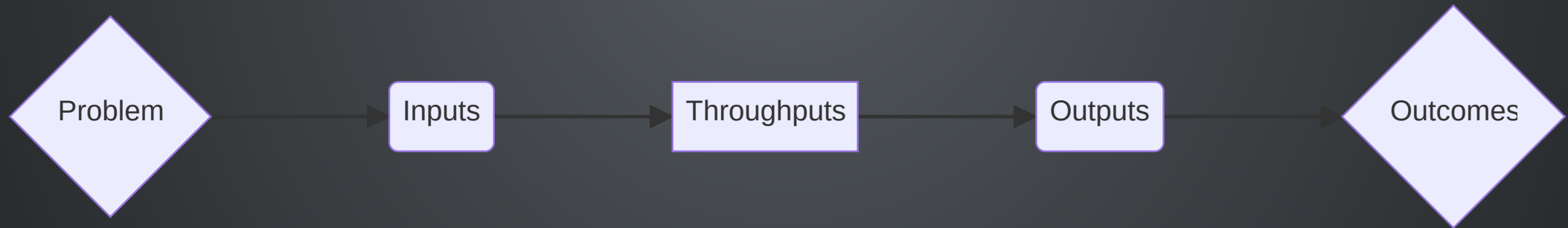# Policy Analysis

POSC 315
Week 9

Overview

- General Concepts of Policy Analysis
- Outputs and Outcomes
- Role of Policy Analysis in the Policy Process
- Causation
- Brief History of Policy Analysis
- Role of the Policy Analyst
- Modern Policy Analysis
- Let's Try It!

General Concepts of Policy Analysis

Problem → Inputs → Throughputs → Outputs → Outcomes

Outputs and Outcomes

Outputs

- The **measurable** things an agency or org. produces
- The effort gov't expends to address problems
- e.g., # of traffic signals installed, # of people served by a program, # of people arrested
- e.g., laws, regulations, programs, services, etc.

Outcomes

- The **intended** or **unintended** consequences of gov't action
- The **effect** of gov't action on the problem
- Difficult to measure and hard to quantify
- e.g., reduction in traffic accidents, reduction in crime, reduction in poverty

Policy Analysis in the Policy Process

- The use of analytic tools, often from operations research, statistics, and economics, in order to assess the consequences of policy alternatives—to predict outcomes from expended outputs.
- Useful to predict how a policy may adapt to new conditions and changing circumstances and interests.
- It asks, "How does the effort expended *cause* a particular outcome?"

Causation

- **Causation** is the relationship between cause and effect.
- Conditions for Cause and Effect
  - Cause must precede effect
  - Cause and effect must be related
  - No other factor can explain the relationship

Causation
Positive and Negative Relationships

- **Positive relationship**: the higher the value of one variable, the higher the value of the other variable
- **Negative relationship**: the higher the value of one variable, the lower the value of the other variable
- **No relationship**: the value of one variable does not affect the value of the other variable

A Brief History of Policy Analysis

- *Muller v. Oregon* (1908)
  - The liberty protected by Due Process of the Fourteenth Amendment is not a bar to Oregon's compelling interest in protecting women's health through restricted working hours.
  - What does this have to do with policy analysis?
- Empirical knowledge for gov't policy expanded as social science disciplines and law were professionalized in the early 20th century.
- Increase in policy advisors in the 1930s and 1940s and especially after WWII.

A Brief History of Policy Analysis

Harold Laswell on the Principles of Policy Science

- Orientation toward problem solving based in theory and empiricism
- Policy sciences are multidisciplinary
- Politics matter because *values matter* "[In] a democracy, decisions are made in a *political* system in which values are as important as neutrally derived facts."

A Brief History of Policy Analysis

A Policy Science

- An applied science
- Deals with major policy issues
- Requires interdisciplinary inquiry
- Empirical and based in sophisticated theory
- Dedicated to improving public policy through improved information and policy discourse

A Brief History of Policy Analysis

- Analysts were in high demand by the time of the Great Society programs of the 1960s.
- Practitioners drew from a wide range of academic disciplines, especially economics.
  - ... for a "rational" way of making policy to overcome the "messiness, contingency, and sometimes irrationality fo politics as a system for defining problems and framing solutions."
- Computers were employed to assist in forecasting and modeling.

Role of the Policy Analyst

Analytical Integrity	Responsibility to Clients	Adherence to One's Concept of Good
Objective Technician Let analysis speak for itself. Primary focus should be predicting consequences of alternative policies.	Clients are necessary evils; their political fortunes should be secondary considerations. Keep distance from clients; select institutional clients whenever possible.	Relevant values should be identified but trade-offs among them should be left to clients. Objective advice promotes good in the long run.
Client's Advocate Analysis rarely produces definitive conclusions. Take advantage of ambiguity to advise clients' positions.	Clients provide analysts with legitimacy. Loyalty should be given in return for access to privileged information and to political processes.	Select clients with compatible value systems; use long-term relationships to change clients' conceptions of good.
Issue Advocate Analysis rarely produces definitive conclusions. Emphasize ambiguity and excluded values when analysis does not support advocacy.	Clients provide an opportunity for advocacy. Select them opportunistically; change clients to further personal policy agenda.	Analysis should be an instrument for progress towards ones' conception of the good society.

Role of the Policy Analyst
Eugene Bardach's Eightfold Path

1. Define the problem
2. Assemble some evidence
3. Construct the alternatives
4. Select the criteria
5. Project the outcomes
6. Confront the trade-offs
7. Decide
8. Tell your story

Modern Policy Analysis

Two Logics of Policy Making

Economic Rationality of Policy Analysts

- Application of economic logic to political phenomena as a way to bypass the "messiness" of politics
- Transparent assumptions
- Consistent methods to compare alternatives

Modern Policy Analysis

Two Logics of Policy Making

Political Rationality of Policy Makers

- Policy makers are not rational actors
- Strategic use of information
- Release favorable information and suppress unfavorable information

Modern Policy Analysis

Two Logics of Policy Making

Which is Right?

- Both are right, but they are not the same
- Policy makers are not rational actors, but they are not irrational either
- Policy makers are not always strategic, but they are not always naive either
- Politics is full of paradoxes and contradictions that are not amenable to economic logic

Modern Policy Analysis

A Need to Understand the Political Context

- It can explain policy outcomes that might not otherwise make sense
- It can help to design effective democratic institutions or refine existing ones
- Analysts can operate more effectively if they understand the political context

Modern Policy Analysis

Analysis as a Profession

- The field has evolved over the past 50 years
- The field is now more professionalized and specialized
- The field is more diverse and interdisciplinary
- Technical skills are still essential but no longer the leading motivation driving the field
- Analysts are active participants in the policy process

Let's Try It!

"Horse Rich and Dirt Poor"

- The problem: "Horse rich and dirt poor"
- The goals:
- The alternatives:
- The criteria:
- Observed outcomes:
- Policy performance:

Horse Rich & Dirt Poor

That's all for today!

Next Time: Guest Speaker Assemblymember Phillip Chen and book author Bill Wong

Also Next Time: Review for Test Two