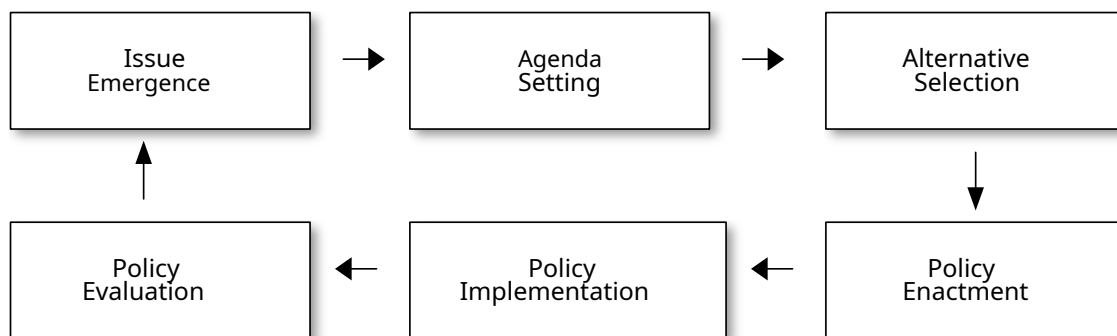## Policy Process Elements

Lecture 2

Week 2

POSC 315: Introduction to Public Policy

Overview

1. Policy Process Models
2. The Public Policy Environment

The Stages Model

The Stages Model

- **Issue Emergence**: A problem is identified and brought to the attention of government officials and the public.
- **Agenda Setting**: The problem is placed on the government agenda for consideration.
- **Alternative Selection**: The government considers various policy options to address the problem.

- **Policy Implementation**: The government implements the policy.
- **Policy Evaluation**: The government evaluates the policy to determine its effectiveness.
  - **Policy Maintenance, Succession, or Termination**: The government decides to maintain, modify, or terminate the policy.
- **Issue Emergence**: What new issues emerge as the policy is maintained, modified, or terminated?

Stages Model Strengths

- **Intuitive**: The stages model is easy to understand and explain.
- **Descriptive**: The stages model describes the policy process in a way that is consistent with how people think about the policy process.
- **Flexible**: The stages model can be adapted to different policy areas and levels of government.

Stages Model Weaknesses

- **Linear**: The stages model assumes that the policy process is linear and sequential.
- **Oversimplified**: The stages model oversimplifies the policy process by ignoring the complexity of the policy process.

- **Separate**: The stages model separates the policy process into distinct stages, but in reality, the stages overlap and interact with each other.

Systems Thinking

- A way of thinking about natural or social phenomena as a system with various inputs that are processed and intermingle to create a discernible set of outputs.
- A way of thinking about the world that emphasizes the relationships among the parts of a system and how the parts interact with each other and the system as a whole.

The Systems Model

- Public policy is viewed as the response of the political system to forces brought to bear on it from the outside environment.
- A policy environment surrounds the political system.
    - Forces enter the political system from the environment either as demands or as support

The Systems Model

Image of Systems Process Model

Figure 1: Image of Systems Process Model

The Systems Model

- **Policy Environment**: The political, economic, and social context in which the policy is developed and implemented.
- **Inputs**: The demands and expectations of the public, interest groups, and government officials.
- **Throughputs**: The policy process is the interaction between the policy environment and the political system. This is the "black box" of the policy process.

The Systems Model

- **Outputs**: The policy outputs are the laws, regulations, and decisions that are created by the policy process.
- **Feedback**: The feedback is the response to the policy outputs.
- **Policy Outcomes**: The policy outcomes are the effects of the policy outputs and feedback.

Systems Model Strengths

- **Holistic**: The systems model is holistic because it considers the policy environment, the political system, and the policy process.
- **Dynamic**: The systems model is dynamic because it considers the interaction between the policy environment and the political system.
- **Flexible**: The systems model can be adapted to different policy areas and levels of government.

Systems Model Weaknesses

- **Complex**: The systems model is complex because it considers the policy environment, the political system, and the policy process.
- **Abstract**: The systems model is abstract because it does not provide a clear explanation of the policy process.

The Policy Environment

The Structural Environment

- **Political System**: The political system is the set of formal and informal political institutions that make and implement collective decisions.
    - The basic features of American government are the separation of powers, federalism, and checks and balances.

The Social Environment

- **Political Culture**: The political culture is the set of shared beliefs, values, and norms that influence the political system.
    - The basic features of American political culture are liberty, equality, democracy, civic duty, and individual responsibility.

The Social Environment

- Changing Demographics
    - The population of the United States is becoming
        * more diverse, older, more urban, more educated, more mobile.
- The government must respond to these changing needs

The Economic Environment

- **Economic Conditions**: The economic conditions are the state of the economy.
    - The basic features of the economy are the business cycle, inflation, unemployment, and economic growth.
    - Measured by GDP, size of industrial sector, unemployment rate, inflation rate, etc.

The Political Environment

- Often measured by the **National Mood**.
    - The national mood is the public's general attitude toward government and politics.
    - Measured by the **Direction of the Country** question in public opinion polls.
    - Measured by the **Presidential Approval Rating** question in public opinion polls.

The Political Environment

The Most Important Problem Facing the Country Today

NYT in 2016: The Most Important Problem Facing America?

The Political Environment

- Political Ads try to capture the national mood
    - It's Morning Again in America
    - Daisy
    - Willie Horton
    - Swift Boat Veterans for Truth
    - Go From There
    - Brighter Future

The International Environment

- **Globalization**: The increasing interdependence of countries on each other.

– The basic features of globalization are the international economy, international organizations, and international law.

The Overall Policy Environment

- The overall policy environment is the combination of the structural, social, economic, political, and international environments.
- The overall policy environment is the context in which the policy process takes place.
- The overall policy environment influences the policy process.

The Overall Policy Environment

- Structural
- Social
- Economic
- Political
- International

Key Takeaways

- Policy process models help us understand how policies are made
- The stages model provides a linear framework but oversimplifies reality
- Systems thinking emphasizes relationships and feedback loops
- Policy environment shapes and constrains policy decisions
- Multiple environmental factors influence policy: structural, social, economic, political, international

That's it for Today!

Remember to read Chapter three for next time!