

PUAF U6110 The Politics of Policymaking (Fall 2010)

SYLLABUS (as of October 6th, 2010. Please refer to the individual sessions on Courseworks for the most current information)

Instructor Information

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Course Overview:

This course is an introduction to the role of politics and evidence in public policymaking. Public policy professionals of all types must navigate the intersecting realms of politics and knowledge. Increasingly, they operate in settings where social conditions, as well as policy inputs, outputs, and impacts are quantified, with the intent of understanding and solving social problems.

Despite this emphasis on quantification, uncertainty and ambiguity remain central features of the policymaking process. How can policymakers reconcile the uncertainties associated with all measurement with concepts such as evidence-based policymaking, performance measures, and social indicators? What are the implications of political and institutional environments for the use of evidence? This course will introduce students to the challenges of public policymaking and present tools and strategies for dealing with these challenges.

Approximately half of the lectures will be devoted to applications of these concepts and themes; a series of guest speakers will examine issues in a range of policy areas, including public health, international development, urban policy, military intelligence, and the press. In weekly discussion sections and through written assignments, case studies, oral presentations and panel discussions, students will have the opportunity to engage with and apply course material to real-world policy problems.

Course Objectives:

This course aims to teach students how to translate knowledge into evidence to advance public policy goals. To this end, students will study questions such as: What constitutes evidence? How is evidence understood and communicated in various settings? How does the strength of the scientific and political consensus surrounding a policy issue affect the nature of the discourse and the outcomes that emerge? What are the implications of different government institutions, be they democratic or non-democratic, for the use of evidence in policymaking? How can policymakers strategically use arguments and evidence to navigate the political and institutional context?

Assignment Grading and Due Dates

1. Evidence Analysis Memo (10%)
 - i. Topic Proposal (200-300 words) due 9/22
 - ii. Strategy Proposal (300-400 words) due 10/6
 - iii. Evidence Analysis Memo (1000 words) due 11/17

2. Indicator assignment (20% total): Handed out 9/22, due 11/10 (in groups)
 - i. 5% Part 1: Explore an Indicator (200 words)
 - ii. 15% Part 2: Design an Indicator (400 - 500 words + charts/tables optional)

3. Final exam (45%) Handed out 12/8, due date TBA

4. Participation (25%)
 - i. 10% Case presentation (in groups)
 - ii. 10% Participation (including section-specific activities)
 - iii. 5% Attendance

SYLLABUS:

Lecture 1 (9/8)

Politics, Policymaking, and Evidence

- Introduction to policymaking
- The role of public policy schools
- What is public policy?
- What is evidence?

Lab 1

Readings for Lab 1: Clarkson Airport Authority case

Lecture 2 (9/15)

The Quantification of Public Policy, Part 1: Knowledge

- Sources of Policy Knowledge
- Evidence-Based Policymaking
- Political consensus and scientific certainty

Readings:

- Deborah Stone. Policy paradox the art of political decision making, Intro and Ch. 1
- Anonymous, “Framework” & “Argument”
- Esterling, Kevin. “The Political Economy of Expertise”, Ch.1, 4 and 7

Reading Guidelines:

Begin with Stone’s critique of rational-analytic policymaking and market model. Next, read “Framework” and “Argument” for a discussion of how evidence is defined and the use of social science research as evidence. Next, Esterling examines the role of expertise and evidence in legislative policymaking. Chapters 1 and 4 introduce his central arguments. How do uncertainty and ambiguity in the causal framework of a policy affect which interests get mobilized? How does the available evidence constrain the type of arguments that proponents and opponents can make? Chapter 7 applies Esterling’s arguments to the issue of school vouchers.

Lab 2

Lecture 3 (9/22)

The Quantification of Public Policy, Part 2: Usage and Applications

- Classification
- The Denominator
- Indicators

- Social experiments/causal inference

Readings:

- Kenneth Prewitt. “Counting America's Races: Do We Still Want To? Do We Still Need To?”, Chapter 1: Statistical Races Get Their Start
- Norman. M. Bradburn and Carolyn J.E. Fuqua. “Indicators and the Federal Statistical System: An Essential but Fraught Partnership”.
- Robert Jervis. “Yardsticks and Indicators” from “System Effects”

Reading Guidelines:

Begin with Prewitt, who discusses classification and category construction. Next, Bradburn defines indicators and explains why they are inherently political. Next, the short reading by Jervis describes how indicators can be susceptible to various distortions, both intentional and unintentional.

Assignment Due: Topic Proposal for Evidence Analysis

Lab 3

Reading for lab 3: Jericho Burg. Methodology Wars: The politics of Emergency Needs Assessment in Ethiopia.

Lecture 4 (9/29): Guest Lecture by Professor Michael Doyle

Readings:

- Road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. 6 September 2001.
- United Nations Millennium Declaration Resolution adopted by the General Assembly. 18 September 2000.

Lab 4

Reading for lab 4: Case 1

Assignment Due: Case Presentation - Group 1

Lecture 5 (10/6): Guest Lecture by Robert Jervis

Readings:

- Robert Jervis. “Why Intelligence and Policymakers Clash”. Political Science Quarterly Vol. 125 No. 2. 2010.
- Iran: Nuclear Intentions and Capabilities. National Intelligence Estimates. Nov 2007.

Assignment Due: Strategy Proposal for Evidence Analysis (bring 1 copy to lecture and 1 copy to lab)

Lab 5

Bring a copy of your Strategy Proposal and Topic Proposal to lab for peer review

Lecture 6 (10/13): Guest Lecture by Professor Ronald Bayer

Readings:

- Ronald Bayer and Claire Edington. HIV Testing, Human Rights, and Global AIDS Policy: Exceptionalism and Its Discontents. *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law*, Vol. 34, No. 3, June 2009
- Marian Moser Jones and Ronald Bayer. Paternalism and Its Discontents - Motorcycle Helmet Laws, Libertarian Values, and Public Health. *American Journal of Public Health*, Vol 97, No. 2, February 2007.
- Ronald Bayer and James Colgrove. *Unfiltered*. Ch 1, Children & Bystanders First: The Ethics and Politics of Tobacco Control in the United States.
- Amy L. Fairchild, Ronald Bayer and James Colgrove. Ch. 7 “AIDS, Activism, and the Vicissitudes of Democratic Privacy” from “Searching Eyes – Privacy, the State, and Disease Surveillance in the US”.
- Ronald Bayer and Jennifer Stuber. Tobacco Control, Stigma, and Public Health. *American Journal of Public Health*. January 2006, Vol 96, No. 1.

Lab 6

Reading for lab 6: Case 2

Assignment Due: Case Presentation- Group 2

Lecture 7 (10/20): Guest Lecture by Professor Lisa Anderson

Required readings:

Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky, “Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda” *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (Dec., 2004), pp. 725-740

M. Victoria Murillo, “Political Bias in Policy Convergence: Privatization Choices in Latin America” *World Politics*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (Jul., 2002), pp. 462-493

Lisa Anderson, “Rogue Libya’s Long Road” [*Middle East Report*](#) No. 241, (Winter, 2006), pp. 42-47

Arab Human Development Report 2003, “Building a Knowledge Society,” chapter 8, The Political Context, pp. 145-160 <http://www.arab-hdr.org/publications/other/ahdr/ahdr2003e.pdf>

Optional readings:

Evelyn Dietsche, "The Political Economy of Policy Decisions: Why good technical reform designs don't always work A Literature Review" Oxford Policy Institute, December 2003

http://www.opi.org.uk/publications/documents/Dietsche2003_002.pdf

Andres Rius and Nicolas van de Walle, "Political Institutions and Economic Policy Reform" August 15, 2003

http://depot.gdnet.org/gdnshare/pdf2/gdn_library/global_research_projects/understanding_reform/thematic3final.pdf

Lab 7

Reading for lab 7:

1. Case 3
2. Ryszard Kapuscinski, "The Emperor: Downfall of An Autocrat" pp. 26-56

Assignment Due: Case Presentation - Group 3

Lecture 8 (10/27): Guest Lecture by Professor Andrew Nathan

Readings:

- Andrew J. Nathan, "Authoritarian Resilience" *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 14, No. 1, January 2003, pp. 6-17
- Andrew Nathan and Andrew Scobell, "Who Runs Chinese Foreign Policy? Changes in Policy-Making from Mao to Hu", in *China's Search for Security* (draft)
- Maria Edin, "State Capacity and Local Agent Control in China: CCP Cadre Management from a Township Perspective", *The China Quarterly*, No. 173 (Mar., 2003), pp. 35-52.

Lab 8: No lab due to University Holiday

Lecture 9 (11/3):

Democratic Systems, Interests, and Access

- Ambition and democratic institutions
- Separation of Powers vs. Parliamentary systems
- Policy environment: costs and benefits
- Interest groups, access, and mobilization

Readings:

- James Wilson, "Organizations and Public Policy", pg. 330-337, in *Political Organizations*
- Sven Steinmo, "Political Institutions and Tax Policy in the United States, Britain, and Sweden". *World Politics* 41 (1989): 500-35
- Alfred Stepan and Cindy Skach, "Constitutional Frameworks and Democratic Consolidation: Parliamentarism versus Presidentialism," *World Politics* 46 (1993): 1-22

Reading Guidelines:

Steinmo and Stepan and Skatch discuss the implications of different types of democratic political institutions on politics and policymaking. Wilson discusses how the degree to which policy costs and benefits are distributed or concentrated affects the political environment.

Lab 9

Lecture 10 (11/10):

Bureaucracy and Implementation

- What is bureaucracy?
- The bureaucratic dilemma and delegation as a strategic problem
- Constraints and strategies for bureaucrats

Readings:

- James Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, Ch. 1, 2, and 7
- Terry Moe, "The Politics of Bureaucratic Structure," in *Can the Government Govern?*, ed. John E. Chubb and Paul E. Peterson

Reading Guidelines:

Begin with Wilson. Chapters 1 and 2 set the stage for examining the organization of bureaucracies. Chapter 7 discusses why public bureaucracies differ from private bureaucracies, and identifies three key constraints on public bureaucracies. Next, Moe presents a related argument, though his emphasis is on how interest groups attempt to influence agency structure.

Assignment Due: Indicator assignment

Lab 10

Lecture 11 (11/17): "Guest" Lecture by Professor Kenneth Prewitt

The Politics of Census Taking

Readings: TBA

Assignment Due: Evidence Analysis Memo

Lab 11

Indicator presentations and voting

Lecture 12 (12/1): Guest Lecture by Professor Ester Fuchs

Readings: TBA

Lab 12

Reading for lab 12: Case 4

Assignment Due: Case Presentation- Group 4

Lecture 13 (12/8): Final Session

- Measure of America: American Human Development Project [<http://www.measureofamerica.org/>] : Presentation by Co-directors Sarah Burd-Sharps and Kristen Lewis (see bio below)
- Indicator Presentations
- Semester wrap-up

Sarah Burd-Sharps and **Kristen Lewis** are co-directors of the American Human Development Project. The two are authors (with Eduardo Martins) of *The Measure of America: American Human Development Report 2008-2009*, published by Columbia University Press, and *A Portrait of Mississippi* and *A Portrait of Louisiana*. They founded the project in 2006. Previously, Sarah worked with the United Nations for over two decades. Most recently she was Deputy Director of the Human Development Report Office of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Prior to this, she worked with UNIFEM in China and in a number of African countries on gender issues and economic empowerment. Sarah holds an M.I.A. from Columbia University. Kristen also comes from an international development policy background, having worked primarily in the areas of gender equality, governance, environment, and water and sanitation. Kristen is co-author, under the leadership of Jeffrey Sachs' Millennium Project, of the 2005 book *Health, Dignity and Development: What will it take?* She worked at the United Nations for some ten years, first with UNIFEM and then in UNDP's policy bureau, and has served as a consultant for many international development organizations. Kristen holds an M.I.A. from Columbia University, as well.

Final Exam (take-home) distributed.