

POL22: POLITICS AND PUBLIC POLICY

Organiser

Dr Margarita Gelepithis

Lecturers

Professor Diane Coyle
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Outline

This paper introduces the politics of democratic policymaking, with the aim of laying the foundations for empirically substantiated and critical evaluation of the actions of governments. It is structured in two parts. Part one, in Michaelmas term, introduces conceptual and theoretical tools that can help us make sense of how governments in different countries respond to social and economic pressures. We will explore, in turn, the interests, ideas, and institutions that shape the behaviour of key actors in public policymaking. Part two, in Lent term, is an opportunity to delve deeper into some specific policy issues. We will analyse four policy challenges that are of pressing importance in the 21st century, in a series of guest lectures and seminars delivered by experts from the Bennett Institute for Public Policy. There will be two revision sessions in Easter Term.

Lectures, readings, seminars and supervisions will be finalised shortly before the beginning of each term and announced on Moodle.

LECTURE SCHEDULE

Michaelmas Term

Week	Date	Time	Room	Topic	Lecturer
1				<i>Introduction</i>	Dr Margarita Gelepithis
2				<i>Interests and public policy (I)</i> Democratic responsiveness	Dr Margarita Gelepithis
3				<i>Interests and public policy (II)</i> Business and organized interests	Dr Margarita Gelepithis
4				<i>Ideas and public policy (I)</i> Complexity and understanding	Dr Margarita Gelepithis
5				<i>Ideas and public policy (II)</i> Norms and values	Dr Margarita Gelepithis
6				<i>Institutions and public policy (I)</i> Political systems	Dr Margarita Gelepithis
7				<i>Institutions and public policy (II)</i> History and path dependence	Dr Margarita Gelepithis
8				<i>Taking stock</i>	Dr Margarita Gelepithis

Lent Term

Please note: the order of the guest cases in Lent term will be confirmed nearer the time.

Week	Date	Time	Room	Topic	Lecturer
1				<i>Wicked Problems in Public Policy</i>	Professor Dennis Grube
2				<i>Wicked Problems in Public Policy</i>	Professor Dennis Grube
3				<i>Environmental Policy</i>	Dr Cristina Peñasco
4				<i>Environmental Policy</i>	Dr Cristina Peñasco
5				<i>Inequality and Regional Policy</i>	Professor Mike Kenny
6				<i>Inequality and Regional Policy</i>	Professor Mike Kenny
7				<i>Digital Policy</i>	Professor Diane Coyle
8				<i>Digital Policy</i>	Professor Diane Coyle

Easter Term

Week	Date	Time	Room	Topic	Lecturer
2				<i>Revision lecture</i>	Dr Margarita Gelepithis

SUPERVISIONS

There are three supervisions in Michaelmas term, three in Lent term, and one in Easter term.

Please prepare a 1500 word essay in response to the following questions:

Michaelmas Term

Wk	Option 1	Option 2
3	To whose interests is public policy responsive?	Does interest group influence make public policy less democratic?
5	What are normative ideas, and how do they influence public policymaking?	Public policy is at least as much about 'puzzling' as it is about 'powering.' Discuss.
7	Are majoritarian political institutions responsible for producing weak welfare states?	How are policy preferences shaped by the existing policy context?

Lent Term

Wk	Option 1	Option 2
3	Why does public policy sometimes fail to address important societal challenges?	Why are policy problems sometimes ignored for centuries before they are addressed by policymakers?
5	Political leaders flatter themselves if they think they have the power to change the world. Discuss	Does the logic of collective action make some policy problems intractable?
7	Why do different governments respond differently to similar policy challenges?	In what sense is public policy politically contested?

SEMINARS

There are three seminars in Michaelmas term and four seminars in Lent term. Seminars are structured around the following discussion questions.

Michaelmas Term

	Date	Discussion question	Seminar leader
1	Week 3	Does public policy disproportionately reflect business interests?	Margarita Gelepithis
2	Week 5	What is the role of ideas in transformative policy change?	Margarita Gelepithis
3	Week 7	How are policymakers constrained by institutional context?	Margarita Gelepithis

Lent Term

Please note: the order of the guest cases in Lent term will be confirmed nearer the time.

	Date	Discussion question	Seminar leader
1	Week 2	What's the difference between a <i>difficult</i> problem and a 'wicked' one – and should it make any difference to how governments approach them?	Dennis Grube
2	Week 4	UNFCCC was adopted to stabilize GHG concentrations in the atmosphere at the level that would prevent dangerous effects on the climate system. After almost 30 years of failure, we should abandon the UNFCCC. Discuss.	Cristina Peñasco
3	Week 6	Was "levelling up" the right policy approach to adopt to deal with the UK's deepening regional inequalities?	Mike Kenny
4	Week 8	Tbc	Diane Coyle

ASSESSMENT

Students will be assessed through a three-hour written examination in the Easter Term. Students must answer three questions.

Since this is the first year this paper is running, there are no past exam papers. But please rest assured that the exam will closely follow the following sample:

POL22 SAMPLE EXAM

Duration: Three hours.

Answer any three of the following questions. Your answers should refer to at least one specific area of policy.

1. Does public policy today primarily reflect the interests of the middle classes?
2. Are interest groups detrimental to public policymaking?
3. How influential are experts in public policy?
4. How do ideas about justice and fairness shape public policy?
5. Does consensus democracy produce kinder, gentler public policies?
6. What is path dependence, and how does it shape public policy?
7. Would citizens be less politically disaffected if they understood the constraints that policymakers face?
8. Why are long periods of policy stability occasionally punctuated by change?

MICHAELMAS TERM READING LIST

Week 1.

Introduction

What is public policy? Why study politics and public policy? In this introductory lecture, we set out the aims and structure of POL22: Politics and Public Policy. The paper aims to give you the tools to evaluate the actions of government critically but without cynicism. We will explore the interests, ideas, and institutions that shape public policymaking, using these concepts to explain damaging policy choices, and to inform discussion of some big 21st century policy challenges.

Essential reading

- Kingdon, J. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* (Pearson, 2010, Second Edition). Introduction.
- Baumgartner, F.R., and Jones, B. *Agendas and Instability in American Politics* (University of Chicago Press, 2009, Second Edition). Introduction.

Further reading

- John, P. (2018) Theories of policy change and variation reconsidered: a prospectus for the political economy of public policy. *Policy Sciences*, 51:1-16.
- 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.

Week 2.

Interests and Public Policy (I) Democratic responsiveness

Understanding public policy involves understanding its distributional consequences. This week we ask, in whose interests is public policy made? Are policymakers responsive to interests of the middle classes? Of the rich? Of specific pivotal or swing voters? Does it make a difference what party is in power as to whose interests are represented in policymaking?

Essential reading

- Aughey, D., & Warshaw, C. (2018). Policy Preferences and Policy Change: Dynamic Responsiveness in the American States, 1936–2014. *American Political Science Review*, 112(2), 249-266.
- Elsässer, L. Hense, S. & Schäfer, A. (2021) Not just money: unequal responsiveness in egalitarian democracies, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 28:12, 1890-1908
- Iversen, T. and Soskice, D. (2019) *Democracy and Prosperity*. OUP. Introduction.

Further reading

- Ansell, B. (2014). The Political Economy of Ownership: Housing Markets and the Welfare State. *American Political Science Review*, 108(2), 383-402.
- Hibbs, D.A. (1977) Political Parties and Macroeconomic Policy. *American Political Science Review*. 71:4, 1467-1487.
- Meltzer, A. and Scott R. 1981. 'A Rational Theory of the Size of Government.' *Journal of Political Economy*. 89:5, 914–27.
- Rehm, P., Hacker, J., & Schlesinger, M. (2012). Insecure Alliances: Risk, Inequality, and Support for the Welfare State. *American Political Science Review*, 106(2), 386-406.

Week 3.

Interests and Public Policy (II) Business and organized interests

This week we deepen our discussion of public policy responsiveness. We consider whether public policy disproportionately reflects business interests, and how collective action problems may systematically disadvantage the interests of some social groups.

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.
- 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.

Further reading

- [Dahl, R. A. \(1989\). Democracy and Its Critics. New Haven: Yale University Press. Chapter 20, 280-298.](#)
- [Olson, M. \(1982\). The rise and decline of nations: economic growth, stagflation, and social rigidities. New Haven: Yale University Press. Chapters 2 and 3.](#)

Week 4.

Ideas and Public Policy (I) Complexity and understanding

Public policy is often complex, and its effects are difficult to evaluate let alone predict. In this week's session 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

- Hall, P.A. (1993) 'Policy Paradigms, Social Learning, and the State: the Case of Economic Policymaking in Britain' *Comparative Politics*. 25, 257-296.
- 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.
- Guardino, M. (2019) *Framing Inequality. News Media, Public Opinion, and the Neoliberal Turn in U.S. Public Policy*. Oxford: OUP.

Further reading

- Barnes, L. (2022) Taxing the rich: public preferences and public understanding, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 29:5, 787-804
- Baumgartner, F.R. (2013) Ideas and Policy Change. *Governance*. 26:2, 239-258.
- Campbell, J.L. (2002) Ideas, Politics and Public Policy. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 28, 21-38.
- Hay, C. (2004). Ideas, interests and institutions in the comparative political economy of great transformations. *Review of International Political Economy*. 11:1, 204-226.
- Hugh Hecllo, *Modern Social Politics in Britain and Sweden: From Relief to Income Maintenance*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974)
- Lee, N. (2022). Do Policy Makers Listen to Experts? Evidence from a National Survey of Local and State Policy Makers. *American Political Science Review*, 116(2), 677-688.
- McNamara, K. (2011) Rational fictions: Central Bank Independence and the Social Logic of Delegation. *West European Politics*. 25:1, 47-76.
- *and the discovery of innocence*. Cambridge University Press.
- Margarita Geleptis and Marco Giani, 'Inclusion without Solidarity: Education, Economic Security, and Attitudes toward Redistribution'. *Political Studies*, vol. 70, no. 1, (2022) pp.45-61.

- Zaun, N. & Nantermoz, O. (2022) The use of pseudo-causal narratives in EU policies: the case of the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 29:4, 510-529
- Slothuus, R. and Bisgaard, M. (2020) How Political Parties Shape Public Opinion in the Real World *AJPS* Volume 65, Issue 4, Pages 896-911
- Walsh, J. (2000) When Do Ideas Matter? Explaining the Successes and Failures of Thatcherite Ideas. *Comparative Political Studies*. 33:4, 483-516.

Week 5.

Ideas and Public Policy (II) Norms and values

Normative ideas are central to public policymaking. This week we explore the role that ideas of fairness and justice play in public policymaking. We consider how normative ideas are linked with descriptive and causal beliefs, how they are constructed and mobilised, and how they contribute to transformative public policy change.

Essential reading

- 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.

Further reading

- Baumgartner, F. R., De Boef, S. L., & Boydston, A. E. (2008). *The decline of the death penalty*
- Hiscox and Hainmueller (2006) Learning to Love Globalization: Education and Individual Attitudes Toward International Trade. *International Organization* 60.
- Margarita Gelepithis and Marco Giani, 'Inclusion without Solidarity: Education, Economic Security, and Attitudes toward Redistribution'. *Political Studies*, vol. 70, no. 1, (2022) pp.45-61.
- [Scheve, K. and Stasavage, D. \(2016\) Taxing the Rich. A History of Fiscal Fairness in the United States and Europe, Oxford, Princeton University Press](#)
- Htun, M., & Weldon, S. L. (2012). The civic origins of progressive policy change: Combating violence against women in global perspective, 1975–2005. *American Political Science Review*, 106(3), 548-569.
- Wasow, O. (2020) Agenda Seeding: How 1960s Black Protests Moved Elites, Public Opinion, and Voting. *APSR*. OnlineFirst.

Week 6.

Institutions and Public Policy (I) Political systems

In the first of two weeks on institutions, we explore how political institutions shape public policy. We consider whether different political systems lead policymakers to act in different ways, resulting in systematic differences in public policy.

Essential reading

- [Lijphart, A. \(2012\) Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries. London: Yale University Press. Second Edition, chs. 1 and 16.](#)
- Weller, P., Grube, D., & Rhodes, R. A. (2021). *Comparing Cabinets: Dilemmas of Collective Government*. Oxford University Press.

Further reading

- Baumgartner, F. et al (2009) Punctuated Equilibrium in Comparative Perspective. *AJPS*, 53:3, 603-620.
- Beland, D. (2019) *How Ideas and Institutions Shape the Politics of Public Policy*. Cambridge: CUP.
- 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.
- Wlezien, C. and Soroka, S.N. (2012) Political Institutions and the Opinion-Policy Link. *West European Politics*. 35:6, 1407-1432.

Week 7.

Institutions and Public Policy (II) History and path dependence

Past policy choices are an important part of the institutional context in which policy is made. To what extent are policymakers constrained by previous policy choices? What does it mean for policy to be path dependent?

Essential reading

- Beland, D., Campell, A.L., and Weaver, R.K., (2022) *Policy Feedback. How Policies Shape Politics*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Gelepithis, M. and Berens, B. (2019) Welfare state structure, inequality, and public attitudes towards progressive taxation. *Socio-Economic Review*. 17:4, 823-850.

Further reading

- Hays, Ehrlich, Peinhardt (2005) Government Spending and Public Support for Trade in the OECD: An Empirical Test of the Embedded Liberalism Thesis. *International Organization*. 59.
- Larsen, C. A. (2008) The Institutional Logic of Welfare Attitudes: How Welfare Regimes Influence Public Support, *Comparative Political Studies*, 41, 145–168.
- Pierson, P. (1996). 'The New Politics of the Welfare State'. *World Politics*. 48:2,143-179.

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.

LENT TERM READING LIST

This term we will analyse four policy challenges that are of pressing importance in the 21st century, in a series of guest lectures and seminars delivered by experts from the Bennett Institute for Public Policy.

Please note: the order of the guest cases will be confirmed nearer the time.

CASE ONE. WICKED PROBLEMS IN PUBLIC POLICY

Professor Dennis Grube

Week 1.

Wicked problems (I)

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.

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
- 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.

Further Reading

- 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.

Week 2.

Wicked problems (II)

This week’s lecture extends the discussion from defining and understanding wicked problems, to asking 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

- 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.
- 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.

Further Reading

- 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.

CASE TWO. POLITICS AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Dr Cristina Peñasco

Comparative environmental decision making in developed vs. developing countries.

Week 1.

The Policy Challenge

Essential reading

- Ostrom, E., Burger, J., Field, C. B., Norgaard, R. B., & Policansky, D. (1999). Revisiting the commons: local lessons, global challenges. *science*, 284(5412), 278-282.
- Schulze, K. (2014) Do parties matter for international environmental cooperation? An analysis of environmental treaty participation by advanced industrialised democracies, *Environmental Politics*, 23:1, 115-139.
- Duit, A. (2016) The four faces of the environmental state: environmental governance regimes in 28 countries, *Environmental Politics*, 25:1, 69-91

Further reading

- Sommerer, T- & Lim, S. (2016) The environmental state as a model for the world? An analysis of policy repertoires in 37 countries, *Environmental Politics*, 25:1, 92-115
- Hughes, L., & Urpelainen, J. (2015). Interests, institutions, and climate policy: Explaining the choice of policy instruments for the energy sector. *Environmental Science & Policy*, 54, 52-63.
- Gupta, J. (2014). *The History of Global Climate Governance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9781139629072 (Chapters 3 and 4)
- Bäckstrand, K. & Kuyper, J.W. (2017). The democratic legitimacy of orchestration: the UNFCCC, non-state actors, and transnational climate governance, *Environmental Politics*, 26:4, 764-788

Week 2.

Policy Solutions

Essential reading

- Hausknot, D. & Hammond, M. (2020) Beyond the environmental state? The political prospects of a sustainability transformation, *Environmental Politics*, 29:1, 1-16.
- Peñasco, C., Anadón, L.D. & Verdolini, E. (2021). Systematic review of the outcomes and trade-offs of ten types of decarbonization policy instruments. *Nat. Clim. Chang.* 11, 257–265 .
- Douenne, T., & Fabre, A. (2020). French attitudes on climate change, carbon taxation and other climate policies. *Ecological Economics*, 169, 106496.

Further reading

- Fuso-Nerini, F., Tomei, J., To, L. S., Bisaga, I., Parikh, P., Black, M., ... & Mulugetta, Y. (2018). Mapping synergies and trade-offs between energy and the Sustainable Development Goals. *Nature Energy*, 3(1), 10-15.
- Bodansky, D. (2016). The Paris Climate Change Agreement: A New Hope? *The American Journal of International Law*, 110(2), 288-319

Seminar

UNFCCC was adopted to stabilize GHG concentrations in the atmosphere at the level that would prevent dangerous effects on the climate system. After almost 30 years of failure, we should abandon the UNFCCC. Discuss.

1. Depledge, J., Saldivia, M., & Peñasco, C. (2022). Glass half full or glass half empty?: the 2021 Glasgow Climate Conference. *Climate Policy*, 22(2), 147-157.
2. Christoff, P. (2016). The promissory note: COP 21 and the Paris Climate Agreement, *Environmental Politics*, 25:5, 765-787

CASE THREE. INEQUALITY AND REGIONAL POLICY

Professor Michael Kenny

Week 5

The history of (mostly failed) regional policy-making in the UK, and the importance of cities in the UK's growth strategy.

Week 6

Policy tools and dilemmas: how should 'levelling up' work?

- HMG, *Levelling up the United Kingdom*, February 2022; available at [Levelling Up the United Kingdom White Paper \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/104141/levelling-up-white-paper.pdf), pp1-51, 105-156
- Henry Overman, 'People, places and politics; the challenge of levelling up in the UK', *Centrepiece*, Spring 2020; available at: <https://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/cp570.pdf>
- Ron Martin et al., *Levelling up Left-Behind Places*
- Paul Collier, *The Future of Capitalism*
- Martin Sandbu, *The Economics of Belonging*
- Philip McCann, *The UK Regional-National Economic Problem*
- Tom Kelsey and Michael Kenny, *Townscapes: the value of social infrastructure*; available at: <https://www.bennettinstitute.cam.ac.uk/publications/social-infrastructure/>

CASE FOUR. DIGITAL POLICY

Professor Diane Coyle, CBE

Week 7

Reading list to follow.

Week 8

Reading list to follow.

EASTER TERM READING LIST

There will be a revision lecture and seminar, details to follow.