

# POLITICS AND POLICY

POSC 315

LECTURE 1

WEEK 1-2

QUESTIONS BEFORE  
WE START?

# THEME OF THE COURSE:

## AMERICAN POLITICAL VALUES

1. Individualism
2. Equality
3. Community
4. Patriotism
5. Rule of Law
6. Diversity
7. Distrust of Government

LET'S START WITH A  
COUPLE OF  
QUESTIONS:

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*WHY DO WE HAVE PROGRAMS  
FOR REDUCED COST OR FREE  
SCHOOL LUNCHES?*

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*WHY IS THE PRIMARY  
RESPONSIBILITY FOR  
EDUCATING CHILDREN AND  
POLICING PEOPLE LEFT TO  
STATE AND LOCAL  
GOVERNMENTS?*



# INTRODUCTION

- We seek to understand and find solutions for public problems.
- We have many theories about how the policy process works.
  - Many are *interdisciplinary*.



- We will focus on the *politics* of policy.
  - How do we get from a problem to a solution?
  - How do we get from a solution to a policy?
  - How do we get from a policy to a program?
  - How do we get from a program to an outcome?



Across the political landscape, we have many different views about what things are problems, what are the solutions to those problems, whether a government program is the best way to solve those problems, and what are the best ways to implement solutions.

# POLITICS AND PUBLIC POLICY DEFINITIONS:

- How did your friend, family member, or other person respond when you asked them to define politics?
- policy?

# POLITICS AND THE POLICY PROCESS

- **Politics** is the process of making collective decisions, usually by governments, to allocate public resources and to create and enforce rules for the operation of society.
- **Politics** is how we organize and govern ourselves; the art and science of government.

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- **Public Policy** is the course of action the government takes in response to an issue or problem.
- Public policy is political because it takes place in the *public sphere*.
- Public policy addresses problems that are public or problems that some members of society think *should* be public.

# WHAT IS PUBLIC?

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- Public versus Private come to us from the Latin *publicus* and *privatus*, from Ancient Rome
- Publicus means “of the people” or “of the state”
- Privatus means “individual” or “personal”

# WHAT IS PUBLIC?

Public (publicus)	Private (privatus)
Polis – the State	The Household – private business
Freedom	Necessity
Equality	Inequality
Immortality	Mortality
Open	Closed

These distinctions begin to collapse from the 19th century onward.

# POLITICAL THEORY (QUICKLY)



# THE GREEKS

- Socrates, Plato, Aristotle
- Sought to understand how to best organize and behave in a political community.

# 15TH - 17TH CENTURY

- Machiavelli
  - Information is key when seizing political opportunities.
  - Policy is an act of sustaining power.
- Bacon
  - Knowledge is power.
  - Policy is an act of creating knowledge. Policy is an activity of sustaining balance and authority.

# ENLIGHTENMENT THINKERS

- Bring ideas from the natural sciences to the crafting of human organizations and how to craft government.
- Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Smith, Hume, Kant, and others.
  - all sought how to create a neutral government that would allow for the flourishing of individuals and society.

# ENLIGHTENMENT THINKERS

- From Locke, we get the idea of the social contract.
  - Citizens give up some of their rights to the government in exchange for protection of their remaining rights.
  - Adapted with Smith's idea of the invisible hand, we get the idea of a free market.

# ENLIGHTENMENT THINKERS

## THE VALUE OF INDIVIDUALISM

- From Rousseau, we get the idea of the general will.
- From Montesquieu, we get the idea of the separation of powers.
- Toleration of religion and freedom of speech and press.
- From Hume, we get the idea of the public sphere.

# 18TH CENTURY AND 19TH CENTURY

- American Founding Fathers
  - Jefferson, Madison, Hamilton, Adams, Franklin, and others.
  - Adapted the ideas of the Enlightenment to the American context.
  - Created a government that would allow for the flourishing of individuals and society.

# 18TH CENTURY AND 19TH CENTURY

- American Founding Fathers
  - We can extend the (re)founders to Lincoln, Wilson, both Roosevelts, Johnson, King, and others.
  - All emphasize and interpret American political values in various ways, either through laws, regulations, or appointments.

# 20TH CENTURY

- John Rawls
  - Try to maximize the well-being of the least well-off.
  - Emphasizes equality as equity, attempting to make up for past injustices and make a fair system of governance.



# 20TH CENTURY

- Karl Marx and Max Weber
  - Emphasize the role of economics in politics.
  - Explain how the strong overcome the weak and how the weak can overcome the strong.
- John Dewey
  - Emphasizes the role of social sciences in politics.
  - Understands how facts and values interact in the political process when making policy.

# 20TH CENTURY

- Harold Lasswell
  - Emphasizes the role of psychology in politics.
  - Understands how the individual interacts with the political process when making policy.
  - “Politics is who gets what, when, and how.”

# 20TH CENTURY

- Harold Lasswell
  - Policy is used to understand how problems and processes may be **contextualized**.
- Context
  - The circumstances that form the setting for an event, statement, or idea, and in terms of which it can be fully understood and assessed.

# WHY POLITICAL THEORY AND PUBLIC POLICY?

*“[A]s students of the policy process ... we need to carefully and scientifically understand why it is that money is so important in politics, why legislative processes can seem so confusing and slow, and whether and to what extent politics as currently practiced really works as a way of organizing our society.”*

Birkland (chapt 2)

# POLICY FOR THE COMMON GOOD

- Policy is:
  - meaning-making
  - a statement by a government about what it intends to do about a public problem
  - what government chooses *not* to do.

## Policy for the Common Good

*“Policies are revealed through texts, practices, symbols, and discourses that define and deliver values including goods and services as well as regulations, incomes, status, and other positively or negatively valued attributes.”*

Deborah Stone

# GOALS OF THE POLICY PROCESS

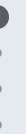
- Solve, not regulate
- Bring together multiple perspectives
- Activate local knowledge
- Increase capacity for self-governance
- Attempt to produce a common good
- Continuity

# CHANGE: THE BASIC TENSION IN THE POLICY SCIENCES

- How does policy change happen?
- How does social learning occur?
  - Manipulation?
  - Relationships?
- How does change happen without the government?



POLICY CONSISTS OF  
PARTICIPATION,  
OBSERVATION, AND  
CAPACITY BUILDING



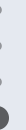
- Participation
  - Who participates in the policy process?
  - Who is excluded?
  - How do we get more people to participate?
  - How do we get more people to participate in a meaningful way?

- Observation

- How do we know what is going on?
- How do we know what is working and what is not?
- How do we know what is a problem and what is not?



- Capacity Building
  - How do we build the capacity of individuals and communities to participate and observe?



# THE COMMON WILL

Policy is an attempt to translate the popular will into a political reality.

- In a liberal democracy, the popular will is expressed through elections; it is derived from the people.
- When advocates convince the government to make a policy, one can claim the government does so in the *public interest*.



# THE PUBLIC INTEREST

The assumed broader desires and needs of the public, in whose name policy is made.

- The public interest is a contested concept.
- The public interest is a political concept.
- The public interest is a moral concept.

# THE PUBLIC INTEREST

- Hard to define:
  - Who gets to define it?
- Advocates claim *their* preferences are in the public interest.
- When something goes wrong, we claim the government is not acting in the public interest.
- It changes over time.



# THAT'S IT!

Before next time:

- Check in if you have questions Read Chapter 2 in Birkland
- Have a great weekend!