

The Politics of Policymaking (PUAF U6110)

Course Overview: This course is an introduction to political analysis for public policy professionals. Public policymaking of all kinds takes place in a political environment, in which strategic, purposive actors seek to advance their own goals and realize their own visions how the world ought to be changed for the better. It also takes place within a knowledge environment, in which policy professionals try to bring systematic evidence and scientific knowledge to bear to understand and solve social problems. How well are social problems understood? How certain are we that public policies will produce the intended results? How can public policy professionals ensure that knowledge and evidence actually influence the process and outcomes of policymaking? **Course Objectives** The goals that participants in the policymaking process pursue may take a variety of forms — substantive policy outcomes, of course, but also political advancement or material advantage. The actors who populate the process, moreover, may disagree about the goals they seek and making policy — especially in democratic political systems — requires some means of resolving these disagreements. Actors also differ in the resources they have at their disposal to seek their goals — power, money, organization, for example, but also knowledge. Finally, policymaking actors cannot do anything they want in pursuit of their goals. They are constrained by the rules and structures that make up the policymaking system. These factors — actors, goals, resources, knowledge, and rules — shape the strategic options available to would-be policymakers.

Ultimately, then, this is a course about strategy. Policy professionals who understand the political environment in which they operate and who can integrate political, managerial, and policy analysis, are likely to prove more effective than those who do not and cannot, whether they work in the public, private, or nonprofit sector.

The concepts, skills, and analytical tools that this course seeks to develop rest on a foundation of political theory and basic principles of political economy and political science. These theoretical foundations help us identify patterns of behavior and outcomes, ways of thinking about these patterns, and methods of analysis that facilitate understanding, prediction, and, ultimately, the shaping of strategies to improve policymaking in a political environment. **Course Logistics** We will meet for lectures each week on Wednesday afternoons from 4:10-6:00. Each student must also register for and attend a two-hour weekly lab section, directed by a Teaching Assistant. In labs, students will discuss lectures and assigned readings, review cases and written assignments, and participate in small-group projects. **Readings** Wilson, James Q. *Bureaucracy What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It*, will be available at Book Culture.

Weekly Readings will be available through course works and through library e-reserves. **Method of Evaluation** Assignments should be typed, double spaced, with the student's name, his or her TA's name, and the word count at the top. Assignments are due by the start of class (4:10pm) on the specified date. Students should hand a hard copy to their TA before class begins. Late assignments will be penalized by 1/3 of a grade, equivalent to 3 points out of 100, per day (e.g. an A- paper would automatically become a B+). A grading rubric for the assignments will be posted shortly.

- POP Analysis (Individual) - 35%

Preliminary Analysis

Strategy Analysis

Evidence Analysis

Institutions Analysis

Final Analysis

- Class Participation - 25%

Attendance
Readings Discussion
Case Presentation (Group)

- Take-home Final Memo (Individual) - 40%

Session 1:

Topic:

Introduction

Description:

Why do we need a course on the politics of policy making? What are the challenges of policy making in a democracy?

Readings:

Clarkson Airport Authority

Session 2:

Topic:

Analytical Framework

Description:

What are the challenges to rational policy making in a democracy and how do you approach it?

Readings:

Charles E. Lindblom, "The Science of Muddling Through," Public Administration
19 (1959): 79-88. Available
[here](#).

Ira Katznelson, "Policy History: Origins," International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences.
Available
[here](#).

Kevin Esterling, The Political Economy of Expertise, Chapter 1 (e-reserves)

Stone, Deborah. Policy paradox the art of political decision making, Introduction and Chapter 1. (e-reserves)

William H. Riker, Liberalism Against Populism, Chapter 1 (e-reserves)

Session 3:

Topic:

Narrative of the Policy Process

Description:

How does the policy come to be - from its inception to its implementation and evaluation?

Readings:

John W. Kingdon, Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies, Chapters 1 ([e-reserves](#)), 8 (Need to get the book from Lehman Reserve for Ch. 8)

Frank R. Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones, Agendas and Instability in American Politics, Chapter 1 ([e-reserves](#))

Schattschneider, E. E. Semisovereign people, a realist's view of democracy in America. Chapter 1. ([e-reserves](#))

Maria Luisa Sanchez Fuentes; Jennifer Paine; Brook Elliott-Buettner. *The decriminalisation of abortion in Mexico City: how did abortion rights become a political priority?* . Available [here](#)

Session 4:

Break

Session 5:

Topic:

Quantification of Public Policy & Professionalization of Social Sciences

Description:

The gradual professionalization of quantitative policy-making, based in the linked growth of a) empirical social science; b) think-tanks; c) census and survey-based population statistics. Roots in 19th century race-science.

Readings:

Michael J. Lacey and Mary O. Furner, *The State and Social Investigation in Britain and the United States*. pp 23 - 51 ([e-reserves](#))

Lisa Anderson, *Pursuing Truth, Exercising Power: Social Science and Public Policy in the Twenty-First Century*, Chapter 2 (e-book - Available [here](#))

Charles Edward Lindblom, David K. Cohen, *Usable knowledge: social science and social problem solving*, Chapter - 1 ([e-reserves](#))

Ken Prewitt. "Count the Mulatto Race: Watch it Disappear" (Attached)

Jericho Burg, *Methodology Wars: The politics of Emergency Needs Assessment in Ethiopia*. (Attached)

Session 6:

Topic:

Indicators & Evidence-Based Policy

Description:

The late 20th century surge in, and globalization of, quantitative policy-making - using the OECD Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies as the major example, but attention as well to the "evidence-based-policy" movement. The arrival of digital information - and its implications for government transparency & accountability, and for individual privacy.

Readings:

The Global Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies (Attached)

Bradburn, N. Social Indicators. in Prewitt (ed), *The Federal Statistical System: A Scientific Resource*. Annals, forthcoming (Attached)

[Deluge of Data Shapes a New Era in Computing \(NY Times\)](#)

Innes, Judith Eleanor. Knowledge and public policy the search for meaningful indicators. Chapter 13: Conclusion and Policy Implications ([e-reserves](#))

Prewitt -- "Flawed& Fragile" (Attached)

OMB Program Evaluation (Attached)

Session 7:

Topic:

Using Evidence in Policy

Description:

What is known, not known, about the use of social science knowledge in the policy-making process. The conflict between "politics" and "knowledge."

Readings:

Framework, Anonymous (Attached)

Argument, Anonymous (Attached)

Kevin Esterling, The Political Economy of Expertise, Chapter 7 ([e-reserves](#))

K. Buse, A. Martin-Hilber, N. Widyantoro, S. Hawkes, Management of the politics of evidence-based sexual and reproductive health policy, The Lancet, Volume 368, Issue 9552, pp 2101-2103. Available [here](#).

Session 8:

Topic:

Panel Discussion on Race in the Census

Description:

Professor Prewitt will present his recommendation for a major modification in the race classification currently used by the U.S. Census Bureau, and the panelists will discuss why that modification is unlikely to be adopted.

Panel Members:

Angelo Falcon

Founder and current President of the National Institute for Latino Policy.

Nathan Persily

Charles Keller Beekman Professor of Law and Professor of Political Science, Columbia University. Expert on redistricting using census statistics.

Theodore Shaw

Professor of Professional Practice In Law. Columbia University. Past Director-Counsel and President of the NAACP Legal Defense & Education Fund (LDF).

Session 9:

Topic: No Class - Spring Break

Session 10:

Topic:

Bureaucracy

Description:

Bureaucracy: the site of policy implementation site. Why bureaucracies are not, necessarily, designed to be efficient at their task. Balancing the politics and evidence.

Readings:

Wilson, Bureaucracy, Chapters 1, 2, 9, 10,11

Terry Moe, "The Politics of Bureaucratic Structure," in Can the Government Govern?, ed. John E. Chubb and Paul E. Peterson ([e-reserves](#))

Prewitt, "Keep Counting, Change the Purpose"(Attached)

Assignments Due

Session 11:

Topic:

Electoral Systems & Representation

Description :

Electoral ambition and the reelection imperative are the driving forces of politics and policymaking in democratic political systems. Electoral incentives fundamentally shape the behavior of policymakers regardless of their ideologies or policy preferences. Different electoral systems provide very different kinds of incentives for elected officials. We will examine the fundamental difference between proportional representation and winner-take-all electoral systems and explore how these systemic differences affect policymaking behavior.

Readings:

Horowitz, Donald L., 'Electoral Systems: A Primer for Decision Makers', Journal of Democracy, 14 (2003), pp. 115-127. Available [here](#).

R. Douglas Arnold, The Logic of Congressional Action, chap. 1 ([e-reserves](#))

Alberto Alesina and Edward Glaeser, Fighting Poverty in the US and Europe: A World of Difference, chapter 4 (e-book, Available [here](#))

Jonas Pontusson, "The American Welfare State in Comparative Perspective: Reflections on Alberto Alesina and Edward L. Glaeser's Fighting Poverty in the US and Europe," Perspectives on Politics 4 (2006): 315-26. Available [here](#).

Session 12:

Topic:

Legislatures & Executive - I

Description:

The structure of decision-making institutions affects the incentives and behavior of individual policymakers, as well as systems of political parties and interest organization. Different kinds of legislative-executive systems allocate

power differently. We will focus on parliamentary and separation-of-powers system and their different properties, which have considerably different "rules of the game."

Readings:

Sven Steinmo, "Political Institutions and Tax Policy in the United States, Britain, and Sweden," *World Politics* 41 (1989): 500-35 (Available [here](#))

Alfred Stepan and Cindy Skach, "Constitutional Frameworks and Democratic Consolidation: Parliamentarism versus Presidentialism," *World Politics* 46 (1993): 1-22 (Available [here](#))

R. Douglas Arnold, *The Logic of Congressional Action*, chaps. 6 ([e-reserves](#))

Wise, Carol and Pastor, Manuel, *The Lost Sexenio : Vicente Fox and the New Politics of Economic Reform in Mexico*, *Latin American Politics & Society*, Volume 47, Number 4, Winter 2005, pp. 135-160 (Available [here](#))

Session 13:

Topic:

Legislatures & Executive - II

Description:

The structure of decision-making institutions affects the incentives and behavior of individual policymakers, as well as systems of political parties and interest organization. Different kinds of legislative-executive systems allocate power differently. We will focus on parliamentary and separation-of-powers system and their different properties, which have considerably different "rules of the game."

Readings:

Alberto Diaz-Cayeros, Beatriz Magaloni And Barry R. Weingast, *Tragic Brilliance: Equilibrium Hegemony And Democratization in Mexico* (Attached).

Eric Chang, "Electoral Incentives and Budgetary Spending: Rethinking the Role of Political Institutions," (Attached)

Barry Ames, "Electoral Strategy under Open-List Proportional Representation," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (May, 1995), pp. 406-433. Available [here](#)

Wilson Ch. 13 &14

Ryszard Kapusinski, *The Emperor: Downfall of An Autocrat*, pp. 26-56 ([e-reserves](#))

Session 14:

Topic:

Interest Groups and NGOs

Description:

What affects the organization and mobilization of policy constituencies? What tools do groups who are not part of the government have to shape the policy process and policy outcomes? Topics include the collective action problem and the distribution of the costs and benefits of policy as factors affecting mobilization and power.

Readings:

Vogel, David. "Representing Diffuse Interests in Environmental Policymaking." *Do Institutions Matter?: Government Capabilities in the United States and Abroad*. 237. ([e-reserves](#))

Raúl L. Madrid. Labouring against Neoliberalism: Unions and Patterns of Reform in Latin America. Journal of Latin American Studies, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Feb., 2003), pp. 53-88. Available [here](#)

Bruce Yandle, "Bootleggers and Baptists: The Education of a Regulatory Economist." Regulation 7, no. 3 (1983): 12. (Attached)

Wilson - Chapter 16

Session 15:

Topic:

Guest Lecture: Professor Michael Doyle

Description:

Assembling the MDGs: The Politics of Global Indicators

Assignments Due