

Comparative Public Policy

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Course Objectives:

This course focuses on how policies are made by governments in different countries on a range of important issues, e.g., national security policy, fiscal management, poverty, health, education, the environment. It will explore answers to different types of outcomes in policymaking by reference to culture, state institutions and societal organizations. It will compare advanced industrial nations, former socialist nations, rising powers and developing countries. Comparative analysis will allow students to recognize patterns and draw generalizations that can then be used to develop a broader understanding of different patterns of policy making cross-nationally.

Core Readings: Available at Mary Jane's Books

- Eugene Bardach *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis* (Congressional Quarterly Press, 2009)
- Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons* (Cambridge U. Press, 1990)
- Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion* (Oxford University Press, 2006)
- Fareed Zakaria, *The Post American World*, (Norton, 2009)
- Articles and reports available on blackboard.

Requirements

Attendance & Participation	10%	Final Exam	30%
Midterm	30%	Paper Assignments/Presentations	30%

Writing and Plagiarism. Plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional use of another's words or ideas without giving credit to that person. While this includes copying text word for word without the use of quotation marks, it also includes paraphrasing another person's work without proper citation. Intellectual honesty is a core value of university and the foundation of faculty and student development. Students guilty of plagiarizing **any** material will receive a failing grade for the **course** and the evidence will be automatically turned over to the *Office of Student Conduct*. During the first week of class, all students **must** review the UAlbany Library's tutorial on plagiarism entitled: Plagiarism 101 (<http://library.albany.edu/usered/ncplaga/index.html>). It is really far easier to do your own work than to plagiarize and students would be most unwise to consider it.

Participation. Class participation consists of preparation for and engagement in class discussion. It entails regular class attendance, completing assigned readings, asking relevant questions, and taking positions on issues raised in class

Midterm and Final Exams: These essay exams will give the opportunity to present views on the material covered in class and in readings.

Written Assignment: Comparative Policy Making. Students will be broken into groups. Each group will address an issue in public policy from different institutional and national perspectives in order to gain some understanding of the variety of processes and dynamics of policy making in different institutional settings. A more comprehensive description of the assignment will be passed out in class. Students will form ‘working groups’ that will complete comparative analyses of policy making on following issues: Security, Environment, Health Care, Education and Poverty. Each group will give a presentation to the class towards the end of the semester.

COURSE OUTLINE

A. Introduction: How to Study Comparative Public Policy?

August 31 September 2, 9

What is “public policy” and how is it part of “politics” and “political science”? How does comparison help us understand our own system better? What should be compared? How important are institutions, electoral systems, and other rules and institutions? How can we meaningfully compare US institutions to institutions of other countries?

- Robert Axelrod, “Political Science and Beyond: Presidential Address to the American Political Science Association,” *Perspectives on Politics* VI, no. 1, pp. 3-8 (2008), Handout/Blackboard.
- Abdo I. Baaklini, “Viable Constitutionalism and Democratic Political Stability,” Abdo I. Baaklini and Helen Desfosses, eds, *Designs for Democratic Stability* (M.E. Sharpe, 1997), pp. 3-32, Blackboard
- Eugene Bardach, *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis*, pp. XV-XX, 127-143.
- Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons*, pp. 1-28.

B. The Emerging World: Where are we Comparing?

September 14, 16 The Emerging World: Comparisons of What, Where?

What is the nature of changing global leadership? Which ‘emerging markets’ are likely to become significant players in international affairs? Which countries are left behind? How can we measure and assess the quality of institutions?

- Zakaria *The Post American World*

C. Concepts: Types of Institutions and Policy Making

September 21, 23: The Art and Science of Policy Analysis

What steps can be taken by policy analysts to solve problems? Groups and Assignments. What are the steps of Policy Making? Who are the Actors? What roles are played? How is evidence amassed in support of different alternatives? What steps will assist policy analysts solve problems more effectively – or make good policy. We will break into groups and begin the semester's major project.

- Bardach, A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis, pp. 1-110.

September 30, October 5: Rational Choice, Organizational Process, Bureaucratic Politics

Model I: Who is the key actor in the rational choice model? What is the logic of rational choice? How are goals, values and information viewed? How is “national security” paradigmatic? Which other policies might be explained in terms of rational choice decision making?

Model II: Who are the key actors in the organizational process model? How do policymakers set goals and gather information? What differences are there between public organizations, non-profit organizations and the private sector? What incentives are most important?

Model III: Who are the key actors in the bureaucratic politics model? How does position in the hierarchy determine stance on policy? How important is information in policy making? How do policy makers set their priorities in practice?

- Charles Lindblom, “The Science of Muddling Through,” vol. 19, no. 2 (Spring, 1959), pp. 79-88 – Blackboard
- Graham Allison, “Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis,” *APSR*, vol 63, no. 3 (Sept. 1969), pp. 680-718 – Blackboard
- Jonathan Bendor, Thomas H. Hammond, “Rethinking Allison’s Models,” *APSR*, vol 86, no. 2 (June, 1992), pp. 301-322 – Blackboard
- David A. Welch, “The Organizational Process and Bureaucratic Politics Paradigms: retrospect and Prospect,” *International Security*, vol 17, no. 2 (Autumn 1992), pp. 112-146 – Blackboard

October 7 Garbage Can Decision Making

How do political leaders and policy makers select problems, and alternative policy solutions? How do politics affect decision making? How are alternative policies devised?

How does decision making differ in rational, incremental and garbage can models? What are: the issue attention cycle, policy windows, focusing events and organized anarchies?

John Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies*, Chapters 1, 4, 8 and 9 – Blackboard

October 12: Issue Area

How does decision making on foreign policy differ from that on domestic policy? How does the type of “goods” at stake in the policy determine the process of decision making? What discernible types of policy processes can be identified in governments of “democratic,” “authoritarian,” “developing” and “advanced industrial” societies?

- William Zimmerman, “Issue Area and Foreign Policy Process: A Research Note in Search of a General Theory,” *APSR*, vol. 67, no. 3 (Dec 1973), pp. 1204-1212.

October 14: Policy Implementation

How does implementation differ from policy? How do politics affect implementation? What makes some policies easier to implement than others? Are some sorts of decisions easier to implement than others? Does implementation work more effectively in democracies or in authoritarian systems?

Daniel A. Mazmanian and Paul A. Sabatier, *Implementation and Public Policy*, Chapters 1-2 – Blackboard

October 19: Midterm

D. Selected Issues and Policies

October 21: Health Policy

- Elizabeth Docteur and Robert A. Berenson, “How Does the Quality of U.S. Health Care Compare Internationally,” *Timely Analysis of Immediate Health Policy Issues* (August 2009), Handout/Blackboard.
- Jessica Adolino and Charles Blake, *Comparing Public Policies*, pp. 208-242 Blackboard

October 26, 28: Environment

Are Common Property Resources (CPRs) best managed in centralized or decentralized systems? Does individual rationality necessarily lead to socially incoherent outcomes? How can individuals and institutions learn to project common goods in the environment? How do informal and formal rules combine to produce

constructive and destructive outcomes in the environment? How does institutional choice organizational learning take place?

- Ostrom, *Governing the Commons*, Chapters 2-6.
- David Victor, et al, "The Geo-engineering Option," *Foreign Affairs*, March-April 2009, pp. 64-76 – Blackboard

November 2: National Security:

To what extent does policy making on national security include issues of cultural, economic and social survival? How are decisions on national security made?

- Karl Inderfurth and Loch Johnson, *Fateful Decisions*, pp. 107-123, 173-193 - blackboard
- Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence*, pp. 1-40 – Blackboard
- *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility, Report of the High-Level Panel and Threats, Challenges and Change (A/59/565)*, 2 December 2004 – Blackboard

November 4: Fiscal Policy and Taxation

- Jessica Adolino and Charles Blake, *Comparing Public Policies*, pp. 144-208 -- Blackboard

November 9, 11: Poverty and International Development:

- Collier, *The Bottom Billion*, whole book

E. Public Presentations

- November 16: Security
- November 18: Environment,
- November 23: Health Care
- November 30: Education
- December 2: Poverty

NOVEMBER 16: PAPER DUE

December 7: Conclusion: Comparing Public Policy

On issues (what is to be compared), concepts (through what lens will we regard the policy), method (how it will be compared), and measurement. How are important are formal and informal institutions in policy making? How do these systems differ in different kinds of countries.

More about our Comparative Public Policy and Institutions cluster and their research into public policies in contemporary democracies.Â The CCPI cluster examines key themes in public policy, political processes and institutions in contemporary democracies. Areas of particular focus include: Gender and the policy process. European and EU politics. The media. Rhetoric and public policy. Democratic reforms processes. The role of bureaucracy. The MSc Comparative Public Policy provides intensive analytical training in the systematic comparison of social and public policies from an international perspective. It helps develop substantive knowledge in a wide range of policy fields around topical issues such as policy evaluation, policy learning and policy transfer. Amid the ongoing debate on Scotlandâ€™s role within the UK, we offer the ideal environment in which to observe contemporary public policy developments.