

Understanding Politics and Public Policy


Foundations and Core Concepts

POSC 315: Introduction to Public Policy

Lecture 1 (Part 1 of 3)

California State University, Fullerton

Theme of the Course

- 
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:

Why do we have programs for reduced cost or free school lunches?

Why is the primary responsibility for educating children and policing people left to state and local governments?

Let's start with a couple of questions:

Why do we have programs for reduced cost or free school lunches?

Why is the primary responsibility for educating children and policing people left to state and local governments?

These questions help us understand **values** and **priorities** in policy choices.

Introduction

- We seek to understand and find solutions for public problems.

Introduction

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

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?

Different Views Across the Political Landscape

Across the political landscape, we have many different views about:

1. Problem Definition

What things are problems that need solving?

3. Intervention Selection

Is a government program the best way to solve those problems?

2. Solution Identification

What are the solutions to those problems?

4. Implementation Strategy

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?

What about policy?

Politics and Public Policy Definitions

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

What about policy?

Let's compare your responses with academic definitions...

Politics and the Policy Process

Politics

- 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 and the Policy Process

Politics

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

Politics and the Policy Process

Public Policy

- The **course of action** the government takes in response to an issue or problem.

Politics and the Policy Process

Public Policy

- 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*.

Politics and the Policy Process

Public Policy

- 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?

What is Public?

- 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)

What is Public?

Public (publicus)	Private (privatus)
Polis – the State	The Household – private business

What is Public?

Public (publicus)	Private (privatus)
Polis – the State	The Household – private business
Freedom	Necessity

What is Public?

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

What is Public?

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

What is Public?

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

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.

Reflection Activity

Think About:

- Social media platforms
- Healthcare decisions
- Education choices

Questions:

- Where do you see the public/private boundary shifting?
- How might these shifts affect policy decisions?

Key Takeaways

- **Politics:** The process of making collective decisions about public resources and rules
- **Public Policy:** Government's course of action in response to public issues
- **Public vs. Private:** Historically distinct spheres that are increasingly blurred
- **Policy Process:** The path from problem identification to outcome evaluation

Key Takeaways

- **Politics:** The process of making collective decisions about public resources and rules
- **Public Policy:** Government's course of action in response to public issues
- **Public vs. Private:** Historically distinct spheres that are increasingly blurred
- **Policy Process:** The path from problem identification to outcome evaluation

Coming Up Next

In Part 2, we'll explore the history of political thought and how it shapes modern policy approaches.