POL 317H1(F): Comparative Public Policy

Michael James Donnelly
University of Toronto Department of Political Science
2014-2015

This course serves as an introduction to public policy, with a focus on wealthy democracies. We will begin by spending two weeks looking at the questions that motivate many studies of policy:

- Who controls the actions of democratic states? Whose preferences are enacted?
- Why do policies differ across time and space? Why to they change?

These questions cut to the heart of all democratic theories. They are also crucial to understanding your roles as a participant in a democratic society, whether as a voter, a policy-maker, a tax-payer, or a service user.

The focus of the course is on big-picture policy questions. Since this course is meant to feed into POL 474, where you will look more carefully at the policy evaluation process, we will spend less time here on policy outputs and more time on policy inputs. In other words, we will try to understand how policies come to be and how they change.

We will examine four clusters of policies that are important in every country:

1. Social policy, or “Who gets what and how much”?
2. Labour and public employment policies, or “How is work life shaped by the state?”
3. Criminal justice policies, or “Against whom does the state wield force”?
4. Immigration and citizenship policies, or “Who is a part of our society”?

When we are finished, you will be able to describe policy variation on these issues. This description will enable you to analyze theories of policy formation, critiquing their strengths and weaknesses, and making a critical judgement about their explanatory power. Finally, you will also be able to communicate your description and analysis with others, both orally and in writing.
1 Contact Information

Office: 3105
Office Phone: 
Email: mj.donnelly@utoronto.ca
URL: http://www.MichaelJDonnelly.net

Please note that this is a tentative syllabus, and is subject to change.

2 Prerequisites

Please see the 2014-2015 Faculty of Arts and Sciences Calendar to see the list of prerequisites.

3 Logistics

• Class: Wednesdays 12:00pm - 2:00pm

• Michael’s Office hours: 3:00-5:00pm on Thursdays.\(^1\) Appointments by email are also available.

• Email policy: I will respond to all emails within two working days. If I have not gotten back to you by then, feel free to send a reminder. Do not email questions about an assignment less than three days before it is due. Questions requiring a long or complex answer are better asked on the discussion board (see below) or in office hours.

3.1 Questions

In addition to office hours, please use the discussion board at Blackboard when asking questions about lectures, papers, and other course materials. This allows all students to benefit from the discussion and help each other understand the materials. Students are also encouraged to answer any questions that are posted by other students (doing this will help your participation grade).

4 Course Requirements

Your final grade is based on participation, two short policy memoranda, and a long paper.

• Participation (20%): I expect you to come to class having read the assigned materials and prepared to discuss them. Attendance is mandatory. If you expect to miss class, or if you miss class unexpectedly, it is essential that you communicate with me.

  – Most class sessions will include both lectures and discussions. Your participation in the discussions is important to you and to your classmates. I expect most students to contribute on any given day, and all students to contribute multiple times over the course of the semester. I will occasionally cold-call students.

\(^1\)These hours are subject to change. Check Portal for announcements.
After each class, please enter your participation self-report on Blackboard. You will evaluate your own preparation (did you read?), attention (did you listen?), and contribution (did you speak?). I will show you how to do this at the end of class on the first day. I will spot-check self-reports, so be honest!

I expect you to put your cell phones away when class starts. If you take notes on computers or tablets, you may keep them on your desk, but you may not check email, news sites, Facebook, etc. during class. The first violation of this policy will result in a 5 percentage point loss on your participation grade. Any further violations will result in 10 percentage point penalties.

I expect classroom discussions to be civil and respectful. You will disagree with me, with the readings, and with each other quite frequently. That is good. It means we are all thinking hard about public policy, one of the most controversial topics we can study. When you participate in class, be careful to consider your tone, and to avoid racist, sexist, homophobic, or sectarian comments.

- **Policy Memoranda** (10% X 2): Twice over the course of the semester, you should write a 400 word (one side of one page, single-spaced) policy memo. This should examine a single policy in two countries, comparing and contrasting the policies of the two states. These memos are self-scheduled. You may turn the first one in during week 5 or 7 and the second one during week 9 or 11. The policy should come from the relevant issue area (social policy in Week 5, labour markets in Week 7, etc.). The first memo will be graded and returned by November 3.

- **Long Paper** (50%): This paper will be an in depth (3-4,000 words) examination of policies in an issue area of your choice. You will choose an area, describe the variation across at least three countries, and explain why the policies vary. A rough draft is due (on Blackboard) at 10:00pm on November 18. The papers are due (on Blackboard) December 8 by 5:30pm.

  - **Feedback** (10%): You will also be tasked with providing written feedback to two of your peers. Two hard copies of each set of comments (one copy for me and one for each classmate) are due in class on Week 12.

### 4.1 Long Paper Details

The comparison should focus on the **causes** of the policies in question. You will examine three or four countries, describing the types of policies and how you might measure them in a broader selection of countries. You will not have space to describe every detail about each case, so you must make analytic choices about the most important aspects of the policy for determining the causes.

You should clearly describe the theoretical framework in which you are working and provide initial evidence for your theory. Some potential issues are listed below. Feel free to pick an issue not on this list, but clear the topic with me by email before Week 6.

- Minimum wages
- Unemployment benefits
- Income taxes
Comparative Public Policy

• Consumption/value added taxes
• Taxes on capital
• Public sector union regulation
• Private sector union regulation
• Utility regulation
• Public sector procurement
• Anti-discrimination laws
• Drug regulation
• Divorce
• LGBT rights
• Abortion
• Prisons and punishment
• Domestic violence prevention
• Education funding
• Education curricula
• Teacher training
• Health care/insurance funding
• Food safety
• Trade policy
• Defense procurement

After you have chosen your topic, you should submit a short (about one page single spaced) topic selection memo (due Week 6). In this memo, you should:

1. Identify a topic
2. Identify cases (these may be tentative)
3. Describe a measurement strategy, including possible sources of those measurements (i.e. your own categorizations, using the OECD’s measures, etc.)
4. Identify three scholarly works that are relevant to your topic and/or your cases.

Table 1 displays the criteria for the paper itself, while Table and 2 display the criteria for the feedback. An A paper or feedback packet will have more than one aspect falling into the “Excellent” category and none in the “Poor” or “Fair.” A C+ item will display mostly “Fair” performance, while a failing item will be mostly “Poor.”

5 Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Plagiarism and other violations of academic integrity will not be tolerated. See the university policies\(^2\) for more details. The Writing Center\(^3\) can also assist you in avoiding plagiarism.

\(^2\)http://www.utoronto.ca/academicintegrity
\(^3\)http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/home
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical framework</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Missing or incoherent</td>
<td>Coherent, but contains logical gaps, does not connect to other theories</td>
<td>Draws on existing literature, does not add to it or explain nuances.</td>
<td>Innovative or displaying clear grasp of underlying mechanisms and structures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection to readings</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Does not cite readings</td>
<td>Ignores some important readings on syllabus</td>
<td>Makes appropriate citations to readings on syllabus</td>
<td>Cites appropriate readings on and off syllabus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case selection</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Do not vary in key independent/dependent variables. Incorrect number of cases.</td>
<td>Vary on some IV’s/DV’s, but not those appropriate to the framework.</td>
<td>Well-chosen cases.</td>
<td>Well chosen cases displaying unusual or striking insight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measurement</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Does not consider measurement issues.</td>
<td>Mentions measurement, but uses poorly designed measures.</td>
<td>Measures are appropriate for theory.</td>
<td>Measures display unusual insight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Hard to follow.</td>
<td>Overall organization is good, but lower levels display incoherence</td>
<td>Well-structured</td>
<td>Good transitions and all parts are clearly linked to thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing and graphics</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Many grammatical/spelling mistakes, poor or inappropriate graphics</td>
<td>Competent writing, reasonable graphics, poor link between the two</td>
<td>Well integrated writing and graphics</td>
<td>Exceptionally insightful and creative writing and graphics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1: Final Draft Criteria**
### Table 2: Feedback Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>Not tied to papers</td>
<td>Engages, but does not display a clear grasp of the theory and cases</td>
<td>Clear grasp of the paper</td>
<td>Displays critical evaluation and adds insight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical sophistication</td>
<td>Does not grasp theory or evidence</td>
<td>Displays understanding of theory and evidence, but does not add to it</td>
<td>Adds some insights</td>
<td>Adds many insights, will be especially beneficial to recipients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tone</td>
<td>Is disrespectful</td>
<td>Is respectful but not critical</td>
<td>Includes respectful criticism. May include cliched compliments</td>
<td>Includes respectful criticism and useful compliments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6 Late Assignments

Late assignments will receive deductions of 20% per day. Students are strongly advised to make rough drafts and hard copies before handing anything in and to keep those copies until after grades are posted on ROSI.

7 Readings

Below, you will find a detailed listing of readings for each class session. Most classes will be based on two to four assigned articles or book chapters (typically about three hours worth of careful reading, though a bit longer in weeks 2 and 3). You should read carefully and be prepared to discuss both the theory and the evidence. Some of the evidence is going to rely on knowledge - of history, politics, statistics, or past work - that you do not have. That is to be expected. If you read the evidence and cannot understand exactly what it means, make sure to bring that up in class.

We will use the following books, available online:


Some of these books are classics, and have been published and republished repeatedly. Feel free to buy the cheapest editions available, though if you are only asked to read some chapters, you should check with me to make sure you are reading the right chapters. If an entire book is assigned, you are responsible for understanding the basic argument and why we should believe it. All other readings will be posted to Blackboard.

8 Course Outline

Week 1: Introductions, logistics, etc. September 10

- Pages 1-65\(^4\) of Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*

\(^4\)You may skim Chapter 2, but make sure you understand the argument.
Policy Causes

Week 2: Interests, institutions, and ideas: What causes variation in public policies? This section introduces three possible sources of differing preferences and differing outcomes.

September 17

- Peter A Hall. “Policy Paradigms, Social Learning, and the State: The Case of Economic Policymaking in Britain”. In: Comparative Politics 25.3 (Apr. 1993), pp. 275–296

Week 3: Does public opinion shape the outcome of democratic politics? If so, whose preferences matter? Is it the rich? The media? Politicians?

September 24


Week 4: Analyzing policy causes as social scientists. What strategies do political and social scientists use to provide evidence for their theories? How do we measure key concepts?

October 1


Social Policy

Week 5: How much and to whom?

October 8

- Daniel Bélanger and André Lecours. “The Politics of Territorial Solidarity”. In: Comparative Political Studies 38.6 (2005), p. 676
Week 6: Why do some states “care” more than others?

- Chapters 3-6 Alesina and Glaeser, *Fighting Poverty in the US and Europe*

Labour, Public Employment, and Bureaucracies

Week 7: How do states influence the labour market? October 15

- Chapters 1, 6, and 9 of Wilson, *Bureaucracy*

Week 8: Who works? For whom? October 29


Criminal Justice

Week 9: Politics and Crime November 5

- Eva-Maria Euchner et al. “From morality policy to normal policy: framing of drug consumption and gambling in Germany and the Netherlands and their regulatory consequences”. In: *Journal of European Public Policy* 20.3 (Mar. 2013), pp. 372–389

Week 10: Inequalities November 12


Immigration and Citizenship Policy

Week 11: Who can come? Who can stay? November 19

- Read the introduction and two or three chapters of Koopmans et al., *Contested citizenship*
Week 12: How do natives respond?  