

II. The Politics of U.S. Public Policy *

Prof. Sarah Pralle

Sarah Pralle is an associate professor of political science at the Maxwell School at Syracuse University. Her research and teaching interests are in the area of agenda setting and policy change, particularly as they apply to environmental politics and policy. She is the author of the book "Branching Out, Digging In: Environmental Advocacy and Agenda Setting" (Georgetown University Press, 2006) and several articles published in various journals, including Political Science Quarterly, Journal of Public Policy, Policy Studies Journal, and Environmental Politics. Her current research examines efforts by state attorneys general to reshape national environmental policy through litigation.

This course is broadly concerned with political science research about public policy processes. This research is characterized by attention to how politics shapes the set of issues on the policy agenda; the policy programs, solutions and instruments selected by the public and policymakers; and the implementation and outcomes of public policy. The first part of the course examines different approaches to policy studies, with an eye toward understanding differences between how professional policy analysts and political scientists understand the policy process. The second part of the course investigates different stages of the policy process, including agenda-setting, policy change, design, and implementation. We also investigate specific policy institutions, such as the bureaucracy, interest groups, and the legislature. The course concludes with an examination of how policies, once created, may in turn restructure political processes and shape subsequent policies. Throughout the course, special attention is given to the U.S. context, although some cross-national comparisons are included.

Requirements

The course is structured as a research seminar and should facilitate students' abilities to think and write critically about the policy process literature, to design research projects, and to make oral presentations to an audience.

Grades will be based on the following:

Participation in seminar discussions (15%). Your contributions to the seminar will be assessed with respect to your performance in leading discussion during assigned weeks and your contributions to the seminar discussion generally. Each week 2-3 students will be designated to lead the discussion in class and all students are expected to participate in the subsequent group discussion. Each student's contributions to the seminar will be evaluated on an overall scale of "stellar contributions" (A+/A), "solid contributions" (A-) "acceptable contributions" (B+), or "less than desired contributions" (B). Your attendance is required at every seminar; excused absences are awarded for family emergencies and personal illness.

* This syllabus was modeled after a course by Suzanne Mettler, Clinton Rossiter Professor of American Institutions, at the Department of Government at Cornell University.

Weekly response papers and advice to future students (30%). Students are required to hand in one-page response papers (single or double spaced; 1 inch margins—no longer than one page please!) on the course readings, due every week in class except weeks 1, 10 and 12. The purposes of the response papers are to initiate discussion in class and to encourage you to carefully consider the readings in light of what they add to our understanding of the policy process. You might critically examine the author's theoretical framework, methodological approach, arguments, evidence, or conclusions. You could consider the main themes, puzzles, or questions addressed in the readings, or suggest additional research that would help us understand the topic/ subjects/ theoretical questions raised. Or, you may identify confusing concepts or theories that you would like to discuss further. Of course, you will not be able to address all of these things in your paper; the important point is to refrain from summarizing the book or readings. (Assume your audience has carefully read the material!) Papers will be evaluated on a 4-point scale. A “4” indicates an A grade; a “3” indicates an A-; a “2” indicates a B+; and a “1” indicates a B. Lower grades, or failure to turn in a paper receive a “0.” Late papers will be docked 2 points.

For week 12, I am asking that you write a 4-5 page paper (double-spaced) that gives advice to future students in the course. You should address your memo to the students and you may write it in a conversational style, if preferred. Your memo should give them a road map to the course. In other words, provide guidance to students who may have little background in the policy process literature. You can preview the big theoretical approaches in the policy literature, discuss their strengths and weaknesses, and identify remaining questions. In addition, you may discuss how to best approach the research design project, and share any advice you have after going through it yourself.

Book review and in-class presentation (15%). A short (3-4 pages double-spaced) review of a recent or classic book addressing aspects of the policy process is due at the start of class. You will be asked to list your top three choices during the second week of class and will be assigned a book during week 3. Think about a book that will help you with your research design project (see below). During class each student will give a brief presentation on their chosen book. You should summarize the book and provide us an idea of where it fits into the policy literature, its strengths and weaknesses, its methodology, and other responses you had to the book. This assignment will be graded with a standard letter grade; late papers will not be accepted except in case of an emergency and with prior notification.

Research design paper and in-class presentation (40%). This will be developed in a series of steps that include: (1) preliminary topic paper (2) outline and bibliography; (3) in-class presentations to be given weeks 13 & 15; and the research design paper itself. The first two assignments will be assessed as either “ahead of the game”; “on target”; or “time to get going.” If you are ahead of the game on the assignments, you will be awarded extra points on your final paper; if you are behind (“time to get going”), points will be deducted from your final paper. The oral presentation to class will be graded along with the paper; each will receive a standard letter grade.

Readings

Frank Baumgartner and Bryan Jones. *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Ann Chih Lin. *Reform in the Making: The Implementation of Social Policy in Prison*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Suzanne Mettler. *Soldiers to Citizens: The G.I. Bill and the Making of the Greatest Generation*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Gary Mucciaroni. *Reversals of Fortune: Public Policy and Private Interest*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1995.

Deborah Stone. *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2002.

James Q. Wilson. *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It*. Basic Books, 1989.

Weekly Topics and Reading Schedule

- **Introduction**

- **Traditional model of policy analysis and challenges**

David Weimer and Aidan Vining, *Policy Analysis* (Prentice Hall, 1992 & 1999), excerpts. (Read in the order presented--chapters are from different editions).

Charles Lindblom, "The Science of 'Muddling Through,'" *Public Administration Review* 19 (1959): 79-88.

Robert Behn, "Policy Analysis and Policy Politics," *Policy Analysis* 7 (Spring 1981): 199-226.

Joseph Stiglitz, "The Private Uses of Public Interests: Incentives and Institutions," *Journal of Economic Perspective* 12 (Spring 1998): 3-22.

- **The political model**

Deborah Stone, *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making*, Chapters 1-3 & 6-10.

Schneider and Ingram, "Social Construction of Target Populations: Implications for Politics and Policy," *American Political Science Review* 87 (1993): 334-47.

- **Big political analyses**

Theodore J. Lowi, "American Business, Public Policy, Case Studies, and Political Theory," *World Politics* 6 (1964): 677-715.

Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Harvard University Press, 1992), Introduction.

Paul Pierson, "When Effect Becomes Cause: Policy Feedback and Political Change," *World Politics* 45 (July 1993): 594-628.

Frank Baumgartner and Bryan Jones, *Agendas and Instability in American*

Politics, Chapters 1-3.

- **Agenda setting and policy change**

John Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, selections.

Frank Baumgartner and Bryan Jones, *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*, Chapters 4, 5, 6, 9 & 10.

Paul Sabatier and Hank Jenkins-Smith, "The Advocacy Coalition Framework: An Assessment," in Sabatier, *Theories of the Policy Process*.

- **Business interests and policymaking**

Mucciaroni, *Reversals of Fortune: Public Policy and Private Interest*.

- **Bureaucracy**

B. Dan Wood and Richard Waterman, *Bureaucratic Dynamics: The Role of Bureaucracy in a Democracy* (Westview Press, 1994), Chapter 2.

James Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, Chapters 1, 2, 5, 6, & 20. In addition, read one of the following chapters—13, 14, 15, or 16—depending on your specific interest.

Judith Tendler, *Good Government in the Tropics* (John Hopkins, 1997), Introduction and chapters 3 & 6.

- **Implementation**

Ann Chih Lin, *Reform in the Making: The Implementation of Social Policy in Prison*.

- **Big political analyses**

Theodore J. Lowi, "American Business, Public Policy, Case Studies, and Political Theory," *World Politics* 6 (1964): 677-715.

Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Harvard University Press, 1992), Introduction.

Paul Pierson, "When Effect Becomes Cause: Policy Feedback and Political Change," *World Politics* 45 (July 1993): 594-628.

Frank Baumgartner and Bryan Jones, *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*, Chapters 1-3.

- **Wrap up of policy process and book reviews**

Peter John, "Is There Life After Policy Streams, Advocacy Coalitions, and Punctuations: Using Evolutionary Theory to Explain Policy Change?" *Policy Studies Journal* 31 (4, 2003): 481-98.

Books to Review

Frank Baumgartner and Bryan Jones, eds. *The Politics of Attention: How Government Prioritizes Problems*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005. (Agenda setting; information processing; prioritization of issues)

Thomas Birkland. *Lessons of Disaster: Policy Change after Catastrophic Events*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1997. (Policy change; focusing events)

Christopher Bosso. *Pesticides and Politics: The Lifecycle of a Public Issue*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1987. (Agenda setting; policy change; implementation)

Gerard Boychuk. *National Health Insurance in the United States and Canada: Race, Territory, and the Roots of Difference*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2008. (Comparative public policy; health care; historical analysis)

Daniel Carpenter. *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy: Reputations, Networks, and Policy Innovation in Executive Agencies, 1862-1928*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001. (Bureaucracy; interest groups; organizational theory)

Charles Clotfelter. *After Brown: The Rise and Retreat of School Desegregation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004. (Policy outcomes and evaluation; implementation; education policy)

Richard DeLeon. *Left Coast City: Progressive Politics in San Francisco: 1975-1991*. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1992. (Urban politics and policy)

Martha Derthick. *Policymaking for Social Security*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1979. (Historical institutionalism; welfare state)

Martha Derthick and Paul Quirk. *The Politics of Deregulation*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1985. (Deregulation of industries; role of economic analysis; interest groups)

Mark Donovan. *Taking Aim: Target Populations and the Wars on AIDS and Drugs*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2001. (Social constructions; targeting)

Jacob Hacker. *The Road to Nowhere: The Genesis of President Clinton's Plan for Health Security*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997. (Agenda setting; policy alternatives/ solutions; health care policy)

Joel Handler. *Down from Bureaucracy: The Ambiguity of Privatization and Empowerment*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996. (Decentralization; privatization; "citizen empowerment")

Michael Lipsky. *Street Level Bureaucracy*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1980. (Implementation)

Theodore Lowi. *The End of Liberalism*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1979. (Bureaucracy; Congress; "Juridical democracy")

William Lowery. *Preserving Public Lands for the Future: The Politics of Intergenerational Goods*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1998. (Comparative public policy; environmental policy)

R. Shep Melnick. *Between the Lines: Interpreting Welfare Rights*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1994. (Courts and policymaking; welfare state)

Patrick McGuinn. *No Child Left Behind and the Transformation of Federal Education Policy, 1965-2005*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2006. (Policy change; education policy)

Karen Mossberger. *The Politics of Ideas and the Spread of Enterprise Zones*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2000. (Policy diffusion, adoption, and decision-making)

Gary Mucciaroni and Paul Quirk. *Deliberative Choices: Debating Public Policy in Congress*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006. (Congress and policymaking)

Sarah Pralle. *Branching Out, Digging In: Environmental Advocacy and Agenda Setting*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2006. (Agenda setting, interest groups, environmental policy)

Richard Rose. *Lesson-Drawing in Public Policy: A Guide to Learning across Time and Space*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishers, 1993. (Policy learning; comparative policy studies)

Theda Skocpol. *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992. (Historical institutionalism; welfare state)

Stuart Soroka. *Agenda-Setting Dynamics in Canada*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002. (Agenda setting; Canadian policy and politics)

Jeffrey Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky. *Implementation*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973. (Implementation; policy evaluation)

Nikolaos Zahariadis. *Markets, States, and Public Policies: Privatization in Britain and France*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1995. (Comparative agenda setting; policy change; multiple streams model)

- **Policy Feedback**
- Suzanne Mettler and Joe Soss, "The Consequences of Public Policy for Democratic Citizenship: Bridging Policy Studies and Mass Politics," *Perspectives on Politics* (March 2004): 55-73.
- Andrea Campbell, "Self-Interest, Social Security, and the Distinctive Participation Patterns of Senior Citizens," *American Political Science Review* 96 (September 2002): 565-74.
- Mettler, *Soldiers to Citizens: The G.I. Bill and the Making of the Greatest Generation*, Chapters 3-8 & 10.

- **Policy development, devolution, and retrenchment**
- Paul Pierson, "The Study of Policy Development," *Journal of Policy History* 1 (2005): 34-51.
- Eric Patashnik, "After the Public Interest Prevails: The Political Sustainability of Policy Reform," *Governance* (April 2003): 203-34.
- Jacob Hacker, "Privatizing Risk Without Privatizing the Welfare State," *American Political Science Review* 98 (May 2004): 243-60.

Joe Soss et. al., "The Color of Devolution: Race, Federalism, and the Politics of Social Control," *American Journal of Political Science* 52 (July 2008): 536-53.