PUBLIC POLICY: FROM DESIGN TO DELIVERY

First term 2026

Instructor:	Felipe Torres-Raposo	**Time:**	TBC
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Course description: This course provides a critical examination of policy delivery and evaluation, two crucial yet often overlooked stages of the policy process. While much attention in public policy focuses on agenda-setting and decision-making, the success or failure of policies ultimately depends on how well they are implemented and whether their impacts are rigorously assessed. This course explores how governments and public agencies worldwide have sought to upgrade their delivery and evaluation capacity in recent decades, examining both theoretical frameworks and real-world practice. Students will analyse diverse delivery mechanisms; from centralized delivery units to collaborative governance networks and digital service platforms—and master multiple evaluation approaches, from randomized controlled trials to theory-based and mixed-methods designs.

The course adopts a comparative and applied perspective, drawing on case studies from multiple countries and policy domains. Students will engage with foundational theories of implementation, trace the evolution from Traditional Public Administration through New Public Management to emerging paradigms, and critically assess contemporary innovations including AI-enabled service delivery and anticipatory governance. Particular attention is given to understanding why policies fail and how organizations can learn from setbacks. By examining the intersection of delivery and evaluation, students will develop the analytical skills to both design effective implementation strategies and rigorously assess policy outcomes in complex, rapidly-changing environments.

Through weekly article analyses and a substantive pre-analysis plan, students will apply course concepts to real policy challenges. The course emphasizes practical relevance while maintaining analytical rigour, preparing students for careers as policy analysts, program evaluators, public managers, or advisors who must navigate the political, organizational, and technical realities of turning policy aspirations into measurable results.

Grading Policy: Article decomposition memos (20%), Pre-Analysis Plan (80 %).

Key Dates:

> Policy Memos . . . . Every Friday at 23:59 pm
> Pre-Analysis Plan . . . . March, 2026

Office Hours: We will hold weekly office hours every Tuesdays from 9:00 to 11:00 am.

Prerequisites: An undergraduate-level understanding of quantitative and qualitative methods would be valuable.

Course Outline:

- **Week 1: Introduction - The Policy Process & Why Delivery/Evaluation Matter**
- **Week 2: Theoretical Frameworks for Policy Implementation**
- **Week 3: Traditional Public Administration vs New Public Management**
- **Week 4: Delivery Units and Performance Management**
- **Week 5: Multi-level Governance and Collaborative Delivery**
- **Week 6: Digital Government and Service Delivery Innovation**
- **Week 7: Evaluation Theory and Methods**
- **Week 8: Impact Evaluation and Randomized Controlled Trials**
- **Week 9: Qualitative and Mixed-Methods Evaluation**
- **Week 10: Learning from Failure - Case Studies**
- **Week 11: Future of Policy Delivery and Evaluation**

Course schedule and readings:

Week 1: Introduction - The Policy Process & Why Delivery/Evaluation Matter.

Learning objectives: 1) Understand where delivery and evaluation fit in the policy process. 2) Explain why the "implementation gap" matters. 3) Identify key challenges in moving from policy design to outcomes. 4) Understand the relationship between delivery and evaluation

- Paul Cairney (2012). "Complexity Theory in Political Science and Public Policy". In: *Political Studies Review* 10.3, pp. 346–358. URL: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-9302.2012.00270.x

- Ian Sanderson (2002). "Evaluation, Policy Learning and Evidence-Based Policy Making". In: *Public Administration* 80.1, pp. 1–22. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9299.00292. URL: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1467-9299.00292

- Sonia Alconini (Sept. 2022). *The Pre-Columbian Inca Empire: The Capital and its Provinces*

Week 2: Theoretical Frameworks for Policy Implementation.

Learning objectives: 1) Distinguish between "top-down" and "bottom-up" implementation theories 2) Understand the role of street-level bureaucrats in policy delivery. 3)Explain how institutional context shapes implementation outcomes. 4) Apply implementation theory to analyse real-world cases

- Jr. O'Toole Laurence J. (Apr. 2000). "Research on Policy Implementation: Assessment and Prospects". In: *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 10.2, pp. 263–288

- Michael Lipsky (2010). *Street-level bureaucracy : dilemmas of the individual in public services*. 30th anniversary expanded edition. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. **Read only chapters 1 and 2.**

- Peter Hupe and MJ Hill (2014). *Implementing Public Policy: An Introduction to the Study Of Operational Governance (third, revised, edition)*. English. **Read only chapters 1 and 2.**

Week 3: Traditional Public Administration vs New Public Management

Learning objectives: 1) Compare core principles of Traditional Public Administration and NPM regarding accountability, efficiency, and the role of government. 2) Analyze NPM reforms (marketization, privatization, performance management) and their impacts on policy delivery. 3) Evaluate strengths and weaknesses of both approaches in different contexts. 4) Identify post-NPM developments (New Public Governance, Public Value Management, Digital Era Governance) that address NPM's limitations.

- Christopher Hood (1991). "A Public Managment for all Seasons?" In: *Public Administration* 69.1, pp. 3–19. URL: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1467-9299.1991.tb00779.x

- Janet A. Weiss (1995). In: *The Academy of Management Review* 20.1, pp. 229–235. ISSN: 03637425. URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/258896 (visited on 02/16/2026)

- Christopher Pollitt, Geert Bouckaert, and EBSCOhost (2017). *Public management reform : a comparative analysis : into the age of austerity*. Fourth edition. Oxford ; Oxford University Press

- Patrick Dunleavy et al. (Sept. 2005). "New Public Management Is Dead—Long Live Digital-Era Governance". In: *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 16.3, pp. 467–494

Week 4: Delivery Units and Performance Management.

Learning objectives: 1) Understand delivery units as central government mechanisms for driving policy implementation and analyze the "Deliverology" approach. 2) Evaluate performance management systems in the public sector, including their purposes, challenges, and unintended consequences. 3) Critically assess targets and metrics in driving public sector performance and the risks of gaming and distortion.

- Michael Barber (2007). "Instruction to Deliver: Fighting to Transform Britain's Public Services". In: URL: https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:107703827

- Jenny Gold, Akshay Mangla, and Rhea Perakis (2020). *Inside the Delivery Unit: The Pursuit of Results in Ghana and Malaysia*. Research Report. London, UK: Institute for Government. URL: https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/publication/inside-delivery-unit

Week 5: Multi-level Governance and Collaborative Delivery.

Learning objectives: 1) Understand multi-level governance (MLG) as a system of vertical and horizontal coordination across government levels and sectors for policy delivery. 2) Analyse collaborative governance frameworks and their application to complex, cross-boundary policy problems that cannot be solved by single organizations. 3) Evaluate the challenges of collaborative performance management, including accountability tensions, power dynamics, and measuring collective outcomes. 4) Apply robust governance strategies for adapting policy delivery in turbulent, rapidly-changing environments.

- Chris Ansell and Alison Gash (Nov. 2007). "Collaborative Governance in Theory and Practice". In: *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 18.4, pp. 543–571

- Jacob Torfing et al. (n.d.). "Advancing Robust Governance in Turbulent Times: The Role of Multi-Level Governance, Hybrid Governance, and Negotiated Societal Intelligence". In: *Public Administration* n/a.n/a (). URL: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/padm.70011

- Maurits Waardenburg, Martijn Groenleer, and Jorrit de Jong (2025). "Performance Management in Collaborative Governance: A Review of the Literature and Synthesis of the Challenges". In: *Public Performance & Management Review* 48.4, pp. 735–767

- Kirk Emerson and Tina Nabatchi (2015). *Collaborative Governance Regimes*. Georgetown University Press. ISBN: 9781626162532. URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt19dzcvf (visited on 02/16/2026). **Read chapters 1, 2 and 3.**

Week 6: Digital Government and Service Delivery Innovation.

Learning objectives: 1) Analyse how digital technologies transform public service delivery, including opportunities for efficiency, accessibility, and citizen engagement. 2) Evaluate the implementation challenges of digital government, including legacy systems, skills gaps, data governance, and the scaling problem. 3) Critically assess AI applications in public administration, including their impact on service delivery, decision-making, and the role of public servants. 4) Understand the governance frameworks needed to ensure trustworthy, ethical, and effective use of digital technologies in delivering public services.

- OECD (2024). *Enabling Digital Innovation in Government: The OECD GovTech Policy Framework*. OECD Digital Government Studies. Paris: OECD Publishing. DOI: 10.1787/a51eb9b2-en. URL: https://doi.org/10.1787/a51eb9b2-en. **Read only chapters 1 and 2.**

- OECD (2025). *Governing with Artificial Intelligence: The State of Play and Way Forward in Core Government Functions*. Tech. rep. Paris: OECD Publishing. DOI: 10.1787/795de142-en. URL: https://doi.org/10.1787/795de142-en. **Read only chapters 1 and 2.**

- Ines Mergel et al. (2023). "Implementing AI in the Public Sector". In: *Public Management Review*, pp. 1–14. DOI: 10.1080/14719037.2023.2231950. URL: https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2023.2231950

- Oliver Neumann, Katharina Guirguis, and Reto Steiner (2024). "Exploring artificial intelligence adoption in public organizations: a comparative case study". In: *Public Management Review* 26.1, pp. 114–141

Week 7: Evaluation Theory and Methods.

Learning objectives: 1) Understand the purposes of evaluation including accountability, learning, and improvement, and distinguish evaluation from related practices like monitoring and audit. 2) Compare major evaluation approaches, including experimental/counterfactual methods versus theory-based methods, and their appropriate applications. 3) Apply theory-based evaluation frameworks, particularly theories of change, logic models, and process tracing, to real policy interventions. 4) Critically assess evaluation design choices, including trade-offs between internal and external validity, feasibility constraints, and ethical considerations.

- Steve Jacob (2024). "Navigating the challenges of policy evaluation". In: *Canadian Public Administration* 67.2, pp. 282–290. URL: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/capa.12571

- Michael Quinn Patton (2012). *Essentials of Utilization-Focused Evaluation: A Primer*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. URL: http://www.sagepub.com/books/Book233973#tabview=title **Read only from pages 1 to 22.**

- Sebastian Lemire et al. (2020). "What Is This Thing Called a Mechanism? Situating Mechanisms in the Larger Landscape of Theory-Based Evaluation". In: *New Directions for Evaluation* 167

Week 8: Impact Evaluation and Randomized Controlled Trials.

Learning objectives: 1) Understand the logic of experimental and quasi-experimental impact evaluation, including the fundamental problem of causal inference and the counterfactual framework. 2) Evaluate the strengths and limitations of RCTs for policy evaluation, including internal vs. external validity trade-offs, practical constraints, and ethical considerations. 3) Compare quasi-experimental methods (difference-in-differences, regression discontinuity, synthetic controls) and assess when each is appropriate. 4) Critically assess impact evaluation studies, including their design choices, assumptions, generalizability, and policy relevance.

- Laura Haynes et al. (2012). *Test, Learn, Adapt: Developing Public Policy with Randomised Controlled Trials*. Tech. rep. London, UK: Cabinet Office Behavioural Insights Team

- Rachel Glennerster and Kudzai Takavarasha (2013). *Running Randomized Evaluations: A Practical Guide*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press

- Angus Deaton and Nancy Cartwright (2018). "Understanding and Misunderstanding Randomized Controlled Trials". In: *Social Science & Medicine* 210, pp. 2–21. DOI: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2017.12.005

- Abhijit Banerjee et al. (2017). "From Proof of Concept to Scalable Policies: Challenges and Solutions, with an Application". In: *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 31.4, pp. 73–102. DOI: 10.1257/jep.31.4.73

- Kathryn Oliver et al. (2014). "A Systematic Review of Barriers to and Facilitators of the Use of Evidence by Policymakers". In: *BMC Health Services Research* 14, p. 2. DOI: 10.1186/1472-6963-14-2

Week 9: Qualitative and Mixed-Methods Evaluation.

Learning objectives: 1) Understand the role of qualitative methods in evaluation, including when qualitative approaches are most appropriate and their unique contributions to understanding policy outcomes. 2) Design and conduct mixed-methods evaluations that integrate qualitative and quantitative approaches throughout the evaluation process, not just at the analysis stage. 3) Apply Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) to systematically analyse multiple cases and identify configurations of conditions leading to outcomes. 4) Evaluate the quality and rigour of qualitative and mixed-methods studies, including integration strategies, credibility, and practical utility for policy decisions

- Burt S. Barnow, Sanjay K. Pandey, and Qian "Eric" Luo (2024). "How Mixed-Methods Research Can Improve the Policy Relevance of Impact Evaluations". In: *Evaluation Review* 48.3, pp. 495–514

- Patricia Burch and Carolyn J. Heinrich (2016). *Mixed Methods for Policy Research and Program Evaluation*. Sage Research Methods. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. ISBN: 9781483398259. DOI: 10.4135/9781483398259. URL: https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483398259

- Kathryn Hendren et al. (2023). "How qualitative research methods can be leveraged to strengthen mixed methods research in public policy and public administration?" In: *Public Administration Review* 83.3, pp. 468–485. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13528. URL: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/puar.13528

- Reem El Sherif et al. (2024). "Using qualitative comparative analysis as a mixed methods synthesis in systematic mixed studies reviews: Guidance and a worked example". In: *Research Synthesis Methods* 15.3, pp. 450–465. URL: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/jrsm.1698

Week 10: Learning from Failure - Case Studies.

Learning objectives: 1) Define and categorize policy failure, distinguishing between different types and dimensions of failure (process, program, political). 2) Analyse causes of policy failure using case studies, identifying common patterns including over-optimism, implementation gaps, political pressures, and complexity challenges. 3) Evaluate frameworks for learning from failure, including the obstacles to organizational learning and conditions that enable it. 4) Apply evaluation methods from Weeks 7-9 to diagnose failures and extract actionable lessons for improving future policy delivery.

- Allan McConnell (2015). "What is policy failure? A primer to help navigate the maze". In: *Public Policy and Administration* 30.3-4, pp. 221–242

- Claire A. Dunlop (2020). "Policy Learning and Policy Failure: Definitions, Dimensions and Intersections". In: *Policy Learning and Policy Failure*. Ed. by ClaireEditor Dunlop. Bristol University Press, pp. 1–22. **Read chapters 1, 2 and 3.**

- Dennis C. Grube (2023). *Why Governments Get It Wrong (And How They Can Get It Right)*. London: Pan Macmillan. **Read chapters 1, 2 and 3.**

- Michael Howlett, Ching Leong, and Tim Legrand (2025). *Bad Public Policy: Malignity, Volatility and the Inherent Vices of Policymaking*. Elements in Public Policy. Cambridge University Press

Week 11: Future of Policy Delivery and Evaluation.

Learning objectives: Identify major trends reshaping policy delivery and evaluation, including AI/digital transformation, turbulence and poly-crises, democratic challenges, and complex transboundary problems. 2) Understand anticipatory governance and strategic foresight as emerging approaches to future-proof policymaking and build adaptive capacity. 3) Evaluate emerging models for adaptive and experimental governance that enable learning, flexibility, and resilience in

uncertain environments. 4) Synthesize course learning to propose how delivery and evaluation practices should evolve to meet future challenges.

- Tom Christensen and Per Lægreid (2025). "Future Challenges of Public Administration". In: *Public Performance & Management Review* 0.0, pp. 1–26

- Geert Bouckaert et al., eds. (2025). *Futures for the Public Sector*. Open Access. Leuven: Leuven University Press, p. 400. ISBN: 9789461666246. DOI: 10.11116/9789461666246. URL: https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/99163

- Piret Tõnurist and Jamie Orlik (2025). *Towards Anticipatory Governance Guidelines for Public Sector Organisations*. OECD Working Papers on Public Governance 82. Paris: OECD Publishing. DOI: 10.1787/a5203d0b-en. URL: https://doi.org/10.1787/a5203d0b-en. **Read chapters 1, 2 and 3.**

- Brian W. Head (2022). *Wicked Problems in Public Policy: Understanding and Responding to Complex Challenges*. Open Access. Available under CC BY 4.0 license. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. vii + 176. ISBN: 978-3-030-94579-4. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-030-94580-0. URL: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-94580-0. **Read chapters 1, 2 and 3.**