



Princeton School  
of Public and  
International Affairs

## **POLICY ADVOCACY CLINIC**

### **Purpose**

Public policy influences all aspects of our lives, yet few people give much thought to how policy is made, let alone experience the policymaking process firsthand. How does a policy agenda get set and how are policy priorities formed? How do competing stakeholders exercise power to win their policy goals? What is the relationship between social movements and policy change?

It's these questions and more that are answered by the Policy Advocacy Clinic at the School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University. This exciting new offering allows students to both learn about and participate in the policymaking process. It introduces students to key policy theories and strategies while also equipping them with practical skills needed to turn social problems into policy solutions. Through readings, class discussions, fieldwork, research and writing, and policy partner interactions (including partners on the international, federal, state and local levels), students learn, in a non-partisan manner, how to move an issue through the policy cycle. It is the goal of the Policy Advocacy Clinic to equip and inspire the next generation of policymakers, advocates, and social movement builders.

### **Description**

This one-year, two semester experience includes (1) a fall semester academic seminar, where students will study the policymaking process; and (2) a spring semester clinical program, where under the close supervision of the clinic professor, students will work with external partners, whether lawmakers or advocates, to advance a public policy issue. By the end of the year, students will have learned about the policymaking process, gained practical skillsets on how to advance policy, and have an opportunity to apply these skillsets and knowledge to help advance an actual public policy issue.

### ***Seminar***

In the fall semester, students attend weekly seminar classes where they study a range of topics on the policymaking process, from theory to practice, including:

- Introduction to public policy, including theories and frameworks of policy development and the policy cycle.
- The legislative process and understanding the mechanics of the lawmaking powers of legislatures and the role of the executive.
- Introduction to administrative law and the formal and informal rulemaking process.

- Introduction to the role of social movements in advancing policy change, including reviewing examples from the right and left successfully setting a policy agenda and pushing for systemic change.
- Review of the policy analysis process, including how to identify problems, develop potential policy solutions, and draw conclusions.
- Campaign planning and development, including prioritization and power-mapping, SWOT and other feasibility analysis.
- Tactics used to advance the policymaking process, including various organizing models, and the role of communications strategies, both old and new, to advance policy goals.
- The limits of law and policy to drive social change, particularly when attempting to address systemic problems.
- Advice on how to pursue a career in public policymaking and advocacy.

Throughout the seminar an emphasis is placed on the interaction of public policy with movements for social change, studying how movements on both the right and left have been able to influence policymaking. These discussions center issues of race, power and privilege to help understand the policymaking process and how an issue evolves from an idea to policy action.

### *Clinic*

Students will continue their study through the spring semester, where they will enroll in the field component of the Policy Advocacy Clinic and work on specific projects with outside partners, all under the close supervision of the clinic professor. Students will be assigned partners who seek assistance on public policy matters on the international, federal, state or municipal/county levels. Partners may include nongovernmental organizations working to advance a particular public policy matter or local or federal lawmakers who need assistance with a specific policy goal.

Each year, students will work on different projects that are ripe for involvement. Specific projects may include:

- Drafting policy analysis memos, which define and analyze the problem, survey policy alternatives, apply evaluative criteria, and make policy recommendations.
- Drafting legislation, rules, regulations, and executive orders for NGOs or policymakers.
- Drafting public testimony, including for hearings before local, state, federal or international bodies, to support existing or future efforts.
- Assisting in drafting campaign plans and engaging in power-mapping, SWOT and other feasibility analysis.
- Drafting and producing public education materials, such as reports, fact sheets, policy briefs, webinars and explanatory videos to support policy efforts.
- Collecting and analyzing public opinion data, including potentially producing original polling.
- Creating legislative and communications advocacy tools, such as action alerts, talking points, social media toolkits, and more.

- Organizing community meetings, public forums, briefing sessions and other events helpful to the policy process.

Students will gain real-world experience through their field work, including by interacting with policymakers and their staff, attending hearings and coalition and community meetings, providing testimony, canvassing communities, engaging in media advocacy, lobbying lawmakers (in compliance with SPIA protocols) and more.

### **Conclusion**

This is a unique offering meant to help transform student experiences at SPIA, provide students with an education in both theory and practical skills, and inspire the next generation of policymakers and movement leaders. The clinical experience will connect the SPIA curriculum to pressing public policy matters all while providing students with both a hands-on experience in the field and academic work in the classroom. For any questions or for more information, please contact Professor Udi Ofer at [uofer@princeton.edu](mailto:uofer@princeton.edu).