

POLI 718 Agenda Setting, Baumgartner, Spring 2017

Questions for week 5, Agendas and Instability

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

1. Compare our research design to that of Kingdon. He did interviews and covered 4 years. We used archival and media sources and covered longer time periods. He did two big issue domains, we did individual policies, covering about nine altogether in different levels of detail. To what degree are the findings and foci of the two books derived from the research designs?
2. 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?
3. 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?
4. 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?
5. Discuss the question of predictive and explanatory power in this model. Compare to Kingdon. Compare to Gaventa.
6. 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?
7. 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?
8. Do we political scientists care if Eldredge and Gould are controversial in the field of evolution? Should we?