Introduction
This seminar will cover a broad range of contemporary theories about policy-making processes. The literature is primarily from political science, because political scientists focus more on policy-making processes than other disciplines. The readings primarily focus on the US, because most of the theoretical and empirical work has been written in the US, but empirical applications from other countries are included. The course serves PhD students who wish to conduct research on policy-making processes (such as agenda setting) or specific policy topics (such as public health or education).

Requirements
You will be graded on the following three components:

- Pre-class postings – 20% (due weeks 2-9)
- In-class participation – 40% (due weeks 1-9)
- Term paper – 40% (due March 16 at 1pm)

Pre-class postings (Weeks 2-9)
For Weeks 2-9, you must post discussion questions on Canvas by 10am the day of class. In these postings, please write one question for each reading (for a total of 4-5 questions, depending on how many readings are assigned that week). Each question should be numbered, following the order of the readings, with the question itself underlined for easy reference during class discussions. After each question, write a short paragraph explaining why the question is interesting to you. These questions might explore the empirical boundaries of a theory, the clarity of concepts in a theory, the appropriateness of measures of these concepts in empirical applications, how hypotheses were derived or tested, ideas for research based on a theory in your own area of interest, ways to link theories across several weeks of the course, or other types of questions you would like to pose. You need not have answers to these questions; to the contrary, questions are often interesting because they do not have easy answers. I grade each weekly assignment as follows: shows full preparedness and critical capacity across all questions (4.0); shows full preparedness, but some questions show less critical capacity than others (3.7); shows preparedness for some readings but not for others (3.3); shows bare minimum understanding of the readings (3.0). These weekly assignments should be no more than two pages single-spaced.
Be sure your name appears above the questions. Please post them in Word, so I can cut and paste them for distribution in class.

In-class participation

To receive a 4.0 for in-class participation, you must attend class each week and demonstrate through discussion that you have carefully considered the assigned readings. This does not mean your comments in class are somehow definitive, complete, brilliant or “right”; but your participation should be active, well-reasoned, engaged with the flow of conversation, and demonstrate your curiosity about the strengths and limitations of theories and empirical applications. Be provocative, but don’t just knock authors down. Strive to build theoretical and empirical understanding, not just demonstrate weaknesses. You can’t make a career out of poking holes in others’ research without showing a way forward. I grade participation on the following scale: consistently demonstrates preparedness and critical capacity (4.0); typically makes solid contributions in these regards, but not consistently so (3.7); often quiet, but makes solid contributions when speaks (3.3); less than desired contributions, with indications that passing a qualifying exam in the field is questionable (3.0). Almost always quiet, but attends class every week (2.7). If you miss a class for any reason, you must submit a commentary on each of the assigned readings; otherwise, I will lower your participation grade .4 for the day you are absent (representing 1/10th of 4.0 for the ten classes in this ten-week course).

Term paper

The term paper need not demonstrate understanding of the entire course. Nor should it be a literature review. I am looking for the first draft of a publishable article that demonstrates you can do empirical work testing one or more of the theories we will cover in the course. You must have a research design section, but need not collect any qualitative or quantitative data. I view this as an exercise in professional development. Basically, I am looking for the first draft of a serious attempt to write a manuscript that might be publishable in a good journal. I will grade based on how well you can situate a research question in the literature, pose hypotheses from theory(s), develop measures of key concepts, and indicate how you will test the hypotheses. Your paper must include a research design, but you need not gather any data. Note the milepost due dates in Weeks 4 and 7 below. I will advise you on developing your paper throughout the course.

Academic Integrity

As a student in this course, you acknowledge that you are a member of a learning community in the Evans School of Public Affairs that is committed to the highest academic standards. As a member of this community, you agree to uphold the fundamental standards of honesty, respect and integrity, and you accept the responsibility to encourage others to adhere to these standards. If you are uncertain about whether a particular action constitutes academic misconduct, please ask me for guidance before an assignment is due, or see the UW’s guidance on what constitutes academic misconduct: depts.washington.edu/grading/pdf/AcademicResponsibility.pdf.

Assigned Readings

Most of the readings are available on Canvas. The other readings are in the following book, which can be purchased at the University Bookstore:
Weekly Schedule

Week 1 (Jan 5) – Theories, Frameworks, and Models

No pre-class written assignment; just read what is assigned below, and think about the discussion questions I posted on the course web site. Note that two of the reading below are from the second edition of the textbook, and are therefore posted on the course web site. I recommend reading these in the order listed below.

Discussion questions are posted with the readings below.

Required readings:


Week 2 (Jan 12) – Multiple Streams Theory

Required readings:


**Week 3 (Jan 19) – The Narrative Policy Framework**

Required readings:


**Week 4 (Jan 26) – Social Construction Theory**

Term papers:

Topic due Jan 27 by email.

Individual consultations regarding the term paper to be arranged.

Required readings:


**Week 5 (Feb 2) – Policy Feedback Theory**

Required readings:


**Week 6 (Feb 9) – Subsystem and Trans-subsystem Theories**

Required readings:


**Week 7 (Feb 16) – The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF)**

Term papers:

Submit your updated term paper proposal by e-mail attachment no later than noon on February 18. Please include the topic, research question, theory(s) you plan to use, key hypotheses, and possible methods. This assignment is intended to keep your term paper focused and directed, but not set in stone.

Required readings:


Week 8 (Feb 23) – Punctuated Equilibrium Theory (PET)

Required readings:


Week 9 (Mar 1) – Policy Diffusion

Required readings:


Optional readings for term papers:


*Week 10 (March 8) – Research Paper Presentations*

Required reading:


Required handout for your presentation:

Prepare a one-page handout that includes your research question, theory(s) tested, hypotheses, methods and evidence you would like to gather or have gathered. You may also attach tables and figures if you have gathered and analyzed data. Please bring sufficient copies of the handout to class.