

# **GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY**

*The Fund for American Studies*

*Public Policy + Economics Internship Seminar*

## **General Information**

**Course:** Inside Washington Seminar, ECON 496  
**Dates:** Thursday, June 5 – July 17, 2025  
**Time:** 5:00 pm – 7:30 pm; Van Metre Hall, Room 466  
**Instructor:** Professor Karen M. Czarnecki  
**Email:** Primary: [kczarnec@gmu.edu](mailto:kczarnec@gmu.edu); Secondary: ProfessorCzarnecki@gmail.com (Please email both accounts for quickest response.)  
**Phone:** N/A  
**Office hours:** By Appointment and/or via Zoom.

## **Professor Biography: Professor Karen M. Czarnecki**

Karen M. Czarnecki has spent over two decades in politics and public policy in Washington, DC. She is currently the Executive Director of an educational non-profit, overseeing a staff working on academic research relating to the science and statistics of life. She was previously the Vice President of Outreach for the Mercatus Center at George Mason University and also served as director of education at the Law and Economics Center at Scalia Law School at George Mason. Her former roles include Congressional Chief of Staff and as Senior Advisor to U.S. Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao (Director of the Office of the 21st Century Workforce; Deputy Assistant Secretary for Intergovernmental Affairs, and Acting Assistant Secretary for Disability Employment.) For over a decade, she has been a regular lecturer for the Congressional Management Foundation and the Leadership Institute, and has volunteered for many Presidential, Gubernatorial and Congressional races. Czarnecki received her BA and JD degrees from The Catholic University of America and is an alumna of the TFAS Public Policy and Economics program.

## **Required Texts:**

*How Washington Really Works*, by Charles Peters

## **Supplemental Materials:**

- The instructor regularly supplements textbook readings with journal articles, book chapters, essays, and other material. It is the student's responsibility to consult Canvas **weekly** for updated materials prior to each class.

## **Course Goals:**

- To further an understanding of how Washington, DC, public policy works
- To develop writing and presentation skills applicable to your future careers
- To highlight current events in the context of internship experiences

## **Format:**

- Subject matter lectures
- Readings
- Active discussion regarding class topics, internships, assigned readings
- Student group presentations illustrating class work, assigned readings, and research
- Homework assignments

### **Expectations:**

- The instructor and students will act with the highest level of professional ethics, demonstrate a genuine interest in the subject matter at hand, and come to every class fully prepared to engage in the learning process.
- Students will complete all of the readings in advance of each class, and come to class ready to discuss their own experiences and insights regarding the lessons at hand.
- Students will adhere to the George Mason University Honor Code. Copying, cheating, or plagiarism will not be tolerated. **AI, ChatGPT, or similar tools are not to be used for writing assignments.**
- Students will attend all class sessions and participate in class discussions. Students who are unable to attend any particular class must, to the fullest extent practicable, inform the instructor of their pending absence in advance. The instructor will work to accommodate every student's situation, where appropriate, including unexpected family or personal challenges and unanticipated events (e.g. a death in the family, severe illness, hospitalization, etc.).
- Unless otherwise agreed upon by the instructor, students will submit all their assignments on time, prior to the beginning of each class via Canvas. With rare exception, late assignments will be marked down a minimum of one full letter grade. Students are expected to proofread their written products for typos and grammatical errors, which if left unchecked, will result in a lower grade.
- The instructor will maintain an open-door policy and be available to field any questions, concerns, comments, etc. within a reasonable timeframe.
- Please note that in order to accommodate speaker schedules, some changes in class content may occur. The professor or TFAS staff will send out a note to students if there is a change in schedule.

### **Grading:**

□ Class Attendance & Participation, including:	25%
○ Knowledge of readings	
○ Class Participation	
□ Written Papers	35%
□ Quizzes	10%
□ Group Presentations	20%
□ Internship Grade	10%

### **Grading standards**

A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	86-89
B	83-85
B-	80-82
C+	75-79
C	72-74
C-	70-71
D	68-69
F	67 or below

### **George Mason University's Grading Table:**

#### **Letter Grade Grade Points Undergraduate Courses**

A+	4.00	Satisfactory / Passing
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A	4.00	Satisfactory / Passing
A-	3.67	Satisfactory / Passing
B+	3.33	Satisfactory / Passing
B	3.00	Satisfactory / Passing
B-	2.67	Satisfactory / Passing
C+	2.33	Satisfactory / Passing
C	2.00	Satisfactory / Passing
C-	1.67	Satisfactory* / Passing
D	1.00	Unsatisfactory / Passing
F	0.00	Unsatisfactory / Passing

**PLEASE TAKE NOTE: Once a final grade has been entered at the end of the semester, late work of any kind cannot be accepted.**

## **SYLLABUS**

### **PRIOR TO THE FIRST CLASS:**

Read the essays under the Role of Government folder in Canvas and be prepared to discuss the takeaways from each essay in the first class. There is a **quiz the first day of class** based upon the readings. See Canvas for tips on how to prepare (outline the readings; take note of data.)

#### **June 5      Brief Course Overview**

- Introduction to subject matter, overview of assignments and expectations
- Group Presentation topics assigned at end of class

#### **Role of Government Discussion**

- **Quiz** on reading assignments posted to Canvas (See Folder: Role of Government)
- Discussion on the Role of Government in Public Policy, How DOGE has affected government

#### **Homework Assignment/Prep for next class:**

- Read *How Washington Works*, Chapter 7 (Congress)
- Read *Atlantic* article, *How to Salvage Congress*
- Read WSJ article, "Where Have All the Inspectors General Gone"
- Read *The Waxman Report*, Chapter 8 (*Fraud, Waste and Abuse*) by Henry Waxman
- Work on Student Group Project assignments
- Write an Internship Interview Summary due on June 12, submit via Canvas.

#### **June 12      Congress-Part 1**

- **Quiz** on 4 Congress readings
- Submit "Internship Interview Summary" prior to start of class via Canvas
- General Discussion on How Congress Works, Congress' Relationship with other Branches
- Congress Group Presentations

#### **Homework Assignment for next class:**

- Work on Student Group Project assignment
- Review the "The Waxman Report," Chapter 8

**June 19**

**Congress: Part 2**

- Congress Group Project Presentation
- Discuss Congressional Oversight and potential reform
- Guest Speaker: TBD

Homework Assignment for next class:

- Read “Devaluing the Think Tank” in *National Affairs* by Tevi Troy
- Read Chapter 4, “Competing in the Marketplace of Ideas: The Strategies of Think Tanks,” from *Do Think Tanks Matter?*
- Scan 2 white papers on Trade by Irwin and Boudreaux for general trade principles/concepts
- Prepare think tank essay assignment (one page, single spaced)

**June 26**

**Think Tanks in the context of Trade Policy**

- Submit Think Tank essay and white paper via Canvas prior to class
- Discussion on how think tanks influence public policy
- Presentation from Trade Group Projects
- Guest Speaker: TBD

Homework Assignment for next class:

- Read Peters, *How Washington Works*, Chapter 2 (Lobbies)
- Read S. Vance, chapter posted from *The Influence Game*
- Read Abramoff, 2 chapters posted from *Capitol Punishment*
- Prepare Final Paper-Policy Persuasion Paper

**June 30-Mon**

**Lobbying**

- Presentation from Lobbying Student Group
- General Discussion on How Lobbying Affects Policy Development, Lobbying Tactics/Strategy
- Guest Speaker: TBD

Homework Assignment for next class

- Work on Student Group Project assignments
- Read Peters, Chapters 3 (Bureaucracy) and 6 (Regulators)
- Under folder named Regulation, read
  - “The Problems with Regulation”
  - Getting More Bang for the Regulatory Buck” and “Look Before You Leap: A Key Principle for Regulation”
- Optional Reading: Under Bureaucracy, read Why the Bureaucracy Fails (CATO publication)
- Work on Final Paper “Decision Memo.” See Canvas for instructions.

**July 10**

**Regulation/Bureaucracy**

- Discussion on the complexities and shortcomings of regulatory policy
- Presentation from Regulation Student group
- **FINAL PAPER DUE** – “Decision Memo” via Canvas prior to class

Homework Assignment for next class:

- Read Peters Chapter 8 (White House) and “A Way Out”

- Listen to “The Staffer” podcast, link to episode featuring Tevi Troy in Canvas (only first 30 minutes)
- Review chapter from Heritage Foundation on “White House Administrations”

**July 17**

**White House**

- Presentation from White House Group Project
- General Discussion on White House Operations, How Administrations Control the Agenda