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 April 11th, and will be due back to the instructor on April 18th. It will approximate the policy process comprehensive exam in structure.

Grades will be allocated on the following activities:

(1) proposal for a paper topic (10%);
(2) take-home examination (30%)
(3) 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 17th: Policy Studies as a Field of Inquiry

Smith and Larimer, Chapters 1 and 2.


January 24th: The Microfoundations of Policy Process Theories

Smith and Larimer, Chapter 3


January 31st: Interest Groups, Policy Subsystems and Advocacy Coalitions

Smith and Larimer, Chapter 4.


February 7th: Issue Definition and Social Construction


Max Rose and Frank Baumgartner. 2012. Framing the Poor.

February 14th: Agenda Setting and the Expansion of Political Conflict

Peruse the Policy Agendas website (http://www.policyagendas.org/)

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


February 21st: Punctuated Equilibrium, Budgeting, and the Processing of Information


**February 28th: Policy Diffusion**

**Paper proposal due**


**March 7th: Causation and Measurement**


**March 14th: No CLASS; Spring Break**

**March 21st: Institutional and Policy Design**

Smith and Larimer, Chapters 3 and 8


March 28th: Policy Design and Implementation

Smith and Larimer, Chapters 5, 6 and 7.


April 4th: Comparative Political Analysis

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


**April 11th and April 18th: Public Opinion, Institutions, Political Parties, and Public Policy**


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


**April 25th: Policy Termination and Modification**


**May 2nd **Paper presentations**

**May 6th **(Monday): Paper due