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.