

POSC 6954
Policy and Evaluation

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Office hours: T/Th 9:00-10:00
Spring 2013
T/Th 12:30-3:00

Course Description

This is a graduate seminar on public policy and program evaluation. The first half of the course will focus on the policy process and will cover both domestic and international policies. We will: (1) explore how institutions, ideas, and individuals determine which policies emerge (2) examine assumptions about individual and institutional behavior that underpin popular theories of policy impact (3) explain why some efforts at policy change are more successful than others and (4) describe the ways in which policy decisions shape future politics. The second half of the course focuses on program evaluation. You will learn the basic evaluation tools that are used in the policy world to assess the causal effects of program interventions. We will apply these evaluation skills to examine case studies in a variety of policy areas such as education, public health and finance.

Note: This class will meet twice a week (T/Th from 12:30-3:00) for eight weeks (1/15-3/5).

Objectives

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- Assess how institutions constrain policy choices, and how the intersections among institutions, ideas and actors help explain paths of development and shifts in the policy agenda;
- Explain assumptions about individual and institutional behavior that underpin specific policy proposals;
- Evaluate the quality of impact assessments and other program evaluations;
- Diagnose a problem, formulate a policy proposal and develop a feasible plan for program evaluation;
- Present analysis and recommendations in both written and oral form.

Course Policies

- *Academic dishonesty.* All written work should be your own and you must cite sources appropriately. I expect familiarity with Marquette's policies on academic honesty. Plagiarism on any of the written assignments will result in an "F" in the course (not just the assignment).
- *Late work.* With the exception of a catastrophic event, I do not accept late work.
- *Email.* Please use proper email etiquette. I will do my best to send you a prompt response. Please note that I am generally offline after 9 pm.
- *Course readings.* I reserve the right to adjust the syllabus as the course proceeds.
- *Disability accommodations.* Students requiring disability accommodations should register with the relevant campus office. I will be happy to accommodate in compliance with the ADA and Marquette University policy.

Required texts

Banerjee, Abhijit and Esther Duflo. 2011. *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty*. New York: PublicAffairs. [BD]

Additional course readings (articles and book chapters) will be available on D2L.

Course Requirements

- *Participation.* The success of this course depends on your participation. I have high expectations for participation in a graduate seminar. Students must complete all readings before our meeting and come prepared to discuss the material. **10%**
- *Weekly Discussion Questions.* Before each class meeting, students are required to submit two questions to help guide our discussion and must post them to D2L no later than noon the day of our meeting. **10%**
- *Critical essay.* Graduate students in the class will be assigned to write one critical essay during meetings 2-7. This is an *analytical* essay. It should engage important concepts, themes, questions or tensions in the readings. It is not a summary of the readings. Questions to help guide you in this exercise are provided below. Your essay should be approximately two pages, single-spaced and should be posted to the class email list as an attachment no later than 24 hours before our class meeting. **20%**
- *Commentary on critical essay:* One graduate student will be assigned to comment on each critical essay. In your commentary, do not summarize the essay or assigned readings. You should use your time to respond to the essay. For example, you might elaborate on the essay, question its assumptions, present counterarguments, or use it to develop a discussion question. Remarks should be 5-8 minutes in length, and cannot exceed 10 minutes. **10%**
- *Policy memo.* Over the course of class meetings 8-13 you will be assigned to write two policy memos, each worth 10% of your grade. Memos should be no longer than two, double-spaced pages. I will post a specific question about the readings to answer in the policy memo. These memos will not require any research outside of the assigned readings, but it may be helpful to draw upon your knowledge of current events or substantive policy area. Guidance on how to write a memo is provided at the end of the syllabus. **20%**
- *Student presentations.* During the last week of class you will prepare one presentation on a policy issue. Additional guidance on this assignment will be provided later in the semester. **15%**
- *Final exam.* You will have a final take-home exam. **15%**

Grading scale

94-100 A

88-93 AB

82-87 B

77-81 BC

72-76 C

66-71 CD

62-65 D

62 and below F

Preparing to participate

To prepare for class, read each selection and try to answer each of the following questions in a sentence or two: (1) What is the main argument? (2) What is the evidence? (3) Does the evidence support the propositions of the argument? (4) Does this tell us anything important about the policy process? (5) Can you challenge the argument or come up with an alternative argument? Some of our readings do not present empirical evidence; omit questions two and three in those cases. I have also included several introductory questions under each topic below. Think about them as you prepare, and try to write down

your responses to them in a few sentences. If you can do these things, you are very well prepared for class (and off to a great start for the exam and other assignments).

Calendar

1/15: Introduction

Can you take politics out of policy analysis?

Deborah Stone. 1988. *Policy Paradox and Political Reason*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Company. Pp.1-26.

Alan Blinder. 1997. "Is Government Too Political?" *Foreign Affairs*. 76 (November/December): 115-126.

Case study: Welfare Reform

Joe Soss. 1999. "Lessons of Welfare: Policy Design, Political Learning, and Political Action." *American Political Science Review*. 93(2): 363-81.

Joe Soss and Sanford F. Schram. 2008. "Coloring the Terms of Membership: Reinventing the Divided Citizenry in an Era of Neoliberal Paternalism." In D. Harris and A.C. Lin, eds. 2008. *The Colors of Poverty: Why Racial and Ethnic Disparities Persist*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation. Pp.293-322.

1/17: Institutions

How are institutions situational standpoints for choice and action? How does institutional design affect prospects for policy reform?

Philip G. Zimbardo. 2004. "A Situationist Perspective on the Psychology of Evil: Understanding How Good People Are Transformed into Perpetrators." In Arthur Miller, ed. *The Social Psychology of Good and Evil: Understanding our Capacity for Kindness and Cruelty*. New York: Guilford.

Michael N. Barnett. 1997. "The UN Security Council, Indifference, and Genocide in Rwanda." *Cultural Anthropology*. 12(4): 551-78. Pages 551-562 are required, the rest is optional.

Greif, Avner and Guido Tabellini. 2010. "Cultural and institutional bifurcations: China and Europe compared." *American Economic Review, Papers and Proceedings*, vol. 100: pp. 135-140

Suzanne Mettler. 2010. "Reconstituting the Submerged State: The Challenges of Social Policy Reform in the Obama Era." *Perspectives on Politics*. 8(3): 803-824.

Case Study: Financial Reform

Watch in-class: *Frontline: The Warning*

Daniel Carpenter. 2010. "Institutional Strangulation: Bureaucratic Politics and Financial Reform in the Obama Administration." *Perspectives on Politics*. 8(3): 825-46.

1/22: Ideas

According to Scott, why are states' efforts to improve society so often unsuccessful? What assumptions about individual behavior are implicit in Hardin's argument? How are those assumptions challenged by Ostrom? Why is practical knowledge useful? How do ideas about individual and institutional behavior shape policy choice?

James C. Scott. 1998. "Introduction" and "Cities, People, and Language." *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. Pp.1-8, 53-83. [available online through Raynor library]

Hardin, Garrett. 1968. "The Tragedy of the Commons." *Science* 162: 1243-1248

Ostrom, Elinor, et al. 1999. "Revisiting the Commons: Local Lessons, Global Challenges." *Science* 284: 278-282.

Case study: Economic Growth and Development

Dollar, David, and Aart Kraay. 2002. "Growth Is Good for the Poor." *Journal of Economic Growth* 7(3): 195-225. (Read through page 14)

Datt, Gaurav, and Martin Ravallion. 2002. "Is India's Economic Growth Leaving the Poor Behind?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 16(3): 89-108.

1/24: Social Construction

What do Schneider and Ingram mean by "social construction"? How are social constructions related to policy design?

Anne Schneider and Helen Ingram. 1993. "Social Construction of Target Populations: Implications for Politics and Policy." *American Political Science Review* 87: 334-47.

Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad. 2007. "The Post-9/11 *Hijab* as Icon." *Sociology of Religion*. 68(3): 253-67.

Ange-Marie Hancock, 2003. "Contemporary Welfare Reform and the Public Identity of the 'Welfare Queen'" *Race, Gender & Class* 10(1): 31-59.

Case study: Obesity

Paul Campos et al. 2006. "The Epidemiology of Overweight and Obesity: Public Health Crisis or Moral Panic?" *International Journal of Epidemiology*. 35: 55-60.

Paul Campos. 2013. "[Our Absurd Fear of Fat](#)" *The New York Times* [January 2].

1/29: Political Discourse and Policy Change

What affects the timing of policy reform? Why do we need causal stories? How does the choice of causal story affect the policy agenda?

John W. Kingdon. 2002. "The Policy Window, and Joining the Streams." *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies*. 2nd ed. Addison-Wesley. 165-95.

Deborah A. Stone. 1989. "Causal Stories and the Formation of Policy Agendas," *Political Science Quarterly* 104 (Summer): 281-300.

Matt Bai. 2005. "The Framing Wars." *The New York Times Magazine*. July 17.

Case study: Criminal justice policy

Kelling, George and James Q. Wilson. 1982. "Broken Windows." *The Atlantic Magazine* (March).

Zeoli, April M., et al. 2012. "Homicide as Infectious Disease: Using Public Health Methods to Investigate the Diffusion of Homicide." *Justice Quarterly*

Drum, Kevin. 2013. "[America's Real Criminal Intent: Lead](#)." *Mother Jones* [February].

1/31: Performance-Based Government

Why has performance-based government become so popular? Can standards improve program performance? What are some of the challenges to designing an effective performance-based system?

Donald P. Moynihan. 2010. "The Promises and Paradoxes of Performance-based Bureaucracy" in *The Oxford Handbook of American Bureaucracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp. 278-302.

Case Study: The debate over education reform

Background materials on "[Accountability](#)" and "[No Child Left Behind](#)" *Education Week*

Gamaron, Adam. "Introduction: Can Standards-Based Reform Help Reduce the Poverty Gap in Education?" In *Standards-Based Reform and the Poverty Gap: Lessons for "No Child Left Behind."* Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Chetty, Raj, John N. Friedman, and Jonah E. Rockoff. 2012. "[Great Teaching: Measuring its effects on students' future earnings](#)." *EducationNext* (Summer)

Gillum, Jack and Marisol Belo. 2011. "[When Standardized test scores soared in D.C., were the gains real?](#)" *USA Today* March 30.

Ravitch, Diane. 2012. "[Schools we can envy](#)" and "[How, and how not, to improve the schools.](#)" *The New York Review of Books*.

*Recommended:

Thomas S. Dee and Brian Jacob. 2011. "The Impact of No Child Left Behind on Student Achievement." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 30(3): 418-446. [skim]

Chetty, Raj, John N. Friedman, and Jonah E. Rockoff. 2011. "[The Long-Term Impacts of Teachers: Teacher Value-Added and Student Outcomes in Adulthood.](#)" NBER Working Paper 17699. [skim]

2/5: Citizen Engagement and Policy Feedback

Can the relationship between technical and social knowledge be improved? Should we make governance more participatory? How can policy design shape the practice of citizenship?

Frank Fischer. 2009. *Democracy & Expertise: Reorienting Policy Inquiry*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. Pp. 48-103.

Martha S. Feldman and Anne Khademian. 2007. "The Role of the Public Manager in Inclusion: Creating Communities of Participation." *Governance* 20(2): 305-24.

Suzanne Mettler and Joe Soss, "The Consequences of Public Policy for Democratic Citizenship: Bridging Policy Studies and Mass Politics," *Perspectives on Politics* 2 (1): 54-73.

Case study: Policing and Schooling in Chicago

Archon Fung. 2004. *Empowered Participation: Reinventing Urban Democracy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 1-14, 220-42. [available online through Raynor library]

2/7: Introduction to Policy Evaluation

What is a program evaluation? What are some of the challenges faced by program evaluators? How many different research designs did you count in the studies discussed by Odell? How do they differ? What are they all trying to explain? What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of the different research designs?

Rossi, Peter H., Mark W. Lipsey, and Howard E. Freeman. 2004. *Evaluation: A Systematic Approach* (7th ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. Pp. 1-30.

Odell, Kathleen. 2010. "Measuring the Impact of Microfinance." Grameen Foundation Publication Series.

Case Study: Poverty and Development

BD, Chapter 1 "Think Again, Again" and Chapter 2 "A Billion Hungry People"

2/12-2/14: Foundations of Causal Inference

What is an impact assessment? How does it differ from other types of evaluations? How do evaluators estimate causal effects?

Rossi, Peter H., Mark W. Lipsey, and Howard E. Freeman. 2004. *Evaluation: A Systematic Approach* (7th ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. Pp. 31-65.

Barbara Schneider et al., *Estimating Causal Effects: Using Experimental and Observational Designs*. Washington, D.C.: American Educational Research Association. Pp. 1-37.

Case study: Public Health

BD, Chapter 3 "Low-Hanging Fruit"

2/19: Asking the Right Questions

What makes a good evaluation question? How can logic models be used to elucidate program theory and assumptions? How can we use data visualization to explain technical information to non-technical audiences?

Rossi, Peter H., Mark W. Lipsey, and Howard E. Freeman. 2004. *Evaluation: A Systematic Approach* (7th ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. Pp. 67-99, 133-168.

Take a look at [2012: The Year in Graphs](#)

And this one too: [2012: The Year in Graphics](#)

Watch in class: Hans Rosling: [Stats that reshape your worldview](#)

Case study: Education and Public Health

BD, Chapter 4 “Top of the Class” and Chapter 5 “Pak Sudarno’s Big Family”

2/21: Policy Tools: Microcredit and Microfinance

Can you express the theory behind microcredit and microfinance tools in a “logic model”? How are the economics of lending to the poor “not so easy”? How does microcredit work? What is the value of saving? What are the constraints to saving? How have researchers tried to evaluate the success of these policy tools?

BD, Chapter 7 “The Men from Kabul and the Eunuchs from India” and Chapter 8 “Saving Brick by Brick”

2/26: Policy Actors: Social Entrepreneurs and Social Impact Bonds

What role do social entrepreneurs play in the policy landscape? What barriers do social entrepreneurs face? What are social impact bonds? What types of policies are they most appropriate for? Are there examples of “collective impact” here in Milwaukee?

Bornstein, David. 2012. “[Moving Forward in Tough Times.](#)” *The New York Times*. December 12.

Liebman, Jeffrey. 2011. “[Social Impact Bonds: A promising new financial model to accelerate social innovation and improve government performance.](#)” Center for American Progress

Dichter, Sasha, et al. 2013. “Closing the Pioneer Gap.” *Stanford Social Innovation Review* Winter.

Kania, John and Mark Kramer. 2011. “Collective Impact.” *Stanford Social Innovation Review* Winter.

See also: [Channeling Change: Making Collective Impact Work](#)

2/28: Guest Speakers

3/5: Student Presentations