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 in general (e.g., agenda setting) or on specific policy topics (e.g., public health or education).

Requirements

You will be graded on the following three components:

- Pre-class postings – 25% (due Weeks 2-8)
- In-class participation – 25% (during Weeks 1-9)
- Term paper – 50% (due March 15 at noon)

Pre-class postings (Weeks 2-8)

For Weeks 2-8, you must submit discussion questions by email attachment to me by 8am 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 discussion. After each question, write a short paragraph explaining why the question is of interest 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 one or two questions show less critical capacity than others.
(3.7); shows full preparedness but not great critical capacity for most of the questions (3.3). If a question is missing for one of the readings,.5 will be deducted from the assignment. These weekly assignments should be no more than two pages single-spaced. Be sure your name appears above the questions. Please submit them in Word, so I can cut and paste for distribution in class.

In-class participation

To receive a 4.0 for in-class participation, you must 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 regularly attends class (2.7).

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 6 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 UW guidance on what constitutes academic misconduct.

Assigned Readings

All of the readings are posted on Canvas, with the exceptions of the chapters in one textbook that must be purchased via Amazon or other on-line source:

Make sure you purchase the orange and black 4th edition, not the green 3rd edition or blue 2nd edition.

**Weekly Schedule**

*Week 1 (Jan 9) – 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. The fourth reading below is very dense and too hard for the beginning of the course, but I want you to skim it so you get a sense of what is coming.

**Required readings:**


*Week 2 (Jan 16) – Multiple Streams Theory*

**Required readings:**


**Week 3 (Jan 23) – Social Construction Theory**

**Term paper assignment (I):**
Submit your ideas for a possible topic, plus a back-up topic, along with brief explanations of why those topics are of interest to you, by January 24 by email attachment.

**Required readings:**


**Week 4 (Jan 30) – Policy Feedback Theory**

**Required readings:**


**Week 5 (Feb 6) – The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF)**

Required readings:


**Week 6 (Feb 13) – The Narrative Policy Framework**

**Term paper assignment (II):**

Submit your term paper proposal by email attachment by Feb 15. Please include the topic, research question, theory(s) you might use, a few hypotheses, and possible methods. This assignment is intended to keep your term paper focused and moving forward, but not set in stone.

Required readings:


Week 7 (Feb 20) – Punctuated Equilibrium Theory (PET)

Required readings:


Week 8 (Feb 27) – Policy Diffusion

Term paper assignment (III):

Submit a revised version of the last term paper assignment that incorporates my feedback to you, new ideas based on the subsequent theories and readings we covered, and a fleshed-out research design.

Required readings:


Optional readings for term papers:


**Week 9 (March 6) Research Paper Presentations**

**Required readings:**


**Term paper assignment (IV):**

Prepare a one-page handout for your presentation today 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 for everyone in the class.

**Week 10 (oddly does not exist this quarter)**

Term papers due March 15 at noon by email attachment.