. Will the Pandemic Change the Design of Urban Spaces?

James S. Russell, “Building Public Spaces for a COVID World,” *New York Times*, September 11, 2020,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/11/arts/design/architecture-urban-planning-coronavirus.html>

“The Changing Face of Urban Design in a Post-COVID World,” Oct. 21, 2020,

<https://www.elledecor.com/life-culture/a34160787/urban-design-after-covid-pandemic/>

3.2 (Feb. 3) Work on formation of groups/topics

4.1 (Feb. 8): Group meetings

4.2 (Feb. 10) Group meetings

5.1 (Feb. 15) Annotated Bibliography due by 5pm.

5.2 (Feb. 17) Group meetings

6.1 (Feb. 22) Group meetings

6.2 (Feb. 24) Group meetings

7.1 (March 1) Presentations on Work in Progress on Effects of Pandemic.

7.2 (March 3) Presentations on Work in Progress on Effects of Pandemic.

8.1 (March 8) No class

8.2 (March 10) No class

Draft of Report on Effects of Pandemic, Due March 12 at noon; should include interview transcript

9.1 (March 15) Group meetings

9.2 (March 17) Group meetings

10.1 (March 22) Group meetings

10.2 (March 24) Group meetings

11.1 (March 29) Whole Class meeting: Interim reports on Lessons from the Pandemic, including draft policy proposal.

11.2 (March 31) Whole Class meeting: Interim reports on Lessons from the Pandemic, including draft policy proposal.

12.1 (April 5) No class

12.2 (April 7) Draft of Report on Lessons from the Pandemic/Policy Solutions, Due at 4:00 pm

13.1 (April 12) Group meetings

13.2 (April 14): Group meetings

14.1 (April 19): Final Group Presentations

14.2 (April 21): SSRD

15.1 (April 26): Final Group Presentations

15.2 (April 28): Final Group Presentations

Final Paper, including Executive Summary, Due on May 4, 2pm; also, the transcript of follow-up or second interview due at same time