

POLI 718 Agenda Setting, Baumgartner, Spring 2017

Questions for week 4, Kingdon and Cohen, March, and Olsen

Consider the following questions for discussion and for potential paper topics.

1. Review the first few pages of Cohen March and Olsen. (That is, you can ignore the fortran code!) Re-describe the model in plain English. Kingdon then makes some revisions, simplifying the model. Why? Are those fundamental revisions, or is Kingdon's model still "in the spirit of" the original?
2. Review what is meant by "organized anarchy." The theory is *not* supposed to apply to all organizations or decision-making environments, for example where the tasks are clear or where the technology is well understood. What is the range of applicability for this theory? Give some examples of where clarity is more clear, and a few examples where you believe the model should indeed be applicable. What about a university? Small town? The UN? Large city? State Corrections Department? A shoe store? A small accounting firm? An MLB team? A McDonald's franchise?
3. The model asserts an important role for randomness. What are the implications of this? Can the model be tested? How? What standard political science hypothesis testing approaches cannot be used?
4. Are problems really completely disconnected from solutions? That is, is there really *no* constraint between solutions and problems, or is there in fact some moderate constraint in the real world? What are the implications of this? How does it compare to a comprehensively rational approach, no matter what the answer?
5. Review the research and fieldwork that Kingdon undertook. How does he use his evidence? How convincing is it? How else could the topic be addressed?
6. Kingdon says the media play very little role in this process. Discuss.
7. Consider the reasons why Kingdon's book has been so influential. Consider the reasons why so little research has been done along similar lines to what Kingdon actually did. That is, those who cite Kingdon don't typically engage in a similar research process; why is that? Compare to Bachrach and Baratz.