PPG1001: THE POLICY PROCESS
School of Public Policy and Governance
University of Toronto
Fall 2019

Section L0102
Wednesday 2 – 5
Location: CG-160
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This core course in the MPP program aims to help students understand the connection between politics and public policy by making sense of the political environment in which policy decisions are made, and the political forces at work throughout the policy process. A central theme in the course concerns the tension between politics and expertise. This tension cannot be elided – there is no way of administratively "managing" public problems in an apolitical manner in a liberal-democratic regime. Rather, we need to better understand how the policy process is shaped by both distinctively political considerations and expertise, specialized knowledge and evidence.

The course proceeds in two parts. First, we explore foundational theories of politics and policy making that seek to capture the role of organized interests, the importance of political institutions, and the influence of ideas and ideology. Part two builds on this theoretical foundation by focusing on each specific "stage" of the policy process, investigating how policy issues emerge, agendas are set, programs designed and implemented, and outcomes evaluated. Particular attention is paid to how well theories of human motivation and rational decision making apply to real-world experiences in public policy.

What Students Can Expect to Learn:

- The components of the policy process
- The role of political actors and organized interests in driving policy making
- The role of institutions in enabling and constraining policy making
- The influence of contending ideas and ideologies in policy making
- Theories of human motivation and rational decision making
- The range of standards for measuring the quality of policy processes and outcomes
- Critical thinking, analysis, and presentation skills

Outline of Topics and Assignments

Week 1   Sep 18   Introduction

Part I: Foundations of Public Policy

Week 2   Sep 25   Actors and Interests

Week 3   Oct 2   Institutions and Macrostructures

Week 4   Oct 9   Ideas and Ideologies

Part II: The Policy Cycle

Week 5   Oct 16   Agenda Setting

                Oct 18   *Midterm Test (2:00 – 4:00 PM, CG160)*

Week 6   Oct 22   Policy Formulation *rescheduled to Tuesday, Oct 22 9:30am in UC314

Week 7   Oct 30   Decision Making I

Week 8   Nov 6   Decision Making II
                                Hand in Group Presentation Outline

Week 9   Nov 13   Implementation

Week 10   Nov 20   Evaluation

Week 11   Nov 27   *Group Presentations*

Week 12   Dec 4   *Group Presentations*

                Dec 11   *Hand in Individual Research Paper*

Requirements and Evaluation

Participation (20%): Participation is measured by actions including but not limited to: (a) consistently attending class; (b) being attentive and respectful to your peers; (c) raising thoughtful comments and questions; (d) attending office hours; (e) bringing relevant articles and materials to the attention of the class; and above all else, (f) coming to class prepared. ***At a minimum***, **this means having completed the required readings, and, for each reading, having reflected on the following questions:**
• What does the reading contribute to our understanding of the policy process?
• Were you persuaded by the author's argument? If so, why? If not, why not?

- What assumptions are being made in the reading, and are they warranted?
- What evidence does the author present? Does it support the general argument?
- Are there important weaknesses and/or contradictions in the reading?
- What are the implications of the author's arguments?

Midterm Test, October 18 (20%): The midterm test will focus on concepts covered in Part 1 of the course (Weeks 1-4). The format will be multiple choice. The test is scheduled for Friday October 18, 2:00 to 4:00 PM in CG160. Everyone is expected to write the test on this date and time. Please adjust your schedules accordingly.

Case Analysis (60%): The purpose of this assignment is to encourage students to apply the theoretical content of the course to a practical case analysis. You will be divided into groups of four, select a case from a list provided by the instructor, and complete the following:

1. *Group Presentation Outline, November 6 (10%)* - A one-paragraph sketch of the central policy problem relevant to your case study, accompanied by a preliminary list of theoretical and empirical sources that the group will use to prepare its analysis. Grades will be based on the clarity of the group's problem statement and the extensiveness of their collective research effort. Due Week 8.

2. *Group Presentation (25%)* - A concise, 15-minute presentation that provides necessary background information to bring the class up to speed on the case, before analyzing (a) the emergence of the problem on the public agenda, (b) the policy response adopted by decision makers (c) the process of decision-making that led to this response (d) the means through which the policy response was carried out, and (e) the manner in which the response was ultimately evaluated. Presented in class during Weeks 11 and 12.

3. *Individual Research Paper, December 11 (25%)* – An 8-page essay (12-pt font, one-inch margins, double-spaced) that provides students the opportunity to demonstrate their unique perspective on the case study presented by the group.

Course Policies

Student Portal, Quercus: All required readings, assignment descriptions, and course information will be posted on a Student Portal available through DropBox. I will forward the link via Quercus. Assignment submissions will be through Quercus.

Laptops, tablets, and phones: Electronic devices may only be used to access readings or for classroom activities specified by the instructor. At all other times, laptops, phones, and tablets should be closed, switched to silent mode, or turned off to avoid distractions. Exceptions will only be made for those with accommodations or for official note takers. The negative impacts of electronic devices in the classroom (persistent distraction, low levels of engagement, poor knowledge retention, and lower grades) consistently outweigh the positives. Don't just take my word for it — see for yourself:

Holstead, Carol E. 2015. "The Benefits of No-Tech Note Taking," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 4.
Shirky, Clay. 2014. "Why I Just Asked My Students To Put Their Laptops Away," *Medium* (personal blog), September 8.
Hamilton, Jon. 2008. "Think You're Multitasking? Think Again," *NPR.org*, October 2.

Email Policy: I normally respond to email within 48 hours. Please note that email received during weekends and after business hours may take longer to answer, so do not leave your requests or queries until the last minute. Also, please do *not* submit course assignments via email.

Late Assignments: I expect students to turn in assignments on time. No exceptions are made except in the case of an adequately documented emergency. You must make a reasonable effort to inform me as soon as the problem arises and present your written documentation when you return. It is at my discretion whether to accept the late assignment and/or attach a lateness penalty. If you do miss an assignment deadline, your grade for this component will be reduced by 3% for the first day and 1% per day thereafter, including weekends. Students are also strongly advised to keep rough and draft work and hard copies of their assignments. These should be kept until the marked assignments have been returned. All graded assignments are to be kept by students until the grades have been posted on ACORN.

Accessibility Needs: The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom, or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: disability.services@utoronto.ca or http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility.

Plagiarism: It is the responsibility of each student to be able to demonstrate the originality of his or her work. Failure to properly reference figures, concepts, and quotations that are not your own will result in academic penalties, as required by the University of Toronto's policy on plagiarism. At a minimum, for every assignment, the sources of all data and ideas must be properly referenced using a standard academic referencing style such as Chicago, APA, or MLA. If you are unclear about what constitutes plagiarism or how to reference sources, please visit: http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize

Civility in the Classroom and Respect for Diversity: The School of Public Policy and Governance is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. The School encourages behaviour that is welcoming, supportive, and respectful of cultural and individual differences at all times, both within and outside the classroom. In this course, each voice in the classroom has something of value to contribute to class discussion. Please respect the different experiences, beliefs and values expressed by your fellow students, faculty members, and guest speakers.

Safety, Mental Health and Wellness Resources for Students: The University of Toronto has extensive services dedicated to supporting students' personal safety, mental health, and wellness. Please review these resources here: http://safety.utoronto.ca.\

<div align="center">**Seminar Topics and Readings**</div>

All required readings are available via the course website and should be read in advance of class. Students without a strong background in policy studies may also wish to read:

Paul Cairney, *Understanding Public Policy: Theories and Issues*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
Peter John, *Analyzing Public Policy* 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2012.

September 18: Week 1 – Introduction

What is public policy? What do we mean by the "policy process"? How does policymaking relate to politics?

Smith, Kevin B., and Christopher W. Larimer. 2009. "Public Policy as a Concept and a Field (or Fields) of Study." In *The Public Policy Theory Primer*, pp. 1-25. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
Knill, Christoph and Jale Tosun. 2010. "Policy-making." In *Comparative Politics*, 2nd ed., ed. Daniele Caramani, pp. 373-388. New York: Oxford University Press.
Marland, Alex and Jared J. Wesley. 2019. *The Public Servants Guide to Government in Canada*, pp. 19-44. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
Weber, Max. 1919. "Politics as a Vocation."
    http://anthropos-lab.net/wp/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Weber-Politics-as-a-Vocation.pdf

Part I: Foundations of Public Policy

September 25: Week 2 – Interests and Actors

To what extent do interests drive public policymaking? Whose interests are most consequential? Is bureaucracy a tool of political actors or an agent in its own right, with distinctive interests?

Stone, Deborah. 2012. "Interests." In Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making, 3rd ed., pp. 229-247. New York: W.W. Norton and Co.
Dahl, Robert. 2005 [1961]. "Overview: Actual and Potential Influence," in *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in An American City,* 2nd ed., pp. 271-275. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
Gilens, Martin and Benjamin Page. 2014. "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens." *Perspectives on Politics*, 12(3): pp. 564-581.
Smith, Miriam. 2005. "Social Movements and Judicial Empowerment: Courts, Public Policy, and Lesbian and Gay Organizing in Canada." *Politics & Society*, 33(2): pp. 327-353.
Weber, Max. 1978. "Bureaucracy." In *Economy and Society*, eds., Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, sections 1, 6, 9 and 11, pp. 956-958, 973-975, 987-989, 990-994.Berkeley: University of California Press.

October 2: Week 3 – Institutions

What are institutions? How do institutions structure/constrain/transform politics? How do institutions empower some actors and disempower others?

North, Douglass C. 1990. Introduction to *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance,* pp. 3-10. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Immergut, Ellen M. 2006. "Institutional Constraints on Policy." In *The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy*, eds. Michael Moran, Martin Rein, and Robert E. Goodin, pp. 557-571. New York: Oxford University Press.

Peter A. Hall Peter and Rosemary C.R. Taylor. 1996. "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms," *Political Studies*, 44(5): pp. 936-57.

Terry Moe. 2005. "Power and Political Institutions." *Perspectives on Politics* 3(2): pp. 215-233.

Mueller, Benjamin. 2019. "Boris Johnson Drags the Queen Into the Brexit Quagmire." *The New York Times*, September 13.

October 9: Week 4 – Ideas, Ideologies and Cultural Cognition

How do ideas, ideologies and cultural cognition shape politics and policymaking?

Lakoff, George. 2010. "Why It Matters How We Frame the Environment." *Environmental Communication* 4(1): 70-81.

Canovan, Margaret. 2002. "Taking Politics to the People: Populism as the Ideology of Democracy." In *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*, eds. Yves Mény and Yves Surel, pp. 25-44. New York: Palgrave.

Randall Hansen and Desmond King. 2001. "Eugenic Ideas, Political Interests, and Policy Variance: Immigration and Sterilization Policy in Britain and the U.S." *World Politics* 53: 237-63.

Kahan, Dan M. and Donald Braman. 2006. "Cultural Cognition and Public Policy." *Yale Law and Policy Review* 24(1): pp. 149-172.

Part II: The Policy Cycle

October 16: Week 5 – Agenda Setting

Why, when, and how do some issues become policy problems? How is a policy problem defined? Who sets the public policy agenda? Is there a clear logic to the process?

Kingdon, John W. 1995. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*. 2nd ed., pp. 165-195. New York: Addison Wesley Longman.

Soroka, Stuart N. 2007. "Agenda-setting and Issue Definition." In *Critical Policy Studies*, eds. Michael Orsini and Miriam Smith, pp. 185-210. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Baumgartner, Frank R. and Bryan D. Jones. 1993. "Studying Agenda Change." In *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*, pp. 39-55. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Teske, Paul and Mark Schneider. 1992. "Toward a Theory of the Political Entrepreneur: Evidence from Local Government." *American Political Science Review* 86(3): pp. 737-747.

October 22 (9:30am, UC 314): Week 6 – Policy Formulation

Is policy formulation and design best left to experts? Should citizens play a role? How so?

Sidney, Mara S. 2007. "Policy Formulation: Design and Tools." In *Handbook of Policy Analysis: Theory, Politics and Methods*, eds., Frank Fischer, Gerald J. Miller and Mara S. Sidney, pp. 79-88. Boca Raton: CRC Press.

Thomas, Harold G. 2001. "Toward a New Higher Education Law in Lithuania: Reflections on the Process of Policy Formulation." *Higher Education Policy* 14: pp. 215-223.

Skogstad, Grace. 2003. "Who Governs? Who Should Govern? Political Authority and Legitimacy in Canada in the Twenty-First Century." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 36(5): pp. 955-974.

Fung, Archon. 2006. "Varieties of Participation in Complex Governance." *Public Administration Review* 66: pp. 66-75.

October 30: Week 7 – Decision Making I

What is a "rational" policy decision? What are the basic assumptions of rational choice theory? What is "bounded rationality" and how does it affect decision making?

Becker, Gary S. 1976. *The Economic Approach to Human Behavior*, pp. 3-14. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ordeshook, Peter C. 1990. "The Emerging Discipline of Political Economy." In *Perspectives on Positive Political Economy*, pp. 9-30. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Forester, John. 1984. "Bounded Rationality and the Politics of Muddling Through." *Public Administration Review* 44(1): 23-31.

Wilson, Rick K. 2011. "The Contribution of Behavioral Economics to Political Science." *Annual Review of Political Science* 14: 201-223.

November 6: Week 8 – Decision Making II

What is evidence-based decision making? Why do policy makers often ignore good evidence? How do changes in contexts influence decision making, sometimes leading to reversals?

Head, Brian W. 2010. "Reconsidering Evidence-based Policy: Key Issues and Challenges." *Policy and Society* 29(2): 77-94.

Cairney, Paul. 2015. Excerpts from *The Politics of Evidence-based Policymaking*, pp. 1-7, 119-134. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Botterill, Linda Courtenay, and Andrew Hindmoor. 2012. "Turtles All the Way Down: Bounded Rationality in an Evidence-based Age." *Policy Studies* 33(5): 367-379.

Jones, Bryan D. 1994. "A Change of Mind or a Change of Focus?" In *Reconceiving Decision-Making in Democratic Politics: Attention, Choice, and Public Policy*, pp. 78-102. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

November 13: Week 9 – Implementation

How are policy decisions translated into action? What policy tools are best suited to produce desired outcomes? What assumptions inform the selection of policy instruments?

Hupe, Peter L., and Michael J. Hill. 2016. "'And the Rest is Implementation.' Comparing Approaches to What Happens in Policy Processes Beyond Great Expectations." *Public Policy and Administration* 31(2): 103-121.

Meyers, Marcia K. and Susan Vorsanger. 2007. "Street-level Bureaucrats and the Implementation of Public Policy." In *The Handbook of Public Administration*, pp. 153-163. Ed. B. Guy Peters, and Jon Pierre. London: Sage Publications.

Schneider, Anne and Helen Ingram. 1990. "Behavioral Assumptions of Policy Tools." *Journal of Politics* 52(2): pp. 510-529.

Thaler, Richard R., Cass Sunstein, and John P. Balz. 2010. "Choice Architecture." SSRN working Paper.

November 20: Week 10 – Evaluation

What criteria do governments use to make and evaluate policy decisions? Should all considerations be reduced to dollars and cents? What, if any role, do principles play in determining the success or failure of policy?

Anderson, Charles. 1979. "The Place of Principles in Policy Analysis." *American Political Science Review* 73(3): 711-23.

Bovens, Mark, Paul 'T Hart, and Sanneke Kuipers. 2006. "The Politics of Policy Evaluation," in *The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy*, eds. Michael Moran, Martin Rein, and Robert E. Goodin, pp. 319-335. New York: Oxford University Press.

McConnell, Allan. 2010. "Policy Success, Policy Failure and Grey Areas In-Between." *Journal of Public Policy* 30(3): 345-362.

Walzer, Michael. 1973. "Political Action: The Problem of Dirty Hands." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 2(2): pp. 160-180.

November 27 and December 4: LWeek 11/12 – Student Presentations *(No assigned readings)*