The Political Economy of Policy Design and Implementation

Public Policy 206

Course Syllabus

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Office hours: Thursdays 4:00–5:00 by appointment
Class meetings: Mondays, Wednesdays 1:00 PM–2:20 PM
Class location: School of Public Affairs Bldg 2355

About the course
Public policies both redistribute economic wealth and determine the moral conduct of society. Heated battles are fought in the political arena over the design and implementation of such policies. The objectives of this course are 1) to help you understand the political dynamics of these battles and 2) to strategically affect these political outcomes on behalf of your client or constituency.

Throughout this course we will take the perspective of an interest group that seeks to affect policy outcomes through the political process. The central objective of the course is to familiarize you with reasons that public agencies succeed or fail in their policymaking missions. To that end, we first examine the extent to which an agency is flawed by design. That is, can its deficiencies be traced to the compromises struck within the legislature in order to secure the majority needed to bring it into existence?

Once it is created, we explore the challenges it faces when interpreting its statutory mandate. How do agencies see their missions? How much discretion do they have when making policy? To what extent are they simple agents of the legislative or executive branch? Under what conditions might our answers to these questions vary?

Ever present are multiple principals (e.g., legislative oversight committees, executive branch appointees, the courts, other agencies and, of course, interest groups) that seek to influence its policy decisions. Using a wide range of agency case studies, we explore the following questions:

1. Which principals influence the agency’s policy decisions?
2. What strategies or methods do these principals use?
3. What institutional conditions made their influence possible?
4. What is the size of the effect they have on policy outcomes?

We will explore how agencies adapt their internal structures to anticipate and, when possible, pre-empt conflict with external principals.

When supported by a powerful principal (e.g., the chief executive or the legislative oversight committee), an agency may refuse to implement aspects of its statutory mandate. We explore the strategies used by such agencies to resist full implementation. We will also explore strategies available to interest groups, legislators, and the courts to overcome an agency’s reluctance. An important mechanism for forcing targeted compliance with a portion of a statute is statutory review by the courts.

We pay particular attention to a wide range of regulatory agencies (e.g. environment, law enforcement and drug safety agencies), national security agencies as well as welfare and health agencies. In closing, we examine how the process of budgeting modulates an agency’s capacity and its priorities.

My pedagogical approach to this course is two-pronged. First, we read articles that develop and test the predictions of agency policymaking. Second, we analyze several cases in which a variety of principals affect the design and/or implementation of policies by agencies.
Grading
Grades for the course will be determined in the following way:

- 10% Participation (especially on the weekly case discussion)
- 15% Diagnostic memo (8 AM on Wednesday, April 24th)
- 25% Agency reform memo (5 PM on Friday, May 31st)
- 45% Final exam (Wednesday, June 12th, 11:30 AM – 2:30 PM)

Readings
The readings for this course are moderate. They include journal articles and cases that are available from UCLA’s digital library and from the Harvard Case Program.

Cases
The cases will need to be purchased for $2.50 each. The following cases should be purchased at:
http://www.ksgcase.harvard.edu/search.asp
- 142.0 Auto Safety (B)
- 155 HEW and Title IX: The Elimination of Sex Discrimination in Education
- 1335.0 The Contemptuous Administrator: Radionuclides Regulation and the Clear Air Act
- 638.0 Environmental Protection Agency: Ruckelshaus Returns
- 847.0 Managing Environmental Risk: The Case of Asarco
- 847.1 Managing Environmental Risk: The Case of Asarco (Sequel)
- 1436.0 USDA’s Civil Rights Reform (Part 2): Making Change Happen
- 1435.0 USDA’s Civil Rights Reform (Part 1): Defining the Challenge
- 1279.0 Tailhook: The Navy Response (A)
- 1280.0 Tailhook: The Navy Response (B)
- 1280.1 Tailhook: The Navy Response (Epilogue)
- 1562.0 Reducing the Complaints Backlog at the Employment Opportunity Commission

Schedule of Readings

WEEK 1

April 1       Introduction

“Bureaucracy’s Bosses” Chapter 3 by William Gormley and Steven Balla, Bureaucracy and Democracy: Accountability and Performance 2008 CQ Press

“Bureaucracy’s Clients” Chapter 4 by William Gormley and Steven Balla, Bureaucracy and Democracy: Accountability and Performance 2008 CQ Press


April 3       The Enacting Coalition: Strategic Designs in the Face of Uncertainty


WEEK 2

April 8  The Enacting Coalition

142.0 Auto Safety (B) [http://www.ksgcase.harvard.edu/casetitle.asp?caseNo=142.0](http://www.ksgcase.harvard.edu/casetitle.asp?caseNo=142.0)

April 10  Rule-making


WEEK 3

April 15  Executive Strategies for Controlling Agencies

155 HEW and Title IX: The Elimination of Sex Discrimination in Education [http://www.ksgcase.harvard.edu/casetitle.asp?caseNo=155.0](http://www.ksgcase.harvard.edu/casetitle.asp?caseNo=155.0)


April 17  Examples of Executive Strategies

1335.0 The Contemptuous Administrator: Radionuclides Regulation and the Clear Air Act [http://www.ksgcase.harvard.edu/casetitle.asp?caseNo=1335.0](http://www.ksgcase.harvard.edu/casetitle.asp?caseNo=1335.0)

638.0 Environmental Protection Agency: Ruckelshaus Returns [http://www.ksgcase.harvard.edu/casetitle.asp?caseNo=638.0](http://www.ksgcase.harvard.edu/casetitle.asp?caseNo=638.0)

WEEK 4

April 22  Legislative Oversight


April 24  No Class Diagnostic Memo (due 8AM)
WEEK 5

April 29  Legislative Committees


May 1  Courts


739.0 Judge Tauro and Care of the Retarded in Massachusetts
http://www.ksgcase.harvard.edu/casetitle.asp?caseNo=739.0

WEEK 6

May 6  Multiple Principals


May 8  Agency Executive and Agency Performance

847.0 Managing Environmental Risk: The Case of Asarco
http://www.ksgcase.harvard.edu/casetitle.asp?caseNo=847.0

847.1 Managing Environmental Risk: The Case of Asarco (Sequel)
http://www.ksgcase.harvard.edu/casetitle.asp?caseNo=847.1


WEEK 7

May 13  Cultural Reforms: part 1

1436.0 USDA’s Civil Rights Reform (Part 2): Making Change Happen
http://www.ksgcase.harvard.edu/casetitle.asp?caseNo=1436.0

1435.0 USDA’s Civil Rights Reform (Part 1): Defining the Challenge
http://www.ksgcase.harvard.edu/casetitle.asp?caseNo=1435.0

May 15  Cultural Reforms: part 2

1279.0 Tailhook: The Navy Response (A)
http://www.ksgcase.harvard.edu/casetitle.asp?caseNo=1279.0

1280.0 Tailhook: The Navy Response (B)
http://www.ksgcase.harvard.edu/casetitle.asp?caseNo=1280.0

1280.1 Tailhook: The Navy Response (Epilogue)
http://www.ksgcase.harvard.edu/casetitle.asp?caseNo=1280.1
WEEK 8

May 20  Operational Reform

1562.0 Reducing the Complaints Backlog at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
http://www.ksgcase.harvard.edu/casetitle.asp?caseNo=1562.0

May 22  Agencies without Active Constituencies: Flawed by Neglect

Case 523A The legal Services Corporation Under the Reagan Administration (A) The Congress (Abridged)
http://www.ksgcase.harvard.edu/casetitle.asp?caseNo=523.3

WEEK 9

May 27  Memorial Day No Class

May 29  Interagency Failure


Case 1892.0: Thin on the Ground: Deploying Scarce Resources in the October 2007 Southern California Wildfires
http://www.ksgcase.harvard.edu/casetitle.asp?caseNo=1892.0

Case 1844.0 Hurricane Katrina (B): Responding to an “Ultra-catastrophe” in New Orleans
http://www.ksgcase.harvard.edu/casetitle.asp?caseNo=1844.0

WEEK 10

June 3  Budgeting and Agencies


June 5  Understanding the Performance and Death of Agencies & Review


Final Exam: Thursday, June 13, 2013, 11:30 AM - 2:30 PM room 2355