Policy Systems

By Asim Zia, University of Vermont

Welcome to PA 306: Policy Systems. In this introductory graduate-level seminar geared toward current and aspiring public administrators and policy analysts, students will learn about policy analysis frameworks and theories that aim at understanding and assessing the complex dynamics of change and continuity in policy systems. In particular, the emphasis is placed upon Institutional Analysis and Development Framework, the Multiple Streams Framework; Social Construction and Policy Design; the Network Approach; Punctuated Equilibrium Theory; the Advocacy Coalition Framework; Innovation and Diffusion Models, Large-N Comparative Models and Complex Systems. Further, students will apply these theories and frameworks to analyze a substantive public policy problem. These policy problems may span, or even cut across, a broad range of policy domains such as (included but not limited to) energy policy, economic policy, food policy, environmental policy, defense and foreign policy, space policy, homeland security, disaster and emergency management, social policy, transportation policy, land-use policy and health policy.

Course Objectives and Competency Learning Goals

At the completion of this course, students would be able to:

• Understand a wide range of public policy frameworks and theories for understanding and assessing the complex dynamics of change and continuity in policy systems;
• Engage in public policy analysis and evaluation, attaining higher competency in applying at least one policy system framework and theory;
• Critically analyze discourses surrounding public policy problems
• Develop and refine their research, writing, analytical, and problem-solving skills

This course extensively covers the following core Master of Public Administration (MPA) competencies:

• To lead and manage public governance
  o Public, private & non-profit sector collaboration and conflicts
  o Systems dynamics
• To participate in and contribute to the policy process
  o Political theory and practice
  o Policy streams, cycles and systems
  o Problem identification
  o Policy implementation
  o Policy analysis and evaluation
• To analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions
  o Program evaluation and action research
  o Organizational learning and development
Policy making in complex systems

This course also exposes students to the following core MPA competencies:

• To articulate and apply a public service perspective
  o Authentic citizen participation and community
  o Social and economic equity
• To communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry
  o Pluralism/multiculturalism/cultural diversity
  o Coalition and team building
  o Information systems and technology

A Graduate Seminar

This course is designed as a graduate-level seminar, so all students are expected to take an active leadership role in stimulating class discussions on readings, assignments and relevant policy discourses as well as design and implement a major policy analysis project with real-world public policy implications. Active participation by students in the seminar discussions and a collaborative project is also required to help them achieve the course objectives through an interactive learning experience. Each 3-hour seminar bloc is typically broken down as follows: (1) Instructor introduces the policy theory topic (60 minutes); (2) A designated student leads the discussion on the policy theory topic (60 minutes); (3) Instructor introduces the policy analysis topic (30 minutes); (4) Open discussion on questions that are generated prior to and during the seminar (30 minutes). In addition, students will engage in a semester-length policy analysis project to apply and refine the concepts, skills and tools discussed during the class.

At the beginning of each class, students will have an opportunity to ask questions pertaining to course expectations and assignments. If any student anticipates missing a class, please let me know.

Course Website

A course website is created on Blackboard, which can be accessed at https://bb.uvm.edu. All power point presentations, additional readings, and detailed assignments will be available at the Blackboard website.
Texts and Other Readings


Additional readings that are included in the list of readings below (shown in *italics*) are available on the Blackboard website.

Calendar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics and Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 13</td>
<td><strong>Topic: Overview of Public Policy Theories and Frameworks</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Background Readings <em>(Optional)</em>: Sabatier 2007, Chapter 1</td>
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<td>Weimer and Vining 2011, Chapters 2 and 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 20</td>
<td><em>Martin Luther King Holiday</em></td>
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<td>January 27</td>
<td><strong>Policy Theory Topic: Institutional Analysis and Development Framework</strong></td>
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<td>Readings: (1) Sabatier 2007, Chapter 2; [Ostrom]</td>
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<td><strong>Policy Analysis Topic: Gathering Information for Policy Analysis</strong></td>
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<td>Reading: Weimer and Vining 2011, Chapter 14</td>
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<td>February 3</td>
<td><strong>Policy Theory Topic: Multiple Streams Framework</strong></td>
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<td>Readings: (1) Sabatier 2007, Chapter 3 [Zaharidias]</td>
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<td><strong>Policy Analysis Topic: Landing on Your Feet: Organizing Your Policy Analysis</strong></td>
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<td>Reading: Weimer and Vining 2011, Chapter 15</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Policy Theory Topic</td>
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<td>February 10</td>
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<td>Policy Analysis Topic: Cost-Benefit Analysis: Assessing Efficiency</td>
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<td>February 17</td>
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<td>Readings: (1) Sabatier 2007, Chapter 5 [Adam and Kriesi]</td>
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<td>Policy Analysis Topic: Efficiency and the Idealized Competitive Model</td>
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<td>Reading: Weimer and Vining 2011, Chapter 4</td>
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<td>February 24</td>
<td>Revised (President's Day Holiday) One Week Later</td>
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<td>March 3</td>
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<td>March 10</td>
<td>Policy Theory Topic: The Punctuated Equilibrium Theory</td>
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<td>Readings: (1) Sabatier 2007, Chapter 6 [True, Jones and Baumgartner]</td>
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<td>Policy Analysis Topic: Rationales for Public Policy: Market Failures</td>
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<td>Reading: Weimer and Vining 2011, Chapter 5</td>
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<td>March 17</td>
<td>Policy Theory Topic: The Advocacy Coalition Framework</td>
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<td>Readings: (1) Sabatier 2007, Chapter 7 [Sabatier and Weible]</td>
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<td>Policy Analysis Topic: Rationales for Public Policy: Other Limitations of the Competitive Framework</td>
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<td>Reading: Weimer and Vining 2011, Chapter 6</td>
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<td>March 24</td>
<td>Policy Theory Topic: Innovation and Diffusion Models</td>
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<td>Readings: (1) Sabatier 2007, Chapter 8 [Berry and Berry]</td>
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<td>Policy Analysis Topic: Rationales for Public Policy: Distributional and Other Goals</td>
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<td>Reading: Weimer and Vining 2011, Chapter 7</td>
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March 31 | **Policy Theory Topic:** Policy Process and Large-N Comparative Studies  
**Readings:** (1) Sabatier 2007, Chapter 9 [Blomquist]  
**Policy Analysis Topic:** Limits to Public Intervention: Government Failures  
**Reading:** Weimer and Vining 2011, Chapters 8 and 9

April 7 | **Policy Theory Topic:** Complex Systems Framework  
**Policy Analysis Topic:** Correcting Market and Government Failures: Generic Policies  
**Reading:** Weimer and Vining 2011, Chapters 1 and 10

April 14 | **Policy Theory Topic:** A Comparison of Frameworks, Theories and Models of Policy Processes  
**Reading:** Sabatier 2007, Chapter 10 [Schlager]  
**Policy Analysis Topic:** Adoption and Implementation Issues  
**Reading:** Weimer and Vining 2011, Chapters 11 and 12

April 21 | **Policy Theory Topic:** Fostering the Development of Policy Theory  
**Reading:** Sabatier 2007, Chapter 11 [Schlager]  
**Policy Analysis Topic:** Government Supply: Drawing Organizational Boundaries  
**Reading:** Weimer and Vining 2011, Chapter 13

April 28 | **Class Presentations on Your Policy Analysis Project**

**Assignments and Grading**

Majority of the assignments are geared towards providing you hands-on experience in conducting public policy analysis and evaluation and applying theoretical models and frameworks discussed during the class in a real-world context of a policy analysis project. Here is an overview of the assignments. More detailed instructions for each of these assignments will be thoroughly discussed in the class and posted on the Blackboard.
Assignment 1: Policy Analysis Project (40%): Detailed instructions will be provided in the class on February 10th

Assignment 2: Group Policy Project (20%): Detailed instructions will be provided in the class on March 10th

Assignment 3: Critical Review of Weekly Readings (33%): You will provide a 500-750 word critical review of the readings assigned for each of the eleven weeks from January 27th onwards. Your critique could address theoretical, methodological and/or analytical issues and must clearly specify which readings are you criticizing. You must bring a printed copy of your review at the start of each class. No late submissions will be accepted.

Class Participation (7%)

Relevant Public Policy Journals

1. Advances in Economic Analysis & Policy
4. American Foreign Policy Interests: The Journal of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy
5. The American Journal of Tax Policy
6. Analyses of social issues and public policy
7. Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy
8. Applied Health Economics and Health Policy
10. Asian American Policy Review
11. Asian Politics and Policy
12. Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice
13. Canadian-American Public Policy
14. Canadian Public Policy : Analyse de Politiques
15. Clean Technologies and Environmental Policy
16. Climate Policy
18. Communication Law and Policy
19. Comparative Labor Law & Policy Journal
20. Consumer Economic Policy
21. Contemporary Economic Policy
22. Cornell Journal of Law and Public Policy
23. Criminology & Public Policy
24. Critical Social Policy
25. Defense & Foreign Affairs’ Strategic Policy
27. Drugs: Education, Prevention, & Policy
30. Economic Papers: A journal of applied economics and policy
31. Economic policy
32. Educational evaluation and policy analysis
33. Educational Policy
34. Educational research for policy and practice
35. Energy policy
36. Energy Sources, Part B: Economics, Planning and Policy
37. Environmental Economics and Policy Studies
38. Environmental Policy and Governance
39. Environmental Policy and Law
40. Environmental science & policy
41. European journal of housing policy
42. European Social Policy
43. Food policy
44. Foreign policy
45. Foreign policy analysis
46. Forest policy and economics
47. Genomics, society and policy
49. Global Social Policy
50. Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy
51. Harvard journal of law and public policy
52. Health Economics, Policy and Law
53. Health policy
54. Health policy and planning
55. Health Research Policy and Systems
56. Higher Education Management and Policy
57. Housing policy debate
58. Information economics and policy
59. Information Infrastructure and Policy
60. Innovation: Management, Policy & Practice
62. International Journal of Cultural Policy
63. International Journal of Drug Policy
64. International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy
65. Journal for critical education policy studies
66. Journal of accounting and public policy
67. Journal of Business Administration and Policy Analysis
68. Journal of comparative policy analysis
69. Journal of Consumer Policy
70. Journal of Disability Policy Studies
72. Journal of Education Policy
73. Journal of Educational Administration and Policy Studies
74. Journal of Environmental Assessment Policy and Management
75. Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning
76. Journal of European public policy 
77. Journal of European Social Policy 
78. Journal of Health Politics, Policy & Law 
79. Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management 
80. Journal of International Wildlife Law & Policy 
81. Journal of Natural Resources Policy Research 
82. Journal of Policy Analysis & Management 
83. Journal of Policy History 
84. Journal of policy modeling 
86. Journal of public health policy 
87. Journal of Public Policy 
88. Journal of Public Policy & Marketing 
89. Journal of social policy 
90. Journal of Transport Economics and Policy 
91. Journal of Transportation Law, Logistics, and Policy 
92. Knowledge and Policy 
93. Knowledge, Technology & Policy 
94. Land use policy 
95. Language Policy 
96. Latin American Policy 
97. Law & policy 
98. Marine policy 
99. Maritime Policy & Management 
100. Middle East policy 
101. OECD journal of competition law and policy 
102. Outlook on Science Policy 
103. Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education 
104. Philosophy & Public Policy Quarterly 
106. Policy & Practice 
107. Policy and Society 
108. Policy, Politics, & Nursing Practice 
109. Policy Review 
110. Policy Sciences 
111. Policy Studies Journal 
112. Policy studies: the journal of the Policy Studies Institute 
113. Politics & policy 
114. Population research and policy review 
115. Public policy and administration 
116. Public policy research 
117. Public Works Management & Policy 
118. Regional Science Policy & Practice 
119. Research policy 
120. Review of environmental economics and policy 
121. Review of Policy Research
122. Science and Public Policy
123. Sexuality Research and Social Policy
125. Social Philosophy and Policy
126. Social Policy
127. Social Policy & Administration
128. Social Policy and Society
129. Space Policy
130. Sustainability: science, practice, & policy
131. Transport policy
132. Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice
133. Urban Policy and Research
134. Utilities policy
135. World policy journal