Lecture Notes

* Opinions about politicians truth telling based on personal world view.
* Two models of decision making
  + Rational actor model (RAM)
  + Political model
* RAM developed primarily to understand foreign policy
  + Normally a policy decision is evaluated by multiple federal agencies.
  + Policy process is not a unitary process but the debate is normally held behind closed doors in an administration so that it appears unitary.
* Problems with RAM are rooted in its underlying assumptions
  + State is not monolithic
  + Various bureaucracies have multiple, competing goals
  + Decisions are viewed as zero sum games
  + Decision making is not rational because of politics and conflict
  + Cooperation tends to be the exception and not the rule in a bureaucracy.
* Roughly 98% of thought is unconscious therefore most thought is reflexive, not reflective
* Daniel Kahneman proposed a two system model of thinking
  + System 1 is reflexive, requires little to no effort, and is involuntary
  + System 2 if reflective, thoughtful, and requires mental attention
* We think we operate under System 2 but most of the time we’re operating under System 1
  + This is necessary to function
* Awareness occurs when sensory inputs do NOT conform to our predictive mental models.
  + You only think about something when it’s unexpected or new.
* System 1 thinking works through metaphor.
  + e.g., a “warm, caring” person versus someone who is as “cold as a fish”
  + People tend to associate problems with something they’ve experienced before (i.e., metaphor)
  + When neurons fire together they become wired to one another and make associations.
  + The world is NOT as coherent as we think; coherence about the world is a product of System 1 thinking.
* How the models of thinking relate to the policy process
  + We create complex mental metaphors that become bound into narratives.
  + Narratives are stories with heroes, villains, victims, etc.
  + The policy process operates through politics (i.e., policy process is political)
  + Politics is about changing the narrative.
* Facts often don’t matter in political and policy discussions because people filter arguments through their world view which is constructed through metaphorical System 1 thinking.
  + This challenges the validity of RAM.
  + How people view policy issues is likely related more to our constructed narratives about the world rather than any analytical process.
* Market versus Polis
  + Polis is concerned with relationships, community, and belonging.
  + Market is self-interested.

Comments and Questions

1. Dr. Gilsinan seems to be using politics and policy process interchangeably. Is there a difference?

General Discussion

* Clarification of instructions for Discussion Post 01 assignment
  + Compare and contrast RAM, market, and System 2 Thinking or political, polis, System 1 Thinking for your policy domain, depending on which set is more relevant.
  + Peer Comment: Policymakers that don’t fully understand technology may be forced to use System 2 Thinking. Alternatively, they may rely on System 1 Thinking to if they don’t have good information.
* Does denigration of experts imply a degradation of democracy?
* Stumbling in the dark allows System 2 Thinking to dominate.
* Experts that extensively employ System 1 Thinking may fall into System 2 Thinking.
* One big issue is how to draw the line between expertise and sovereignty of the people.
* Avoiding falling into System 1 Thinking
  + Be cognizant of triggers.
  + Move away from right and wrong model (i.e., move from winning to understanding).
  + Intentionally try to construct an alternative metaphor or analogy.

Lecture Notes

Policy Issues are Framed as Morality Tales

* How organizations view problems rather than how individuals view problems.
* Four morality tales
  + Mob at the gates – hordes of people want into our country
  + Triumphant individual – anybody can do anything in America
  + Rot at the top – corrupt elites run the system to the disadvantage of most and the advantage of a select few
  + Benevolent community – Americans take care of each other
* Conservative and liberal interpretations of each morality tale
  + Conservative - strong and devious
  + Liberal - weak and needy

Approaches to Problem Solving

* Wicked problems have no good options, only bad and worse.
* Root – comprehensive analysis (RAM, market, System 2 Thinking) 🡪 reasoning and optimizing
* Branch – limited comparisons (political, polis, System 1 Thinking) 🡪 muddling and satisficing

Understanding how organizations view problems

* Four main dimensions
  + Change agent characteristics
  + Organization characteristics
  + Targets of change (internal v. external)
  + Amount of change (BHAG v. muddling)
* Culture and standard operating procedures are to organizations what System 1 Thinking is to individuals.
  + Causes difficulty interpreting outside information contrary to worldview.
* Over-estimating risk can be strategically beneficial to an organization.

Policy Process through an Organizational Lens

* Organizations influence at three levels
  + Policy in intention – broad policy goals
  + Policy in implementation – characteristics of street-level bureaucrat
  + Policy in experience – the experience of those on the receiving end of the policy

General Discussion

* Stages model is good for getting historical grasp of a policy issue.
* Stages model give the impression that policy follows linear, well-structured process.
* Stages model assumes that politics causes policy.
* Log-rolling is similar to quid pro quo
  + Follow the lead of policymakers with expertise in an area if they follow your lead in your expertise
* Typologies model assumes that policy causes politics.
* Typologies useful for agency politics even though it was developed to understand presidential and congressional politics.
* Widely distributed cost and benefits 🡪 majoritarian politics 🡪 low political conflict
* Concentrated costs and benefits 🡪 interest groups politics 🡪 high political conflict
* Concentrated costs and widely distributed benefits 🡪 entrepreneurial politics 🡪 champion
* Distributed costs and concentrated benefits 🡪 special interest politics 🡪 under the radar
* Better Together initiative in St. Louis is an example of a BHAG
* Once BHAGs get started they are difficult to stop because of sunk costs even if they are not working as intended.
  + Cognitive biases become problematic
  + Tend to discount or ignore conflicting information
* Tragedies are focusing events in policymaking
  + Key for organizational reformer to take change and effect change
* Creating policy based only on technical expertise without input of those effected by policy can be symptomatic of Rot at the Top
* Policy in intention must be informed by policy in experience; without it policy in implementation becomes flawed.

Lecture Notes

* Administrative evil is undesired outcomes that result from the normal functioning of government
  + Results in moral inversion 🡪 rationalization of the undesired outcome
* Characteristics that facilitate administrative evil
  + Division of labor 🡪 unclear moral culpability for a particular undesired outcome
  + Routinization 🡪 don’t consider the consequence of the task
  + Technical language 🡪 masks ethical consequences of acts
  + Reliance on technical systems 🡪 obscures ethical responsibility
* Moral responsibility is dispersed therefore no one is responsible
* Utilitarian ethic is a focus most good for the most number of people
* Deontology ethic is a duty ethic (e.g., we have a duty to perform some task)
* Dialogic ethic 🡪 how to get organizations to consider ethics
  + Conversation and analysis of assumptions, frameworks, SOPs, etc. to understand the ethical consequences of an action
  + Can activate System 2 Thinking
* In policy arena, facts are gathered to advance a position, not necessarily to solve a problem

Discussion

* Privileges driven by categories
  + By definition some people are in and others are out.
  + Simply defining categories has ethical implications.
* When analyzing policy it’s very important to consider the categories that are created to apply the policy.
* Certain policy language is privileged.
  + In *The Fires*, quantitative language was privileged (i.e., carried more weight).
  + Language can cloud the impact of a policy.
* Numbers are generated within context.
  + Understand how the numbers are generated.
* There are potential issues with a dialogic ethic:
  + Who is at the table for the discussion
  + Some people will be more outspoken than others
  + The process is not very efficient

Lecture

* One frames according to one’s experience.
* The U.S. system of government is set up to make change difficult.
* Framing is focusing on a single element of an extended causal chain.
  + Time-bound
* Types of Framing
  + Episodic 🡪 one-time events 🡪 tends to illicit individualistic responses (individual)
  + Thematic 🡪 contextual and trends 🡪 tends to illicit governmental responses (societal)
* People tend to decide what past problem the current problem resembles
  + Apply solution approach from past problem to current problem
* Reframing is used to overcome the tendency of people to discard new facts that don’t conform to one’s view of a situation.
  + e.g., Donald Trump’s attempt to reframe the construction of a border wall as a humanitarian effort to stop exploitation of immigrants.
* Framing Levels
  + The big idea (e.g., freedom, justice, community, responsibility, etc.)
  + Issue type (e.g., slavery, judicial sentencing, childcare, disease prevention, etc.)
  + Specific issue (e.g., abolition, mandatory minimums, childcare tax deductions, AIDS prevention, etc.)
* Framing Analysis
  + Identify problem and how it gained agenda status
  + Appeal to a morality tale (e.g., “Benevolent Community”)
* Framing Levels
  + Problem formulation and adoption
  + Policy implementation (i.e., how the policy is put into practice)
  + Policy evaluation (i.e., how success is defined)

Assignments

* Issue framing paper must be anchored in a specific policy that is placed within the context of a policy domain.

Discussion

The importance of narratives

* Villainizing narratives tend to be very effective at rallying support for a public policy.
* For a narrative to be effective it needs a cogent hero and cogent villain.
* Categories mean so much when deciding who gets what; it’s important to have a voice in deciding the categories.

Lecture

Elements of framing

* Context
  + Source amnesia is forgetting the context of a statement or argument
  + Media often manipulates the context
  + Establishing connections
  + Link current data to long-term trends
  + Interpret the data
  + Define the problem so that the dots are connected
  + Our way of life is at stake
  + Connect issues
  + Assign responsibility
  + Present solution
* Numbers
  + Use social numbers (e.g., place in social context, use comparisons).
  + If facts don’t fit the frame, find new facts (but always keep the frame).
* Messengers
  + More effective if not seen as advocates (particularly unlikely allies)
  + Evoke symbolism
* Visuals
  + Close-up shots suggests episodic nature of issue
  + Pictures of public and community settings suggests public nature of problem
  + Use sequence and trends to demonstrate cause and effect
* Metaphors and simplifying models
  + Connect information to myths, ideologies, and stereotypes
* Tone
  + Rhetorical mode polarizes
  + Reasonable mode opens to problem solving
  + Appeal to level one values (e.g., justice, freedom, etc.) to avoid partisan debates

Ethics in selecting frames

* People’s judgments are affected by false information even if they know it’s false.
* False framing shifts the terms of debate away from important relevant issues.
* Methods to keep framing honest
  + Ridicule (e.g., Jon Stewart) is effective but audiences are segmented (e.g., preaching to the choir).