

# Introduction to Public Policy

David P. Adams, Ph.D.

2024-08-27

# Introduction to Public Policy

**POSC 315**

Dr. David P. Adams, Ph.D.

# Introduction and Syllabus Overview

## POSC 315 Syllabus



Figure 1: Read your Syllabus

# Defining Public Policy

**What comes to mind when you hear the term “public policy”?**



Figure 2: Word Cloud

[View Word Cloud](#)

# What is Public?

**Public** refers to the people, the state, or the government. But also, public . . .

# What is Public Policy?

**Public Policy** is what officials within government, and by extension the citizens they represent, choose to do or not to do about public problems.

# Thought Experiment

What can you do without government intervention?



Figure 3: Thought Experiment

# Many different ways to discuss public policy

1. **Intentions:** the purposes of government action
2. **Goals:** the stated ends to be achieved
3. **Plans or proposals:** the means to achieve the goals
4. **Programs:** the authorized means for pursuing the goals
5. **Decisions or choices:** specific actions that are taken to set goals, develop plans, and implement programs



# Policy Outputs and Outcomes

1. **Policy Outputs:** the formal actions that governments take to pursue their goals
2. **Policy Outcomes:** the effects that result from policy outputs



Figure 4: What's the difference?

# The Basics

- ▶ **Institutions:** the rules, norms, and procedures that structure the behavior of individuals and organizations.
- ▶ **Government:** the institutions and political processes through which public policy choices are made with legal authority to govern or rule a group of people.
- ▶ **Government Institutions:** the US Constitution, Congress, the President, the Courts, the bureaucracy, and state and local governments.
- ▶ **Federalism:** the division of power between the national government and state governments; the division of power and authority on a geographic basis.

## The Basics (cont.)

- ▶ **Politics**: the process of making and implementing decisions that apply to members of a group; concerns the exercise of power and the resolution of conflicts.
- ▶ **Policy Making**: the process by which authorities decide which actions to take to address a problem or set of problems.
- ▶ **Policy Analysis**: the process of identifying and evaluating policy options and their consequences.

# The Context of Public Policy

## The Social Context

- ▶ **Social Problems:** conditions that are harmful to individuals or society and that require collective action to address.
- ▶ **Social Values:** the beliefs that people hold about what is good, right, and desirable.
- ▶ **Social Norms:** the unwritten rules that guide behavior in a society.
- ▶ **Social Changes:** the transformations in society that affect the way people live and work.

# The Context of Public Policy (cont.)

## The Economic Context

- ▶ **Economic Problems:** conditions that are harmful to individuals or society and that require collective action to address.
- ▶ **Economic Policy:** the actions that governments take to influence the economy, such as setting tax rates, spending money, and regulating businesses.

# The Context of Public Policy (cont.)

## The Political Context

- ▶ **Political Problems:** conditions that are harmful to individuals or society and that require collective action to address.
- ▶ **Political Party System:** the organization of political parties and the competition between them.
- ▶ **Trust in Government:** the belief that government will act in the public interest.
- ▶ **Ideology:** a set of beliefs about the proper role of government in society.

# The Context of Public Policy (cont.)

## The Governing Context

- ▶ **Complex Governance Structures:** the overlapping and interdependent relationships among government agencies, interest groups, and other organizations.
- ▶ **Shared Responsibility:** the idea that government, the private sector, and civil society all have a role to play in addressing public problems.

# The Context of Public Policy (cont.)

## The Cultural Context

- ▶ **Political Culture:** refers to widely held values, beliefs, and attitudes, such as trust and confidence in government and the political process, or the lack thereof.
- ▶ **Political Socialization:** the process by which individuals learn about politics and acquire political values and beliefs.
- ▶ **Political Participation:** the ways in which people get involved in politics, such as voting, running for office, or joining interest groups.
- ▶ **Cultural Differences:** help to explain the wide variation in state and local public policies.



One more thing!



Figure 5: The Feels

Check it

## For Next Time:

- ▶ Read Chapter 1 in the textbook
- ▶ Review the syllabus
- ▶ Check out the *Canvas* page for the course
- ▶ Sign up for *Kritik*