# Presentation Title: Policy Failure and Learning

Slide 1:  
Policy Failure and Learning  
POSC 315 Week 12-1  
Evaluation Part I

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Slide 2:  
Implementation Review  
Policy implementation is very complex  
Policy isn’t self-executing  
Policy Design to improve implementation is challenging  
Bureaucrats have discretion  
Is Implementation Technical or Political?  
The old idea:  
administration simply does the will of the legislature (see Wilson [1887, 1989] and Goodnow [1900])  
The new idea:  
administration is a political process (see Appleby [1949] and Waldo [1948]) and so is implementation (see Pressman and Wildavsky [1973])  
Who is Responsible for Implementation?  
The legislature?  
The executive?  
The bureaucracy?  
The courts?  
The public?  
All of the above?  
Implementation Studies: Four Generations  
First Generation: The “Classics” (1930s-1950s)  
Second Generation: The “Moderns” (1960s-1970s)  
Third Generation: The “Post-Moderns” (1980s-1990s)  
Fourth Generation: The “New New” (2000s)

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Slide 7:  
Policy Failure  
Why some policies might not work  
Possible Reasons for Policy Failure  
People may respond or adapt to public policies in a manner that negates some of their influence.  
Policies may have incompatible goals that bring them into conflict with one another.  
Solutions for some problems may involve costs and consequences greater than people are willing to accept.  
Possible Reasons for Policy Failure  
Inadequate resources may be allocated to implement a policy.  
Policies may be administered to lessen their potential effect, i.e., watered down upon implementation  
Public problems are often caused by a multitude of factors, but the policy may be only directed at one or a few of them. Why?  
Possible Reasons for Policy Failure  
Many problems cannot be solved, or at least not completely  
New problems may arise that distract attention from a problem  
Many national problems and policies are implemented by state and local agencies and are sometimes designed at the local level  
Responses to Policy Failure  
Adjustments in enforcement  
More money or resources  
Challenge(s) to the legality or constitutionality of the policy  
The policy or its program is simply ignored  
The policy is left to local governments to implement or improve upon  
The policy is abandoned or repealed

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Slide 8:  
Policy Failure  
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Slide 13:  
More on Policy Failure  
Policy Failure  
A  
Slippery  
Concept  
Two Types of Failure  
Theoretical Failure  
The causal theory didn’t work as predicted  
Programmatic Failure  
Implementation didn’t work as planned  
Failure is in the eye of the beholder  
When did it fail?  
Who did it fail?  
Where did it fail?  
How did it fail?

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Slide 14:  
More on Policy Failure

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Slide 15:  
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Slide 17:  
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Slide 18:  
Failure is Challenging to Define  
Some problems may be tentative first steps toward resolving a broader social problem.  
Doing something may indicate the political system “responds to problem, even if knowledge may be limited and appropriate policy tools unavailable.”  
Would the “do nothing” option have been better?  
Failure is Challenging to Define  
Excessive Policy Demand  
Constant demands on the part of the gov’t to do “something” may make more failures more inevitable as more policy with more complexity fails to meet expectations.  
Gov’t may fuel this demand by claiming to have the resources and tools available to implement a policy that may be technically infeasible.  
Failure is Challenging to Define  
Reasonable Expectations  
We may reach too far in expecting gov’t can solve a problem  
If we make progress, is that failure, even if we don’t meet the exact goal?  
Poor Causal Theory  
Failure is often the product of a poor causal theory:  
Theory influences tool choice  
Choice of tools influences implementation  
Implementation influences outcomes

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Slide 23:  
Learning from Failure  
Policy Failure and Learning  
learning can lead to policy change  
learning is accumulating information for better decision making  
learning is a process of discovery, and key to evaluation  
Two Types of Learning  
Single-loop learning  
is a process of correcting errors in the implementation of a policy without questioning the policy itself.  
learn about performance  
learn how the process or tools may have failed  
adjust by changing the process or tools  
Two Types of Learning  
Double-loop learning  
is a process of questioning the policy itself and the assumptions that underlie it.  
learn from single-loop learning  
rethink the fundamental assumptions about the problem and if the policy is the right tool  
learn about inherent values, goals, and assumptions

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Slide 28:  
More on Learning

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Slide 29:  
An Urge to Learn  
Improve performance and outcomes  
internally, within and organization  
Normative expectations  
we believe gov’t and policy makers should learn  
we institutionalize learning through evaluation, after-action reports, etc.  
Three Types of Policy-Oriented Learning  
Instrumental Learning  
learning about the best means to achieve a given end  
Social Learning  
learning about the values and goals that underlie a policy  
examine the social construction of the problem  
seeks to determine if the worked in a specific environment  
Three Types of Policy-Oriented Learning  
Political Learning  
learning about the political environment and how to navigate it  
learning about the political feasibility of a policy  
focus on ho to make more effective arguments for a policy  
The Goal of Learning  
Success  
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Slide 33:  
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Slide 34:  
Next Time  
Policy Evaluation Part II  
Policy Success?

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