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