

PLSC 497, Fall 2005

Notes for October 3, 2005

Exam on Wednesday:

- 10 percent of your final grade. Study!
- Format:
 - identifications (2 sentence answers; 1 sentence to identify the item; 1 sentence to explain its political or public policy relevance)
 - Short answers (1 paragraph to answer the question)
 - Short essays (a few paragraphs to answer the question, covering more than one side)

Ideas for study topics:

What is public policy?

Rationales for government involvement:

- Public goods, private goods, and stuff in between
- Market failures
- Social demands
- Hurricane Katrina. Is a purely private sector response being discussed? Why not?

Peculiarities, special features of the US public policy making system:

- Separation of powers
- Federalism
- Bicameralism
- Executive Branch agencies, independent commissions, independent regulatory agencies, etc.
- MANY venues of public policy

Federal, State, and Local public policies. Note that many policies are typically housed at different levels of government. Some are shared between more than one level. Think of how it works in various policy areas: Exclusive (at what level of government) or shared (between which levels, and on what basis)?

- Defense
- Foreign policy
- Environment
- Health
- Social security
- Transportation
- Higher education
- K-12 education
- Police protection and crime control

- Etc.

Subgovernments, issue-networks, iron-triangles, government by the vested interests only

- Baumgartner's angle on this: has to do w/ agenda-setting. When things are off the agenda, watch out!
- Examples of areas of public policy where most people don't know much or care much about what is going on. Army Corps of Engineers as an example of that. (Things change!)

Theories of the policy process

- Elite theory
- Group theory, pluralism

Policy Process Model, the "Policy Cycle"

- Agenda-setting
- Policy formation
- Legitimation, decision-making, enactment
- Implementation
- Evaluation
- Policy Change, feedback, inputs into the next "cycle"
- Does it really work like this? No. Why do you have to learn it? These different processes occur, just all at the same time or sometimes out of order.

Multiple agendas:

- Public or systemic agenda (what is on people's minds)
- Institutional agenda: what govt institutions are doing (in general)
- Media agenda, congressional agenda, presidential, court, gubernatorial, mayoral, etc. Each institution can have its own agenda
- These various agendas may or may not correspond. They may or may not follow or lead the public agenda. Should they? What about the agendas of specialized policy communities of experts, such as those knowledgeable about student financial aid programs? Should they be attuned to different agendas, or should they work independently?

Problem definition, framing, etc.

- Examples of rival frames of the same issue. Are these "sincere" or are they purely cynical and strategic? Why do they matter?

Policy Instruments:

- Regulation of private sector or individual behavior (examples?)
- Direct government provision of services (examples?)
- Taxing and spending
- User fees, self-financing, excise taxes
- General funds, redistribution through income tax
- Market mechanisms

- Education and propaganda, “bully pulpit” of the President

Policy Analysis

- Values that support larger government in general
- Values that support smaller government in general
- Values that affect a given policy problem (examples)
- Scientific / objective / researchable facts that affect a given policy problem
 - Extent of the problem
 - Feasibility of the various solutions
 - How these are often relatively narrow compared to the scope of the entire problem