Policy Formation in Global Perspective

Objectives: The goal of this course is to deepen students’ understanding of the way in which public policy is made, with a particular emphasis on the roles played by advocacy campaigns and ideas (sometimes shaped by policy analysis) plays in that process. We will look at the processes of policy formation at three distinct levels of policymaking and governance: at the national level in the U.S. and other OECD countries, in the developing country context, and at the transnational (international, multilateral) level. The emphasis will be on social and environmental policy, with some discussions of other issue areas.

The public policy field is dominated by perspectives and approaches grounded in efforts to explain the U.S. policymaking process. Recently more systematic efforts at the comparative analysis of policymaking are being developed, which has served to highlight the institutional exceptionalism of the United States – an outlier of sorts. The goal of this course is to place the United States within a global and comparative context so as to gain a better understanding of the role that context plays in policymaking. In an era when “best practices” and policy innovations involve transnational communities of practice, it becomes increasingly important to understand the salience and significance of different lessons learned and policy experiences.

In addition to developing a solid understanding of the competing perspectives on explaining the relationships between power, knowledge, advocacy, and policymaking we will explore four sets of questions:

1. How do we disentangle the dynamics of power, policy, and politics in the policy formation process? Or, another way, how do we explain how interests, institutions, ideas and individuals interact to shape policy outcomes?
2. How do public service practitioners balance roles as an observer of the policymaking process and a participant in that process?
3. How do analysts balance (or not) concerns regarding efficiency, effectiveness, and equity? What indicators do we use to measure each of those objectives?
4. Do analytical tools designed for studying policymaking in the U.S. and other OECD countries travel well or do we need to develop new ones?
5. What, if anything, is distinctive about transnational policymaking processes?
Requirements

1. Class Participation: (30%) The course depends on active and ongoing participation by all class participants. This will occur in three ways:

   a). Weekly Participation (10%): Participation begins with effective reading and listening. Class participants are expected to read and discuss the readings on a weekly basis. That means coming prepared to engage the class, with questions and/or comments with respect to the reading. You will be expected to have completed all the required readings before class to the point where you can be called on to critique or discuss any reading.

   Before approaching each reading think about what the key questions are for the week and about how the questions from this week relate to what you know from previous weeks. Then skim over the reading to get a sense of the themes it covers, and, before reading further, jot down what questions you hope the reading will be able to answer for you. Next, read the introduction and conclusion. This is normally enough to get a sense of the big picture. Ask yourself: Are the claims in the text surprising? Do you believe them? Can you think of examples that do not seem consistent with the logic of the argument? Is the reading answering the questions you hoped it would answer? If not, is it answering more or less interesting questions than you had thought of? Next ask yourself: What types of evidence or arguments would you need to see in order to be convinced of the results? Now read through the whole text, checking as you go through how the arguments used support the claims of the author. It is rare to find a piece of writing that you agree with entirely. So, as you come across issues that you are not convinced by, write them down and bring them along to class for discussion. Also note when you are pleasantly (or unpleasantly) surprised, when the author produced a convincing argument that you had not thought of.

   In class itself, the key to quality participation is listening. Asking good questions is the second key element. What did you mean by that? How do you/we know? What’s the evidence for that claim? This is not a license for snarkiness, but for reflective, thoughtful, dialogic engagement with the ideas of others in the class. Don’t be shy. Share your thoughts and reactions in ways that promote critical engagement with them. Quality and quantity of participation can be, but are not necessarily, closely correlated.

   b). Précis/Response Papers: (10%) Each week 3-5 people will take responsibility for preparing response papers to one or more of the readings. This includes writing a 3-5 page précis of the reading that a) lays out the main argument(s), b) indicates what you found provocative and/or mundane, and c) poses 3-4 questions for class discussion. These handouts will be distributed via email to the rest of the class by Tuesday at 5 PM (using the course website). Everyone will prepare one précis over the course of the semester. Everyone who prepares a précis for the week should be prepared to provide a brief (2-3 minute) outline of their reaction to the readings as a contribution to discussion.
c). Policy, Politics and Inequality Weblog (5%) There will be a jointly authored course blog. All students will be expected to post 500 words over the course of the semester (ie, about 5 substantive contributions of 100 words, or any equivalent arithmetic combination), including responses to other’s posts. Contributions should pertain to broad issues or themes raised by the course, but are not limited to the readings or issues we discuss in class. Postings can include continuations of or expansions of class discussions (remember all those times time ran out before you could get your comment in the class discussion?), analysis of media coverage of development issues, discussions of talks, events, policy debates, legislation, etc. on issues relating to either in the U.S. or abroad. One should observe all the customary courtesies while blogging that one observes in class.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

One op-ed (15%), one midterm (25%) and one white paper (12-15 pages) (35%).

1. One op-ed length (700-750 words (which is about 3 pages double spaced -- word limit is rigid) on an important current issue relating to inequality, justice, or citizenship. [For guidance on writing an op-ed see the Writing Resources folder under Resources on the course website. The op-ed piece should have a word count of the text of the op-ed. It should also contain a heading, a by line (your name), and a credit statement. The words in these items do not count in the limit of 700-750 words. The credit statement comes at the end of the op-ed piece and identifies you for the reader. (FOR EXAMPLE: "A student at the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, Jane Doe is a former Peace Corps volunteer and worked for a time on the staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.) The credit line has a 35-word limit. THE OP-ED IS DUE February 14 VIA the course dropbox. Op-eds can be rewritten once to improve the grade. Op-ed rewrites must be submitted by March 31 via the Sakai website.

2. Midterm Exam. Take Home. Due March

3. One White Paper (12 -15 pages double-spaced, not including bibliography, notes, appendices) This will be discussed in more detail in class. Proposals for another kind of paper will be considered. It is due one week after the final class.

Students with Disabilities: Anyone in the class who has a disability that may require some modification in seating, testing or class requirements please see me as soon as possible.

Expectations

Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings each week. Students are also expected to follow the news, reading at least one major US newspaper daily, a newsweekly (Economist, Time, Newsweek, etc) and follow at least one major international newspaper, (The Guardian, The Independent, Toronto Globe and Mail, Sydney Morning Herald for those who only read English), or other papers for those able to read languages other than English.
You should also be familiar with the main journals in public policy and policy analysis. Depending on your particular area of expertise, these could include general journals like *Public Administration and Development, Policy Sciences, Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, Journal of Public Policy*, etc. For issues covered in developing countries, this would include *World Development, Journal of Development Studies, Studies in Comparative and International Development, World Politics, Comparative Politics, Comparative Political Studies, Development and Change, New Political Economy, Governance*. For those with an explicit interest in International Organizations, in addition to the development journals above, you should look at *International Organization, Global Governance, International Studies Quarterly, Review of International Political Economy*.

**Grading**

Students are expected to turn in assignments on time. There are acceptable reasons for submitting an assignment late, and all that is required is some communication from the student to me to inform me that such a situation has arisen. For those without acceptable reasons for submitting assignments late, the penalty will be one-third of a grade per day.

**Writing:** It’s an important part of being a policy analyst and advocate. For some useful thoughts on how to approach policy writing, see Michael O’Hare’s memo to his students in the Spring 2004 issue of the *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*. (Available on the Writing Resources folder under Resources). Also see Catherine F. Smith, *Writing public policy: a practical guide to communicating in the policy-making processes*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). For an enjoyable and valuable (although not uncontested) critique of PowerPoint presentations as disastrous to effective and productive communication, see Edward Tufte, *The Cognitive Style of Powerpoint* ([http://www.edwardtufte.com/tufte/powerpoint](http://www.edwardtufte.com/tufte/powerpoint))

**Learning Objectives (tentative):**

1. Identify and explain various approaches to explaining the process of policy formation
2. Clearly articulate the relative roles that framing, deliberation, and implementation play in the policy formation process
3. Explain different ways that concerns regarding efficiency, effectiveness, and equity are incorporated into the policy process and how each is measured.
4. Develop the competence to identify ways in which institutional context conditions the transferability of “best practices” or lessons learned from one policy domain to another, or one country to another
5. Develop an analytical understanding of the relationship between justice, inequality, and citizenship, especially in the domains of politics and policymaking
6. Develop reflective tools for practitioners to be able to understand and evaluate their own normative commitments and to understand not only what those norms are, but how they shape their practice (as analysts, advocates, managers, or leaders) and the practice of others
OVERVIEW OF COURSE

January 24  Week 1  Overview: Interests, Institutions, Ideas and Individuals in the Power, Politics and Policymaking Process

January 31  Week 2  Framing

February 7  Week 3  Why Do Welfare States Look Different?

February 14  Week 4  Inequality and Democracy

February 21  Week 5  The Carceral State and Inequality

February 28  Week 6  Disruption and Contention in Social Movements

March 6  Week 7  David Sometimes Wins: Social Movements and Policy Formation

March 13  SPRING BREAK

March 20  Week 8  Anti-Poverty Policy in the U.S. and Brazil

March 27  Week 9  Deliberation and Participation in Policy Formation

April 3  Week 10  Intellectual Property Rights and Access to Knowledge

April 10  Week 11  The Politics of Climate Change: U.S. in Comparative Perspective

April 17  Week 12  The Judicialization of Policymaking I: the U.S. in Comparative Perspective

April 24  Week 13  The Judicialization of Policymaking II: Is Global Justice Possible

May 1  Week 14  Alternative Futures? Citizenship and Policymaking Along the Gradient of Inequality
Week 1  Interests, Institutions, Ideas and Individuals in the Policymaking Process

David von Drehle, *Triangle*


Dennis Thompson, Designing Responsibility

Case: A *Duty* to Leak?

Week 2  Framing and Agenda Setting I


Also, if you’ve never seen it watch MLK’s I Have a Dream Speech, and listen to the On the Media discussion of the Speech (it’s somewhat about the intellectual property of the speech, but focus on the framing discussion) [http://www.podtrac.com/pts/redirect.mp3/audio.wnyc.org/otm/otm011312g.mp3](http://www.podtrac.com/pts/redirect.mp3/audio.wnyc.org/otm/otm011312g.mp3)


Clifford Bob, *Merchants of Morality*

**Recommended**


**Week 3**

**Why Do Welfare States Look Different, Or the United States as Outlier**

Why do the welfare states of the OECD look different? We look at the interaction between interests, institutions, ideas and individuals in the process of creating welfare states. We will also look at the variation in outcomes (inequality, employment)


**Week 4**

**Inequality, Democracy, and the Politics of Inequality**


Pierson and Hacker, *Politics and Society*, symposium

Pontusson and Lupu

**Week 5**

**The Carceral State and Inequality**


Bruce Western and Becky Pettit, Beyond Crime and Punishment: Prisons and Inequality, *Contexts* (Fall 2002), pp. 37-43.

**Recommended**

**Week 6 Disruption and Contention in Social Movements**
Frances Fox Piven, *Challenging Authority*


**Week 7: David Sometimes Wins: Social Movements and Policymaking**

Marshall Ganz, *Why David Sometimes Wins: Leadership, Organization, and Strategy in the California Farm Worker Movement* (TBD)


**MIDTERM BREAK**

**Week 8 Anti-Poverty Policy in the U.S. and…**

Eldar Shafir, "The Psychology of Decisions Under Scarcity"

Soss and Schram

**Week 9**  **Deliberation, Participation, and Policy Formation**


**Recommended**


Christopher Karpowitz and Tali Mendelberg, “An Experimental Approach to Citizen Deliberation”


**Week 10**  **Intellectual Property Rights and Access to Knowledge**

Is there an inevitable trade-off between efficiency (incentives to innovate and create new knowledge) and fairness? What are the politics of regulating access to knowledge? We will explore these dynamics both within the U.S. and at the global level.
Week 11: The Politics of Climate Change: U.S. in Comparative Perspective
Guest Lecturer: Tom Athanasiou, Ecoequity

Ecoequity, *Greenhouse Development Rights*


Robert Pollin, "Can the Green New Deal Really Work?"

Week 12: The Judicialization of Politics I: A New Civil Rights Agenda?


Week 13: Judicialization of Policymaking II: Is Global Justice Possible?

There has been a tension between judicialization and politicization in the processes of global governance. What are the trade-offs between a greater role for courts versus more deliberative bodies of either the formal (Security Council) or informal (peace negotiations, political settlements, mediation)? Under what conditions are the interests of poor and disadvantaged groups most protected? Do victims of massive human rights abuses need to subordinate their interests to the benefits of political stability and order?


http://www.economist.com/node/17572645

Sikkink, *The Justice Cascade*

**Week 14  Back to the Future: Policymaking Along the Gradient of Inequality**

TBD