PSCI 334 Notes, Winter 2019. Final mark: 96% Easiness: 9/10 Interest: 9.5/10

Professor: Daniel Henstra

By: Jacky Zhai

Check out more of my notes at www.jackyzhai.ca

Introduction (Week 1)

 Public policy consists of policy processes, policy analysis, and actors, interests, and institutions (people, wants/needs, and rules/practices that structure policy)

Public Policy Definition

- Public policy is a course of action or inaction chosen by public authorities in response to a problem or set of problems
- A course of action is a guide for action in a particular field (e.g. environment, infrastructure, etc.). It is a framework for setting priorities and giving direction for programs.
- Policies are backed by policy logic, and programs support and deliver the policy intentions
- Public policy is created by governments and is a response to problems held by the public that may be hard for private sector to deal with (e.g. parks, traffic lights, transit)
- Policies address problems (undesirable conditions) or a cluster of problems

Policy Content (What Makes Up a Public Policy?)

- **Problem Definition** identifying what the problem is, and the conditions of the problem that need to be solved. A good definition should be **casual (discuss the cause of the problem).**
- However, not many stakeholders agree on a single problem, so the definition is vague
- Goals a statement of objectives the policy intends to achieve. May be specific/quant (e.g. we will build 10 schools), but oftentimes general (we will support education infrastructure)
- Targets individuals or groups whose behaviour must be changed (e.g. anti-smoking policy to change behaviour of smokers)
- Instruments tools to achieve policy goals (spend, regulate, educate, coerce, etc.)
- Agents individuals and organizations assigned responsibility to carry out objectives (public servants, private sector, P3 partnerships, etc.)

Week 2 (Policy Environment)

Aspects of the Policy Environment

- There are social, political and economic factors that affect policy-makers and constrain decisions
- There are needs in society, which in turn lead to demands from society to government. **Some demands then turn into issues for government**
- These issues are then dealt with by the political executive, the bureaucracy, the legislature, and the judiciary, and outputted as decisions and policies
- The output is then given feedback by the society, which may result in the cycle looping

Significance of Policy Environment

The policy environment impacts the type of action, the scope of action, and instruments used

The environment constrains such actions and choices (political, economic, social)

Globalization (And Implications) (1)

- Goods and people are much easier to transport around (free trade and easier travel)
- Free-market model of capitalism has integrated global markets, but also caused plenty of outsourcing and massive transnational corporations (race to the bottom for environmental, tax, and labour standards)
- In addition, trade liberalization limits government ability to protect domestic workers/industry
- Now, many products are produced globally (e.g. Iphones, Airbus Planes) at the most attractive locations to reduce costs (outsourcing)

Effect of Globalization on Government

- Easier flows of capital due to instant access to information can cause stampedes of capital in or out of market due to panic, causing economic uncertainty
- This means that governments must keep in mind the confidence of investors
- Government needs a globally competitive business environment because of this.
- Otherwise, they may be disciplined for poor decisions (high corporate taxes, Brexit, etc.)

Political Culture

- Values, beliefs, and attitudes about political life (important issues, participation, etc.)
- There has been a shift in political participation from traditional to non-traditional
- Less people voting or attached to parties, more people in pressure or lobby groups, etc.

Influence of Political Culture on Society and Government (2)

- Disengagement from traditional politics (voting, parties), increase in right-based activist groups
- There is a shift from economic security to lifestyle issues (gender equality, social justice, etc.)
- Due to this shift, government now heavily relies on opinion polling
- Emphasis on problems with visible, short-term solutions (quick wins)
- Citizens demand participation in policy-making, and stakeholder analysis is very important
- There is an increased emphasis on rights, especially individual rights. Political disputes are now being fought in courts (e.g. carbon tax, gay rights, prostitution, euthanasia, abortion)
- There is now an elevated importance of **legal analysis in policy work**

New Public Management (3)

- Shift in thinking on how government should operate to the political right
- **Leaner spending,** less business regulation, cut costs, focus on core services (health, safety, defence, create jobs, etc.)
- Shift towards client-focused and service-oriented governance
- There is now an emphasis on **policy evaluation** to see efficiency (KPIs, program review, impact measurement, VFM analysis, etc.), and polling citizens to ensure needs are met
- Emphasis on market-based instruments (P3, contracting out, user fees)

Federalism (4)

Multiple venues of government mean there are two responsive audiences for citizen demands

- **Federalism can cause** policy emulation and diffusion (e.g. BC carbon tax applied now by other provinces/federal government) or **health care (Saskatchewan first mover)**
- However, can also cause policy overlap or incoherence (environmental policies, smoking, etc.)
- For example, federal promotes carbon, Ontario does not □ cause **conflict**
- Provinces and federal try to blame each other or shift/claim responsibility to each other on sensitive issues (carbon tax challenge, gun registry being a property or crime issue?)

Week 3 (The Policy Process)

- The policy process is a regular pattern of behavior followed by policymakers
- The process model is **a theory** in reality many stages blend together or issues come up that suddenly bring one step into the spotlight

Problem Definition (Stage 1)

- Defining conditions in society as problems (homelessness is a problem of housing vs jobs?)
- Some conditions are seen as **issues**, while some are not

Agenda-Setting (Stage 2)

- Stage at which policy-makers **select and prioritize** issues on the agenda
- Certain issues and not others get on the agenda and are prioritized or are not due to many reasons (political, economic, pressing, quick wins, etc.)

Policy Formulation (Stage 3)

- Policy-makers **propose and debate** potential courses of action
- There are many stakeholders involved, and they **promote their own interests**
- Choices are made on whether to take action/no action and what instruments are used
- Question during formulation: who is involved, what are their interests, how are courses of action evaluated, and what compromises could be made?

Decision-Making (Policy Adoption) (Stage 4)

- Decision-makers **choose** a preferred course of action
- Primary actors in this role are the political executive, legislators, senior-level public servants
- Questions: what criteria are used to select course of action, why are alternatives rejected?

Policy Implementation (Stage 5)

- Stage when policy is put into effect primary actor is the bureaucracy. Implementation units create programs, and then deliver them
- Implementation is complex and political sometimes has unrealistic goals, ineffective instruments, political interference
- Monitoring is done to ensure policies achieve their objectives, **but even then some outcomes get distorted from the original intentions**
- This could due to policy drift, front-line level bureaucrats not perfectly following the guidelines and making judgement calls (e.g. social workers allowing benefits on grounds on compassion)

Policy Evaluation (Stage 6)

- Results can feed back into policy formulation stage and change the formulation
- Policies are not always implemented as planned due to conflicting interests, resistance, ambiguous criteria – thus, continuous evaluation is required to ensure goals are being met
- Questions asked in this stage: effectiveness, efficiency, possible alternatives?

Problem Definition Stage (Week 4)

Definition of a Problem

- Problem is discrepancy between what is and what should be
- Believes that a problem is an **undesirable situation** that can be corrected by public action
- Thus, if there is a consideration of something as a problem, there is agreement that improvement is possible, desired, or important

Attention

- Key process to **initiate** policy process is **attention**. Attention is a valuable element governments have limited time, money, resources, etc.
- Public attention is important too may manifest through media (e.g. GO Train air quality)
- More visible problems are likely to attract public attention (protests, homelessness, etc.)
- Public attention turns into political attention
- Problems are **politically constructed** actors will define some societal conditions as problems and some as not based on their interests, values, and beliefs

Significance of Problem Definition

• Definition of a problem influences **political perception** in terms of **social significance**, **political implications**, **appropriate policy responses**, **and who should be involved in policy design**

Issue Framing

- A frame is an understood explanation of a problem (e.g. homelessness is caused by no jobs)
- Interest groups/individuals attempt to frame problems to attract attention, secure space on policy agenda, promote their preferred solution (e.g. create more jobs!)

Seven Different Attributes of Problems Manipulated by Actors to Frame Problems

Causality (1)

- Why is problem happening? Is it one-off incident?
- Could be defined as a systemic (impersonal and unavoidable forces) or individual choice cause (emphasizes personal fault and blames individual). E.g homelessness is caused by expensive housing vs. caused by laziness
- Can be framed as **intentional or accidental** (homelessness caused by laziness vs. poor economy)
- Lastly, can be framed as **simple or complex causality.** A simple framing (e.g homelessness is caused only by no jobs) is likelier to get on the government agenda, while a complex framing (homelessness is caused by many factors) is less likely

Incidence (Scope) (2)

Is the scope or impact of problem (Affects a lot of people? Affects a vulnerable group?)

• Likelier to reach agenda if the problem is perceived as widespread (e.g. pandemics) or affects vulnerable groups (children, elderly, the ill, etc.)

Severity (3)

- How serious is the issue and what are the consequences of doing nothing. Portraying a problem as very serious and highly consequential is a way to getting public and government attention
- Severity can be found by analyzing **trend lines** (e.g. CO2 concentration) or **indicators** (consumer prices, crime rates, etc.)
- Can frame a problem as **getting worse over time**, **versus random noise** depending on if an group wants action or not

Novelty (4)

New and unprecedented problems (e.g. SARS pandemic) – tends to imbue a sense of urgency

Proximity (5)

- Immediacy of impact on a target group. Issues or government solutions to issues that are **proximate in nature**, are likelier to get on the government's agendas or vice-versa
- Personal relevancy expands support for action (e.g. if this affects me, I will want action)
- E.g. industry companies tell consumers that a carbon tax will increase prices due to more fuel costs = impacts all the public, which means public attention and government attention

Urgency (6)

- How pressing the problem is. There are many ways to signal urgency
- Rhetorical language often used to signal action (emergency, epidemic, war on climate change)
- **Labels** are used to shape public opinion to make favourable or less favourable calling something a **tax vs.** a **fee** or calling something **an assistance plan vs. welfare**
- Metaphors are used too (spanking is child abuse, cat-calling is sexual harassment etc.)
- Appeal to authority also used to increase urgency (scientists claim world will end without GHG reductions, majority of Canadians claim economy is getting worse, etc.)

Solubility (7)

- Easy, affordable, and feasibly solved issues are on the radar for government
- Must be possible AND feasible solution. For example, we could have cameras in every house to solve issue of spanking, but it might not be accepted due to privacy invasions
- Must also be an affordable/timely solution costly solutions not likely to be considered

Agenda Setting (Week 5)

Definition

- Stage of policy process where problems become **selected for government attention**
- Also stage where issues are relatively prioritized by policy-makers
- Also stage where alternative proposed solutions attract public and elite attentions

Types of Agendas

- Agendas are a slate of problems and solutions attracting attention of government and public
- **Systemic agenda** all issues perceived that are within legitimate jurisdiction of government authority, shaped by **social norms and values/opinion polling.** Some ideas are not considered
- Institutional agenda issues under active consideration by government. Is not comprehensive of the systemic agenda due to scarce resources (e.g. party platform of cutting the deficit)
- **Decision Agenda** issues about to be acted upon by government (e.g. Ontario Government to vote on uploading the TTC)

Initiation of Agendas

- Outside initiation: Pressure from individuals, groups, media to make government prioritize something on the agenda (e.g. mothers against drunk driving, LGBT rights community, charity groups, GO Transit gasoline pollution)
- Inside initiation: public servants or politicians recognize a problem (e.g. statistics show that water quality is going down). Inside problems are controlled in definition by government and are oftentimes development without public knowledge

Interests

- Pressure groups **compete** to move problems from systemic so institutional agendas
- Also compete to raise or even lower/block priority of problems on institutional agenda
- Could **block** issues from advancing on agenda
- Interest groups try to put their interests closer to the decision agenda

Blocking Power

- Interest groups that don't want to see issues on agenda can try to block them
- A policy monopoly there exists a monopoly of dominant influence within a field. Actors who benefit under the current monopoly will block alternative ideas from reaching the agenda
- They try to create a **policy image** a **dominant vision** of the status quo constructed by these interests to be associated with **positive values** (e.g **tanning** = **attractive**)
- Thus, public policy becomes shaped around these dominant visions **should not restrict tanning** as it will anger many individuals

Agenda Setting Dynamics - how to get issue on agenda (Week 5)

Issue Expansion (1)

- Groups use numerous strategies to draw attention to and make their issue more prioritized
- More media noise = more likely to get attention. Debate creates priority and attention
- **Dramatic imagery** is often used e.g. starving children, oil-soaked bird, smoking on lungs
- Venue-shifting also used used to widen scope by shifting to other decision making bodies.

 Could be horizontal (executive to judicial e.g. court case) or vertical (municipal to provincial)

Policy Window (2)

- Short moment of predictable or unpredictable opportunity for groups to get attention on issue
- This tends to be quite short and fast pressure is required to sustain attention
- Elections are windows new governments, campaign platforms, new ideology, decision-making are receptive to alternative proposals

- **Budgets** budget period is also a window. Allows for submissions, opportunity to compete for government spending, promote problems, and propose solutions
- Focusing event unpredictable incident may rapidly focus attention on a problem (e.g. TTC 1995 disaster). Suddenly there is focus on safety, maintenance vs. expansion, crew training
- Focusing events rapidly expand issue through media, and enhance severity and urgency

Coalition Building (3)

- Groups with different goals but similar policy interests may collaborate to pressure government
- E.g. environmentalists and fishers unite in their goal to protect fish from oil spills
- E.g. anti-carbon tax and anti-immigrant group unite in goal of right-leaning policy (yellow vests)
- This expands the interest group into a full social movement

After Midterm Material:

Policy Formulation (Week 8)

Actors propose and debate potential options and generate set of plausible policy choices

Policy Communities

- Policy formulation is highly specialized there are specific policy actors within each area that form communities within that policy field
- Actors within these communities include public servants, pressure groups, firms, individuals
- These actors either have functional responsibilities, specialized knowledge, or vested interests
- Each community tends to be exclusive, as the policy issues are specialized. Thus, members of each community have **common values**, **norms**, **style of rhetoric/language**

Key Actors

- Public Servants consult stakeholders, ensure that stakeholder interests are represented. Also
 formulate options and advise decision-makers on feasibility of these options based on evidence
- Political Advisors partisan advisors that serve cabinet ministers. They advise decision-makers on partisan/political considerations
- **Elected Officials** are the ultimate decision makers. As legislators, they sit in committees for reviewing legislature and also debate bills

Role of Public Managers

- Need to understand the problem. And collect evidence of causality, incidence, and severity
- Need to develop clear, actionable, and concrete problem statements
- Need to clarify policy goals (broad statement of purpose) and objectives (clear, precise, and measurable outcomes)
- Need to gauge political support who is likely to support or oppose policy. Also need to anticipate opposition and develop counter-strategy
- Need to **consider implementation** need to **identify resources** for effective implementation, **timelines**, and milestones/KPIs for success

Sources of Policy Options

- **Political direction** election campaign pledges, stated government priorities, consulting with staff from the Minister's office
- Comparable situations see what has been done in the past/in other jurisdictions
- Stakeholder consultation talk to stakeholders and see their ideas on the situation
- Jurisdictional Scan learning from initiatives elsewhere or other levels of governments
- **Professional Networks** developed through liaising with professional organizations (federation of municipalities, institute of planners, etc.)
- External analysis consultant reports, academic studies, think tanks

Evaluation Criteria

- **Technical Feasibility (1)** degree to which option requires specialized data/expertise. Also refers to availability and affordability of technology needed for solution
- Political Feasibility (2) will the alternative be acceptable to decision makers, is there stakeholder support sufficient to give elected officials confidence
- **Social Acceptability (3)** is it consistent with values of citizens (e.g. privacy, rights, freedoms). Are **the negative effects proportional** to the problems?
- Economic efficiency (4) does the option offer value for money (low cost/benefit ratio is better)
- Administrative operability (5) do we have the human resource capacity? Do we have an agency/team/ministry with the expertise?
- Equity (6) are the benefits and burdens fairly distributed? Are there windfall gains for all /unreasonable losses on other people?
- Other Considerations (7) flexibility of option (reversible, changed?), durability (likelihood of surviving change in government, economic downtown), complementary with other policy goals?

Policy Instruments (Week 9)

- Achieving policy goals generally involve changing behavior (either encouraging good behaviour or discouraging bad behaviour), or changing political, social, or economic behaviours
- Instruments may be substitutable different instruments can achieve the same goal

Types of Policy Instruments

Information (1)

- Used to influence behaviour of individuals or organizations, as people generally trust the information that come from governments
- Is noncoercive and indirect, relies on voluntary compliance and there is no penalty or reward for complying
- Knowledge transfer is a way to pass information e.g. canada food guide, guide on electric consumption of dryers, ways to reduce carbon footprint guide
- Exhortation is another way government uses their position of authority to influence behaviour change (e.g. campaign against smoking)
- Moral persuasion campaigns to influence values and beliefs appeals to a sense of moral obligation (e.g. individual duty to preserve the environment)

Shaming – putting a negative image to compel change e.g. publicly identifying people who don't pay property tax

Expenditure (2)

- Attempt to change behaviour by **providing financial resources**
- Transfers a payment directly to a person or group. Transfers are unconditional, and can be used as a recipient wishes (e.g. Old Age Security, Child Tax Benefit)
- Grants payments that come with a specific objective or purpose e.g. OSAP
- Subsidies payments given to groups to supplement private resources. Conditional on a performance requirement- e.g a subsidy for installing energy efficient furnace
- Tax Rebates or Deductions e.g. Transit tax rebate, RRSPs (tax-free shelter)
- Taxes and Fees used to discourage or encourage behaviour e.g. taxes on cigarettes vs. off-peak hydro tax rates

Regulation (3)

- Rules that are issued to control behaviour through coercive power (backed by sanctions)
- Laws and regulations are passed by authoritative bodies (legislature or delegated authorities)
- **Enabling statute** confers regulatory authority e.g. Municipal Act empowers municipalities to enforce and create bylaws
- **Standards** setting minimum requirements on an issue, accompanied by inspection and reporting (e.g. minimum wage, Ontario building code)
- Permits requiring government permissions to undertake activity need a building permit,
 need a demolition permit, alcohol sales permit, etc.)
- **Licensing** regulate certain activities and require certain competencies for eligibility (e.g. driver's license, firearms license)

Direct Action (4)

- Government acts directly through human and financial resources
- May be through a partnership, but government is still accountable for course of action
- Can be delivered through:
- Departments develop programs that are delivered by public employees (e.g. nurses, teachers, firefighters) and involve formal evaluation procedures
- **Regulatory agencies** arms-length organization to ensure **fairness and impartiality** e.g. CRTC regulations broadcasting and telecommunications
- **Crown Corporation** company owned by government. Has autonomy from government (has own budget and hiring) and **delivers a specific service. E.g. Metrolinx**
- **P3** partnering with private sector to deliver a result (e.g. Engineering firm to build a highway)

Restraints on Selection of Instruments

• Selection of instruments are influenced by the **political environment**

Restraints on Spending

• Expenditures must be framed as investments for political reasons, and there is a strong emphasis on value for money.

- Public often focuses on waste, so government must ensure public that programs are delivered effectively
- There is a general resistance to taxation all major political parties favour tax relief due to the realities of political culture being resistant to new taxes and fees

Restraints on Regulation

- There are **political limits to regulation** public outcry over red tape of government
- Coercive power is becoming perceived as less legitimate in modern political culture
- Contradictory to the above, there is now more social pressure for government to introduce social regulation (e.g. environmental protection, safety standards, etc.)

Decision-Making (Week 10)

Overview

- Stage at which actors must choose a course of action.
- This choice will be **limited** (chosen from a subset of alternatives)
- Will be complex (various political and other interests promote preferred policy option)
- And will be political in nature (decisions create winners and losers)

Actors

- Formal participation is restricted to authorities (politicians, cabinet, senior bureaucrats)
- Pressure groups may lobby, but have no formal input

Principles of Cabinet Decision-Making

- Ministers much have sufficient information to make decisions
- Cabinet must be **efficient** only key decisions are made here
- Cabinet must be **deliberative** challenges, ideas, alternatives, and questions can be raised
- Public service coordinates information through central departments (TBS or PCO)

Cabinet Committees

- Are a way to coordinate policy proposals from the public service
- Consist of small groups of ministers and their staff
- They discuss proposals, make recommendations to the full cabinet
- At meetings, the PM is not present as it allows for open discussion without fear of reprisal
- However, PM is informed about the discussion through cabinet office officials

Process of Cabinet Decision-Making

- Proposals prepared in a **cabinet submission**, submitted to PCO, and assigned to committee
- Although consensus is preferred, PM has the final say
- It is presented by minister or DM, and if approved, the committee endorses the proposal
- Then, the proposal moves to **full cabinet for ratification**
- Committee discusses committee recommendations, discusses broad political strategies.
- Cabinet officer issues a Record of Decision to the responsible minister, and senior bureaucrats issue implementation directives

Outputs of Cabinet Decisions

- Legislation bill introduced in legislature and goes through the legislature process (first reading, second reading, legislative committee, third reading, sent to senate, royal assent)
- Order-in-Council official notice of executive decision by cabinet. It is created under delegated legislative authority, and thus has the force of law. Must be publicly announced in the Gazette
- Often used to appoint office holder (e.g Commissioner of canada post), or issue regulations
- Programs operational portfolio of services or funding to meet policy outcomes in a certain jurisdiction, guided by a policy strategy
- Resources and mandates are conferred to the implementation by legislative authority

Role of Public Servants in Decision-Making

- Man role is to make a decision support framework
- Specify measurable decision criteria (impacts of each alternative, create a policy matrix, etc.).
- Perform systematic analysis begin with do nothing scenario, and project outcomes of such
- Assess impact of each option project outcomes for different options (e.g. economic change)
- Consult Widely gather input from other departments, stakeholders, public, fed/prov/muni

Policy Implementation (Week 11)

- Implementation is translation of chosen policy into programs. It is the execution of policy.
- Will be complex (involves many different departments and actors) and political in nature as there are interests, winners and losers.
- Effective implementation is crucial to policy success

Three Broad Factors Influencing Implementation

Tractability (1)

- How easily the problem is managed? (e.g. substance abuse vs. speed limit). Speed limit is easy to manage have speed traps and fines, drug abuse less so
- Problems that are tractable have clear understanding of what needs to be changed, involve only modest changes, and involves only small subsets of population
- Tractable problems allow for **better mobilization of political support.** Costs can be justified **through measurable improvements (e.g.** accidents down 15% after speed limit reduced)

Structure of Implementation Strategy (2)

- Implementation requires authority. Should come from enabling statutes with precise objectives
- Implementation agencies should have strong resources and commitment to policy goals
- Thus, need to assign the task of implementation to units sympathetic to and knowledgeable about policy goals, or make new units

Support for Policy Objectives (3)

- Need to have public support, political support, media support, and pressure group support.
- **Politicians are sensitive to public opinion** economic conditions affect public support. Interests will use polling to support or attack policies
- **Political Support is also required** elected officials can cripple implementation agencies through cuts, axing programs, etc. (e.g. Doug ford axes GreenOn)
- Media Support framing of socioeconomic conditions affects perception of success/failure
- **Pressure Groups** groups will try to get exemptions from policy, or challenge decisions. Also try to rally public support against or for policies (e.g. Students against OSAP cuts)

Criteria for Effective Policy Implementation

- Well-crafted design Strong understanding of problem, clear objectives, reasonable changes
- Clear priority of objectives robust despite changing economic conditions, and minimally vulnerable to changes in political support (e.g. infrastructure policy tend to be politically robust)
- Dedicated and well-resourced implementing agents
- Support of public, politicians, and stakeholders

Strategies for Public Servants to Ensure Effective Implementation

- Consult Widely engage stakeholders, implementation agents, and consider lessons learned
- Good Design specify measureable objectives, specify tasks, outline timeframe, identify risks
- **Build Support** get buy-in from political leaders and stakeholders, ensure senior management is supportive, and anticipate resistance from groups
- Build Capacity form committee to oversee implementation, identify expertise, have communications strategies (e.g. key media releases) to maintain attention and support