

# **Understanding Politics and Public Policy**

Foundations and Core Concepts

POSC 315: Introduction to Public Policy

Lecture 9-1: Policy Analysis Part 1

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- General Concepts of Policy Analysis
- Outputs vs. Outcomes
- Role of Policy Analysis in the Policy Process
- Understanding Causation
- Brief History of Policy Analysis
- Role of the Policy Analyst
- Modern Approaches
- Applied Policy Analysis: Let's Try It!

# General Concepts of Policy Analysis

## **What is Policy Analysis?**

A systematic approach to evaluating policy alternatives for addressing public problems using data and reasoned arguments.

**Core Purpose:** Provide clear, objective information to decision-makers.

**Key Question:** How can we use evidence to determine which policies are most effective?

# Outputs vs. Outcomes

## **Outputs:**

- Measurable things an agency produces
- Tangible efforts, easy to track
- Examples: traffic signals, people served, laws passed

## **Outcomes:**

- Actual effects on society
- Harder to quantify
- Examples: accident reduction, improved health

**Distinction:** Outputs show what was done; outcomes show what difference it made.

# Understanding Causation

**Causation** = Relationship between cause and effect

**To establish causation:**

- Temporal sequence (cause precedes effect)
- Correlation
- No spuriousness (other factors ruled out)

## Understanding Causation (continued)

**Positive**

Education  $\uparrow \rightarrow$  Income  $\uparrow$



**Negative**

Cigarette Tax  $\uparrow \rightarrow$  Smoking  $\downarrow$



**No Relationship**

Ice Cream Sales  $\nrightarrow$  Crime Rate

# History of Policy Analysis

## Early Developments:

- 1908: *Muller v. Oregon* — Brandeis Brief
- Rise of social science in governance
- New Deal → growth of policy advisors
- WWII → operations research techniques

# Lasswell's Policy Science

## Lasswell's Principles:

- Problem-solving orientation
- Multidisciplinary
- Acknowledges values in policy decisions

*"In a democracy, values matter as much as facts."*



## Key Traits:

- Applied practical
- Interdisciplinary
- Empirical theoretical
- Aims to improve public decisions

# Growth and Evolution

- Great Society → demand for analysts
- Dominance of economic rationality
- Rise of modeling forecasting
- Limits of technical approaches become visible