Public Policy: Theories, Traditions and Transitions
Core Course, Public Policy Track

Doctoral Program in Political Science
Fall/ Winter Term AY 2016-17

Lecturers: Agnes Batory and Sara Svensson
Class times: 
Credits: 4
Requirements:
- Participation 15%
- Session presentation 10%
- Session presentation and moderation 20%
- Peer review 15%
- Final paper (4000 words) 40%

Course objectives

The course provides an introduction to the concepts, theories and debates at the core of public policy as a field of scholarly inquiry. The course is designed to prepare the students for their dissertation research, and therefore provides for a broad discussion of public policy analysis that draws on insights and theories from political science, international relations, economics, law and sociology.

The main objective of this course is to develop an advanced understanding of major debates in contemporary public policy, theoretical approaches to the study of public policy as well as diverse methodological opportunities of researching various aspects of public policy-making. The concern is to identify and analyze (a), major strands and traditions of public policy scholarship; (b) core concepts in policy analysis; (c) major methodological perspectives, debates and logics of research inquiry used for academic research on public policy; and (d) explanatory capacity of existing theoretical tools.

Particular attention is paid to the state-of-the-art in public policy research and practice. This is done through, for instance, including discussions from social constructivism and argumentative and interpretive research, and by including practical sessions helping to prepare participants for their future career as professional researchers.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:
- identify the major theoretical debates in contemporary policy studies;
- contrast and compare existing research on public policy, discuss theoretical traditions and frameworks and critically engage with their arguments;
• interpret and judge different methodological strategies used in public policy research, and evaluate their core assumptions as well as their heuristic and explanatory potentials;
• evaluate the relevance of existing frameworks and approaches for their own work;
• have an understanding of the major challenges and requirements of doing advanced research professionally in an academic or practical context.

**Course readings and seminar format**

Students are expected to read all core readings (normally three pieces of literature per week), which are available on the course e-learning site. In addition, the syllabus contains further readings which are recommended for the session. Depending on class size, students may be assigned one recommended reading per session to feed into the discussion.

The format of the seminars may vary, but are generally discussion-based and therefore depend on participants’ ability and willingness to make informed contributions. A number of seminars will be moderated by students (see below under requirements).

**Course structure**

The course consists of 24 weekly seminars of 100 minutes, distributed over two terms (Fall and Winter). The seminars are led by one of the lecturers, students (see course requirements) or guest speakers from the faculty. The topics of the seminars are divided into four themes:

• Public policy as a field of scholarly endeavor and profession
• Understanding policy change and the policy cycle
• Different approaches to policy analysis
• Academic practice: doing research as your profession (this theme will appear as ‘excursions’ interjected throughout the course)
Overview of sessions

Fall term

I. Introduction to policy studies

1. AB & SS Introduction: why are we here?
2. SS Public Policy as a discipline (?), subject and profession
3. AB Evidence-based policy making: does research influence policy?
4. AB Public Policy as a research field: dissertation workshop

II. Understanding policy change and the policy cycle

5. SS The policy cycle approach to public policy studies
6. AB Problem formulation and agenda-setting I: The Garbage Can model and Multiple streams
7. SS Problem formulation and agenda-setting II: The Advocacy Coalition framework
8. AB Academic Practice Excursus 1: Writing peer-reviews for public policy journals
9. SS Policy formulation, decision-making and implementation
10. AB Compliance
11. SS Evaluation
12. AB Academic practice Excursus 2: A guide to the process of publishing your work

Winter term

13. AB Policy transfer and diffusion
14. SS Policy learning and policy translation
15. AB Policy success and policy failure

III. Approaches to policy analysis

16. SS Rational Choice & Public Choice
17. AB Institutionalism & New Institutionalism
18. AB Multi-level governance I: global public policy and global governance
19. SS Multi-level governance II: regional public policy
20. SS Multi-level governance III: local public policy
21. SS Critical/interpretive policy studies I
22. SS Critical/interpretive policy studies II
23. AB Academic Practice Excursus 3: navigating the academic job market
24. AB & SS Conclusion
## Course Requirements

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<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session presentation and moderation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>Peer review</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper (4000 words)</td>
<td>40%</td>
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1. **Seminar participation**
   Students are expected to attend each seminar and regularly participate in discussions. Participation is graded as follows: attendance (but no participation) will merit a C+; good faith efforts at participation lead to the B/B+ range; valuable contributions are in the B+/A range. We expect attendance at seminar discussions throughout the semester. An absence must be reported in advance.

2. **Session presentation and moderation**
   Each term, students are asked to take the lead on one topic. In the Fall term this takes the format of a short (15 minute) presentation, followed by questions for discussion. Presenters are asked to send their outline (slides or notes) to the lecturer of the given seminar at least two working days in advance. The grade will be based on the extent to which added value to the readings is provided in a clear and coherent manner that stimulates discussion.
   In the Winter term students run a full seminar, which follows a format of the student’s choosing. The grade will be based both on the ability to meet predefined learning objectives for the session and the quality and clarity of content delivery.

3. **Peer reviews**
   Students will be asked to review scholarly articles in the field of public policy. Reviews provide for substantiated critiques and take a position towards the scholarly contribution of the assessed article. The first of the peer reviews will be on a paper chosen by the course lecturers, and it is due in week 8 for the first Academic Practice excursus. The review should result in a recommendation to publish/not to publish in a journal pre-determined by the lecturer. This review will not be graded.
   The second review will be done on an article of the students’ choice and field of interest, and will be graded. The second peer-review is due by the end of the Fall term (exact date tba).

4. **Final paper**
   The final paper is a scholarly piece on a subject of your choice. It embeds the research question in a larger academic context, defines a framework of analysis, is empirically rich and follows standard models of research design/inquiry. Students are strongly encouraged to pick one particular theory or model discussed during the course to inform their analysis. Final papers are 4,000 words of length (all inclusive, +/- 10% permissible; overlong or too short papers will be marked down). Students are expected to inform the instructors on the topic of the paper no later than one month before the submission. The final paper is due at the end of the course (late March/early April, tba).

*Please note that late papers will be marked down by a third of a letter grade per day. Please also note that failing any requirement will mean a fail grade for the entire course.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>AB &amp; SS</th>
<th>Introduction: why are we here?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>1. Who are we, what are our backgrounds?</td>
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<td>2. Our PhD research: topics, questions, proposed contributions, relation to public policy</td>
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<td>3. Expectations from the course</td>
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<td>4. The notion of “public policy” in our contexts</td>
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<td>5. The structure of the course and key issues</td>
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**Required readings:**
Upload your research proposal (the one you applied to CEU with or a new one-page summary) to the e-learning site. Read the proposals of your peers before the class. Think about commonalities and differences, especially in relation to ‘public policy’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>Public Policy as a discipline (?), subject and profession</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1. Public policy as a discipline: evolution, conceptual field, research agenda</td>
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<td>2. Public policy as a profession – a preliminary discussion.</td>
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</table>

**Required readings:**


**Further readings:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3</th>
<th>AB</th>
<th><strong>Evidence-based policy-making: does research influence policy?</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Does social science in general and policy studies in particular matter for the ‘real world’?</td>
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<td>• What is the role of ‘experts’ in the policy-making process?</td>
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<td>• How and to what extent does scientific evidence influence policy-making?</td>
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<td>• Is there a specific method or set of methods that is better suited for the production of policy-relevant ‘evidence’?</td>
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**Required readings:**
Wayne Parsons, ‘From Muddling Through to Muddling Up - Evidence Based Policy Making and the Modernisation of British Government’ Public Policy and Administration Autumn 2002 17: 43-60

**Recommended readings:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4</th>
<th>AB</th>
<th><strong>Public Policy as a research field: dissertation workshop</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1. What makes a dissertation a ‘public policy’ dissertation?</td>
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<td>2. How do public policy researchers position themselves vis-à-vis other disciplines?</td>
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**Required readings:**
Before the seminar, you should read one of the following two dissertations written with the Doctoral School’s public policy track
I. Understanding policy change and the policy cycle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5 SS</th>
<th>The stages approach to the policy approach: the policy cycle</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The concept of “policy cycle”: is it a reliable tool for understanding public policy change?</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>What avenues of inquiry does it offer, what are the limits?</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>What are the normative components of this approach?</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Can it be combined with other theories of policy change?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Readings:**


**Further readings:**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6 AB</th>
<th>Problem formulation and agenda-setting I: The Garbage Can model, Multiple streams, and punctuated equilibrium</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Organisational change and garbage can decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Multiple Streams: chance versus rationality; chaos versus order</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Policy entrepreneurs and ‘windows of opportunity’</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
4. Punctuated equilibrium: incremental and radical policy change as a function of agendas

**Readings:**


**Further readings:**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>Problem formulation and agenda-setting II: The Advocacy Coalition framework</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>1. Advocacy coalitions, iron triangles, issue networks, policy (epistemic communities): what are the conceptual boundaries?</td>
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<td>2. How do advocacy coalitions change?</td>
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<td>3. Conceptualising the networks: seeing policy change through the prism of networks</td>
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**Readings:**

| 8 | AB | Academic Practice Excursus 1: **Writing peer-reviews for public policy journals**

*Paper to be reviewed will be uploaded to e-learning prior to the session.*

| 9 | SS | **Policy formulation, decision-making and implementation**

1. How are policy responses formulated and what are the tools available to government?
2. What can the field of public policy add to the understanding of decision-making?
3. What are the distinctive features of policy implementation? How are decisions different at this stage?
4. Can it be conceptualised as a separate stage in policy-making?

**Readings:**


**Further readings:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10</th>
<th>AB</th>
<th><strong>Compliance, target compliance and creative compliance</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1. How is compliance conceptualised in the literature?</td>
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<td>2. Who do target groups comply with obligations?</td>
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<td>3. What are the methodological challenges involved in studying compliance?</td>
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**Readings:**


**Further readings:**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>11</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th><strong>Evaluation and control: political games and governance trends</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>(1) When, why and how did evaluation become an important part of government?</td>
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<td>(2) What is the political component of evaluation?</td>
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<td>(3) What is the state-of-the-art in the research field on evaluation?</td>
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**Readings:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>12</th>
<th>AB</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic practice Excursus 2: A guide to the process of publishing your work</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Please see content on e-learning</em></td>
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**Further readings**


Winter term: *Please note that the reading lists below is indicative and will be confirmed when Winter term starts.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>13</th>
<th>AB</th>
<th>Policy transfer and policy diffusion</th>
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</thead>
</table>
|    |    | 1. What are the core differences between ‘Policy Transfer’ and ‘Diffusion’?  
|    |    | 2. How, when and why do ideas, norms and values as well as ‘best practices’ and international standards spread?  
|    |    | 3. Challenges of policy diffusion research  
|    |    | Readings:  
|    |    | Further readings:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>14</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>Policy learning and policy translation</th>
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</table>
|    |    | Readings (tbc):  

15 AB **Policy success and policy failure**

1. How can we determine whether a policy has succeeded?
2. Why is the literature predominantly focused on policy failure?
3. What are the principal, common causes of policy failure?

**Readings:**


**Further reading:**
Allan McConnell, ‘What is policy failure? A primer to help navigate the maze’ Public Policy and Administration *July-October 2015 vol. 30 no. 3-4 221-242*.


I. Approaches to policy analysis

16 SS **Rational Choice & Public Choice**

(1) What were the contributions of rational choice/public choice theory to academic and applied policy analysis?
(2) What are its legacies?


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>17</th>
<th>AB</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutionalism &amp; New Institutionalism</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Political institutions in the policy process: How do we identify and define political institutions? What type of political institutions exist?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Classical versus new institutionalism</td>
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**Required readings:**


**Further readings**


### Further readings:


### Multi-level governance I: global public policy and global governance

#### Required readings:


#### Further reading:


| 19 | SS | **Multi-level governance II: policy-making in administrative, functional and emerging regional spaces**

(1) What is the difference between administrative and functional regional matters and how does the approach one takes on this matter for policy?
(2) Is there any evidence for a European or global sub-national regionalization trend?
(3) Do cross-border regions have a future in a rebordering Europe?


**Further reading**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>20 SS</th>
<th>Multi-level governance III: Trends in local and urban public policy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What has been the contribution of urban policy planning to the public policy field?</td>
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<td>2. Is decentralization here to stay?</td>
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<td>3. Do public policy theories worked out for national level work at the local scale?</td>
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**Further readings:**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>21 SS</th>
<th>Critical/interpretive policy studies I: trends in social sciences and public policy studies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What are the ontological and epistemological foundations of this intellectual approach?</td>
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<td>2. What is the standing of the approach in today’s academic and applied policy analysis?</td>
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Further readings:


Critical/interpretive policy studies II: methodological considerations

1. What does interpretative research add to our understanding of public policy?
2. How do interpretative perspectives translate into empirical investigations?


Yanow, Dora. 2014. Interpretive analysis and comparative research. In Sabelle Engeli and Christine Rothmayr, eds., Comparative policy studies:


**Further readings:**


<table>
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<tr>
<th>23</th>
<th>AB</th>
<th>Academic Practice Excursus 3: navigating the academic job market</th>
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| 24 | AB & SS | Conclusion |