**PUBLIC POLICY: THEORIES, PROBLEMS, SOLUTIONS**

**Lecturer**: Katalin Ámon, Institute of Political Science (ELTE)

Availability: Thursdays 12-14 pm

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**Short description**

When Public Policy started to form as an academic discipline, it was perceived as a form of scholarly endeavour which contributes to the better functioning of democracies. Evidence-based policy making was supposed to result in better policies, better democratic practices and more transparency. Whether this was the case is up for debate. Many criticize policy experts for depoliticizing public policies and excluding citizens from policy debates. Whether evidence-based policy making truly exists in contemporary government, is an other controversial issue.

There are of course many dilemmas arising in relation to public policies. The understanding of these dilemmas greatly depends on one’s views on democracy, the role of the state and the basic principles that governing bodies should follow. The course does not aim to provide answers to these controversies, but to engage students with some of the dilemmas and potential solutions in policy making and explain the origins, methods and theories of Public Policy as a discipline.

This includes an understanding of policy processes, the context that shapes these processes and the various ways these processes can be conceptualized, analyzed and applied in everdyday life. The course introduces students through case studies of contemporary, real-life policy problems to questions like: why it is important to understand how policies are created, dismissed and changed? How can we understand the policy process? How can this knowledge be applied?

**Learning outcomes**

* A critical understanding of theories about public policy making
* A critical understanding of the various stages of the policy process
* The ability to link theories to real-life policy cases and policy practice
* The ability to critically analyze policies and communicate the findings in written and oral forms

**Course structure**

The course consists of 13 weekly seminars. Each of these seminars lasts 90 minutes. In these 90 minutes we discuss the required readings through existing policy problems. The course consists of the following main topics:

* Introduction: What are public policies and what is Public Policy as a discipline?
* What forms of citizenship do public policies assume and what kinds of citizens do public policies create?
* How do we frame policy problems and why does framing matter?
* What is the Policy Cycle approach and how can we analyze policies in this approach?
* What are the main stages of the policy cycle and what kinds of problems arise in each stage?
* What is the role of policy experts? What should be the role of policy experts?
* How does globalization affect public policy and vice versa?

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| Week | Topic | Required readings |
| 1 | Introduction to the course | Chapter 1 Hill et al. |
| 2 | Introduction to Public Policy and Evidence-Based Policy Making | Chapter 3 Fischer et al., Chapter 2 Moran et al. |
| 3 | Public Policy and Citizenship | Dósa 2018, Haney 2002 Introduction |
| 4 | Interpreting Policy Problems: Policy Frames | Krizsán et al. 2012 |
| 5 | Writing a Policy Brief | One of the chapters from Part III Moran et al., sample policy briefs |
| 6 | Understanding the Policy Process: The Policy Cycle Approach | Chapter 4 Fischer et al. |
| 7 | Agenda Setting in Policy Making | Chapter 5 Fischer et al. |
| 8 | Public Policy and Decision-Making | Chapter 6 Fischer et al. |
| 9 | Policy Implementation | Chapter 9 Hill, Chapter 3 Lipsky 2010 |
| 10 | Policy Responsiveness and Accountability | Gilens and Page 2014 |
| 11 | The Role of Policy Experts | Chapter 11 Fischer, Beveridge 2012 |
| 12 | Globalization and Public Policy | Chapter 29 Moran et al. |
| 13 | Conclusions and Poster Presentations | No required readings |

**Required readings**

Beveridge, R. 2012. “Consultants, depoliticization and arena-shifting in the policy process: privatizing water in Berlin.” *Policy Sciences*, 45: 47-68.

Dósa, M. 2018. “Welfare and Citizenship: The Case for a Democratic Approach to the Welfare State.” *Intersections* 4(1), 45-65.

Fischer, F., Millard, G. J., Sidney, M. S. (eds.) 2007. *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis: Theory, Politics, and Methods*. Boca Raton, Fl.:CRC Press (Chapters 3-6, 11)

Gilens, M., Page, B. 2014. “Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens.” *Perspectives on Politics*, 12(3), 564-581.

Haney, L. 2002. “Introduction: Conceptualizing the Welfare State”. In: *Inventing the Needy: Gender and the Politics of Welfare in Hungary*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1-25.

Hill, M. 2005. *The Public Policy Process*. Edinburgh: Pearson Education Ltd. (Chapter 1)

Krizsán, A. et al. 2012. *Critical Frame Analysis*, Working paper: https://cps.ceu.edu/publications/workingpapers/critical-frame-analysis-quing

Lipsky, M. 2010. “The Problem of Resources.” In: Lipsky. M. 2010. *Street-Level Bucreaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services*. Bew York: Russell Sage Foundation, 29-39.

Moran, M. Rein, M., and Goodin, R. E. (eds.) 2006. *The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press (Chapters 2, 29, Part III)

**Requirements/Assessment**

Students are expected to actively participate in the course, submit the assignments and present their final assignment in the last session of the semester:

* Participation 30%
  + Responding to guiding questions posted online before class 10%
  + Participation in small group discussions 10%
  + Participation in plenary discussions 10%
* Assignment throughout the semester: writing a policy brief (1500-2000 words) 50%
* Final assignment: poster presentation (presentation of policy briefs) 20%

Participation:

Active participation is essential in this course based on a critical understanding and discussion of the required readings. Students are expected to read all the required readings in preparation for the class. Before each class there will be one or two guiding questions posted online to which students are expected to give a short answer based on the readings by 12 am before each class. These answers should demonstrate that the student read the required readings for that specific class. Students are also expected to actively participate in the discussions in class. Discussions will be both held in plenary and small groups. Participation grades will be based on the students participation in the online, plenary and small group discussions. Students can miss one class and one online participation session without providing any explanation.

Policy brief:

A policy brief is a short and concise summary of a policy issue, its potential policy solutions and a policy recommendation. The final assignment of the course is a policy brief of 1500-2000 words (approximately 3 pages). Students are expected to work on this assignment throughout the term. Students are expected to submit a short description of the topic of their policy brief by October 10th. They have to submit the summary of the policy issue by November 7th, the overview of policy solutions by November 21st and the final version of the policy brief by December 10th.

Poster presentation:

In the last class, students will present their policy briefs in a poster presentation format. They are expected to prepare an academic poster for this session. The posters can be prepared individually, based on one policy brief, however, students are encouraged to present in small teams of two or three persons. In the case of team presentations, students should present their policy briefs together. They can either focus on one policy issue and highlight it from different theoretical perspectives or geographical contexts or they can choose a broader policy area and present problems and potential solutions from that area.