This course is broadly concerned with political science research about policy processes. It will involve an exploration of the major theories of policy change, and will examine important empirical contributions to the field. The course will examine the micro-foundations of policy dynamics (models of decision-making), and explore policy agendas, the formation of public policies, and factors influencing agenda and policy change over time. It will emphasize process approaches of policy change rather than substantive issues (although we will find it impossible to study processes in a substantive vacuum).

While the course will focus primarily on the American politics literature, we will also examine policy processes in comparative perspective. The course will include working with the Policy Agendas datasets, now located at the University of Texas (policyagendas.org), and an introduction to the comparative policy agendas projects, now underway in nine European countries.

Requirements

Research Paper. Each student will develop a research paper that is related to one or more of the theoretical perspectives on policy processes discussed in the course. I am flexible about what you address, but it is necessary to get prior approval from me for whatever you decide to study. A proposal for the paper topic is due the 6th week of the semester. Each student will make a brief formal presentation to the class on his or her research project.

Class organizer. Each student will serve as a class organizer at least once during the term, with responsibility to provide the class an overview of issues and a discussion framework. Class organizers will make available to the class a short paper summarizing the up-coming discussion.

Take-home examination. A take-home exam will be distributed on March 22nd, and will be due back to the instructor on April 5th. It will approximate the policy process comprehensive exam in structure. The examination will cover material we have discussed up through March 22nd.

Grades will be allocated on the following activities:
(1) the proposal for a paper topic (10%);
(2) the take-home examination (30%)
(3) the independent research paper due and presentation (40%)
(4) class organization and class participation (20%).

**Students with disabilities:** Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259, [http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/](http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/).

**Statement regarding academic dishonesty:** A statement regarding UT Honor Code (or statement of ethics) and an explanation or example of what constitutes plagiarism (Link to University Honor Code: [http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/gi09-10/ch01/index.html](http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/gi09-10/ch01/index.html))

**Course Materials**

Available at the Co-Op:


Schedule of Sessions

January 18th: Policy Studies as a Field of Inquiry

Smith and Larimer, Chapters 1 and 2.


January 25th: The Microfoundations of Policy Process Theories

Smith and Larimer, Chapter 3


February 1st: Interest Groups, Policy Subsystems and Advocacy Coalitions

Smith and Larimer, Chapter 4.


**February 8th: Issue Definition and Social Construction**


**February 15th: Agenda Setting and the Expansion of Political Conflict**


Nikolaos Zahariadis, “Ambiguity, Time, and Multiple Streams,” Chapter 4 in Sabatier *Theories of the Policy Process*.


**February 22nd: Punctuated Equilibrium, Budgeting, and the Processing of Information**


March 1\textsuperscript{st}: Policy Diffusion

**Paper proposal due**


Boushey, Graeme. 2008. *Diffusion Dynamics*.


March 8\textsuperscript{th}: Causation and Measurement


March 15\textsuperscript{th}: No CLASS; Spring Break

March 22\textsuperscript{nd}: Institutional and Policy Design

Smith and Larimer, Chapters 3 and 8


March 29\textsuperscript{th}: NO CLASS; Midwest Political Science Association Meetings

April 5\textsuperscript{th}: Comparative Political Analysis

**Take-home exam due.**

Peruse the Comparative Agendas Project website: *(http://www.comparativeagendas.org/)*


April 12th: Policy Design and Implementation

Smith and Larimer, Chapters 5, 6 and 7.


April 19th: Public Opinion, Institutions, Political Parties, and Public Policy

Mortensen, Peter. 2009. Political Attention and Public Spending in the US. *Policy Studies Journal*


**April 26th: Policy Ideas and Policy Results**


May 3rd **Paper presentations**

May 9th **(Monday): Paper due**