

Poli 891
Spring 2010
Prof. Baumgartner

Questions for Week 4, Feb 11. 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.

NOTE: Class is on Thursday Feb 11 5:00 to 7:30pm. Place to be announced but probably here in this room.

Also note that Bryan Jones will be here for class and that it is a good idea to read ahead for Week 5 as well since that class is on Monday and includes a lot of Bryan's writing. So questions on that topic will elicit some good discussion as well. So do what you can on that and you'll be a little ahead for the weekend!

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?
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 Eldridge and Gould are controversial in the field of evolution?