

**PPG1001: THE POLICY PROCESS**  
School of Public Policy and Governance  
University of Toronto  
Winter 2016

**Section L0101**

Thursday 2-4  
Location: UC 314  
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Office Hours: Thursdays 1-2 pm or by appt.  
Office Location: Canadiana 61F

**Section L0102**

Thursday 2-4  
Location: CG 361  
Prof. Greg Marchildon  
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Office Hours: Thursday 1pm-2pm, or by appt.  
Office Location: Health Sciences 418

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.

The course proceeds in two parts. First, we explore foundational theories of policy making that seek to capture the role of political actors and 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
- Critical thinking, analysis, and presentation skills

## Outline of Topics and Assignments

Week 1     Jan 14     Introduction

### Part I: Foundations of Public Policy

Week 2     Jan 21     Actors and Interests

Week 3     Jan 28     Institutions

Week 4     Feb 4     Ideas and Ideologies

### Part II: The Policy Cycle

Week 5     Feb 11     Agenda Setting  
*Hand in Analytical Essay*

Week 6     Feb 25     Policy Formulation

Week 7     Mar 3     Decision Making I

Week 8     Mar 10     Decision Making II  
*Hand in Group Presentation Outline*

Week 9     Mar 17     Implementation

Week 10    Mar 24     Evaluation

Week 11    Mar 31     *Group Presentations*

Week 12    Apr 7     *Group Presentations*

              Apr 14     *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 or contradictions in the reading?
- What are the implications of the author's arguments?

*Seminar Leadership (5%)* – As part of the participation component of your course grade, at one point during the term, you will be asked to lead class discussion on one of the assigned readings. This involves highlighting the most important themes/arguments from the article, situating these within the context of the course, preparing discussion points and questions for the class to consider, and facilitating seminar discussion. You will be evaluated based on the clarity of your analysis, the thoughtfulness of your questions, and the quality of discussion. The schedule will be determined during the first class.

***Analytical Essay (20%)***: Drawing on readings from Part 1 of the course (Weeks 1-4), you will prepare a short (1,000 word) essay answering the following question: “What is the driving force in policy making: actors, institutions, or ideas?” Be sure to refer to class readings in your answer. You may also draw on relevant policy cases, current or historical. Due Week 5.

***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 (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, 20-minute power point 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 (25%)* – An 8-page essay (12-pt font, one-inch margins) that provides students the opportunity to demonstrate their individual creativity and unique perspective on the case study presented by the group. Due April 14.

## Course Policies

**Course Website:** All required readings, assignment descriptions, and course grades will be posted on the course website via Blackboard.

**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.

Generally speaking, 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 our 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:** We 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:** We 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 your section faculty as soon as the problem arises and present your written documentation when you return. It is at our 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 ROSI.

**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](mailto: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>

## Seminar Topics and Readings

All required readings are available via Blackboard, and should be read in advance of class.

### Week 1 – Introduction

*What do we mean by the “policy process”? How have political scientists incorporated understandings from economics, sociology, and psychology into policy studies? Is there a role for theory in policy studies?*

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.

Stone, Deborah. 2012. “The Market and the Polis,” in *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making*, 3rd ed., pp. 19-36. New York: W. W. Norton and Co.

Piereson, James and Naomi Schaefer Riley. 2013. “The Problem with Public Policy Schools.” *The Washington Post* (6 December).

### Part I: Foundations of Public Policy

### Week 2 – Actors and Interests

*What are the differences, if any, between individual and group decision making? How do individuals and groups act when they are dissatisfied? What kinds of influence do groups have in policy making?*

Knill, Christoph, and Jale Tosun. 2012. Excerpt from *Public Policy: A New Introduction*, pp. 55-66. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lemann, Nicholas. 2008. “Conflict of Interests.” *The New Yorker* (11 August).

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.

### Week 3 – Institutions

*What are institutions? How do institutions structure/constrain/transform political decision making? How have institutions structured social policymaking in Canada and the United States?*

Knill, Christoph, and Jale Tosun. 2012. Excerpt from *Public Policy: A New Introduction*, pp. 40-50. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

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.

Pierson, Paul. 1995. “Fragmented Welfare States: Federal Institutions and the Development of Social Policy.” *Governance* 8(4): 449-478.

## **Week 4 – Ideas and Ideologies**

*Can we separate out the effects of political attitudes, beliefs, and ideologies on policy making? How are various kinds of ideas packaged into policy frames? Do policy makers respond to public opinion, or do they shape it?*

John, Peter. 2012. "Ideas," in *Analyzing Public Policy*, 2nd ed., pp. 122-153. New York: Routledge.

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

Petry, Francois. 2007. "How Policy Makers View Public Opinion," in *Policy Analysis in Canada: The State of the Art*, eds. Laurent Dobuzinskis, David H. Laycock, Michael Howlett, pp. 375-398. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

## Part II: The Policy Cycle

### **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.

Marchildon, Gregory P. 2014. "Agenda-Setting in a Parliamentary Federation: Universal Medicare in Canada. In *Studying Public Policy: An International Approach*, ed. Michael Hill, pp. 75-88. Bristol: Policy Press.

### **Week 6 – Policy Formulation**

*Should policy be based on the insights of experts or the preferences of citizens? Why do decision makers seem so averse to both options? Can the tension between expertise and democracy be bridged?*

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

Lenihan, Don. 2012. "The Political Objections to Public Engagement," in *Rescuing Policy: The Case for Public Engagement*, pp. 100-118. Ottawa: Public Policy Forum.

Prince, Michael J. 2007. "Soft Craft, Hard Choices, Altered Context: Reflections on Twenty-five Years of Policy Advice in Canada," in *Policy Analysis in Canada: The State of the Art*, eds. Laurent Dobuzinskis, David H. Laycock, Michael Howlett, pp. 163-185. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

### **Week 7 – Decision Making I**

*Many theorists assume that individuals are rational actors. What does that mean? What are the basic assumptions of rational choice theory?*

- Becker, Gary S. 1976. Chp. 1 of *The Economic Approach to Human Behavior*, pp. 3-14. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Shepsle, Kenneth A., and Mark S. Bonchek. 1997. "Rationality: The Model of Choice," in *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions*, pp. 15-35. New York: Norton.
- Becker, Gary S. 1992. "The Economic Way of Looking at Life." Lecture, Nobel Prize in Economics.

### **Week 8 – Decision Making II**

*Are individuals always motivated by self-interest? What is "incrementalism"? What is "bounded rationality" and how does it affect preference formation?*

- Pal, Leslie A. 2011. "Assessing Incrementalism: Formative Assumptions, Contemporary Realities," *Policy and Society* 30(1): 29-39.
- Forester, John. 1984. "Bounded Rationality and the Politics of Muddling Through." *Public Administration Review* 44(1): 23-31.
- Howlett, M. 2007. "Analyzing Multi-Actor, Multi-Round Public Policy Decision-Making Processes in Government: Findings from Five Canadian Cases," in *Canadian Public Policy: Selected Studies in Process and Style*, pp. 91-112. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

### **Week 9 - Implementation**

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

- Graham, Andrew. 2005. "Pressman/Wildavsky and Bardach: Implementation in the Public Sector, Past, Present and Future." *Canadian Public Administration* 48(2): 268-273.
- Schneider, Anne and Helen Ingram. 1990. "Behavioral Assumptions of Policy Tools." *Journal of Politics* 52(2): pp. 510-529.
- Lidman, Russell, and Paul Sommers. 2005. "The "Compleat" Policy Analyst: A Top 10 List," *Public Administration Review* 65(5): 628-634.

### **Week 10 – Evaluation**

*What criteria do governments use to make and evaluate policy decisions? Are all considerations reduced to dollars and cents? Or are other factors taken into consideration?*

- 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.

### **Week 11/12 – Student Presentations (No assigned readings)**