

PLCY220/PWAD220: The Politics of Public Policy
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Spring 2020 – COVID-19 Edition!

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This document will orient you to the plan for surviving this suddenly online class. I know this is a long document, but please take the time to read it. Think of it as FAQ. There is a place to ask questions on Slack (explained below). Pretend this is an online FAQ and click on the Table of Contents below to jump to a specific section.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----------|
| Getting Started..... | 2 |
| Please be flexible and patient. | 2 |
| The rest of this semester will be run asynchronously..... | 2 |
| There have to be some modifications to the grading in the syllabus. | 2 |
| Keep in contact with me. | 2 |
| Let’s keep this fun..... | 2 |
| Don’t worry, I am very reasonable. | 2 |
| Please take this survey..... | 2 |
| Things to Know about COVID-19 | 3 |
| The basics..... | 3 |
| Here are some places to find accurate information about what’s going on. | 3 |
| We need to do our part to #flattenthecurve..... | 3 |
| Tangible things YOU should be doing: | 4 |
| Watching Lectures..... | 4 |
| I will be recording lectures and making them available on YouTube..... | 4 |
| Watching lectures online is hard | 4 |
| While you are watching, I encourage you to take notes,..... | 4 |
| Engage with the lecture content. | 4 |
| Changing Content. | 5 |
| New Schedule for Online Class:..... | 5 |
| Interacting with Lectures, Me, and Classmates | 5 |
| I value the interaction with students in this class,..... | 5 |
| Join our Slack page by clicking on this link and following the directions. | 5 |
| Our slack page is at:..... | 6 |
| You can manage your notification settings and other settings | 6 |
| There are several different channels on our page to structure our interactions. | 6 |
| There are several ways to participate..... | 6 |
| Office Hours, Contacting Me and the TAs..... | 6 |
| I will be online Tuesdays from 9-11am EST and Thursday from 1-3pm EST..... | 6 |
| I welcome all questions, comments, suggestions on how to improve the class..... | 7 |
| Here is a reminder of how to contact the TAs and me. | 7 |
| Assessments..... | 7 |
| Reading Guide Quizzes will be administered on Sakai..... | 7 |
| The final exam will be administered on Sakai | 7 |
| The question format of the exam will obviously need to change..... | 8 |

| | |
|---|----------|
| Policy Brief | 8 |
| Final Factsheet:..... | 8 |
| Policy Brief Draft:..... | 8 |
| Policy Brief Final: | 8 |
| Your Assigned TA: | 8 |
| Summary of Important Dates | 8 |

Getting Started

Please be flexible and patient. This is gigantic social experiment as there have never been mass closings of universities mid-semester. I have done my best to set up an online class that I think will work in these weird circumstances we find ourselves in. Normally faculty spend months planning new classes – and we got little more than a week. Please bear with me and your other professors as we try to make this as smooth, effective and enjoyable as possible. Be aware that I might make changes to these plans as we learn what works well and what works less well.

- If something isn't working, just notify me and patient. I am expecting some hiccups!
- I will keep this document up to date (which is why I am sending it to you as a DropBox link instead of as a .doc

The rest of this semester will be run asynchronously. That means that I will post lectures at the beginning of each week, but you can watch whenever you want. You can reply, ask questions, add comments, etc., whenever you want during the week. I am doing this for two main reasons. First, Zoom doesn't work well under the best conditions with meetings with many participants – and basically all universities are moving to Zoom. We have a big class! Second, some of you might have headed home, to different time zones, etc., and the world is generally chaotic right now. This should make it easier for you.

There have to be some modifications to the grading in the syllabus. We will be doing reading guide quizzes online. I will set the quizzes up so that once you open the quiz, you will get only a few minutes to finish. That is to incentivize you keeping up with the readings and the reading guides. The exam will also be online on Sakai. I might have to change the way I ask questions given it will be given open-book over the internet. I will get this all ironed out as soon as possible. I will be reasonable, though, I promise.

Keep in contact with me. If you are having internet issues, please reach out. If you get sick and need to check out for a bit, let me know. If you have any other concerns or ideas on how to make this work better, let me know. If you have a family member that is sick and impeding your ability to keep up, let me know.

Let's keep this fun. Please feel free to engage online and with me in a relatively informal way. Emojis and gifs are welcome – we all need a bit of levity as we all stay in relative isolation and with an increasing dire situation happening around us.

Don't worry, I am very reasonable. I vow to make sure that the assignments and assessments are reasonable. I will do whatever I can to make sure you don't fall behind.

Please take this survey. The <LINK REMOVED> will ask you a few questions about what tech and resources you have at home. It will also ask about what concerns you have. Things like that.

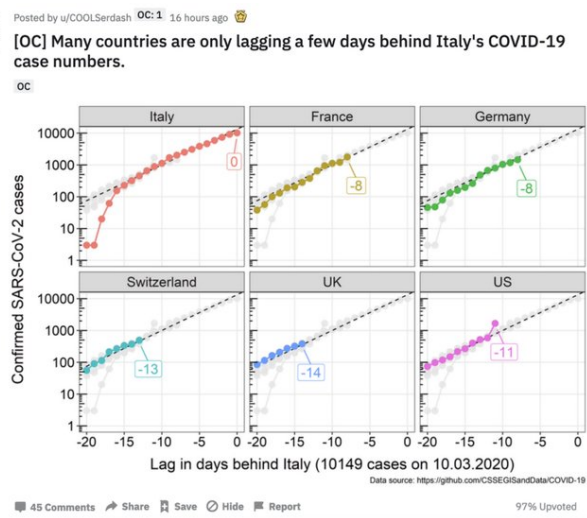
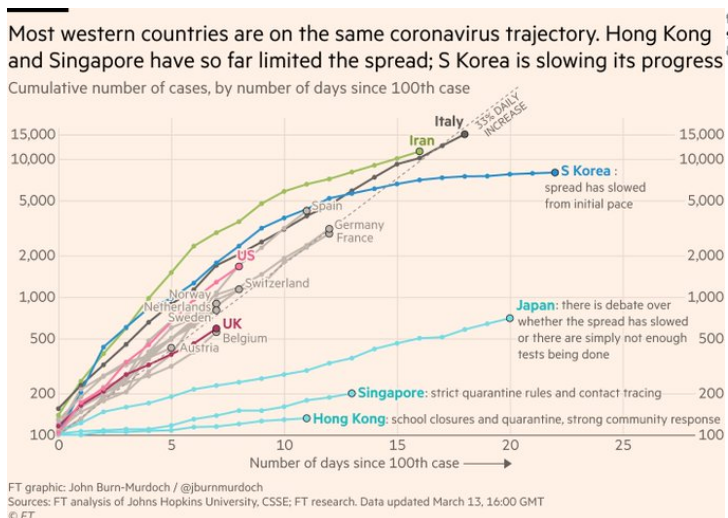
Things to Know about COVID-19

The basics.

This virus is very contagious. While the mortality rate is lower for COVID-19 compared to SARS or Ebola, those diseases didn't spread easily. This does. The most recent information suggests that it can be spread by breathing (not just coughing!), so it spreads very easily in large crowds.

Current information suggests that 80% of those who contract the virus only get mildly ill; 14% get hospital-ill, 6-8% critically ill. The mortality rate seems to be between 1-3%, but that needs to be adjusted for age. Mortality is 10-15% over 80, and drops lower for younger cohorts. That information comes from [this twitter thread](#) based on a panel of experts hosted at UCSF.

One thing that is really important to note is that young, healthy people often get mild or no symptoms. But – they may still have it and be contagious! That's us – we are especially likely to have a mild case, not know it, and then spread it to a bunch of people. Please be extremely careful if you are visiting anyone who is elderly or immunocompromised as you can spread the virus without knowing you have it.

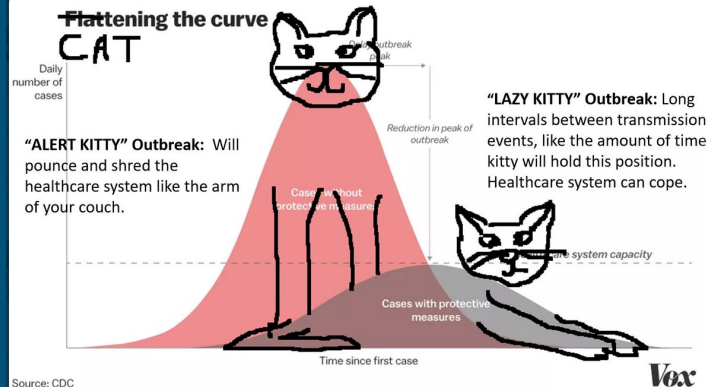
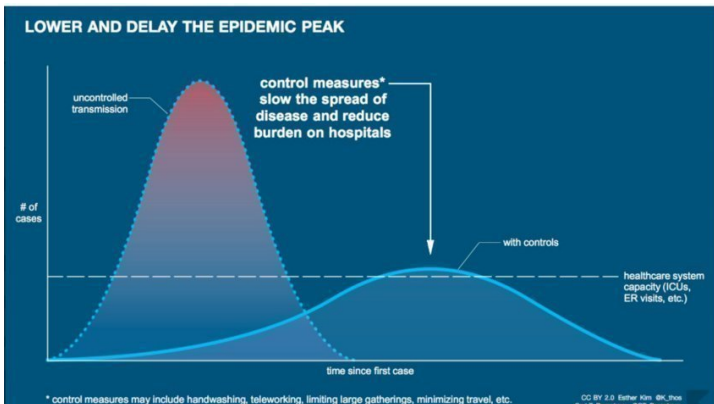


Here are some places to find accurate information about what's going on.

- o [CDC website on COVID-19](#)
- o [Wikipedia page on COVID-19 Outbreak in the US](#)
- o [NCDHHS website on COVID-19](#)
- o [This is the count of COVID-19 cases in NC](#)

We need to do our part to #flattenthecurve.

Flatten the curve references flattening the histogram of COVID-19 cases. In the absence of public policy and community mitigation strategies, the distribution of cases will be a narrow but tall peak, meaning that it will spread quickly to a lot of people. Our health care system is quite fragile and unprepared for this type of pandemic – the number of cases will overwhelm our hospitals. We really need to do our part to slow the spread. Slowing the spread doesn't mean fewer people get the virus – it means that people get it at a slower rate. Hospitals will likely still be overwhelmed, but they will be less overwhelmed.



Here is some additional reading on #flatteningthecurve

- [This is what the CDC recommends for slowing the spread of COVID-19](#)
- [What does #flattenthecurve mean?](#)
- [Here is what's going on in Italy. They have a stronger public health system compared to the US.](#)
- [This story about the Spanish Flu in 1918](#)
- [This piece by a MD, MPH about tangible things we and public policy can do to flatten the curve.](#)

Tangible things YOU should be doing:

- WASH YOUR HANDS, with soap, for 30 seconds. If you want some visual reminders of how long 30 seconds is, here is a [cool website that puts song lyrics next to images](#) of washing hands. Check it out. Seriously, it's pretty entertaining.
- Socially distance yourself. We are already doing this by not holding face to face classes. Also avoid large crowds. This is one of the most important things we can do to flatten the curve. I know it sucks, but try not to hang out with groups of friends.
- If you think you are at medium or high risk for having contracted the virus, self-quarantine. This link has [more information about what that is](#). This website provides a lot of information about what you should do in this case.
 - [If you think you have COVID19, read this from the CDC.](#)

Watching Lectures

I will be recording lectures and making them available on YouTube. I will post the URL for each specific lecture in the associated Slack channel (more on that below).

Watching lectures online is hard – it's easy to become unfocused, distracted or bored. I will be breaking the lectures down in to smaller segments to make them more digestible. You may want to watch a segment, take a break, watch another segment, etc.

While you are watching, I encourage you to take notes, just as you would in class. I won't be leaving pauses for people to finish writing things like I normally do in class. However, use the pause button as you need. You can also re-watch things if you didn't hear it clearly.

Engage with the lecture content. You may have questions about what I meant when I said something. You might want to chime in about the questions I pose or comment on something I've said. I encourage you to chime in using Slack (described in the next section). Because we are running this class *asynchronously* (described above), people may ask good questions, make useful points, etc., after you have already finished that lecture. Check the

Slack channels after a few days after you have watched the lecture to see if others have posted things that will be useful for you.

Changing Content.

Because of the extended spring break, I needed to cut two lecture topics. I am cutting interest groups because you can get a lot from just listening to the podcast and readings, if you are interested in that topic. I am also cutting direct democracy and initiatives, because I needed to cut another one and this seemed less critical. If you are interested in those topics, I encourage you to read the assigned readings.

New Schedule for Online Class:

Note that I am not putting specific dates because we are moving to asynchronous learning. However, this is the order you should watch things and at roughly with this timing. (If you rush and watch too many topics at once, you won't retain as much.)

Week 1, March 23 - 27

- [Final Factsheet Due, March 22](#)
- Partisanship, Ideology and Polarization
- Public Opinion

Week 2, March 30 - April 3

- [Send Draft of Brief to Peer Review Partner, April 2](#)
- [Send Feedback to Partner, April 5 \(but sooner, the better\)](#)
- Elections
- (Only one lecture to give time for peer review)

Week 3, April 6 - 10

- Social Movements and Protest
- Race and K-12 Education

Week 4, April 13 - 17

- Voting Rights and Gerrymandering
- Immigration

Week 5, April 20-24

- [Final Brief Due, April 19](#)
- Social Policy and Religious Rights
- Gun Rights and Regulation

Week 6, April 27 – May 1

- Final Exam

Interacting with Lectures, Me, and Classmates

I value the interaction with students in this class, and I know that many (but not all 😊) students also value these interactions. I strongly encourage people to continue to participate. This will be done on Slack.

[Slack](#) is a communication tool that allows groups to talk with one another in a “chat” or “message” format. Participants sign onto a “channel” in Slack and can view the discussions that other members of the group are having.

Join our Slack page by clicking on this link and following the directions. **<LINK REMOVED>** This link expires in 30 days from when I created it, on 3/13/20.

- You will be prompted to create a log-in with your email and a password. (You can use whatever email.)

- You will also be encouraged (but not required) to create a display name (handle) and upload a picture. I don't really care what your name is. Keep in mind that your display name will be, well, displayed. So, don't go *too* goofy here.

Our slack page is at: [<LINK REMOVED>](#) Slack also has a good desktop version, and a good mobile app.

You can manage your notification settings and other settings. Click on the little arrow next to PLCY220 on the upper left, then click on Preferences. You can also mute or leave certain channels (obviously, do this only for the ones that aren't dealing with class content!!)

There are several different channels on our page to structure our interactions. There is a channel for each lesson topic, a channel for sharing and discussing news stories, a channel for asking general questions about this new class format, a thread for asking clarifying questions during my office hours times. I'll say more about my office hours below.

There are several ways to participate. (Just to be clear, you aren't graded on participating and it isn't mandatory. But it will be more fun for all of us if people do. Engagement also improves retention of information – and I want you to remember this stuff!) I have designated online hours (details below) but I will respond throughout the week whenever I have a few free minutes. I am fine with us being a bit informal here, so appropriate emojis and gifs are welcome.

- **New stories:** There is a channel where you can post and respond to news stories posted by me and your classmates. What are you reading about that is interesting and important (or fun) to know? Feel free to respond to each other's news stories. Again, more engagement = more fun!
- **Ask questions or comment about the lectures:** On the channel for each lecture, please, please ask any clarifying questions. I will respond. I prefer that people ask questions on Slack (as opposed to emailing me privately) so that everyone can see the responses this way. Feel free to also chime in on the topic at hand – your thoughts, experience etc.
- **Visit my virtual office hours:** I will be online on Tuesdays from 9-11am EST and Thursday from 1-3pm EST. During those hours, I will respond right away (or pretty quickly). There are four ways to reach out.
 - In the Office Hours channel, you can ask clarifying questions about things we have talked about, how things connect, about the class structure. Heck – we are all going to be bored as we socially separate – so feel free to ask me anything! My answers to these things will be public for anyone to see. (Don't be shy here!)
 - I will also be available to [meet via Zoom](#) during these hours (or other hours, if these don't work for you). Zoom meetings might be more appropriate if you have more personal questions, like about grad school, internship advice, picking majors or classes, etc.
 - You can privately direct message me or the TAs on Slack by clicking our names on the sidebar on the left.
 - You can also email me, like usual.

Office Hours, Contacting Me and the TAs.

I will be online Tuesdays from 9-11am EST and Thursday from 1-3pm EST. During these hours, I will reply quickly to Slack questions/comments, direct messages and emails. I will also be holding Zoom video meetings as needed.

- Within those time frames, I will open a Zoom meeting for the first half hour or so of each of those windows (so 9 on Tu and 1 on Th). My Zoom Personal Meeting ID is [<removed>](#). Note that I am making

the same offer to my other class and will start an open zoom meeting for them for the second part of each online hours window.

- This will be to chat about the lecture, answer questions, talk about the news, whatever. You don't need to have a question to join. This wouldn't be the time to ask more personal or private questions because it will be semi-public. But if it's a general question like "how am I supposed to get a summer internship right now with what is going on" then feel free to ask it in this open forum

I welcome all questions, comments, suggestions on how to improve the class.

- If your question/comment would be useful for the whole class, please post it under the Office Hours channel in Slack. That will allow all students the ability to see my answer.
- If it's a more private message, feel free to DM me on Slack or email me. You can also request a Zoom video meeting.

Here is a reminder of how to contact the TAs and me.

- Me
 - Online House: Tuesdays from 9-11 and Thursdays from 1-3, and throughout the week at other random times
 - Email: rkreit@email.unc.edu
 - Slack Display Name: Prof. K
- <Removed>
 - Online Hours: Fridays, 1-12
 - Email: <Removed>
 - Slack: <Removed>
- <Removed>
 - Online Hours: Thursdays, 1-3
 - Email: <Removed>
 - Slack: <Removed>

Assessments

Reading Guide Quizzes will be administered on Sakai. I normally give people five minutes to do the paper and pen(cil) ones in class. These quizzes will be a little different.

The reading guide quizzes will be on Sakai. I will announce on Sunday (by email AND Slack) if there will be a reading guide quiz. It will be available from Monday morning until Friday. Instead of asking way simplified versions of the questions, I will use questions that are **nearly identical** to the ones on the reading guides. (So, in other words, the questions won't be *quite* so easy as the ones in class – which often required just a phrase to answer them. Instead, they might require a few sentences. But don't fret because you can still do the whole reading guide quiz before you start the quiz. You will have **ten minutes** to complete the quiz, which will have 3 questions.

The final exam will be administered on Sakai. We are still waiting to hear back from the administration about the requirement that classes hold a three-hour final during finals week. I'm thinking they are going to waive that. Assuming that they do (and again, I don't have confirmation on this yet), my plan is to give a 4-day open book, "take home" style exam. Please don't actually spend 4 days on it – I am just giving that long of a window because people's schedules are crazy right now and who knows what will be going on in six weeks.

The question format of the exam will obviously need to change. What I am like 85% sure I will do is give a mostly essay based exam. I haven't decided the details yet (sorry ...) but I am imagining it will be something like 2-3 essays. I might even do something like give you a word bank of concepts you should address in the essays. There might also be a few short answer questions. I want to reiterate my promise that it will be reasonable in level of difficulty given the situation. I'll also keep everyone updated on the plan for this.

Policy Brief

Final Factsheet:

Because of the chaos of these last few weeks and this big transition, I am delaying the deadline for the final factsheet until Sunday, March 22. (It was March 17.) You should upload it to Sakai by 11:55 that evening. If you turn it in after that time, you will get a 3-point deduction (out of 10). If you can't make that deadline for COVID-19 related reasons, reach out.

Policy Brief Draft:

This draft should have all the content you want in it and some (but maybe not all) of your design figured out. The more you have done, the better feedback you can get from your peer review partner. I haven't figured out how we will do this exactly. What I think I will do is send out a brief survey that asks if you have a peer review partner (or partners) OR if you want me to randomly assign one to you. I will send out a peer review workshop document that talks you through what to look for in your partner's brief. You could do this all over Slack, you could do this over email, you could do this over a Zoom video chat (or Skype or GoogleMeet), or if you are both in the area and quite sure you are not sick, you can do it in person. The deadline for this is the same as before, April 2nd. You don't need to upload it to Sakai; rather, you just need to send it to your partner. You should return your feedback to your partner by April 5. (We normally finish this in class, so it doesn't take long. I have just giving a big window because everything is chaos these days. The sooner you return it, the better.)

Policy Brief Final:

The final policy briefs should be awesome and informative! As a reminder, you can see examples of finished briefs [on my website](#) and you can get ideas for dataviz on [Lorin's website](#). (As of today, I am not sure if she is holding virtual office hours). These will be due April 19th, which is a few days later than the original due date of April 16th. You should upload it to Sakai by 11:55 that evening. If you turn it in after that time, you will get a 30-point deduction (out of 100). If you can't make that deadline for COVID-19 related reasons, reach out.

Your Assigned TA:

You each have one TA grading each part of your brief. If you have any questions at all (checking in on how it looks, if you have the right content, etc.), reach out to the person grading your work. The contact information for each TA is in a previous section.

- ~~<Removed>~~ is grading last name Li through Z
- ~~<Removed>~~ is grading last name A up to Li

Summary of Important Dates

Final Fact Sheet – due Sunday, March 22.

Draft of Brief and Peer Review – due Thursday, April 2.

Final Brief – due Sunday, April 19.

Final Exam – TBD – this will likely be available for a few days on Sakai.