In this online course, led by political scientist Daniel DiSalvo, fellows will examine the influence of ideas in some of our key policy debates – from social class and race to welfare, education, crime and policing, and immigration. Readings will include seminal texts in political science as well as contemporary accounts. In studying major domestic policy issues, fellows will gain insight into our expectations of and dissatisfactions with American government. They will learn how ideas can transform politics, while also appreciating the limits and pitfalls of policy reform.

This seminar will meet online weekly on Tuesdays from 10 AM to 12 PM ET on the following dates: June 15, 22, 29, July 6, & 13.

Course Materials
• Course Reader

Discussion Papers: Each fellow will be responsible for completing a brief discussion paper (1-2 pages, single spaced). See below for your assigned session. Papers are due the day before your assigned session by 5 PM ET. They should be posted on the course Slack channel and will be part of the assigned readings for the session. Paper-writers should be ready to briefly present their ideas during the seminar.

Resources:
To learn more about the ideas and figures discussed in this course, we encourage you to explore a project supported by the Hertog Foundation: The Great Thinkers (http://thegreatthinkers.org/) and Contemporary Thinkers (http://contemporarythinkers.org/) websites.

Relevant pages include Edward Banfield, Martha Derthick, Nathan Glazer, Daniel Moynihan, Aaron Wildavsky, and James Q. Wilson.

We also encourage you to visit National Affairs and its archive of The Public Interest.

Film Screenings: If there is interest, we will arrange class screenings of two documentary films that explore thinkers from this course and the interplay of ideas, politics, and public policy. You may also choose to view these films on your own. Your TA will be in touch about class screenings.
• *Moynihan*, dir. Joseph Dorman and Toby Freilich

**Tuesday, June 15, 2021**

**10 AM – 11 AM ET**  
**Session I: Ideas, Institutions, & Public Policy**

**Readings:**

- James Q. Wilson, Ch.16, *Political Organizations* (Basic Books, 1973)

**Optional Viewing:**

- “*Christopher DeMuth on Ideas & Public Policy*,” Conversations with Bill Kristol (Multimedia), October 28, 2014
- “*Yuval Levin on Reform Conservatism*,” Conversations with Bill Kristol (Multimedia), August 10, 2014

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Can policy studies help or hurt government programs? Can we do without policy studies when government is so large and deeply involved in so many facets of life?
2. How does the substance of a government program shape the politics surrounding it?
3. Why is policy performance important?
4. What factors tend to weaken government policy performance?
Government Structure & the Welfare State

Readings:

- Lane Kenworthy, “How the Safety Net Can Survive Trump: Social Democracy’s Staying Power,” Foreign Affairs, July-August 2018

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the basic features of the American welfare state? Who benefits from it?
2. How is the American welfare state financed?
3. Who actually carries out many of the nation’s major policies?
4. What will the future of the welfare state look like? Is the growth of the American welfare state both inevitable and desirable?
5. What is the federal budget process? Why has it become so politicized?

Tuesday, June 22, 2021

10 AM – 12 PM ET Session II: Poverty

Readings:

• Daniel P. Moynihan, “In Opposition to the Welfare Reform Bill,” U.S. Senate, 104(2) Congressional Record, S8074–8076, July 18, 1996

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the causes of poverty?
2. How is poverty measured?
3. To what extent can government alleviate poverty?

Tuesday, June 29, 2021

10 AM – 12 PM ET    Session III: Education

Readings:

• Frederick Hess, “The Next Conservative Education Agenda,” National Affairs, Spring 2020
• David F. Labaree, “No Exit: Public Education as an Inescapably Public Good,” Reconstructing the Common Good in Education, eds. Larry Cuban and Dorothy Shipps (Stanford University Press, 2000)

Optional Viewing:

• “Chester Finn on Education Reform in America,” Conversations with Bill Kristol (Multimedia), April 18, 2020

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the basic structure of the politics of public education?
2. What is the status of the education reform movement?
3. Can American public schools be improved?
Tuesday, July 6, 2021

10 AM – 12 PM ET  Session IV: Policing & Criminal Justice

Readings:

- Heather MacDonald, “A New Crime Wave and What to Do About It,” *City Journal*, Fall 2021

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the theory or broken windows? Why might it be very hard to do well in practice?
2. Why might police unions hinder effective policing?
3. Should punishment for crime be based on deterrence, incapacitation, or retribution?
4. What would be required to reduce mass incarceration?

Tuesday, July 13, 2021

10 AM – 12 PM ET  Session V: Immigration

Readings:

- Peter Skerry, “Comprehensive Immigration Confusion,” *National Affairs*, Fall 2016

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What is the meaning of the statement that the United States is a “nation of immigrants”? How should that phrase be understood?

2. How should one think about the current wave of immigration as compared to prior waves of immigration in US history?

3. Should immigration be increased, decreased, or remain the same?

4. What are the core immigration reform alternatives?