Poli 891
Spring 2010
Prof. Baumgartner

Questions for Week 2, January 25. Write a one-page paper on one of the topics below and use these topic questions to prepare for class discussion as you do the readings.

Readings: Bachrach and Baratz, Downs, Cobb, Ross, and Ross, and Walker.

1. Bachrach and Baratz make one of those arguments that everyone dutifully cites, then ignores. In fact, their article is the number one most cited article in the entire history of the APSR. Come to class with / describe in a few paragraphs each two serious proposals of how to design a study of the "second face" of power.

2. What are the routes to agenda-access described by Cobb, Ross, and Ross? Is their set of models complete? What are the difficulties in applying this perspective? Can it be used as a guide for research? What routes are likely to be most common?

3. Downs was dead wrong: The environment never went away as a political problem. Evaluate the importance of this article in light of this. Why is his point still influential?

4. Discuss the methods developed by Walker in his article. Why were these not picked up more systematically by others? Or have they been? Can they be done more easily now, given electronic searches of various databases? How hard would it be to replicate his study today? Could you do it in an afternoon? A week?

5. Many of the authors this week discuss issues that would seem to be related to framing or issue-definition. Do any of them discuss this explicitly? How is the work related to this question?

6. Schattschneider in the recommended readings introduced the idea of conflict-expansion, and most authors here discuss how issues rise to the agenda, often as a result of a conflict-expansion strategy. (Cobb et al. are most explicit on this point.) But for each actor interested in expanding a conflict there are others interested in containing the conflict. Discuss the major arguments in the readings that relate to strategies of issue-containment. Is agenda-denial a good topic of study? What about the competitive nature of agenda-setting? How should we study this process, as the eventual salience of an issue is not determined unilaterally by any given actor, though many may attempt to influence it.