Preview Questions

1. What is the Market v. Polis (i.e., RAM v. Politics) paradigm of the policy process?
2. What is a policy paradox?
3. What are the various paradoxes of political decision making?
4. Why is it important to understand policy paradoxes?
5. How do paradoxes affect the decision making process?

Reading Summary

Defining a policy paradox

* A situation in which two contradictory interpretations of the same rule both appear true.
* A situation in which following adhering to one rule to uphold societal values would violate another rule also meant to uphold societal values.
* Public policy and political situations don’t adhere to the rules of scientific decorum.

Winning is Losing and Losing is Winning

* Passing major legislation by using political power gained from an election win becomes a political liability because it provides ammunition for the political opposition.
* Political opposition uses the passage of the legislation to secure political power in the Congress in the next election.
* However, having a political foe is useful for a president and gives him an advantage during the next presidential election.

A Demonstration is a Debate or an Assault

* According to the Supreme Court, however hateful or unpopular a group’s message it contributes to the public debate if it highlights matters of public importance including the political and moral conduct of the U.S. and its citizens.

Pros and Cons of Government Assistance

* More than two-thirds of Americans believe the poor have become too dependent on government assistance programs.
* More than two-thirds of Americans believe the government should guarantee every citizen sufficient food and shelter to survive.
* Nearly two-thirds of Americans believe that individuals have significant control over their lives.
* More than two-thirds of Americans believe that government has a responsibility to take care of people who can’t take care of themselves.

Enemies or Allies

* American manufacturing industries often complain that government regulations create unnecessary costs and stifle innovation.
* American manufacturing industries look to the government to impose regulations to improve their ability to compete with foreign manufacturers and exempt them from liability.

Which Came First, the Problem or the Solution?

* The second war with Iraq can be viewed as the solution for several problems or a constant solution adapting to a changing problem.

The Good and Bad of Low Prices

* Inexpensive imports provide people access to goods and services they would not normally be able to afford.
* Inexpensive imports may cause domestic manufacturers to lose market share and reduce employment as well as prevent domestic manufacturers from entering an industry.
* Low prices have positive economic benefits but negative symbolic connotation.

A Pile versus Rubble

* In the aftermath of a natural disaster, the debris that remains has different meanings for different groups.
* To citizens, the debris is the remains of their lives and accomplishments that need to be salvaged where possible.
* To city officials, the debris is a problem that needs to be eliminated as soon as possible.

Closing Guantanamo

* The Guantanamo prison increased American security by detaining suspected terrorists.
* The Guantanamo prison decreased American security by becoming a recruitment symbol for Islamic extremists intent on harming Americans.

Is Multiculturalism good or bad for human freedom?

* Allowing cultural defense of illegal behavior risks importing immigrant cultural values into our judicial system.
* Not allowing cultural defense of certain behavior suggests that immigrants must completely abandon their way of life.

Does the “Cheetah” and equalize or confer advantage?

* Prosthetics such as Cheetahs simply enable athletes with disabilities to compete with nondisabled athletes or does it confer an unfair advantage?
* There are many factors that contribute to an athlete’s performance.

The Rationality Project

* Various fields aspire to make public policymaking more rational, analytical, and scientific.
  + Political science
  + Law
  + Public administration
  + Economics
* In the early part of the twentieth century, Progressive reformers advocated removing policymaking authority from elected bodies and giving it to expert commissions and professional city managers.
* The rationality project misses the point of politics, which helps us see and understand different worldviews.
* The rationality project emphasizes objectivity but policy analysts and decision makers can avoid their own values during policymaking.
* Public policy is dominated by economics, which models society as a market.
  + Most social scientists don’t find this model compelling or desirable.
  + A model based on community may be more applicable.
* Pillars of making public policy under the rationality project
  + Model of reasoning
  + Model of society
  + Model of policy making
* Policymaking steps under the rationality project
  + Identify objectives
  + Identify alternative courses of action for achieving objectives
  + Predict the possible consequences of each alternative
  + Evaluate the possible consequences of each alternative
  + Select the alternative that maximizes the attainment of objectives
* Problems with the rationality project
  + Doesn’t consider that there are often multiple and conflicting objectives
  + It ignores human emotional feelings and moral intuitions (i.e., dehumanizes actors)
  + People don’t always know what they want as assumed in a market model.
  + It is a production model, which doesn’t capture the struggle over ideas.
  + It doesn’t explain why policy solutions go looking for problems.
  + It doesn’t explain why solutions turn into problems.
* Political reasoning is reasoning by metaphor and analogy.
* Political analysis starts with considering the political community, not a market.
* Behind every policy issue is a contest between conflicting but equally plausible conceptions of the same goal or value.

Preview Questions

1. What is the difference between the Market v. Polis (i.e., RAM v. Politics) paradigms of the policy process?
2. What is the System 1 Thinking v. System 2 Thinking paradigm of the policy process?
3. What is the role of community in the policy process?
4. What is the role of altruism in the policy process?
5. What is the public interest?
6. What are commons problems?
7. What is the role of influence in the policy process?
8. What is the role of cooperation in the policy process?
9. What is the role of loyalty in the policy process?
10. What is the role of groups in the policy process?
11. What is the role of information in the policy process?
12. What is the role of passion in the policy process?
13. What is the role of power in the policy process?

Reading Summary

The Market and the Polis

* A theory of policy politics requires a simple model of political society.
  + Analogous to a theory of economics requiring a simple model of economic society.
* Polis is the Greek word for city-state.
* The market model distorts political life.
  + The market model assumes individual goals and individual behavior.
* A market is a social system in which individuals pursue their own self-interest by exchanging goods and services with others whenever it’s mutually beneficial.
  + Participants in a market compete for scarce resources.
  + Participants try to acquire resources at the least possible cost.
  + Participants try to sell resources at the highest possible cost.
  + Competition raises the level of economic well-being for everyone as a whole.
* Politics and policy only occur in communities.

Community

* Public policy can be defined as communities trying to achieve results as communities.
* The Polis model assumes collective goals and collective effort.
* Community membership is the primary political issue
  + Communities must define who are members and who are not members.
  + Membership defines social, economic, and political rights.
* There is a difference between political community and cultural community.
  + Political community 🡪 living under the same political rules and governance structure
  + Cultural community 🡪 drawing identity from shared language, history, and traditions
  + Integrating multiple cultural communities under a single political community without destroying cultural identity is the primary dilemma.

Altruism

* A model of political community must take into account the phenomenon of altruism.
* Many social scientists do not believe that altruism exists.
* People’s actions don’t count as altruism unless they receive absolutely no physical or psychological benefit to themselves or incur some loss when acting to help someone else.
* Altruism is impossible by definition under the market paradigm.

Public Interest

* Definitions of the public interest
  + Individual interest held in common
  + Individuals’ goals for their community
  + Goals on which there is consensus
  + Things that are good for a community
* The public interest is to the Polis what self-interest is to the market.
* People cannot blatantly and exclusively pursue their self-interest.
* In the market model, the public interest is addressed as an afterthought and side-effect of individuals pursuing their self-interest.

Commons Problems

* Commons problems are situations in which the public interest and self-interest work against each other.
  + Also called collective action problems.
* In the market model, most actions do NOT have social consequences.
* Most significant policy problems are commons problems.

Influence

* Various forces bridge the gap between public interest and self-interest.
  + Influence
  + Cooperation
  + Loyalty
* Influence is how our actions are shaped by education, persuasion, and socialization.
  + Actions and ideas are influence by others.
  + Choices are often conditional.
* Influence can become coercion.

Cooperation

* In the Polis model, cooperation is just as important as competition.
* Politics requires alliances.
  + The two-person market models of public policy do not take this into account.
* Cooperation is essential for power.
  + The market model does not accommodate alliances, but only pure competition.
  + Cooperation is a deviation from a well-functioning market.
  + Cooperation is the norm in a well-functioning Polis.

Loyalty

* Cooperation often goes hand in hand with loyalty.
* The nature of relationships
  + Fluid in the market model.
  + Not fluid in the Polis model.
* Political alliances bind people over time.
* In the Polis there is the presumption of loyalty.
* Switching loyalties requires
  + Deep fear
  + Irresistible opportunity
* Breaking an alliance is risking and not done lightly

Groups

* Groups and organizations rather than individuals are the building blocks of the polis.
* Groups have a deep influence on members, whether or not they are formal or informal members.
* Policymaking is about how groups are formed, split, and re-formed to achieve a purpose.
* Groups are important because decisions of the polis are collective.
* In the market model the actors are individuals or groups that act as though it had one mind.
* Pluralist theory states that all important interests have the capacity to form interest groups, which have relative equal chances of being heard in the political system.

Information

* Information is perfect in the market model.
  + Accurate
  + Complete
  + Available to everyone
* Information is imperfect in the Polis model.
  + Ambiguous
  + Incomplete
  + Strategically shaded or deliberately withheld
* In the polis, interpretation of the facts is more powerful than the facts themselves.
* How we interpret information depends on the source and medium.
* Secrecy and revelation are tools of political strategy.

Passion

* Passion feeds on itself.
  + Channels of influence and political connections grow stronger through use.
  + The more people work together the more committed they become to each other and the common goal.
* Precedent is important in authority.
  + People are less likely to resist or question orders they’ve obeyed before.
* The whole is greater than the sum of the parts.
* Things can men more than one thing simultaneously.
  + Nominal fines for white collar crime signals both condemnation and tolerance of white collar crime.

Power

* The Polis is:
  + A community or multiple communities
  + Whose members are motivated by both altruism and self-interest
  + Has a public interest
  + Suffers from policy problems that are mostly commons problems
  + Influence is pervasive and the line between influence and coercion is contested
  + Cooperation is just as important as competition
  + Loyalty is the norm
  + Groups and organizations are the basic units of the community
  + Information is ambiguous, incomplete, and strategically used.
  + Governed by the laws of passion and the laws of matter.
* Power derives from all the other elements of the Polis.
  + It’s a phenomenon of community.
  + It seeks to subordinate self-interest to the public interest.
  + It operates through influence, cooperation, loyalty, and strategic control of information.
  + It is a resource that is governed by the laws of passion rather than the laws of matter.
* In the market model, change is driven by exchange.
* In the Polis model, change is driven through alliances built upon mutually agreement on ideas.
  + People use ideas to gather political support and reduce the political support of others in order to control public policy.
  + People fight with ideas and about ideas.
* In the Polis model, problems are never sold.
  + Even material needs seem to grow as they are fulfilled.
  + Politics is a way of life according to Plutarch.

Preview Questions

1. What is equity?
2. What are the dimensions of equity?
3. How are distributive methods chosen?
4. What is inequality?

Reading Summary

Defining Equity

* Political science is the study of who gets what, when, and how.
* There are distributive conflicts when equality is the goal.
* Various concepts of equitable solutions (cake analogy).
  + Equal slices but unequal invitations.
  + Equal slices for equal merit but unequal slices for unequal merit.
  + Equal social blocs but unequal slices.
  + Equal meals but unequal slices.
  + Equal value to recipients but unequal slices.
  + Equal starting resources in a fair competition but unequal slices.
  + Equal statistical chances but unequal slices.
  + Equal votes but unequal slices.
* Paradoxically, equality often means inequality.
* Equality denotes sameness and uniformity of distribution.
* Equity denotes distributions regarded as fair even though equalities and inequalities exist.
* Three dimensions of every distribution
  + Recipients of distribution (who)
  + Items of distribution (what)
  + Process of distribution (how)

The Dimensions of Equality

* Membership requires determination of who is counted as a member of the group of recipients.
* Merit is the ideal of reward for individual accomplishment.
* Rank is the concept of relevant differences between segments of a larger group.
* Group is the concept major divisions in society are relevant and should sometimes outweigh individual characteristics in distribution decisions.
* Need refers to how the boundaries of what is being distributed are defined.
* Value refers to how much benefit an individual derives from the distribution.
  + Standardize value
  + Customized value
* Process refers to how distribution is implemented.
  + Market competitions (divisive and socially disruptive)
  + Lotteries
  + Democratic elections (orderly and socially cohesive)
* Distribution methods must be considered fair
  + Fair end result
  + Fair decision-making process

Choosing a Distribution Method

* Equal slices and lotteries are popular because they often avoid conflict.
* Policymakers sometimes resort to lotteries when they can’t justify their decisions.
* How do analyze a distribution problem and arrive at a good solution:
  + Read different positions on the issue
  + Identify how each position defines the three dimensions
  + Read between the lines
  + Consider whether each argument seems accurate, reasonable, persuasive, and fair
  + Identify the beliefs and assumptions that are being taken for granted

Inequality

* Exploring inequality can help provide insight into the concept of equality.
* Must consider how distribution affects communities.
  + Does it make them more cohesive or more divisive?
  + Inequality destroys communities.
    - Less trusting
    - More hostile
    - More racial prejudice and discrimination
    - Less civic participation
    - Less voter participation
    - Weaker sense of community
* Distribution affects the commons, which are resources that everyone is entitled to use.
* Democracy doesn’t ensure that everyone gets the same size slice, but that everyone has equal representation in deciding how the slices are determined.
* Income inequality undermines the democratic ideal.
  + Costs of running for office.
  + Elected officials tend to be more responsive to the wealthy.
  + The wealthy can use their resources to obtain favorable legislation and regulations.
* Equality of voice is the most important equality issue of all.
* The distribution of political power shapes all other distributions.

Preview Questions

1. What is efficiency?
2. What is the relationship between markets and efficiency?
3. How are markets made in the polis?
4. Who defines efficiency?
5. What is the equality-efficiency trade-off?

Reading Summary

The Concept of Efficiency

* Efficiency is getting the most benefit for the least cost.
* Efficiency is a way of judging the merits of different ways to doing things.
  + Not a goal in and of itself.
* Efficiency is a comparative notion.
  + Inputs versus outputs
  + Effort versus results
  + Expenditure versus income
  + Cost versus benefit

What is Efficiency?

* An agency is inefficient if it can produce more outputs for its budget but doesn’t do so.
* Challenges
  + Determining objectives
  + Deciding who are the recipients
  + Inputs are simultaneously outputs
  + Deciding what to count and how to put a value on what is being counted
  + Dealing with opportunity costs
  + Deciding on which input to optimize
  + Deciding on the right amount of redundancy
* Different assumptions lead to different definitions of efficiency.

Markets and Efficiency

* Markets are networks of exchanges.
* Exchanges are voluntary.
* Market participants make voluntary exchanges on the basis of two kinds of information.
  + Objective information (e.g., price, quality)
  + Subjective information (e.g., preferences about needs, desires, abilities)
* In markets, all items have two values.
  + Universal value (i.e., market price)
  + Subjective value (i.e., the value to the participant)
* Social welfare is the total of all individuals’ well-being added together.
* Efficient exchanges in a market result in maximum social welfare.
* Theoretically, markets are naturally self-correcting and self-regulating.
* Ideological debate about whether government should try to manage competitive capitalism or let the free markets drive the economy.
* Free-market theory
  + Classical liberalism
  + Conservativism
  + Free trade
  + Laissez-faire
  + Globalization
  + Washington consensus
  + Neoliberalism

Marking Markets in the Polis

* Problems with the assumptions of free-market theory
  + People are rational and self-interested
    - People rarely form their goals independently
  + Buyers and sellers have full and complete information about alternatives
    - Buyers often lack the background to understand technical information
    - People use information strategically and employ secrecy as part of their competitive strategy
  + Voluntary trade
    - Fuzzy line between voluntarism and coercion.
    - Market exit is not addressed.
    - Many so called markets lack voluntarism.
  + Externalities are not considered.
    - Externalities are effects on people not directly involved in the exchange.
  + Designed for private goods
    - Private goods are consumed individually
    - Public goods are consumed collectively; use by one person does not diminish the supply for others.
    - Free markets will undersupply public goods
    - Community if the paramount public good in the polis.
      * Markets can’t produce community because they are inherently competitive and divisive.
    - Markets are themselves public goods.
      * Markets require trust in the system derived from enforcement of the rules by the government.
  + Competition improves efficiency.
    - There are lots of ways to compete.
    - Some competition methods are better for the community than others.

Whose Efficiency?

* Efficiency is a malleable concept.
* Each person has different roles that often conflict with one another.
* Each person’s welfare is not independent of others.
* There are individual and community goals.

Equality-Efficiency Trade-Off

* Equality and efficiency are fundamentally incompatible.
* Equality is seen as a drag on economic prosperity.
* Unequal rewards motivate people to be productive.
* Redistribution wastes a lot of resources.
  + Like carrying money from the rich to the poor in a leaky bucket.
* Evidence refutes the equality-efficiency trade-off.
* Inequality tends to increase under Republican presidents and decrease under Democratic presidents.

Preview Questions

1. What is welfare?
2. What are the dimensions of need?
3. How are needs made in the polis?
4. What is a moral hazard?
5. What is the welfare-efficiency trade-off?

Reading Summary

Understanding Welfare

* Policymakers typically seek objective standards of need to define the scope of responsibility for social welfare.
* Most people believe that society should help people when they are in dire need.
* The question of what people need for their welfare strongly influences the larger debate about what government should strive to provide for its citizens.
* Definitions of need
  + That which is necessary for survival.
* Concepts about need
  + People have symbolic needs as well as material needs.
  + Welfare is enhanced by instrumental value and intrinsic value.
  + People require reliable and secure ways to meet their needs over time.
  + Welfare depends on quality and quantity.
  + People have relational needs as well as individual needs.
  + Needs are relative and absolute.

Dimensions of Need

* Material versus symbolic
  + Material refers to resources required for survival
  + Symbolic refers to ideas about one’s needs
* Intrinsic versus instrumental
  + Intrinsic refers to one’s broader personal goals
  + Instrumental refers to the resources necessary to meet immediate physical needs
* Volatility versus security
  + Volatility refers to frequent change which implies the possibility of loss.
  + Security refers to having the resources necessary to satisfy one’s needs in the future.
* Quantity versus quality
  + Quantity refers to the amount of a resource required to satisfy one’s needs.
  + Quality refers to how well a resource satisfies one’s needs
* Individual versus relational
  + Individual refers to needs that can be satisfied without social interaction.
  + Relational refers to needs that require social interaction to satisfy such as friendship, love, self-esteem, respect
* Absolute versus relative
  + Absolute refers to standards pegged to a fixed point.
  + Relative refers to comparisons with other members of the community.

Making Needs in the Polis

* Different ways of defining needs result in different positions about what government should be doing to enhance the welfare of citizens.
* Eligibility requirements are struggles about what counts as a valid need.
* Congress and the state legislatures use committee hearings to collect information about needs.
  + Usually sponsored by representatives that support taking action about an issue.
* Public needs are those needs that a community recognizes as legitimate (i.e., necessaries).
* Similarities in the timing of adoption of welfare programs across countries.
  + Same order

Moral Hazard and the Welfare-Efficiency Trade-Off

* Some believe that welfare and efficiency are incompatible goals.
  + Concept usually invoked to prove that public policies to improve social welfare will fail.
* Based on the moral hazard assumption about human nature.
  + Providing certain types of assistance leads to undesired behavior by citizens that tends to produce the very outcomes we want to avoid.
  + Ideological argument that has been refuted by empirical testing.

Preview Questions

1. What is liberty?
2. What are the five paradoxes of liberty in the polis?
3. What is the difference between negative and positive liberty?
4. What are positive obligations?
5. What is the paternalism paradox?
6. What is the freedom of speech paradox?
7. What is the multiculturalism paradox?
8. What is the liberty-equality trade-off?

Reading Summary

The concept of liberty

* There is no single universal definition of liberty.
* People assign different meanings to the concept of liberty.
* The issue can the government legitimately interfere with citizens’ choices and activities.
* Mill, Stuart. (1859). *On Liberty*
  + Government should interfere with individual choices and activities as little as possible.
  + Preventing harm to others is the only legitimate reason for the government to interfere with citizens’ choices and activities.
  + The primary distinction is behavior that affects others versus behavior that does not.
  + Liberty is an attribute of individuals, not groups.
  + The question is what counts as “harm to others?”
    - What types of harms should society prevent?
    - How should society factor into decisions about liberty the compounding effects of individual actions on harms caused by external actions?
    - Cumulative harms are undesirable impacts that accumulate over time.
    - Amenity effects are impacts on aesthetics, lifestyle, and quietude.
    - Psychic harms are undesirable psychological states caused by the actions of others (e.g., worrying, low self-esteem, etc.)
    - Spiritual and moral harms are behaviors that offend the religious and moral beliefs of people.
* The less tangible the harm the more contentious the politics.
* Harms to others are not objective phenomena (i.e., rationally determined); they are political claims given legitimacy by the government.
* Scale of political potency (greatest to least)
  + Physical
  + Economic
  + Amenity
  + Psychic
  + Spiritual and moral
* Political strategy often entails trying to move a harm up the scale of potency.
  + Abortion opponents consider the practice a spiritual and moral harm but they base their arguments on psychological and physical harms.

Making Liberty in the Polis: Five Paradoxes

* Positive and negative liberty
  + Negative liberty is the absence of interference in an individual’s choices and behaviors.
    - Deprivation of resources is a type of coercion or interference.
    - Conservatives tend to view liberty from a negative perspective.
  + Positive liberty is having the support and resources to pursue goals.
    - Requires help from others and society to ensure basic resources.
    - Liberals tend to view liberty from a positive perspective.
* Positive obligations
  + Acts for the benefit of others that the government may rightfully compel individuals to perform to benefit the society as a whole.
    - Protect social order from harm rather than individuals from harm
  + Examples
    - Honoring contracts and promises
    - Paying taxes
    - Educating children
* Paternalism
  + The idea that the government can prevent people from voluntarily acting in ways that might harm themselves.
    - Foreclosing future options is considered a type of harm.
  + Although democracy generally opposes paternalism because by definition it decreases individual liberty, a limited amount of paternalism is necessary to protect individual liberty.
    - The government can prevent a person from voluntarily becoming a slave (i.e., act paternally) because in becoming a slave a person permanently gives up individual liberty (i.e., permanently forecloses future options) and subjects themselves to potential physical harm.
    - When should people’s freedom to choose a course of action be prevented to preserve their future choices?
  + Approaches to paternalism
    - Libertarian paternalism is structuring choices so that the option that a consensus of experts believes produces better outcomes is the default.
    - Allow paternalism for certain categories of people.
      * Susceptible to manipulation
* Freedom of speech
  + Assumes that words are harmless and all speech is good.
  + Some speech might as well be synonymous with actions.
  + Prohibits viewpoint discrimination.
  + Behavior has been transmogrified into speech.
* Multiculturalism
  + What is an appropriate government response when elements of minority culture conflict with the values of the majority culture?

The Liberty-Equity Trade-off

* One person’s equality comes at the expense of another person’s liberty.
  + Based on a negative concept of liberty.
  + Differences in resources are natural and inevitable.
* Liberty comes in degrees.
  + Positive concept of liberty.
  + Inequalities of resources create inequalities in liberty.
  + Differences in resources stem in large part from social arrangements.
* What kinds of harmful behavior should be prevented versus what constraints on liberty can society change?

The Liberty-Welfare Trade-off

* Everyone wants help from others when they need it but no one wants to be dependent on others (i.e., the dilemma of dependence).
* Poverty forces free people to act like slaves.
  + People can’t make free choices without the security of having their basic needs met.
* Does being dependent on others for welfare necessarily mean subjecting oneself to the control of others?
  + Is there such a thing a complete self-sufficiency?
  + The trend of the modern welfare state has been the gradual expansion of rights for people dependent on the state.
  + Formal rights are the best device for protecting the liberty of those who are dependent on the state.

Preview Questions

1. What does security mean?
2. What are the three concepts of security?
3. What is psychological security?
4. How does the polis provide security to its members?
5. How do science and politics compete for authority?
6. What are the double-edged swords of security?
7. What is the security-democracy trade-off?

Reading Summary

The Different Meanings of Security

* Security typically refers to protection from wars, invasions, and crime.
* People can experience insecurity outside of armed conflict or physical danger.
* Kinds of security
  + Economic security (protection from financial strain)
  + Food security (protection from hunger and food-borne illnesses)
  + Cybersecurity (protection of electronic information from malicious use)
  + Personal security (protection from physical harm)
  + Safety (protection from accidents and unintended mishaps)
  + Environmental security (protection of natural resources from destruction)

Three Concepts of Security

* Understand security in terms of insecurity.
* Insecurity exists in the space between when one begins fearing that the harmful event will occur and when a harmful event actually occurs.
* Security can be thought of as the lack of worry that a harmful event will occur because of a guarantee that the harmful event will not occur.
* The political ideal of security is that elite policy making provides security.
* The psychological ideal of security is a state of mind regarding events and policies over which one has no control.
* The scientific ideal of security is that danger can be analyzed and preparations can be taken to guard against it.
  + Risk analysis is the scientific and mathematical approach to security.
  + Risk is the likelihood that an undesired event will occur.
    - Risk implies a probability of less than 100 percent.
    - If an event is certain to occur, there is no risk.
  + Risk appears to be an objective measure of insecurity.
* Two dimensions of insecurity
  + Whether or not the undesired event will occur.
  + The magnitude of the undesired outcomes of the undesired event when it does occur.
  + Expected value is the product of the two.
* Expected values enable us to compare different sources of insecurity.
* Three visions of security
  + Political ideal 🡪 policymakers prevent bad things from happening by making good policy.
  + Psychological ideal 🡪 people don’t worry about bad things happening.
  + Scientific ideal 🡪 policymakers use risk analysis to maximize security and minimize harms.
* Conflict arises from these three visions of security and the approach to achieve them.

Psychological Security and Its Complications

* Security is ultimately a feeling.
* Simply reducing risk may not increase psychological security.
* Lay people don’t access security rationally or logically.
* Psychological insecurity can cause physical harm.
* Risks are social and cultural constructs.
  + Risks don’t become insecurities until social and cultural leaders describe and publicize them.
* In risk analysis, damages from a highly likely but uncertain event are always less than the damage from a certain event.
  + The concept of expected value mitigates damages.
  + Expected value doesn’t capture the way people experience bad outcomes.
  + When a bad event occurs, the consequences won’t be any less bad for having been unlikely to occur.
  + Risk analysis is part of the rationality project.
* Policies can’t achieve psychological security unless they human perception and emotions regarding risk.

Making Security in the Polis

* Political leaders have three ways of producing security.
  + Take measures to prevent a danger from occurring.
  + Mitigate the harms if a danger does occur.
  + Provide reassurance to citizens before, during, and after a danger occurs.
* Reassurance explains why some public policies are implemented despite not actually preventing a danger from occurring or mitigating the harms once it has occurred.
* Requirements to provide psychological security
  + Persuasively conveying to the public that one is in control.
  + Preparing a response for a potential bad event suggests that one is not in control.
* How policymakers deal with the paradox of promising prevention while preparing for their failure to prevent:
  + Thinking and communicating in absolute terms.
  + Acting decisively without much careful analysis.
    - Deliberate scientific analysis often symbolizes doing nothing.
    - Hyper-cautious and aggressive action aligns with psychological logic when the potential danger is catastrophic or existential (i.e., precautionary principle)
* European leaders tend to follow the precautionary principle.
  + The lack of full scientific certainty shall NOT postpone cost-effective measures to prevent the danger.
* American leaders tend to follow the balancing principle (i.e., balancing risk, potential harms, and tolerance of uncertainty) to enable innovation and realize possible benefits.

Science and Politics Vie for Authority

* Security raises scientific and political questions.
  + The estimation of risk is a scientific question.
  + The acceptability of a given risk is a political question.
* Science and politics are not easily separated when it comes to security.
  + Estimates are guesses, which are susceptible to biases and manipulations.
* Extraneous factors that affect people’s responses to risk:
  + Side effects from purposeful and useful activities versus intentional malice.
    - Risks seem more acceptable when they arise from voluntary choices.
    - In making conscious trade-offs, people fear risks less if they perceive themselves to be powerless victims.
    - Statistical equivalence does NOT imply psychological and political equivalence.
  + Equity influences how people respond to risk:
    - When risks and consequences are borne more by particular groups in a community, people tend to be less supportive of policies that reinforce those inequities.
    - There are distributive differences in risk and security.
  + Policy often generates risk and insecurity.
    - Two levels of security
      * Primary level concerning the issue
      * Secondary level concerning the trustworthiness of the government

Double-Edged Swords

* Many policies intended to increase security can actually decrease security.
  + Policymakers need to carefully consider how policies meant to increase security can backfire by understanding the causal mechanisms.
  + Analyze perverse effects by questioning causal assumptions and imagine unanticipated consequences.
* Risk assessment
  + Assessing and publicizing risk can increase insecurity.
  + People tend to estimate the probability of an event by how easily they can think of examples (i.e., availability heuristic).
    - Overestimate the likelihood of recent events.
* Surveillance
  + Surveillance measures can create hostility and resentment and thereby increase the risks they were meant to reduce.
* Border control
  + Borders that are intended to keep dangerous people out of a community can increase insecurity by serving as a constant reminder of danger.
* Prisons
  + Crime is threats to security from people already inside a community.
  + Imprisonment can undermine the goal of crime reduction
    - Former felons to find it difficult to obtain stable employment
    - Imprisoned parents can’t rear their children, which increases the children’s risk of poverty, criminal behavior, and imprisonment.
* Weapons
  + Guns are meant to provide people with a means of protection but having a gun increases the risk of accidental injury and death.
  + Guns carried inside public buildings reduce peoples’ security in not being a victim of gun violence.

The Security-Democracy Trade-Off

* Citizens can’t have total security and total democracy at the same time.
* Leaders often invoke security threats to gain executive power (i.e., constrain democracy)
  + If survival is at stage, anything goes.
  + Necessity knows no law.
* The ad hoc accumulation of temporary, emergency, and exceptional powers amounts to a new de facto legal framework
  + The state of exception is government by exceptions to rules.
* The theory of constitutional dictatorship is a model that explains how democracies govern during crises.
  + Criteria for good democratic dictatorship
    - Only initiated if absolutely necessary to preserve the state and its constitutional order.
    - Decision to initiate should never be made by the same persons that will exercise power under the dictatorship.
    - Must include provisions for its termination.
  + Temporary grants of dictatorial powers have evolved into permanent structures of governance.
* Alternative philosophy is that the rule of law secures democracy’s future; there is no need to suspend democracy to save democracy.
  + The lack of rule of law (i.e., state of exception) reduces individual security.

Preview Questions

1. What are symbols?
2. How are symbols used in politics?
3. What are stories of change?
4. What are stories of power?
5. What is a synecdoche?
6. Why are metaphors important?
7. What is the role of ambiguity?

Reading Summary

Understanding Symbols

* A symbol is anything that represents something else.
* A symbol’s meaning depends on:
  + Interpretation
  + Use
  + Response
* A symbol’s meaning is constructed rather than intrinsic.
  + Collectively created, maintained, and changed.
* Types of symbols
  + Objects
  + People
  + Places
* Symbols tell stories.
* Symbols are a way to influence and control.
* Narrative stories are the primary way to define and contest policy problems in politics.
  + Narrative structure is employed.
    - Beginning, middle, end.
    - Heroes, villains, and victims.
    - Good and evil
* Policy stories have universal themes and culturally specific variations.
* Two broad story lines in politics
  + Story of change
    - Story of decline
    - Story of rising
  + Story of power
    - Story of helplessness
    - Story of control

Stories of Change: Decline and Rising

* Story of decline resembles the biblical story of the expulsion from paradise.
  + Structure
    - Things were good in the beginning.
    - Things got worse.
      * Recitation of facts
      * Assumption that things were better before than now.
    - Things are now nearly intolerable.
    - Something must be done before there is a crisis.
  + Stymied progress story is a variation on the story of decline.
    - Things were terrible in the beginning.
    - Things got better thanks to our hero.
    - Something is now interfering with our hero.
    - Things are going to get terrible again.
    - Something must be done to stop the interference.
  + Change-is-only-an-allusion story is a variant of the story of change.
    - You thought things were getting worse (or better).
    - You were wrong.
    - Here is evidence that things were actually going in the opposite direction.

Stories of Power: Helplessness and Control

* Links helplessness and control as two sides of power relationships.
  + Structure
    - This situation is bad.
    - We thought the situation was out of our control.
    - This is how we can control the situation.
  + Conspiracy stories are a variant of the story of power.
    - The situation is bad.
    - We thought the situation was out of our control.
    - But control was in the hands of a few all along.
    - We must rise against the few who had control all along.
  + Blame-the-victim is another variant of the story of power.
    - The situation is bad.
    - We thought the situation was out of our control.
    - But those suffering from the situation actually have control over the situation.
    - Those suffering from the situation must change their behavior.
* Stories of helplessness are often interwoven with stories of decline.
  + The both foster anxiety and despair.

Synecdoche (sin-ECK-da-key)

* Synecdoche is a figure of speech in which a whole is represented by one of its parts.
  + e.g., “Ten thousand feed moved down Pennsylvania Avenue toward the White House.”
    - Feet represent people.
  + Typical cases (i.e., a part) define the entire problem (i.e., the whole).
  + Horror story is a form of synecdoche.
    - One egregious incident is used to represent the universe of cases.
    - Often used as arguments against regulation and reform.
  + Can cause people to suspend their critical thinking.

Metaphors

* Metaphors draw comparisons between one thing and another.
  + Usually imply a larger narrative story and prescription for action.
* If a is like b, then to solve a we must do what was done to solve b.
  + Plays on the common understanding of fairness which is to treat likes alike.
* Organism metaphor often has implication of leaving things alone.
  + The whole is more important than the sum of its parts.
  + It’s natural and the way it’s supposed to be.
  + Natural laws of social behavior is a variant of organism metaphor.
    - Futility thesis stories argue that it’s futile to attempt social improvement.
      * Social welfare programs perpetuate the problem they’re meant to solve (i.e., helps incentives neediness).
* Machines and mechanical devices metaphors.
  + Metaphor of balance implies a story about decline.
    - Decline from balance.
    - Must add or subtract something to return to balance.
  + Metaphor of wedges and inclines implies a story about future decline.
    - Small beginnings having enormous leverage.
    - Slippery slope policy arguments.
      * A phenomenon is not in itself bad or dangerous.
      * Permitting the phenomenon will inevitably lead to other cases that are bad or dangerous.
    - Changes of scale
* Containers (i.e., fixed space) metaphors.
* Disease (particularly contagious disease) metaphors.
* War metaphors.
* Names and labels lend legitimacy to policy position.
  + Spending to aid business can be labeled as stimulus, giveaways, or bailout.
* Symbolic devices are persuasive because they are emotionally compelling
  + Normative leaps slip past our rational thought processes.
  + They make it harder to recognized and question underlying factual assumptions.
* Recognizing symbols
  + What is the underlying narrative?
  + Does the underlying narrative make sense?
  + Does the metaphor bias the kind of information being presented?
  + Are there other metaphors that might also describe the policy conflict?
  + What resolutions to the policy conflict would other metaphors suggest?

Ambiguity

* Symbols are ambiguous; they can take on various meanings simultaneously.
* Ambiguity is central to political strategy.
  + Politics is more like art than science.
  + Policy analysis must consider this ambiguity.
* Ambiguity enables collective results and purposes through cooperation and compromise.
  + Enables people who want different policies to unite.
  + Masks internal conflicts.
  + Can unite groups that would benefit from the same policy for different reasons.
* Ambiguity enables policymakers to pass legislation with ambiguous provisions to appear to be doing something to address a problem.
  + Specificity is added through interpretation by administrative agencies who can be influenced by interest groups.
  + Moves decisions into arenas where strong special interests dominate.
* Can give rhetoric to one side ad decision to the other.
  + e.g., safe enough to market, but unsafe enough to require warning labels
* Allows opponents to claim victory from the same resolution.

Preview Questions

1. What is the importance of numbers in public policy?
2. How are numbers used as metaphors?
3. In what ways do numbers represent norms and symbols?
4. What is the hidden story of numbers?
5. How does the polis make numbers?

Reading Summary

The Importance of Numbers

* Measuring is one way to define a policy problem.
* There are many possible ways to measure any phenomenon.
  + The choice of measurement depends on the purpose for measuring.
* Counting always involves deliberate decisions about what to count.
  + Counting begins with categorization (i.e., inclusion and exclusion).
* It’s impossible to talk about the goals of public policy without using the language of counting.
* Numbers are the opposite of symbols in that they are not ambiguous.
  + There is ambiguity in choices about what to count.

Numbers as Metaphors

* To categorize in counting and to analogize in metaphors both require:
  + selecting one feature of something,
  + asserting a likeness on the basis of that feature,
  + ignoring all the other features
* Counting schemes are always subject to two possible challenges:
  + Assert a likeness where the measure finds a difference (i.e., wrongful exclusion).
  + Assert a real difference where a measure finds a likeness (i.e., wrongful inclusion).
* Debating the count is one of the most common forms of discourse in public policy.
  + Usually about categorization.
* Every number is an assertion about similarities and differences.
  + Impossible to count without making judgements about categorization.
  + Similarities and differences are the ultimate basis for decisions in public policy.

Numbers as Norms and Symbols

* Numbers make normative leaps as do metaphors.
  + Measures imply a need for action.
  + We only measure things we want to change or change behavior in response to those things.
* Some measurement level can become a norm and an acceptable status quo.
  + Full employment defined as unemployment rate between 3 and 4 percent during the 1950s and 1960s.
  + Full employment defined as unemployment rate between 4.5 and 5 percent in the 1970s.
* Numbers as norms are a story of helplessness and control.
  + Invoking numbers to prove that a problem is under control.
  + Invoking numbers to prove that part of the problem is beyond control.
* In politics many measures are double-edged swords.
  + Being both high and low on a measure has advantages.
* Many of the things we measure are symbols
  + How a measure is interpreted is sometimes more important than the measure itself.
    - e.g., savings can symbolize frugality or waste.
    - e.g., high costs can symbolize quality and prestige or low value and waste.
    - e.g., expenditures are always income to someone else.
    - e.g., efficiency and productivity in healthcare can mean either increase capacity or decreased patient attention.
  + Average can mean normal or mediocre.

The Hidden Stories in Numbers

* Numbers are used to tell a story.
  + The primary language for stories of decline and decay.
* Counting and publicizing a count convey hidden messages independent of the count and their explicit stories.
  + Numbers impart an aura of expertise and authority.
  + Counting something asserts that the phenomenon occurs frequently enough to be worth count.
  + Counting can convey that something rare and small is in fact common enough to have a significant effect.
  + Counting asserts that something is an identifiable entity with clear boundaries.
    - Race and ethnicity are now considered social and cultural experiences rather than biological characteristics.
  + Counting make a community by moving an event from the singular to the plural.
    - Implies that things counted as the same should be treated as a group.
    - Statistical community members share a characteristic but have no real relationship.
    - Natural community members have a real relationship .
  + Counting promises a distinct kind of conflict resolution based on dividing, weighing, and balancing political interests.
    - Breaking irreconcilable demands into smaller components and trading the parts against each other.
    - Counting forces a common denominator where there is none.
  + Counting symbolizes precision, accuracy, and objectivity.

Making Numbers in the Polis

* Counting is a complex mental process.
* Measurement is a complex social process.
* Measuring social phenomenon is different from measuring physical phenomenon because people respond to being measured.
  + Reactive effects 🡪 not the same as deliberate falsification
* Counting stimulates reporting.
  + Formal count may legitimize something that people were previously afraid or ashamed to have known.
  + Many public problems are phenomena that were previously tolerated for decades.
* People have a strong incentive to manipulate measures.
  + Manipulation is the weakness of pay-for-performance systems.
  + Scientific method assumes strict separation between observer and observed.
    - This separation is rarely possible in policy debates.
  + Policy measurement is always linked to benefits and penalties.
* Measurers have power over the fate of the measured.
* Evaluative measurement can lead to paradoxical behavior.
  + Law enforcement is more willing to bargain with a multiple offender than a single offender.
* Numbers can be manipulated by strategically selection one measure from a range of possibilities.
  + Charities and government agencies
    - Choose measures that make their issue seem as big as possible in the beginning.
    - Choose measures that show them to be affecting the issue once they’ve been in operation for a while.
  + Actors with particular solutions to sell will promote measures that point toward their solutions.
* Numbers never stand by themselves in policy debates.
  + Words, symbols, and narrative stories are used to complement them.