POLITICAL SCIENCE 620
PROSEMINAR IN PUBLIC POLICY
FALL TERM 2013
PROFESSOR ROCKMAN
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OFFICE HOURS: 3:00-5:00 TH & BY APPT.

Introduction to the Proseminar

The proseminar in public policy is designed to be a foundational course from the standpoint of acquainting graduate students with approaches to and theories of public policy, including the formation of public policies, the processes by which public policies are made, and the implementation of policies. In reality, policies take concrete expression as programs and through administration. Consequently, we will be concerned with defining just precisely what a public policy is and, among other things, how we can distinguish intent from practice. We also will want to know whether the absence of articulated policy is itself a policy. Ineluctably, institutions, interest groups, and administration all become a crucial part of how policies get designed and implemented. By virtue of that, it is inevitable that comparisons across institutional settings are necessary. To some extent, therefore, we will find ourselves cross-walking between general theories about policy and institutional variabilities that are likely to influence policy outcomes. We will also note that policy domains themselves may be highly variable and that policy domains may vary markedly within the same institutional setting. Thus, different policy contexts may produce strikingly different policymaking capabilities.

Another part of the policy process that is critical is evaluation. How can we know whether or not a policy is working as intended or not? Yet, we are rarely dispassionate about policy even if we are often confused about the details. Where we have strong priors or powerful frames of reference and values, the struggle over how evaluation is used becomes intense. In political debates as in US courts of law, advocates often cherry pick the evidence to support their case, whether intentionally or not. Although uncertainty often clouds choices and projected outcomes, we usually have certainty about our passions and preferences.

Assignments

There will be one major written assignment. This will be in the form of a take home examination. You will have close to two weeks to complete it. Your mastery of the literature and ability to synthesize and analyze it will be evaluated, especially as it relates to applied policy issues. This final paper will account for 80% of your grade. In addition, after the first week or two a student or two will be responsible for preparing an analytic guide to the literature of that week (a short paper of about 5-8 pps. provided 24 hours in advance of the seminar to me and to your classmates) and presenting that (not reading from your paper) in class. I will also appoint a responder for each presentation. We will begin these on the week of Sept. 3. They will be done in the second half of each session. The presentations and responses will constitute 15% of your overall grade. The remaining 5% of your grade will be determined by your level and quality of class participation.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the appropriation of someone else’s intellectual work without attribution. It is a form of intellectual property theft and cheating. It is not tolerated by the university or by me. If you have any
doubts as to whether you may be crossing the borderline, please consult me. Sanctions for plagiarism violations are severe.

**Books to be purchased:**


Other readings noted by an asterisk (*) can be found through Purdue University resources or archival resources such as J-STOR which you can access through your Purdue account.

**POL 620 Reading & Topical Assignments – Fall 13**

**Aug. 20 – Introduction to Course**

**Aug. 27 & Sept. 3 – Frames of Reference, Values, Rationality, Community, Politics**

Reading:


**Sept. 10 – Policy Paradigms**

Reading:


Reading:


Sept. 24 – *Theories of the Policy Process – Part 2 – Garbage Can & Multiple Streams Theories*

Reading:


Oct. 1 – *Theories of the Policy Process – Part 3 – Social Construction and Advocacy Theories*

Reading:


Oct. 8 – *Fall Break*

Oct. 15 -- *Networks and Innovation-Diffusion Models*

Reading:


Oct. 22 -- **Comparative Analysis and Theory**

Reading:


Oct. 29 -- **Comparative Policy: Explanations**

Reading:


Nov. 5 -- **Cases**

Reading:


Nov. 12 -- **Policy Analytics – Science, Values, and Politics -- Part 1**

Reading:


Nov. 19 -- **Policy Analytics – Uncertainty and Priors – Part 2**


Nov. 26 -- **Summing Up**

(no reading 😊)

**Final Papers Handed Out – Nov. 26; Due Back Dec. 10 by 6:00 P.M.**