

PS185 INTRODUCTION TO POLICY ANALYSIS

Seminar Leader: Gale Raj-Reichert
Course Times: Tuesdays & Thursdays 9:00 -10:30
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Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description

This course introduces students to policy analysis and policymaking. What are public policies you may ask? Public policies are courses of action made by governments to solve societal problems by changing behaviors. They include laws, regulations, incentives, and providing services, goods and information. It is important to remember that policies not only include what governments choose to do but also what they choose not to do. Policies by individual governments, groups of governments and intergovernmental organizations can impact outcomes for people, communities, industries, and the environment in different parts of the world.

As an introductory course, during the first part of the course, we will spend time learning about and discussing foundational concepts on what are public policies, how they are made and how they are evaluated. During the second half, we will apply the foundational concepts by examining and discussing real-world policy case studies addressing current policy problems within a domestic and global context.

With this course, students will gain an understanding of a holistic approach to understanding public policy and policy analysis. Students will also learn how to communicate about policy problems, options and recommendations verbally, visually, and in writing.

Requirements

Required Textbook and readings:
Please refer to the Course Reader.

In-class participation

It is expected that core readings are completed *before* each seminar as our discussions will be based on them. Please read actively – try to relate what you are reading with what you already know and have gained knowledge about the topic from other courses or from your own personal interests and explorations (engage in a personal self-reflective discussion). Take notes, be critical, ask questions, and come to class prepared to share!

We will be engaging in and discussing current issues concerning policy analysis and public policies. Many if not most of the issues will be news-worthy items and part of current public debates. It is highly recommended that you regularly check the news and/or other policy related reporting outlets

(newspapers, blogs, policy briefs, Twitter, etc.) for insights and different opinions that relate to the topics in the course – which can be shared during class discussions.

Participating in different ways, either through larger group discussions or in small group/partner exercises, is an integral part of the learning process and it is expected that every student makes a good effort in this regard.

Course Assignments, Deadlines, and Grade Breakdown

Discussion participation **15%**

Half of this grade will be based on in-class discussions of the readings and also include participation in small group work or in pairs.

One policy memo **20%**

Please choose one policy problem and present points on two policy options weighing their costs and benefits. One of these policies will be recommended and expanded on as the best policy option based on analysis and evidence. The policy memo must be between 750 to 1,000 words (1.5-spaced, 12 pt., Times New Roman). Please use the Chicago Style of Referencing.

The policy memo must be written from the perspective of a particular actor chosen from the following list:

- Staff for a member of parliament or congress
- Industry lobby group
- Nongovernmental campaign organization
- Trade union representative
- A different actor (based on discussion with and approval of seminar leader)

We will discuss the format of the policy memo in class.

Policy memo deadline: Friday 15 October, 6pm via email.

Individual presentation **15%**

A presentation (8 to 10 minutes) on a policy research topic. This should (ideally) be on the topic of the policy research paper assignment below. Instructions for the presentation format will be provided in due course.

Presentations are scheduled for the weeks 11 and 12.

Policy research paper **50%**

The paper must introduce a policy problem, the background and context behind the problem, an existing or current policy in place to address the problem, and an analysis of its opportunities and challenges, including alternatives. The paper must be between 3,500 and 4,000 words (1.5-spaced, 12 pt., Times New Roman). Please use the Chicago Style of Referencing.

Students are encouraged to discuss their ideas, progress, and/or outlines for their research report during office hours (by appointment).

Research paper deadline: Friday 10 December, 6pm via email.

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FALL 2021: Some students may need to begin the semester remotely due to travel restrictions caused by the pandemic. In addition, all students and instructors must refrain from in-person attendance if they are feeling ill. Instructors should make efforts to offer alternatives to in-person attendance where needed, including remote participation or asynchronous options.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

Schedule Timetable

Week	Dates	Topic
1	31.8 & 2.9	What is public policy and policy analysis? What are policy problems?
2	7.9 & 9.9	Who makes public policies?
3	14.9 & 16.9	Picking the right policy: Policy design and policy instruments
4	21.9 & 23.9	Policy analysis methods I
5	28.9 & 30.9	Policy analysis methods II
6	5.10 & 7.10	Policy evaluation
7	12.10 & 14.10	Innovations in policy evaluation
Fall semester break		

8	26.10 & 28.10	Film and Discussion: Merchants of Doubt
9	2.11 & 4.11	Policy case study: Water crisis in Cape Town
10	9.11 & 11.11	Policy case study: Race and policing in New York City
11	16.11 & 18.11	Presentations
12	23.11 & 25.11	Presentations
13	30.11 & 2.12	Case analysis: Early childhood program in Brazil
14	7.12 & 9.12	Wrap-up discussion

Weekly Themes and Readings

Foundational Concepts (Weeks 1 to 8)

Week 1: What is public policy and policy analysis? What are policy problems?

Tuesday 31 August

We will begin the semester with an introduction to the origins of public policymaking and its aims and objectives.

Mintrom, M. and Williams, C. (2012) 'Public policy debate and the rise of policy analysis', in *Routledge Handbook of Public Policy*.

Thursday 2 September

The first step to policymaking is understanding the policy problem – the problem definition stage. How societal problems are defined are contingent on a variety of factors, which are themselves theorized. We will discuss the limits and opportunities of the different theories presented.

Lister, R. (2010) 'What's the problem? Social constructionism', Chapter 5 in *Understanding Theories and Concepts in Social Policy*, Policy Press.

Hankivsky, O. and Jordan-Zachery, J.S. (2011) 'Intersectionality and Public Policy: Some Lessons from Existing Models', *Political Research Quarterly* 64: 217–229.

Week 2: Who makes public policies?

Tuesday 7 September

The policymaking process involves both government and non-governmental actors and organizations. The latter group help shape and influence which and how policy problems are taken up by governments for policy interventions. We will also discuss representation of those who are (or are able to) engage in the policymaking process.

Cairney, P. (2019) 'Multi-level governance and multi-centric policymaking', Chapter 8 in *Understanding Public Policy: Theories and Issues*, Macmillan.

Cairney, P. (2021) 'Who should be involved in the process of policy analysis?', Chapter 8 in *The Politics of Policy Analysis*, Palgrave Macmillan.

Thursday 9 September

We will examine and discuss a variety of actors and organizations, such as campaign organizations, social movements, industries, trade unions, and intergovernmental organizations which are part of the 'agenda-setting' process. We will also discuss a classic text by Elinor Ostrom which establishes the idea of 'co-production' or the long-term engagement of stakeholders in policymaking.

Daugbjerg, C., Fraussen, B., and Halpin, D. (2018) Interest groups and policy capacity: Modes of engagement, policy goods and networks, Chapter 11 in *Policy Capacity and Governance*, Palgrave Macmillan.

Ostrom, E. (1996) 'Crossing the great divide: Coproduction, synergy and development, *World Development*, 24 (6): 1073-1087.

Week 3: Picking the right policy: Policy design and instruments

There are a variety of classifications of policy instruments or tools. One classification distinguishes policies as regulatory instruments which permit or forbid certain behaviors through sanctions, financial based policies which (dis)incentivize behaviors through monetary rewards or by increasing costs, informational based instruments to raise awareness, and organizational arrangements for the provision of services and goods. We will discuss these and a new and innovative policy instrument -- 'nudges'.

Tuesday 14 September

Schneider, A. and Ingram, S. (1990) Behavioral assumptions of policy tools, *The Journal of Politics*, 52 (2): 510-529.

Thursday 16 September

Handout forthcoming.

Sunstein, C.R., Reisch, L.A., and Kaiser, M. 2018. 'Trusting nudges? Lessons from an international survey', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 26: 1417-1443.

Week 4: Policy Analysis methods I

Decisions on policies are based on knowledge and evidence, which are important and contested fields in public policy analysis and research. This week begins a two-part discussion on how policy choices are made.

Tuesday 21 September

Cairney, P. (2021) 'What insights from wider studies of power, knowledge, politics and policy do policy analysts need to consider?', Chapter 5 in *The Politics of Policy Analysis*, Palgrave Macmillan.

Thursday 23 September

Economic policy analysis, such as cost-benefit analysis and impact assessments, have been dominant in policy analysis. We discuss and critique these methods in this and the next seminar.

Vining, A. R. and Weimer, D. L. (2009) Assessing the Costs and Benefits of Social Policies, Chapter 1 in *Investing in the Disadvantaged: Assessing the Benefits and Costs of Social Policies*, Georgetown University Press.

Sen, A. (2000) 'The Discipline of Cost - Benefit Analysis', *The Journal of Legal Studies*, 29 (2): 931-952.

Week 5: Policy Analysis methods II

Tuesday 28 September

de Souza Leão, L. and Eyal, G. (2019) The rise of randomized controlled trials (RCTs) in international development in historical perspective, *Theory and Society* 48: 383-418.

Dani, A.A. and Beddies, S. 2011. 'The World Bank's Poverty and Social Impact Analysis', in Vanclay, Frank and Esteves, Ana Maria (eds.) *New Directions in Social Impact Assessment*, World Bank.

**Take a look at the Human Development Index, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/latest-human-development-index-ranking>

Thursday 30 September

More recently, a mix of quantitative and qualitative approaches have become popular using the methods of behavioural economics and cognitive psychology and 'design thinking'.

Yanow, D. 2019. 'Qualitative-interpretative methods in policy research', in Fischer, F. and Miller, G. (eds.) *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis: Theory, Politics, and Methods*, Routledge.

Iskander, N. (2018) 'Design Thinking Is Fundamentally Conservative and Preserves the Status Quo', *Harvard Business Review*, 5 September.

**Take a look at the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) at www.povertyactionlab.org for supplementary readings.

Week 6: Policy evaluation

Policy evaluation aims to understand whether policies are or have been implemented and how successful they are or have been at achieving their goals and objectives. Policy evaluation can be done to understand the outcomes of policies or as part of monitoring their implementation. Evaluation hinges on evidence. We will consider different types of data that are used as evidence as well as the politics behind them this and next week.

Tuesday 5 October

Pankhurst, J. (2017) 'Evidence-based policymaking: an important first step and the need to take the next', Chapter 2 in *The Politics of Evidence: From evidence-based policy to the good governance of evidence*, Routledge.

Court, J. and Young, J. (2006) 'Bridging research and policy in international development: an analytical and practical framework', *Development in Practice*, 16:1, 85-90

Thursday 7 October

Pankhurst, J. (2017) 'What is "good evidence for policy"?: from hierarchies to appropriate evidence', Chapter 6 in *The Politics of Evidence: From evidence-based policy to the good governance of evidence*, Routledge.

Bovens, M., Hart, P., and Kuipers, S. 2008. 'The Politics of Policy Evaluation', in Goodin, R.E., Michael, M., and Rein, M. (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy*, Oxford University Press.

Week 7: Innovations in policy evaluation – limits and opportunities

Tuesday 12 October

Big data and artificial intelligence (the use of algorithms or machine learning) has become the next generation of tools of policy evaluation and implementation. We will learn and discuss these new tools and their trade-offs between efficiency and biases.

Coyle, D. 2020. 'The tensions between explainable AI and good public policy', *The Brookings Institution*. <https://www.brookings.edu/techstream/the-tensions-between-explainable-ai-and-good-public-policy/>

Schintler, L.A. and Kulkarni, R. 2014. 'Big Data for Policy', *Review of Policy Research*, 31: 343-348.

**Take a look at <https://www.project-sherpa.eu>

Thursday 14 October

Schaefer, G. O. 2018. 'Big Data: Ethical Considerations', in Boonin, D. (ed.) *The Palgrave Handbook of Philosophy and Public Policy*, Palgrave MacMillan.

-- Fall semester break --

Week 8: Merchants of Doubt (2014) documentary

Tuesday 26 October and Thursday 28 October

View film and discussion

Policy case studies and individual presentations (Weeks 9 to 14)

Week 9: Policy case study: Water crisis in Cape Town

We will read, discuss, and analyze three policy case studies developed by Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. You will engage in small group exercises to explore questions surrounding policy problems, solutions, analysis and unintended consequences.

Tuesday 2 November

Harvard Kennedy School Case Study "No Trust in Miracles": Leading through a water crisis in Cape Town

Thursday 4 November

Supplemental reading forthcoming

Week 10: Policy case study: Race and policing in New York City

Tuesday 9 November

Harvard Kennedy School Case Study: A Rising Storm: Eric Garner and the Explosive Controversy over Race and Policing

Thursday 11 November

Supplemental reading forthcoming

Week 11: Presentations

Tuesday 16 November and Thursday 18 November

Week 12: Presentations

Tuesday 23 November and Thursday 25 November

Week 13: Policy case study: Early childhood program in Brazil

Tuesday 30 November

Harvard Kennedy School Case Study: Crianca Feliz: Brazil's Ambitious Early Childhood Program

Thursday 2 December

Supplemental reading forthcoming

Week 14: Wrap-up discussion

Tuesday 7 December and Thursday 9 December
