

Policy Theory

PIA 3121, Fall 2024

Tuesdays 3-6 pm, 3430 Posvar Hall

Dr. Zoila Ponce de León
poncedeleon@pitt.edu

3810 Posvar Hall
Office Hours: Wednesdays 4:15-6:15 pm

Course Description

This PhD-level course will focus on the policymaking process, analyzing the different stages (from agenda-setting and decision-making to implementation), and a focus on key theories including punctuated equilibrium, framing, and diffusion, as well as theories on the impact of interest groups and social movements. We will also have an empirical focus on different social policy issues from a comparative perspective in order to apply the policy theories learned. Students will examine a policy area of their choice through a research paper assignment and other assignments throughout the term. This will allow students to carefully choose their specific policy and country of study and build their knowledge about a policy issue.

Course Objectives

- Develop tools to examine the policymaking process.
- Gain a deeper substantive understanding of leading theories in the study of policy.
- Apply the theories learned throughout the course to current and past policy issues.
- Critically examine the course material presented. Critical thought does not necessarily imply criticism, but a careful and creative consideration of the subject matter and awareness of multiple viewpoints.
- Learn to employ the comparative method, analyzing country cases in greater detail and identifying commonalities and contrasts across cases.
- Improve writing skills and creative thinking through the research paper assignment, advancing logical arguments supported with evidence.
- Develop public speaking skills through class presentations, communicating thoughts clearly and concisely.

Required Books

1. Baumgartner, Frank R., and Bryan D. Jones. 2009. *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. 2nd ed. University of Chicago Press.
2. Jones, Bryan D. 2001. *Politics and the Architecture of Choice: Bounded Rationality and Governance*. University of Chicago Press.
3. Kingdon, John W. 1995. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*. 2nd ed. HarperCollins.
4. Weible, Christopher M., ed. 2023. *Theories of the Policy Process*, 5th ed. Routledge.

All the other required readings will be posted on Canvas.

Course Requirements

The course will meet once a week. The requirements are reading of the assigned materials, active participation in class discussions, and completion of the research paper assignments.

I expect everyone to arrive on time. Late arrivals are extremely disruptive.

Contact me if you have questions or concerns. If you have any kind of problem with the course or with life, communicate with me (no need to give me any specific details regarding the situation you are going through). Let me know if my office hours are not at a convenient time for you and we will set an appointment. I am willing to work with you to help you succeed, but I will not do so retroactively at the end of the term.

You are required to have all course-related files saved on an **online drive** of your preference (i.e., Dropbox, OneDrive, or others).

Students are expected to come to each session **ready for a lively discussion**. The following are some guidelines to help you get started:

- **Speak up!** Ask the second you have a question or a comment. Others may have the same queries you do.
- **Respect** one another. Differences of opinion are likely and desirable. **Listen** to your peers' questions and comments and express your disagreements with respect.
- **No cell phones in class.**
- **Stick to pen and paper** to take notes. In exceptional cases, tablets or laptops may be employed only for valid educational reasons related to the course. Violations will affect your grade and preclude further use of the device in class.

Course Evaluation

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|--|----|---------------------|----|
| Participation (including discussion-leading) | 20 | | |
| 2 one-page reaction essays, equally weighted | 10 | | |
| Research paper | 70 | | |
| <i>Abstract</i> | 5 | <i>Outline</i> | 5 |
| <i>Bibliography</i> | 5 | <i>Presentation</i> | 10 |
| <i>Research design</i> | 5 | <i>Final paper</i> | 40 |

Participation

Participation is key for this course. Forget about the percentage of your overall grade it counts towards, the actual value of participation is much greater than this because it will help you to do better on all the assignments in this course.

Students are expected to read the assigned materials **before** each class and **participate actively** during class meetings. After reading anything, you should be able to answer at least the following questions: *What is the main argument? Does it make sense logically? What is the evidence for it? What are the strengths and weaknesses?* You must come to class prepared so that you can engage in discussion and ask questions.

Participation performance is not based on the number of times you speak up during class but on the **quality** of your input. By no means, this should be understood as having to “be right” every time. Comments or questions that contribute to our analysis of course contents and discussion are highly regarded. Questions are an excellent way to participate; they show your interest in the course and your ability for critical thought. To achieve an **A** for participation, your engagement in class discussions must be exceptional, contributing to a lively conversation consistently and displaying that you have mastered the material.

We will deal with interesting and controversial issues, and I hope that we will have lively debates. We must respect one another. Differences of opinion can lead to intellectual growth.

Leading Discussion

Each student must select two sessions to introduce the assigned readings and help lead the discussion. You will prepare a 5-minute introduction to the readings (with a slide show) and between five and ten discussion questions for the set of assigned readings. Students will make their selections on the first day of class.

Reaction Essays

You will write two one-page, single-spaced and 12-point font reaction essays offering **insightful commentary** on one or two of the readings for the session. The essays should critically evaluate the logical consistency of the arguments, and/or the empirical evidence offered. The essay can also include questions for discussion. These short essays **should not summarize** the readings but rather critically discuss their central arguments, compare, and contrast their findings, and highlight their strengths and weaknesses. Students will make their selections on the first day of class. You **cannot** write your reaction essays for the sessions in which you are a discussion leader.

The essays are due **by noon** on the day of class via Canvas. I will grade these on a 0/1/2 scale. You will score 1 if you provide a good description but fail to provide an original contribution, a 2 if you not only described accurately but gave a creative insight.

Research Paper

Students may come from different departments and disciplines, and therefore may benefit from writing different types of term papers. These might be empirical article-style projects drawing from data analysis from a specific country or comparing countries. Or they might focus on the development of a research design for an article or a dissertation. These may be qualitative or quantitative approaches. You should write a paper that will be useful to you. Each of you will work individually with me to devise the most appropriate project for you, given your backgrounds and interests.

Notice that paper assignments are due in Week 5 (abstract), Week 7 (bibliography) , Week 9 (research design), Week 11 (outline), and Week 14 (presentation and final draft). These assignments will allow me to give you feedback along the way to push your project to a higher level. They are due via Canvas. I strongly encourage you to seek the help of the [Writing Center](#).

- **Abstract** describing your paper topic, the puzzle you want to explore and a general idea of the theoretical and empirical approach, relevant literature, and your goals in it (article project, thesis idea, etc.). You may give me two topics so we can choose one.
- **Annotated bibliography** identifying the key source material you are planning to use. You don't have to have read it all yet. No need for extensive annotations, but a list of readings organized by the topics you plan to cover.
- **Research design** identifying your key data source material and a plan for the logistics of your empirical project. You don't have to have done much but have a plan.
- **Detailed outline** including a full structure, planned references, and methods. The structure should be complete in outline form.
- **Presentation** of the main findings of your research in class.

If you use **AI** language models, such as ChatGPT to support your writing, you are fully responsible for its lack of accuracy and bias. I strongly encourage you to avoid relying on these tools as sources of information and critical thinking. If you choose to use them, I will expect you to clearly state your use of AI and exactly *how* you used it.

For all coursework, the [Academic Integrity Guidelines](#) apply. You need to familiarize yourself with the concept and practice of plagiarism to make sure that you avoid it. The university has helpful advice on [avoiding plagiarism](#).

Disability Accommodations

Please let me know in the first two weeks of class if you need any accommodation for a disability. <https://www.diversity.pitt.edu/disability-resources-services/disability-resources-services>

Diversity Statement

A strong commitment to diversity and inclusion is a fundamental value of the University of Pittsburgh and is critical to achieving our mission as a public research university. Diversity encompasses a broad range of differences and evolves over time. The Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U), of which Pitt is a member, defines [diversity](#) as *Individual differences (e.g., personality, prior knowledge, and life experiences) and group/social differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, and ability as well as cultural, political, religious, or other affiliations).*

Policy of Nondiscrimination

The University of Pittsburgh, as an educational institution and as an employer, does not discriminate on the basis of disability, race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, genetic information, marital status, familial status, sex, age, sexual orientation, veteran status or gender identity and expression in its programs and activities. The University does not tolerate discrimination, harassment, or retaliation on these bases and takes steps to ensure that students, employees, and third parties are not subject to a hostile environment in University programs or activities.

Sexual Misconduct Policy

Sexual misconduct that affects the educational or employment environment is a form of sexual discrimination. Such conduct violates University Policy, and generally also violates federal, state, or local laws. The University of Pittsburgh is committed to the maintenance of a community free from all forms of sexual misconduct, and this University Policy extends to the entire University community, including all faculty, researchers, staff, students, vendors, contractors, and visitors to the University.

Course Schedule

All the readings are required. If you don't understand parts of them, come with questions. Bring paper or electronic copies of the readings so you can refer to them during our discussion.

I reserve the right to make changes to the schedule when unforeseen circumstances occur.

Week 1, 8/27: Course Overview & Introductions

- Read the course syllabus

Week 2, 9/3: The Study of Policy

1. Weible, Christopher M., ed. 2023. *Theories of the Policy Process*, 5th Ed. Routledge. "Introduction: The Scope and Focus of Policy Process Research and Theories."
2. Walker, Jack L., Jr. 1966. A Critique of the Elitist Theory of Democracy. *American Political Science Review* 60: 285–95.
3. Downs, Anthony. 1972. Up and Down with Ecology. *Public Interest* 28: 38-50.
4. Haas, Peter M. 1992. Introduction. Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination. *International Organization* 46 (1): 1-35.
5. Schneider, Anne, and Helen Ingram. 1993. Social Construction of Target Populations: Implications for Politics and Policy. *American Political Science Review* 87 (2): 334–47.
6. John, Peter. 2018. Theories of Policy Change and Variation Reconsidered: a prospectus for the political economy of public policy. *Policy Sciences* 51: 1-16.
7. Campbell, John L. 2002. Ideas, Politics, and Public Policy. *Annual Review of Sociology* 28: 21-38.

Week 3, 9/10: Rationality

1. Jones, Bryan D. 2001. *Politics and the Architecture of Choice: Bounded Rationality and Governance*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. **Chapters 1-4.**
2. McGee, Zachary A., Brooke Shannon, and Bryan D. Jones. 2019. "Bounded Rationality in Political Science." *Routledge Research Handbook of Bounded Rationality*.
3. Simon, Herbert A. 1985. Human Nature in Politics: The Dialogue of Psychology with Political Science. *American Political Science Review* 79: 293–304.

Week 4, 9/17: Kingdon and Multiple Streams Models

1. Kingdon, John W. 1995. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*. 2d. ed. New York: HarperCollins.
2. Herweg, Nicole, Nikolaos Zahariadis, and Reimut Zohlnhöfer. 2023. "The Multiple Streams Framework: Foundations, Refinements, and Empirical Applications," in Weible, Christopher M., ed. *Theories of the Policy Process*.

Week 5, 9/24: Agenda-setting & Punctuated Equilibrium

1. Cobb, Roger W., Jeannie Keith-Ross, and Marc Howard Ross. 1976. Agenda Building as a Comparative Political Process. *American Political Science Review* 70: 126–38.
2. Prindle, David. 2012. Importing Concepts from Biology into Political Science: The Case of Punctuated Equilibrium. *Policy Studies Journal* 40: 21-41.
3. Baumgartner, Frank R., and Bryan D. Jones. 2009. *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. 2nd ed. University of Chicago Press. **Chapters 1-3.**

4. Baumgartner, Frank R., Bryan D. Jones, and Peter B. Mortensen. 2023. "Punctuated Equilibrium Theory: Explaining Stability and Change in Public Policymaking," in Weible, Christopher M., ed. *Theories of the Policy Process*.

Abstract Due

Week 6, 10/1: Policy Feedback

1. Mettler, Suzanne and Mallory SoRelle. 2023. "Policy Feedback Theory," in Weible, Christopher M., ed. *Theories of the Policy Process*.
2. David, Paul A. 1985. Clio and the Economics of QWERTY. *American Economic Review* 75: 332–37.
3. Pierson, Paul. 2000. Increasing Returns, Path Dependency, and the Study of Politics. *American Political Science Review* 94:251-267.
4. Sorelle, Mallory and Jamila Michener. 2022. "Methods for Applying Policy Feedback Theory." in *Methods of the Policy Process*. Routledge.
5. Thomas, Herschel F. 2017. Modeling Contagion in Policy Systems. *Cognitive Systems Research* 44: 74-88.
6. Pacheco, Julianna. 2013. Attitudinal Policy Feedback and Public Opinion. *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 77 (3): 714-34.

Week 7, 10/8: Policy Diffusion & Information

1. Porto de Oliveira, Osmany, Giulia C. Romano, Craig Volden, and Andrew Karch. 2023. "Policy Diffusion and Innovation," in Weible, Christopher M., ed. *Theories of the Policy Process*.
2. Boushey, Graeme. 2012. Punctuated Equilibrium Theory and the Diffusion of Innovations. *Policy Studies Journal* 40: 127- 146.
3. Lohmann, Susanne. 1994. The Dynamics of Informational Cascades: The Monday Demonstrations in Leipzig, East Germany, 1989–1991. *World Politics* 47: 42–101.
4. Jones, Bryan D., and Frank R. Baumgartner. 2005. *The Politics of Attention: How Government Prioritizes Problems*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. **Chapter 1**
5. Baumgartner, Frank R., and Bryan D. Jones. 2014. *The Politics of Information*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [Chapters 1-3.](#)

Bibliography Due

Week 8, 10/22: Advocacy & Interest Groups

1. Nohrstedt, Daniel, Karin Ingold, Christopher M. Weible, Elizabeth A. Koebele, Kristin L. Olofsson, Keiichi Satoh, and Hank C. Jenkins-Smith. 2023. "The Advocacy Coalition Framework: Progress and Emerging Areas," in Weible, Christopher M., ed. *Theories of the Policy Process*.
2. Baumgartner, Frank R., and Bryan D. Jones. 2009. *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. 2nd ed. University of Chicago Press. **Chapter 9.**
3. Baumgartner, Frank R., Jeffrey M. Berry, Marie Hojnacki, David C. Kimball, and Beth L. Leech. 2009. *Lobbying and Policy Change: Who Wins, Who Loses, and Why*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. **Chapter 1.**
4. Gibson, C. L. 2019. *Movement-driven Development: The Politics of Health and Democracy in Brazil*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press. [Chapters 1-3.](#)

5. Gamboa, Ricardo, Carolina Segovia, and Octavio Avendaño. 2016. Interest groups and policymaking: Evidence from Chile, 2006–2014. *Interest Groups & Advocacy* 5: 141-64.

Week 9, 10/29: Institutions & Institution Analysis and Development (IAD)

1. Schlager, Edella and Sergio Villamayor-Tomas. 2023. "The IAD Framework and Its Tools for Policy and Institutional Analysis," in Weible, Christopher M., ed. *Theories of the Policy Process*.
2. Ostrom, Elinor. 1999. Coping with Tragedies of the Commons. *Annual Review of Political Science* 2: 493-535.
3. May, Peter J. 1991. Reconsidering Policy Design: Policies and Publics. *Journal of Public Policy* 11 (Part 2): 187-206.
4. Jones, Bryan D. 2001. *Politics and the Architecture of Choice: Bounded Rationality and Governance*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. **Chapters 6 & 8.**

Research Design Due

Week 10, 11/5 (Election Day!): Framing & Narrative Policy Framework (NPF)

1. Entman, Robert. M. 1993. Framing: Towards Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm. *Journal of Communication* 43 (4): 51–58.
2. Druckman, James N. 2004. Political Preference Formation: Competition, Deliberation, and the (Ir)Relevance of Framing Effects." *American Political Science Review* 98(4): 671-86.
3. Peffley, Mark and Jon Hurwitz. 2007. Persuasion and Resistance: Race and the Death Penalty in America. *American Journal of Political Science* 51(4): 996-1012.
4. Haynes, Chris, Jennifer Merolla, and S. Karthick Ramakrishnan. 2016. *Framing Immigrants: News coverage, Public Opinion, and Policy*. Russell Sage Foundation. **Chapters 1 & 2.**
5. Rose, Max, and Frank R. Baumgartner. 2013. Framing the Poor: Media Coverage and US Poverty Policy, 1960–2008. *Policy Studies Journal* 41 (1): 22–53
6. Jones, Michael D., Aaron Smith-Walter, Mark K. McBeth, and Elizabeth A. Shanahan. 2023. "The Narrative Policy Framework," in Weible, Christopher M., ed. *Theories of the Policy Process*.

Week 11, 11/12: Theory Application & Comparative Policy Analysis I

1. Cairney, Paul and Tanya Heikkila. 2023. "How Should We Compare Theories of the Policy Process?," in Weible, Christopher M., ed. *Theories of the Policy Process*.
2. Worsham, Jeffrey. 2006. Up in Smoke: Mapping Subsystem Dynamics in Tobacco Policy. *Policy Studies Journal* 34: 437-52.
3. Baumgartner, Frank R., and Bryan D. Jones. 2009. *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. 2nd ed. University of Chicago Press. **Chapter 8.**
4. Wolbrecht, Christina, and Michael Hartney. 2014. "Ideas about Interests": Explaining the Changing Partisan Politics of Education. *Perspectives on Politics* 12: 603-30.
5. Lodge, Martin. 2022. Comparative Public Policy. *Handbook of Public Policy*.
6. Tosun, Jale and Samuel Workman. "Struggle and Triumph in Fusing Policy Process and Comparative Research," in Weible, Christopher M., ed. *Theories of the Policy Process*.

Outline Due

Week 12, 11/19: Research Paper Workshop

Week 13, 12/3: Theory Application & Comparative Policy Analysis II

1. Esping-Andersen, Gøsta, ed. 2002. *Why We Need a New Welfare State*. Oxford University Press. **Chapter 1**.
2. Haggard, Stephan and Robert R. Kaufman. 2008. *Development, Democracy, and Welfare States. Latin America, East Asia, and Eastern Europe*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. **Chapter 1**.
3. Jensen, Carsten. 2009. Policy Punctuations in Mature Welfare States. *Journal of Public Policy* 29 (3): 287-303.
4. Borland, Elizabeth. 2017. Cultural Opportunities and Tactical Choice in the Argentine and Chilean Reproductive Rights Movements. *Mobilization: An International Journal*. 9 (3): 327-39.
5. Altman, David and Rossana Castiglioni. 2020. Determinants of Equitable Social Policy in Latin America (1990–2013). *Journal of Social Policy*, 49(4): 763-84.
6. Ponce de León, Zoila. 2021. Healthcare Reform out of Nowhere? Policy Reform and the Lack of Programmatic Commitment in Peru. *Journal of Latin American Studies* 53(3): 493–519.
7. Baumgartner, Frank R., Bryan D. Jones and John Wilkerson. 2011. Comparative Studies of Policy Dynamics. *Comparative Political Studies* 44 (8): 947-72.

Week 14, 12/10: Paper Presentations

12/13: Final Paper Due