

Baumgartner, Poli 718, Agenda-Setting, Spring 2014

Questions for week 4, on Agendas and Instability:

Note: Class this week is on Friday at 3:30 to 6:00 in Hamilton 271.

Readings: Baumgartner and Jones, Eldridge and Gould.

1. Discuss the decision to focus on longitudinal change over long periods of time. What theoretical topics is this design especially well suited for? Poorly suited?
2. Consider the lack of interviews and the questions that are not addressed because of this.
3. Choose the public policy issue (such as nuclear power, pesticides, etc.) that you think is best described or most theoretically interesting. Discuss why we should have written a whole book about that case, rather than discussing several cases in less detail, as we did. What more could have been illustrated with longer case studies? What is the comparative advantage of a book about one such topic as compared to the book we wrote?
4. Consider the information about structural changes in chapters 9, 10 and 11 and compare the focus there to the focus in chapters 4 through 8. What do we gain from the addition of Part Three? Why not have a whole book just on that topic? What did we gain from Part Two?
5. Consider the theoretical conclusions about the nature of change. What are the normative implications of this model of punctuated equilibrium? Is the system responsive to democratic inputs? What is the role of leadership in this model? Is it a left-wing, right-wing, or ideologically neutral model?
6. Discuss the question of predictive and explanatory power in this model.
7. Review the discussion of methods of studying policy change, from chapter 3. What would be logical next steps in this literature, now that this study has been done?
8. There is a lot in this book about how positive feedback processes get going in the first place. Discuss. How do you know when this is going to happen / is happening?
9. Do we political scientists care if Eldredge and Gould are controversial in the field of evolution? Should we?