UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY AND GOVERNANCE
WINTER 2014

PPG 1001H
THE POLICY PROCESS

SECTION L0101: CG 150 14 Queen's Park Crescent West THURS 2-4 pm
Instructor: Prof. Linda White
Office: CG 305
Office Hours: Thursdays 1:00-2:00 or by appointment
Telephone: 416-978-2857
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SECTION L0102: CG 150 14 Queen's Park Crescent West FRIDAY 10 am – 12 noon
Instructor: Prof. Phil Triadafilopoulos
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Office Hours: Fridays 1:00-2:00 or by appointment
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SECTION L0103: CG 361 14 Queen's Park Crescent West FRIDAY 10 am – 12 noon
Instructor: Prof. Linda White
Office: CG 305
Office Hours: Fridays 12:00-1:00 or by appointment
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Course Synopsis and Objectives:

This core course in the MPP program aims to help students understand the principal drivers of policy-making in contemporary (mainly North American liberal) democracies. We survey contending theories of public policy, identify key actors and institutions, and review a range of policy instruments used to address contemporary public problems. We also consider theories of agenda setting, policy formulation, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation/learning and how they relate to policy problems. We conclude by discussing the place of ethics and democracy in the policy process and in evaluations of good public policy.

A central theme and indeed assumption in public policy analysis is that policy makers arrive at their decisions using rational decision making processes and techniques. This course asks how well rational models serve public policy makers. Is decision making according to rational models an accurate descriptor of what policy makers do? Are policies rationally deduced responses to objective “problems”? Do rational policy models help to account for policy change (or stasis)? How do distinctly political and/or ideological factors shape policymakers’ thinking and praxis? To illustrate these themes, the theories of public policy-making analyzed and discussed in class are applied to specific cases in comparative public policy.

The course is divided into three parts:

Part one, comprising the first four weeks, focuses on theory and concept development. We will probe theories of human motivation and decision making with an eye to considering whether individual level theories can be extrapolated to groups and how institutions constrain or enable
individual and group decision making. Students will complete a short analytic assignment to ensure they understand this foundational component of the course.

Part two builds on this theoretical and conceptual work. It focuses on the first stages of the policy process, agenda-setting and policy formulation, and exposes students to theories of the policy process that seek to capture the role of actors, ideas, and institutions. We will meet in plenary to consider how policy process theories can apply to the case of immigration reform in Canada and the United States. The aim of this session will be to draw together and make sense of the role of actors, ideas, and institutions.

Part three encourages students to apply concepts introduced in the course to analyze the latter stages of the policy process involving decision making, particularly around instrument choice, as well as policy evaluation. Students will complete a research paper and group presentation on a policy case that highlights one of the following themes related to policy implementation and evaluation: instrument choice; efficiency and effectiveness evaluation versus ethical evaluation; and dilemmas of democratic participation in policy making.

What Students Can Expect to Learn

- Theories of human motivation and decision making
- The role of contending ideas and ideologies and their influence on policy making
- The role of institutions in enabling and constraining policy making
- The components of the policy process (and the interaction of ideas, institutions, and actors along with theories of instrument choice and evaluation)
- Analytical and creative problem solving

The course assignments are designed to link theory with more practically oriented problem solving, so that students learn how to think critically about policy analysis while improving their written and oral presentation skills. We also wish to encourage students to think through how theory relates to real world problems and solutions and, in so doing, hopefully expand their intellectual horizons.

Required Readings:

All required and recommended readings are posted on Blackboard. The required readings should be read in advance of class. Recommended readings are just that: recommended to help you think through a given concept, theory, or case. We have done our best to limit the amount of required reading you must complete in advance of class sessions; recommended readings are helpful for enlarging the canvass of ideas germane to a week’s theme. It is up to you to decide on how much of the recommended reading you wish to cover.

Should Blackboard encounter glitches, please be aware that all journal articles and even some books are available electronically via the University of Toronto’s E-library system. Most articles can also be accessed through a simple Google search of the article title.
**Course Requirements:** Grades for this course will be based on the following requirements:

**Problem Analysis**  
Due in class 6/7 Feb 2014  
Voluntary tutorial 3 Feb 2014 (times TBA)  
20%

**Policy Analysis Assignment (consists of THREE components):**

1. Group presentation outline Due in class 27/28 Feb 2014  
10%

2. Group presentations presented in class in weeks 11 and 12  
30%

3. Final paper individually written but based on group presentation topic:  
Due Monday 14 April 2014 at SPPG reception 4:30 pm  
30%

**Engagement:**  
Cumulative throughout term  
10%

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**Problem Analysis**  
*Maple syrup wars*

The problem analysis assignment should be 5 pages maximum double-spaced, 12 point font, one-inch margins. It is due in class 6/7 February 2014.

**NOTE:** A voluntary tutorial to help prepare the problem analysis has been scheduled for Monday 3 February 2014; times TBA.

Based on course reading and what you learn during class and tutorial discussions, write a problem analysis that identifies the central policy challenge faced by Quebec maple syrup producers as reported in the following articles:


Provide a diagnosis of the behavioural foundations of this challenge and note the effects of institutions. Be sure to clearly define the concepts you discuss, differentiate the causes of the conflict, and discuss how institutions have shaped the outcomes discussed in the articles. Are there institutional solutions to the present impasse? Be sure to cite the theoretical and empirical literature that you draw on for the analysis. You are free to use whatever citation style you are comfortable with; only please use it correctly and consistently. In case you need a refresher, citation style tips can be found here:  
Policy Analysis Assignment

The purpose of this assignment is to encourage students to apply the theoretical content of the course to a practical case analysis.

Students will be divided into groups of groups of 5-6 to conduct the policy analysis and each group will select a question from the list provided at the end of the syllabus. Students will complete an individual research paper and group presentation on their respective policy problem. The group presentation and research paper should:

1. Clearly identify the problem or dilemma that policy makers face. You are required to do research to flesh out your understanding of the problem.

2. Explore how the theoretical material covered in class provides insight into the policy problem/dilemma. Which concepts are most useful for making sense of the problem?

3. Propose possible alternatives to deal with the policy problem, based on your understanding of theory and evidence. Students should take into account the interests, institutional and other constraints that shape the decision context in their particular case to ensure that their proposed remedies are practicable.

The group presentation tests the ability of the group to work together to develop a strong understanding of the problem and the theories that help make sense of it. Working together also tests your ability to come to a consensus as to the possible courses of action.

The final research paper provides the opportunity to students to demonstrate their individual creativity and problem solving skills.

Your grades will be based on an assessment of the scope, depth and overall quality of your research, the insightfulness of your policy analysis and recommendations, and your ability to creatively combine theory and evidence. All three of these components will be assessed in both the group presentations and your individual papers.

The faculty member will be grading the group presentations; additionally, though, students will be asked to provide a peer assessment that will be taken into account when assigning the presentation grade. We will provide you with score sheets to assist you in this peer assessment exercise. The feedback from peers, and not necessarily the scoring itself, will be most helpful and will be shared with the groups.

The policy analysis assignment involves THREE components:

1. Outline:

The group will provide a brief one-paragraph sketch of the policy problem and a list of theoretical and empirical sources that the group will use to prepare the policy analysis. As this is a research assignment, groups will be expected to provide an extensive bibliography of
theoretical and primary and secondary empirical sources such as newspaper articles, policy
documents, journal articles and books/book chapters. The grade on the assignment will be based
the clarity of your statement and the extensiveness of your research effort. Your individual mark
is the group mark. The outline is due in class 27/28 February 2014.

2. Group presentation:

Your group must prepare a concise power point presentation (10-15 slides). As noted above,
your presentation should demonstrate excellence in research, analysis, and problem solving. We
recommend you organize your presentation around the three objectives noted on p. 3 of the
syllabus. The grade for the presentation is a group grade; it is up to the group to decide whether
all group members will present the material or only some.

3. Final research paper:

Your final paper will be an individually written and graded but based on the research informing
the group presentation. Once again, your paper should address the three objectives noted on p. 3
of the syllabus but it should go beyond options to examine the trade-offs between them and your
own assessment

Length: Approximately 10 double-spaced pages, 12 point font, one-inch margins

Due: By 4:30 p.m. Monday 14 April 2014 at the third floor reception desk.

Engagement:

Quality class engagement is essential for the success of this course. Students are expected to
complete each week’s required readings in advance, attend every class, and be prepared to
critically engage readings during the course of class discussions. Incisive questions that increase
everyone’s understanding of the course material are as important as insightful comments.
Engagement is accordingly measured by actions including but not limited to (i) consistent
attendance (one cannot participate if one does not attend); (ii) being prepared for class; (iii) being
attentive to class discussion; (iv) raising thoughtful comments and questions in class; (v)
providing insight and analysis to the readings and discussions; (vi) attending office hours; (vii)
bringing relevant news articles and other materials to the attention of the class.

In order to ensure all students contribute to the class, attendance will be taken. It is the students’
responsibility to account for any absences, as unexplained and unexcused absences will be taken
into account in calculating the engagement grade. The breakdown of the engagement grade will
be as follows: one third for attendance, one third for the quantity of participation, and one third
for the quality of participation.

We would be very happy to provide more information about class requirements and expectations
and encourage you to attend office hours to go over these and any other questions that come to
mind. We are committed to making this a positive learning experience and encourage you to do
your best to contribute to the class.
FINE PRINT

Class Schedule:

Each class will start at 10 minutes past the hour and finish on the hour with no break. You are welcome to bring snacks and beverages to class. Each section will meet separately unless it is noted in the syllabus that we are meeting in plenary.

Late Assignments:

We expect students to turn in assignments on time. No exceptions are made except in the case of an adequately documented emergency. You must make a reasonable effort to contact your section faculty as soon as the problem arises to inform him/her of the problem, and present your written documentation when you return. It is at our discretion whether to accept the late assignment and/or attach a lateness penalty. If you do miss an assignment deadline, your grade for this component will be reduced by 3% for the first day and 1% per day thereafter, including weekends. Students are also strongly advised to keep rough and draft work and hard copies of their assignments. These should be kept until the marked assignments have been returned. All graded assignments are to be kept by students until the grades have been posted on ROSI.

Office Hours, Email Policy:

You are strongly encouraged to see us during office hours, or, if that is not possible, by appointment, to consult about the written assignments or class material or to talk about the course in general. We normally respond to email within 48 hours. Please note that email received during weekends and after business hours may take longer to answer, so do not leave your requests or queries until the last minute. Also, please do not submit course assignments via email.

Accessibility Needs:

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom, or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: disability.services@utoronto.ca or http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility.

A WARNING ABOUT PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is an academic offence with a severe penalty. It is essential that you understand what plagiarism is and that you do not commit it. In essence, it is the theft of the thoughts or words of others, without giving proper credit. You must put others’ words in quotation marks and cite your source(s). You must give citations when using others’ ideas, even if those ideas are paraphrased in your own words. Plagiarism is unacceptable in a university.
The University of Toronto provides a process that faculty members must initiate when they suspect a case of plagiarism. At the School of Public Policy and Governance, suspected evidence of plagiarism must be reported to the Director. A faculty member may not mark an assignment or assess a penalty if he or she finds evidence of plagiarism – the matter must be reported. The Director or Dean of the School of Graduate Studies will assess the penalty.

The following are some examples of plagiarism:

1. Submitting as your own an assignment written by someone else.
2. Quoting an author without indicating the source of the words.
3. Using words, sentences, or paragraphs written by someone else and failing to place quotation marks around the material and reference the source and author. **Using either quotation marks or reference alone is not sufficient. Both must be used!**
4. Adapting an author’s ideas or theme and using it as your own without referencing the original source.
5. Seeking assistance from a friend or family member in respect to work you claim as your own.

If you are not sure whether you have committed plagiarism, it is better to ask a faculty member than risk discovery and be forced to accept an academic penalty.

Plagiarism is **cheating**. It is considered a **serious offence** against intellectual honesty and intellectual property. Penalties can be **severe**.

At a minimum, a student is likely to receive a “0” mark for the assignment or test in question. But a further penalty is often assessed, such as a further reduction from the course mark or placing a permanent notation of the incident on an academic record.

For further information on the University’s Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters, see: [http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm](http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm).

**Some websites listed below on avoiding plagiarism and proper sourcing:**

Schedule of Seminar Topics and Readings

Week 1 (9/10 January) – Introduction: What Can Political Science Bring to Policy Analysis

How have political scientists incorporated understandings from economics, sociology, and psychology into policy studies? What unique insights does political science bring to policy? Is there a role for theory in policy studies?

Required reading:


PART ONE: DECISION THEORY

Week 2 (16/17 January) – Microfoundations I: Economic Theories of Human Motivation and Decision Making: Rational Choice

Many theorists assume that individuals are rational actors. What does that mean? What are the basic assumptions of rational choice theory? How have rationality assumptions influenced the ways in which we understand individual choice, group choice, cooperation, and collective action problems?

Required reading:


Recommended theory:


**Week 3 (23/24 January) Microfoundations II: Behavioural Economic Challenges to Rational Actor Models**

*What is “bounded rationality” and how does it affect preference formation? Are individuals always motivated by self-interest? What makes people obey rules? How do material incentives and social norms influence decision making?*

**Required reading:**


**Recommended theory:**


**Week 4 (30/31 January) – Structural Constraints on Rationality: The Role of Institutions**

*How do institutions structure/constrain/transform political decision making? Is it possible for individuals to produce coordinated and cooperative interactions without hierarchical authority?*
Required reading:


Recommended theory:


OPTIONAL TUTORIAL SESSIONS TO DISCUSS THE FIRST ASSIGNMENT
Monday 3 February 2014 (Times and locations TBA)

PART TWO: THE POLICY PROCESS

Week 5 (6/7 February) – Policy Process I: The Role of Interests in Policy Making

N.B.: PROBLEM ANALYSIS DUE IN CLASS!

What are the differences, if any, between individual and group decision making? How do individuals and groups act when they are dissatisfied? What kinds of influence do groups have in policy making? How do institutions affect interest group influence?
Required reading:


Recommended theory:


**Week 6 (13/14 February) – Policy Process II: Attitudes, Principled Beliefs, Policy Frames, and Political Ideologies in the Policy Process**

*The literature on ideas is both broad and deep. How can we separate out the effects of political attitudes, public opinion, programmatic ideas, principled beliefs, policy frames, and political ideologies on policy making? How do these various kinds of ideas interact with interests? Are policy makers responsive to political attitudes and public opinion or do they shape opinion?*

Required reading:


AND


Recommended theory:


**(20/21 February) READING WEEK – NO CLASS**

*Week 7 (28 February) Policy Process III: Tying it All Together: Agenda Setting, Policy Decision Making, and Explaining Policy Outcomes*

**N.B.: PRESENTATION OUTLINES DUE IN CLASS!**

**PLEASE NOTE THAT ALL SECTIONS OF THE COURSE ARE MEETING IN ONE PLENARY SESSION ON FRIDAY, 28 FEBRUARY IN GALBRAITH BUILDING (35 St. George Street) ROOM 119**

**CASE: Immigration Reform in Canada and the USA**

Required Reading:


Recommended theory:


**PART THREE: POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION**

**Week 8 (6/7 March) Policy Implementation and Evaluation I: Instrument Choice**

*How do policymakers influence people’s perceptions and actions? What policy tools or “instruments” are best suited to encouraging behaviour that is deemed appropriate and productive, especially in liberal-democratic contexts where over-regulation may be frowned on? When does “nudging” slip into ethically problematic manipulation?*

Required reading:


Recommend theory:


**Week 9 (13/14 March) – Policy Implementation and Evaluation II: Efficiency, Effectiveness, Ethics, and Morality**

*What criteria do we use to make and evaluate policy decisions? Should we reduce all considerations to dollars and cents, as per cost-benefit analysis, in order to arrive at rational policies? Or must we take other factors into consideration, to avoid ethically dubious positions?*

**Required reading:**


**Recommended theory:**


**Week 10 (20/21 March) – Policy Implementation and Evaluation III: Democracy, Decision Making, and Governance in the 21st Century**
Should policy be based on the insights of experts or the preferences of citizens? Can the tension between expertise and democracy be bridged? How might citizens be better informed and how might these informed citizens be integrated into the policy process?


Recommended theory:


Week 11 (27/28 March) –

GROUP PRESENTATIONS

Week 12 (3/4 April) –

GROUP PRESENTATIONS AND WRAP-UP
LIST OF TOPICS FOR POLICY ANALYSIS ASSIGNMENT:

(The linked articles are meant to help you get a sense of the topic)

Policy Implementation and Evaluation I: Instrument Choice

1. Is Mayor Bloomberg’s proposed ban on the sale of sugary drinks in containers larger than 16 fluid ounces a practicable way to combat obesity? See, e.g.: http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/oliver-burkemans-blog/2012/jul/10/bloomberg-soda-ban-new-york-freedom

2. Are shaming and denormalization initiatives such as the New York City ad campaign to reduce teen pregnancy useful policy tools? See, e.g.: http://brenebrown.com/2013/03/20/2013320meuitdwaubpgr9qt1xann3fwwa0sjo/ and http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/16/opinion/a-case-for-shaming-teenage-pregnancy.html?hp&_r=3&

3. Is changing the menu as per the Government of Ontario’s Healthy Schools initiative enough to get students to eat better?: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/healthyschools.html and http://fullcomment.nationalpost.com/2012/05/15/ontario-healthy-food-policy-runs-aground-on-shoals-of-student-eating-habits/

Policy Implementation and Evaluation II: Efficiency, Effectiveness, Ethics, Morality


5. A number of indexes evaluating universities based on cost-benefit analyses have emerged of late. Criteria used include whether students land jobs after graduation. Should universities be evaluated based on such criteria? E.g. http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/28/education/lists-that-rank-colleges-value-are-on-the-rise.html

Policy Implementation and Evaluation III: Democracy, Decision Making, and Governance in the 21st Century

