

POL22: POLITICS AND PUBLIC POLICY

Paper Organiser

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MICHAELMAS TERM READING LIST

Week 1.

Success and failure in public policy

What is public policy? Why study politics and public policy? In this introductory lecture, we set out the aims and structure of POL22. The paper aims to give you the tools to examine the policy actions of government critically but without cynicism. The opening lecture asks how we conceptualise what we consider as policy success or policy failure and the extent to which politics drives that assessment.

Essential reading

- Peters, B. Guy (2015) *Advanced Introduction to Public Policy*. Edward Elgar. Ch 2 – ‘Policy Problems’.
- McConnell, A. (2017) ‘Policy Success and Failure’ In William R. Thompson (Eds.), *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Leong, C. and Howlett, M (2022) ‘Policy Learning, Policy Failure, and the Mitigation of Policy Risks: Re-Thinking the Lessons of Policy Success and Failure’, *Administration and Society* 54(7): 1379-1401.

Further reading

- Dunlop, C. A. (2017) ‘Policy learning and policy failure: Definitions, dimensions and intersections’, *Policy and Politics* 45(1), 3–18.
- Grimm, H.M. (2019) ‘Introduction: The Added Value of Public Policy Research in the Global South’. In Grimm, H.M. (ed) *Public Policy Research in the Global South*. Springer.
- Grube, D.C. (2023) *Why Governments Get it Wrong*. London: Pan Macmillan. pp. 5-31.
- Hacker, J.S. & Pierson, P. (2014) ‘After the “Master Theory”: Downs, Schattsneider, and the rebirth of policy-focused analysis’, *Perspectives on Politics* 12(3): 643-662.

Week 2.

Theories of Policymaking

What makes public policy happen? Why do some things change while other issues remain stubbornly unaddressed, even in the face of strong political argument? This lecture takes a look through some of the many different academic theories about policy change that have emerged over the last 70 years. Some conceptualise change as a rational, linear and evidence-based activity, whereas others suggest it happens much more chaotically.

Essential reading

- Peters, B. Guy (2015) *Advanced Introduction to Public Policy*. Edward Elgar. Chapter 3.

- M. Howlett, A. McConnell and A. Perl (2017) 'Moving Policy Theory Forward: Connecting Multiple Stream and Advocacy Coalition Frameworks to Policy Cycle Models of Analysis', *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 76(1): 65-79.
- Cairney, P. (2016) *The Politics of Evidence-Based Policy Making*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, Chapter 2.
- T. M. Marteau (2023) 'Evidence-Neglect: Addressing a Barrier to UK Health and Climate Policy Ambitions', *Science and Public Policy* 50(6): 1103-1109.

Further reading

- Amri, M.M. & Drummond, D. (2021) 'Punctuating the equilibrium: An application of policy theory to COVID-19', *Policy Design and Practice* 4(1): 33-43.
- Baumgartner, F. R., and B. D. Jones. 1993. *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press. Ch 1.
- Cairney, P. (2022) *Understanding Public Policy: Theories and Issues*. London: Bloomsbury Academic. Chapter 2.
- Fischer, F. (2021) *Truth and Post-Truth in Public Policy: Interpreting the Arguments*. Cambridge University Press. pp. 1-16.
- John, P. (2018) 'Theories of policy change and variation reconsidered: a prospectus for the political economy of public policy', *Policy Sciences*, 51:1-16.
- Kingdon, J. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* (Pearson, 2010, Second Edition). Epilogue.
- Lindblom, C. (1959) 'The science of muddling through', *Public Administration Review* 19: 79-88.
- Sabatier, P. (1998) 'The advocacy coalition framework: Revisions and relevance for Europe', *Journal of European Public Policy* 5(1): 98-130.

Week 3.

Interests, Ideas and Institutions

We build on last week's look at policy theory by drawing on the three dominant lenses in the policy literature for understanding the forces that control policy choices and outcomes. These are 'interests', 'ideas', and 'institutions'. All three are powerful contributors to how we shape policy, and this lecture will assess how the three interact as explanations for policymaking.

Essential reading

- Culpepper, P. D., & Thelen, K. (2020) 'Are we all Amazon primed? Consumers and the politics of platform power', *Comparative Political Studies*, 53(2): 288-318.
- Hall, P.A. (1993) 'Policy Paradigms, Social Learning, and the State: The Case of Economic Policymaking in Britain', *Comparative Politics*. 25: 257-296.
- Lijphart, A. (2012) *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. London: Yale University Press. Second Edition, chs. 1 and 16.

Further reading

- Beland, D., Campell, A.L., and Weaver, R.K., (2022) *Policy Feedback. How Policies Shape Politics*. Cambridge: CUP, sections 1-2.
- Fastenrath, F., Marx, P., Truger, A., & Vitt, H. (2022). 'Why is it so difficult to tax the rich? Evidence from German policy-makers', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 29(5), 767-786.
- Campbell, J.L. (2002) 'Ideas, Politics and Public Policy', *Annual Review of Sociology*. 28, 21-38.
- Lohmann, S. (2003) 'Representative Government and Special Interest Politics (We Have Met the Enemy and He Is Us)', *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 15, 299-319.

- Feldmann, M., & Morgan, G. (2021) 'Brexit and British Business Elites: Business Power and Noisy Politics', *Politics & Society*, 49(1), 107–131.
- Iversen, T. and Soskice, D. (2019) *Democracy and Prosperity*. OUP. (Sections 1.3.5 and 1.8. of the Introduction. These sections set out the core of Iversen and Soskice's argument about public policy responsiveness to middle class interests).
- Dahl, R. A. (1989). *Democracy and Its Critics*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Chapter 20, 280-298.
- Gelepithis, M. and Giani, G. (2022) 'Inclusion without Solidarity: Education, Economic Security, and Attitudes toward Redistribution', *Political Studies*, 70(1): 45-61.
- Van Cranenburgh, O. (2006) 'Namibia: Consensus institutions and majoritarian politics', *Democratization*, 13(4): 584-604,
- Weller, P., Grube, D., & Rhodes, R. A. (2021) *Comparing Cabinets: Dilemmas of Collective Government*. Oxford University Press. Introduction. Chapter 1.
- Pierson, P. (1996). 'The New Politics of the Welfare State', *World Politics*. 48(2):143-179.

Week 4.

Wicked Problems

Public policy problems come in all shapes and sizes. Some seem relatively straightforward, allowing for clear goals and workable solutions. But some problems are inherently so complex that even understanding the issue is difficult, let alone arriving at solutions that can garner public support. Problems like crime or poverty, for instance, are so embedded and interlinked with other issues that they seem to defy every effort to solve them. Labelled 'wicked problems', this week's lecture looks at how we can define and understand these complicated issues better, and asks how we might try and actually solve them. The literature offers a wide range of potential approaches, but are any of them capable of dissolving the complexity that seems to prevent policy success on these issues?

Essential Reading

- H.W.J. Rittel and M.M. Webber (1973) 'Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning', *Policy Sciences* 4(2): 155-169.
- B.W. Head (2022) *Wicked Problems in Public Policy: Understanding and Responding to Complex Challenges*, (Open Access, Palgrave Macmillan). Ch. 2
- A. McConnell (2018) 'Rethinking Wicked Problems as Political Problems and Policy Problems', *Policy and Politics* 46(1): 165-180.
- J. Newman and B. Head (2017) 'The National Context of Wicked Problems: Comparing Policies on Gun Violence in the US, Canada, and Australia', *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice* 19(1): 40-53.

Further Reading

- F. Angeli, S. Camporesi and G. Dal Fabbro (2021) 'The COVID-19 wicked problem in public health ethics: conflicting evidence or incommensurable values?' *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 8: 161.
- N. Turnbull and R. Hoppe (2019) 'Problematizing "Wickedness": A Critique of the Wicked Problems Concept, from Philosophy to Practice', *Policy and Society* 38(2): 315-337.
- J.B. Ruhl and J. Salzman (2020) 'Introduction to Symposium on Governing Wicked Problems', *Vanderbilt Law Review* 73(6): 1561-1583.
- R.J. Lazarus (2020) 'The Super-Wicked Problem of Donald Trump', *Vanderbilt Law Review* 73(6): 1811-1860.
- F. Daviter (2017) 'Coping, Taming, or Solving: Alternative Approaches to the Governance of Wicked Problems', *Policy Studies* 38(6): 571-588.
- W. Ooms and R. Piepenbrink (2021) 'Open Innovation for Wicked Problems: Using Proximity to Overcome Barriers', *California Management Review* 63(2): 62-100.

- E. Ferlie, L. Fitzgerald, G. McGivern, S. Dopson, and C. Bennett (2011) 'Public Policy Networks and "Wicked Problems": A Nascent Solution?', *Public Administration* 89(2): 307-324.
- B.W. Head (2022) *Wicked Problems in Public Policy: Understanding and Responding to Complex Challenges*, (Open Access, Palgrave Macmillan). Ch. 3-4
- B. Head and J. Alford (2015) 'Wicked Problems: Implications for Public Policy and Management', *Administration and Society* 47(6): 711-739.
- C.J.A.M. Termeer, A. Dewulf, G. Breeman, and S.J. Stiller (2015) 'Governance Capabilities for Dealing Wisely with Wicked Problems', *Administration and Society* 47(6): 680-710.
- N. Okeke-Ogbuafor, T. Gray, S.M. Stead (2020) 'Is There a "Wicked Problem" of Small-Scale Coastal Fisheries in Sierra Leone?' *Marine Policy* 118: 103471.

Week 5.

Problem Framing and Policy Narratives

Public policy is often complex, and its effects are difficult to evaluate let alone predict. In this week's lecture we explore how policymaking is shaped by ideas about how the world is and about what the effects of public policy choices will be. We consider how ideas about public policy are contested and how they change over time, paying particular attention to the role of experts, politicians, and the media.

Essential reading

- C. Bacchi (2016) 'Problematizations in Health Policy: Questioning how 'Problems' are Constituted in Policies'. *Sage Open*. 6: 1-16.
- Downs, A. (1972) 'Up and down with ecology: "The issue-attention cycle"', *The Public Interest* 28(8): 38-50.
- Guardino, M. (2019) *Framing Inequality. News Media, Public Opinion, and the Neoliberal Turn in U.S. Public Policy*. Oxford: OUP. Introduction.
- Fischer, F. (2003) *Reframing Public Policy: Discursive Politics and Deliberative Practices*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1.

Further Reading

- H. Bergeron, P. Castel & A.C. Saguy (2019) 'A French Paradox? Toward an Explanation of Inconsistencies Between Framing and Policies', *French Politics, Culture & Society* 37(2): 110-130.
- Grube, D.C. (2023) *Why Governments Get it Wrong*. London: Pan Macmillan. Chapter 1: 'problems, problems, problems'.
- McIntyre, L., Patterson, P.B., Anderson, L.C. & Mah, C.L. (2016) 'Household food insecurity in Canada: Problem definition and potential solutions in the public policy domain', *Canadian Public Policy* 42(1): 83-93.
- Knaggard, A. (2015) 'The multiple streams framework and the problem broker', *European Journal of Political Research* 54(3): 450-465.
- Pagliarello, M.C. & Cini, M. (2023) 'Policy entrepreneurs and problem definition: The case of European student mobility', *Journal of Public Policy* 43(4): 704-721.
- Polletta, F. and Callahan, J. (2017) 'Deep Stories, Nostalgia Narratives and Fake News: Storytelling in the Trump Era', *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 5(3): 392-408.
- Rochefort, D.A. & Cobb, R.W. (1993) 'Problem definition, agenda access and policy choice', *Policy Studies Journal* 21(1): 56-71.
- Rose, M. and Baumgartner, F.R. (2013) 'Framing the Poor: Media Coverage and U.S. Poverty Policy, 1960-2008', *Policy Studies Journal* 41(1): 22-53
- Schneider, A. and H. Ingram. (1993) 'Social construction of target populations: Implications for politics and policy', *The American Political Science Review* 87(2): 334-347.

Week 6.

Policy Instruments and Implementation

The battle over public policy is not just a debate about ideas and frames, but also about what actions government should take once a problem is identified. Governments can do many things – from taxing, to regulating, to nudging and more. But not all of these actions will be a good fit for every policy challenge that government is confronted with. In this week's lecture, we look at how difficult it can be to select the right policy instrument to affect change, and how many policies can get bogged down at the implementation stage.

Essential reading

- M. Howlett (2018) 'Matching Policy Tools and their Targets: Beyond Nudges and Utility Maximisation in Policy Design', *Policy and Politics* 46(1): 101-124.
- Sager, F. and Hinterleitner, M. (2022) 'The Politics of Policy Implementation: A Reassessment in More Conflictual Times', in the Edward Elgar *Handbook on the Politics of Public Administration* (2022), edited by Ladner, A. and Sager, F. London: Edward Elgar.
- R.K. Weaver (2015) 'Getting People to Behave: Research Lesson for Policy Makers', *Public Administration Review* 75(6): 806-816.

Further Reading

- Ansell, C, Sørensen, E, Torfing, J (2017) 'Improving policy implementation through collaborative policymaking', *Policy & Politics*, 45(3): 467-86.
- Capano, G. and Lippi, A (2017) 'How policy instruments are chosen: Patterns of decision makers' choices', *Policy Sciences* 50(2): 269-293.
- Hood, C. & Margetts, H. (2007) *The Tools of Government in the Digital Age*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Chapter 1: 'Exploring government's toolshed'.
- Howlett, M. (2019) 'Moving policy implementation theory forward: A multiple streams/critical juncture approach', *Public Policy and Administration* 34(4): 405-430.

Week 7.

Outcomes and Accountability

Who's to blame when things go wrong? If the trains don't run on time, or there aren't enough hospital beds, or people can't find jobs – who do we hold accountable for that? This lecture looks at the central role of accountability and blame games in public policy. Through the work of Christopher Hood in particular, the lecture will examine how the complexity of policymaking makes it extraordinarily difficult to actually enforce accountability in practice.

Essential Reading

- C. Hood (2011) *The Blame Game: Spin, Bureaucracy, and Self-Preservation in Government*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, Chapters 1-2
- M. Hinterleitner (2020) *Policy Controversies and Political Blame Games*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Chapter 2.
- R. Ran (2017) 'Understanding Blame Politics in China's Decentralized System of Environmental Governance: Actors, Strategies and Context', *The China Quarterly* 231: 634-661.

Further Reading

- Bovens, M., Schillemans, T. and t' Hart, P. (2008). 'Does public accountability work? An assessment tool'. *Public Administration* 86: 225-42

- Flinders, M., Hinterleitner, M., Rhodes, R.A.W., Weaver, R.K. & Dimova, G. (eds) (2024) *The Politics and Governance of Blame*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Select chapters that interest you).
- Kelso, A., Bennister, M. & Larkin, P. (2016) 'The shifting landscape of prime ministerial accountability to parliament: An analysis of Liaison Committee scrutiny sessions', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 18(3): 74-754.

Week 8.

Taking stock

This week we take stock of what we have learnt, in preparation for the case studies in Lent term.

There is no new reading this week.