

Introduction to Public Policy

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POSC 315

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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

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

For Next Time:

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