PS185 Introduction to Policy Analysis

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Course Description

This course will introduce students to the definition of policy problems, the identification of alternative solutions to these, and the criteria governing the choice between these alternatives. Students are exposed to the various sources of evidence upon which assessment of alternatives is carried out as well as to the basis for considering policy impact. Through case studies, presentations and reviews of professionally-conducted policy analyses, students will receive a first-hand exposure to both the basic steps of this undertaking, and will have an opportunity to critique real-world policy decisions. Cases for analysis will include public health policies and social policies relating to housing and community development. The course will involve both individual and team work. Key outcomes will include an introductory knowledge of various forms of policy analysis, an ability to engage with policy problems and to decide on the best policy solution.

The structure of the course is designed to transition between three general sections: 1) processes and theories of policymaking and policy analysis, 2) empirical analysis and cases including health policy and current policy topics, and 3) global social policy. The framework of this course also views policy as a form of social research and highlights the real-world implications for theories and study of policymaking, hence the focus on critical elements of institutions and policymaking with additional readings on exclusion. As such, in addition to learning key concepts and the leading scholarship on various theories, some readings highlight critical approaches to policy in general, along with the analysis of these policies to identify social problems and understand how to address problems such as disparities and structural exclusion and inclusion through policy. The course provides students with tools and theories to approach policy analysis, and also provides students with critical, contextual perspectives on policy.

Course Learning Objectives

At the end of this course, students will be able to have a stronger grasp of the following:

1. Understanding the various types and forms of policy analysis that exist for different kinds of research questions and audiences
2. Describing the policy process and identifying key actors and key theories guiding the complex processes of creating policy
3. Identifying policies most relevant to students' research interests, and applying theories of policymaking to a policy topic of choice

4. Conducting various types of policy analysis, including interpretive policy analysis, coding documents for analysis, and writing policy briefs
5. Identifying policy problems within the context of social disparities and challenges that arise from either a given policy or lack of policy
6. Critically assessing research for social purposes, including identifying problems, challenges and modern issues, including histories of structural exclusion and racism in public policies
7. Critically assessing the underpinning philosophies and theories behind empirical examples of social policy (ex: Medicare for all in the U.S., Housing First, etc.)
8. Differentiating between types of policy in different countries and at different governance levels, from local, state, federal, and global
9. Developing critical perspectives on state-citizen relations and public-private affairs, using scholarship on power, policy frameworks, and processes
10. Understanding actors and processes in health care systems and policy, and applying theoretical frameworks such as institutionalism, path dependence, and stakeholder mobilization, etc.
11. Linking singular issues to wider global, racial, political, and socio-economic challenges

Requirements and Assignments

The course will be assessed through a combination of assignments which are designed to achieve the overall goals and learning objectives of the course. All the written assignments must be submitted in electronic format. The assessment is based on 1) class participation 2) individual presentations 3) two written assignments. Expect occasional short quizzes based on the readings or previous sessions.

1) Participation in class: You are expected to attend all the classes, prepare the required reading for each class, and actively participate in class discussions. Students will be assessed on the quality and quantity of contributions. The highest grades for participation will be awarded to those who make valuable contributions to class discussions and demonstrate an understanding of and engagement with the readings. Attending without contributing to group work or class discussions will only earn you a minimum pass.

2) Individual presentation in class: Presentations will be carried out individually. You should critically discuss the topic of the week (through the indicated reading material) and provide a relevant practical case study to your audience. The example can be from any area of public policy (e.g. education, defense, health, environment, agriculture, migration, etc.) and context (e.g. local, national, regional, global). Please feel free to reach out for me if you would like to discuss your presentation idea in advance. I will be available for consultation once you have drafted the presentation topic, and will gladly guide you towards further reading. If you use a PowerPoint/Prezi/Keynote presentation or handouts,

please submit them to me after the class. Presentation will be evaluated on their quality, clarity and your ability to master the topic.

3) Two assignments (midterm and final paper)

a) **Op-ed:** The mid-term assignment consists of a 2,000 word op-ed (opinion editorial) article. This is an essay in which you present your expert opinion or insight on a specific policy problem or current political debate. Op-eds are used to raise awareness about an issue or convince others about a direction in which a policy should go. You may write as yourself or as a hypothetical representative of a fictive or real organization. The assignment should include a footnote/endnote with the name and short description of the media outlet (newspaper/magazine/newsletter) in which you would like to publish your op-ed and the reason why you think this outlet is suitable for it. The op-ed will be evaluated based on its structure, writing style, internal logic and richness of the argument.

b) **Policy Brief:** The final assignment for this course is a 3-4,000 word policy brief. You will write a policy brief on a topic of your choice (it can be the same topic as your op-ed or individual presentation). Policy briefs are written to persuade policy-makers and decision-makers to take a certain course of action. For this assignment, imagine that you are a nongovernmental stakeholder (e.g. think-tank, NGO, private sector organization, student organization, etc.) and you want to convince the government to address a certain policy problem and adopt your recommended solution. The issue should be narrow and specific rather than broad and generalizing. Your policy brief should:

(1) Identify a policy problem and the actors: What is the specific problem or issue that you seek to resolve? What is the background of this problem and how did it emerge? What are the consequences or implication of the problem that make it important and urgent to deal with?
(2) Assess policy alternatives: What previous/current attempts have been made to solve the problem? Why have they been unsuccessful? What policy alternatives are available for solving the policy problem? What are the pros and cons of these policy alternatives?
(3) Provide policy recommendations: What is the best possible policy solution? On what basis did you select it as the preferred course of action? What policy goals will it meet?

Overall, the brief should include a clear policy problem, be analytically and empirically rigorous in assessing policy alternatives, provide persuasive policy recommendations on the chosen issue, and have an appealing layout. The assignment will be evaluated based on its link to policy practice, substance, insight, clarity, the quality of writing and overall presentation.

Grade Breakdown

Seminar preparation and participation	30%
Op ed (due Oct 16)	20%
Presentations (individually scheduled during Weeks 9-15)	20%

Policy Brief (due Dec. 16)	30%

Policy on late submissions: students are expected to meet the deadline and marks will be docked for late submission barring pertinent reasons.

Academic Integrity, course values

Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects good academic practice from students in their studies. 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. See resources on proper referencing in APA format to avoid plagiarism https://apastyle.apa.org/.

This course honours diversity and healthy debate centered around legitimate, critical, and respectful points of view. Inclusiveness, integrity, and responsibility are at the core of this course. Part of making this inclusive also means responsibility to give your fellow classmates time to speak and ask questions. Please participate and engage with your fellow students in order to make this course as successful as possible.

Attendance

Two absences will not affect the participation grade or require documentation. Beyond two absences, please inform me of absences. Credit cannot be given to anyone who has missed more than 30% of classes. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FALL 2020: Some students might 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. Alternatives to in-person attendance in such cases will be discussed in class including remote participation or asynchronous options through submission of response sheets for each weeks' readings.

Readings

We will use several chapters of this textbook throughout the course:

Hill, Michael & Varone, Frederic. (2017). The public policy process, 7th ed. Routledge

This textbook provides an important structure and we will draw from several chapters to guide us throughout the course.

Additionally, the course draws heavily from a variety of articles and scanned readings that will be made available online. You are not required to purchase a course reader.

Course schedule

Fall classes start on Monday, August 31 and run until Friday, December 11 with fall break planned from October 19 – October 25. Completion week is from December 14 - 18.

Students are required to be on campus during completion week. Scheduled class times will be available online under the relevant course heading:
https://berlin.bard.edu/academics/courses/

Theories, Processes	Week 1: Aug 31- Sept 4	Introduction. What is public policy?
Section 1: Processes and theories	Week 2: Sept 7-11	Week 2: The field of public policy: methods and history
	Week 3: Sept 14-18	Agenda-setting
	Week 4: Sept 21-25	Critical institutions and institutional theory
	Week 5: Sept 28-Oct 2	Policy feedback
	Week 6: Oct 5 – 9	Stakeholder mobilization and power
	Week 7: Oct 12 - 16	Advocacy Coalition Framework
	Week 8: Oct 19 -23 (break week)	
Section 2: Health policy, current issues, and empirical analysis	Week 9: Oct 26 – 30	Structural exclusion in policy
	Week 10: Nov 2 – 6	Policy networks
	Week 11: Nov 9 – 13	Three main forms of policy analysis
	Week 12: Nov 16 - 20	Writing, and policy formulation
	Week 13: Nov 23 - 27	Implementation, evaluation, and structural issues
Section 3: Global dimensions	Week 14: Nov 30-Dec 4	International non state actors, policy convergence
	Week 15: Dec 7- 11	Global Social Policy

Section 1: Introduction, processes, theories

Week 1: Introduction. What is public policy?

Our first class on Aug. 31 will consist of introductions and an overview of the syllabus, including contingency plans in case of changes to the syllabus or COVID-19 public health restrictions.

For Wednesday, September 2, please read: Hill, M. & Varone, F. (2017). Chapter 1: Introduction: Studying the policy process. In: The public policy process, 7th ed. Routledge

Week 2: the field of public policy: methods and history

The readings this week introduce us to the field of study of policy studies as well as methodology in policy research to situate us within the broader field of political studies. The two readings give an overview of the history of the discipline and the distinction between basic and policy research.

Deleon, P. & Martell, C. (2006). The Policy Sciences: Past, Present, and Future. In Handbook of Public Policy, Eds. B. Guy Peters & Jon Pierre

Etzioni, A. (2008) The Unique Methodology of Policy Research. In: The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy, Eds. Robert E. Goodin, Michael Moran, and Martin Rein. Oxford University Press.

Week 3: Agenda-setting

This week, students develop a solid foundation on agenda-setting and what the policy process looks like. Kingdon's (1995) important text introduces us to multiple stream theory, and Buse et al. (2012) apply it to the example of health policy.

Kingdon, J.W. (1995). Chapter 1: Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies. 2nd edn, New York: Longman.

Buse, K., Mays, N., & Walt, G. (2012). Chapter 4: Agenda-setting. In Making Health Policy, 2nd Edition. Open University Press. Pp. 64-83

Week 4: Critical institutions and institutional theory

The readings this week on institutional theories introduce students to the role of institutions, and also provide empirical policy examples of Old Age Security and Aid for Dependent Children in the US. Lieberman (1995) takes a critical approach to the study of policy, illustrating discrimination, exclusion, and institutionalized racism that can be present in policies.

Hill, M. & Varone, F. (2017). Institutional Theory. Chapter 5. In: The public policy process, 7th ed. Routledge

Lieberman, R. (1995). Race, Institutions, and the Administration of Social Policy. Social Science History , Winter, 1995, Vol. 19, No. 4 (Winter, 1995), pp. 511-542.

Week 5: Policy Feedback

Health policy is one of the most widely researched policy areas. This week will introduce us to the empirical example of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and link this to the theory of policy feedback. We will focus on actors and processes.

Rosenbaum, A. (2011). The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act: Implications for Public Health Policy and practice. Public Health Reports (1974-), Vol. 126, No. 1 (January/February 2011), pp. 130-135. Association of Schools of Public Health.

Mettler, S., & Sorelle, M. (2018). Policy Feedback Theory. In *Theories of the Policy Process*, eds. Christopher M. Weible and Paul A. Sabatier. Fourth edition. | Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2017.: Routledge, 103–34.

Week 6 - Stakeholder mobilization and power

This week introduces us to policy at both domestic and global levels – which we will revisit in the last part of the course. Quadagno's (2004) reading highlights various actors to explain the lack of a universal health care policy in the US, focusing on stakeholder mobilization, while Moon (2018) provides a rich theoretical and empirical overview of power and how different forms of power are exercised in policy processes – and what this means for inequities.

Quadagno, J. (2004). Why the United States Has No National Health Insurance: Stakeholder Mobilization Against the Welfare State, 1945–1996*. Journal of Health and Social Behavior 2004, Vol 45 (Extra Issue): 25–44

Moon, S., (2018). Power in global governance: an expanded typology from global health. Globalization and Health 2019, 15(Suppl 1):74.

Week 7 – Advocacy Coalition Framework

This week highlights the important framework of the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), and the Hill (2017) reading ties together the main theories and concepts of policy processes for us to move on to current policy issues in Section 2 of the course after break week.
Jenkins-Smith, H., Nohrstedt, D., Weible, C., & Ingold, K. (2018). The Advocacy Coalition Framework: An Overview of the Research Program. In *Theories of the Policy Process*, eds. Christopher M. Weible and Paul A. Sabatier. Fourth edition. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, Routledge, 135–71.

Hill, M. & Varone, F. (2017). Chapter 4: From Pluralism to Networks. In: The public policy process, 7th ed. Routledge

Week 8 – Break week

Section 2 – health policy, current issues, empirical analysis

Week 9 - Structural exclusion in policy

As we enter the second part of the course, this week's readings on health and evidence (and recommended reading on housing) introduce the concept of research with a social impact, and the social exclusion inherent to many policies. This connects to Parkhurst et al.'s (2018) article on evidence in policymaking, and why evidence is useful but has not been shown to be the only factor used in policymaking.

Yearby, R. (2018). Racial Disparities in Health Status and Access to Healthcare: The Continuation of Inequality in the United States Due to Structural Racism: Continuing Racial Health Disparities. *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 77(3–4): 1113–52.

Desmond, M. & Bell, M. (2015). Housing, Poverty and the Law. Annual Review of Law and Social Science. 2015. 11:15–35

Parkhurst, J., Ettelt, S.,& Hawkins, B. (2018). 'Studying Evidence Use for Health Policymaking from a Policy Perspective'. In *Evidence Use in Health Policy Making*, International Series on Public Policy, eds. Justin Parkhurst, Stefanie Ettelt, and Benjamin Hawkins. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 1–19.

Week 10 – Policy networks

The readings this week explore one form of policy analysis; the network analysis – with important key concepts such as explaining change. The Hill (2005) reading introduces students to a wider variety of current policy issues.

Rhodes, R. A. W. 2008. *Policy Network Analysis*. In: The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy, Eds. Robert E. Goodin, Michael Moran, and Martin Rein. Oxford University Press.

Hill, M. & Varone, F. (2017). Chapter 7: Integrating theoretical approaches. In: The public policy process, 7th ed. Routledge

Week 11 – Three main forms of policy analysis

The readings this week give excellent overview of three main types of policy analysis. We will hold an in-class workshop on conducting an interpretive analysis. We will also discuss a policy example relating to gender and the pandemic.

Browne, J., Coffey, B., Cook, K., Meiklejohn, S. and Palermo, C. (2018). A guide to policy analysis as a research method. Health Promotion International, 2018, 1–13. Oxford University Press.

Smith, K., & Katikireddi, S. V. (2013). A Glossary of Theories for Understanding Policymaking. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 67(2): 198–202.

Week 12 – Writing, review, and policy formulation

This week will consist of a review and discussion on Hill's (2017) main concepts. We will also discuss the final assignment and go over a guide to writing policy briefs.

Young, E. & Quinn, L. (2017). AN essential guide to writing policy briefs. International Centre for Policy Advocacy

Hill, M. & Varone, F. (2017). Chapter 8: Policy and politics In: The public policy process, 7th ed. Routledge

Week 13 – Implementation, evaluation, and structural issues

As we transition from domestic to global issues, we finish this section with Vedung's (2006) hands-on, public administration-centered reading on evaluating various types of policy, as well Hancock's (2004) political science reading on the dangers of institutionalizing bias and stereotypes into public policy, using the example of welfare policy in the US.

Vedung, E. (2006). Evaluation research. In Handbook of Public Policy, eds. B. Guy Peters & Jon Pierre

Hancock, A. (2004). The Politics of Disgust: The Public Identity of the Welfare Queen. Ch. 2: "Political Culture and the Public Identity of the "Welfare Queen"." Pp.23-64

Week 14 – International non state actors, policy convergence

This week highlights non-state actors and the concept of policy convergence to broaden our understanding of policy analysis to the global level.

Stubbs, P. (2003). International Non-State Actors and Social Development Policy. *Global Social Policy: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Public Policy and Social Development* 3(3): 319–48.

Knill, C. (2005). Introduction: Cross-National Policy Convergence: Concepts, Approaches and Explanatory Factors. *Journal of European Public Policy* 12(5): 764–74.

Week 15 – Global Social Policy

In this last class, we finish with Yeates' (2014) reading on global social policy and the need to focus on global solutions in our interconnected societies.

Yeates, N. (2014). Understanding Global Social Policy, Second edition. (pp. 1-18)

Recommended readings:

The materials covered in this syllabus consist of a non-exhaustive collection of readings and theories on policymaking and policy analysis. Below are three readings that highlight media and policy analysis which may be interesting for those of you who wish to peruse. Those interested are encouraged to look up these recommended readings. Please reach out to me if you'd like any further resources on any area of policy research that interests you.

Schneider, A., & Ingram, H. Social Construction of Target Populations: Implications for Politics and Policy. The American Political Science Review, Vol. 87, No. 2 (Jun., 1993), pp. 334-347 American Political Science Association

Dorfman, L., Cheyne, A., Gottlieb, M., Mejia, P., Nixon, L., Friedman, L., Daynard, R. (2013). Cigarettes Become a Dangerous Product: Tobacco in the Rearview Mirror,1952–1965. American Journal of Public Health Recommended reading:

Entman, R. (1993). Framing: Towards Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm. Journal of Communication, Autumn 1993, 43, 4, Research Library Core.