Course Objectives:
This course provides an overview of developments in comparative public policy theory and the various methods used by public policy scholars. The course readings combine classics (frequently cited and theoretical breakthroughs) and more recent contributions to theories and empirical analyses of public policy. They are representative of the different theoretical and empirical work regarding the causal factors that explain policy-making dynamics and outputs across time and place.

The course concentrates on addressing a number of questions that have preoccupied students of public policy, foremost among which are the following. First, what micro-theories of individual behaviour best explain collective decision-making by political actors? Second, what causal factors and processes—structural, institutional, ideational, and psychological—explain variations in public policies across policy sectors and jurisdictions? Third, what causal mechanisms and processes explain policy stability and policy change? And fourth, how have policy processes been reshaped by the dynamics of globalization and fiscal austerity? The course draws on literature that is largely, but not exclusively, derived from studies of public policies in industrialized democracies. Policy developments with respect to the distributive and redistributive politics of the social welfare state are given particular focus.

This course serves as the core course for PhD students who are specializing in Public Policy as one of their fields. Students planning to write the Major Field Exam (MFE) in Public Policy will need to supplement the readings for this course, not only with Further Readings listed here, but more comprehensively, with material on the Public Policy MFE Reading List. The latter is available from the instructors.

The course is also open to MA students. They are asked to consult with one of the instructors to ensure they have the background for the demands of the course.

Students are expected to have sufficient background in research design and methods to address, in seminar discussions and assignments, the merits of the methods employed in the course.
readings (which may include large-n quantitative studies, small-n case studies, formal theory, process tracing, and experiments).

Students with NO background in public policy should review an introductory text. We recommend one of the following:


**Required Readings:**
Please note that most of the required readings (listed by year of publication) are journal articles that are available for downloading on the University of Toronto’s E-library system. They can also usually be accessed through a simple Google search of the article title. Required readings that are not available online (i.e. are book chapters or unpublished papers) have also been made available on Quercus. Please note, given how much we use these texts, you may want to purchase:


**Course Requirements:**

Grades for this course will be based on the following requirements:
1. Seminar Participation: Cumulative throughout term: 20%
2. Critical reading responses/presentations: Three @ 10% each = 30%
3. Book Review: 20%
4. Literature Review Essay: Due April 9, 2018: 30%

In order to ensure they receive feedback on their progress by the end of the first term, students are advised to space out their critical review responses and to complete AT LEAST one in the first semester.

1. **Seminar Participation: 20%**

Weekly attendance is mandatory. If it is impossible for you to attend a class, please email the instructors as much in advance as possible to explain why.

All students are expected to have done the required readings before class and to come to class prepared to discuss them. To facilitate seminar discussion, all students are expected to post 3 questions for discussion and/or points for further clarification on the readings by 10 pm Sunday on the course Quercus website. Questions are expected to address the theoretical or methodological features of the article. Students should consult one another’s posting prior to the
Monday class and be prepared to discuss them as well as the readings. The seminar participation grade will be determined on the basis of the quality and frequency of participation, including the presentation of analytical papers (see below). Frequency of participation will be determined by the regularity of intervention in class discussions. Quality of participation will be determined by demonstrated grasp of course readings, attentiveness to class discussion, and thoughtful comments and questions to move the discussion along.

On the weeks where full books are assigned for the book review, students who are preparing a written review of the book are not expected to post written questions on the book. All other students are.

2. **Critical Reading Responses/Presentations: Three worth 10% each**

Students will prepare three analytical papers of not more than 10 double spaced pages (12 font) on the readings for three separate weeks. Papers should develop an argument that appraises the major themes, concepts and methods of the readings, and situate the readings in the broader public policy sub-field. Papers should draw comparisons across the readings assigned for the week, highlighting their shared/different epistemological and ontological claims, and conclude with two or three questions for class discussion. Students may, but do not have to, include readings from Further Readings in their analytical paper.

Please plan on presenting your paper in 10-15 minutes, and on leading the class discussion the day you present. *Students should email a copy of their paper to the instructors by 10:00 pm Sunday before the Monday class.*

3. **Book Review: Worth 20%**

Students must complete ONE book review of approximately 8 pages (double spaced 12-point font) from among the two books listed below. The review is due on the date scheduled on the course outline and should address the following questions:

1. What is the central thesis or argument(s) of the book?
2. What concepts/perspectives on comparative public policy inform the analysis of the book? Do the author(s)/editor(s)/contributor(s) do a good job of applying that perspective? Is it clear in its exposition and documentation of how concepts or mechanisms are linked to one another to provide an account?
3. Could another perspective or any concepts not considered also explain the outcomes the book investigates just as well or better than those utilized by the author(s)?
4. Is the argument of the book a useful advancement, addition, or critique of the literature we have studied?
5. Does the book use evidence well to back up the argument(s)? Could the same evidence be used to support an argument that is different than the one the author makes?
6. How significant a contribution do you think the author(s)’ arguments make?

The two options for the book review are:


### 4. Literature Review Essay: Worth 30%

Students are to prepare a 20-25 page essay that reviews the literature relevant to their proposed public policy dissertation. This review essay should introduce your dissertation question/puzzle and then survey the literature relevant to solving it.

**Late Assignments:**

Assignments are due on the days assigned. The only exception is an adequately documented emergency and/or medical illness. Please contact the instructors *as soon as* the problem arises to inform them of the problem and present your written documentation when you return.

Please keep copies of rough and draft work, as well as of the written work you submit until the marked assignments have been returned. All graded assignments are to be kept by students until the grades have been posted on ACORN.

**Academic Integrity:**

Please be aware of the importance of academic integrity and the seriousness of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism. The more obvious instances of plagiarism include copying material from another source (book, journal, website, another student, and so on) without acknowledging the source, presenting an argument as your own – whether or not it is a direct quotation – rather than fully acknowledging the true originator of the idea, having another person help you to write your essay, and buying an essay. All of these are instances of academic dishonesty, which the university takes very seriously and they will result in academic penalty. Those penalties can range from failing the assignment, failing the course, having a notation on your academic transcript, and/or suspension from the university. For further information on the University’s Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters, see: [http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm](http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm). To avoid problems in your assignments, please consult “How Not to Plagiarize” by Margaret Proctor: [http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize](http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize).

**Office Hours and Email Policy:**

Students are invited to meet with the instructors during their posted office hours or by appointment about any matter relating to the course. The instructors are also available by email – but please reserve email communication for scheduling appointments, rather than for discussing the substance of your course assignments.

**Accessibility Needs:**

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom, or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible:
disability.services@utoronto.ca or http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility.

Course Modification Statement:
The instructors reserve the right to modify assigned readings during the term--with reasonable notice and with an explanation.

Schedule of Seminar Topics and Readings

Week 1: September 10 – Introduction to the Course & U of T Public Policy Scholars

Week 2: September 17 – The Study of Public Policy I: The Goal of Policy Science


Further Reading:


Week 3: September 24 – The Study of Public Policy II: Research Design and Methods


Further Reading:


Week 4: October 1 – The Micro- or Behavioural Foundations of Public Policy


Craig Parsons. 2007. How to Map Arguments in Political Science. OUP. Chapter 2 (pp. 52-56) and Chapter 5, Psychological Explanations (pages 133-147).


Further Reading:


October 8: Thanksgiving – No Class

Week 5: October 15 – Institutionalist Accounts of Public Policy: Rational Actor Accounts


Further Reading:


Week 6: October 22 – Structural Accounts and Organized Interests


Further Reading:


**Week 7: October 29 – Case Study of Political Actors and Institutions**


Students who are not writing a book review: Chapters 1, 2, one empirical chapter and the Conclusion.

**Week 8: November 5 - Historical Institutionalist Accounts of Policy Development I**


Further Reading:


**Week 9: November 12 – Historical Institutionalist Accounts of Policy Development II: Policy Feedback and Self-Reinforcing versus Self-Undermining Processes**


Further Reading:


Week 10: November 19 – Case Study of Policy Change


Students who are not writing a book review: Chapters 1, 2, one empirical chapter and the Conclusion.

Week 11: November 26 – Ideational Accounts of Public Policy I: Policy Paradigms and Social Learning


Further Reading:


*Journal of European Public Policy*, 23(3), 2016 is a special issue on Ideas, Political Power and Public Policy. See especially articles by Carstensen and Schmidt, pp. 318-337; Parsons, pp. 446-463; and Blyth, pp. 464-471.

**Week 12: December 3 – Ideational Accounts of Public Policy II: Experts, Discourse, Narratives and Policy Learning**


Further Reading:


**WINTER BREAK**

**Week 13: January 7 – Theories of the Policy Process: Agenda Setting, Punctuated Equilibrium Models, and Multiple Streams**


Further Reading:


**Week 14: January 14 – The Advocacy Coalition Framework and Comparison of Process Theories**


Further Reading:
Katharina Rietig. 2018. “The Links Among Contested Knowledge, Beliefs, and Learning in European Climate Governance: From Consensus to Conflict in Reforming Biofuels Policy.” Policy Studies Journal 46, 1: 137-159. This article addresses the same topic as Skogstad, 2017, week 9, albeit from a different theoretical perspective.

**Week 15: January 21 – Policy Networks and Public Policy**


Further Reading:


Week 16: January 28 – The Political Economy of the Welfare State I: Origins and Development


Further Reading:


Week 17: February 4 – The Changing Political Economy of the Welfare State


Further Reading:


**Week 18: February 11 – Public Opinion, Policy Feedback Effects, and Political Behaviour**


Further Reading:


February 18 – READING WEEK – NO CLASS

Week 19: February 25 – Explaining Social/Redistributive Policies: Class, Ethnicity, Region


Further Reading:


**Week 20: March 4 – Gender and Public Policy**


Further Reading:


**Week 21: March 11 – Policy Transfer, Policy Diffusion and Convergence**


Further Reading:


Week 22: March 18 – Comparing Beyond Europe and North America


Further Reading:


**Week 23: March 25 – Policy Design and Instrument Choice**


Or


Further Reading:


**Week 24: April 1 – Policy Making in a Global Era: State Retreat, Interdependence, Private Authority**


Further Reading:


Guidelines on Preparing Readings for Seminar Discussion

Seminar participation is a crucial component of learning. But achieving the benefits of seminar participation requires good preparation in advance of the seminar. Reading the listed materials carefully and thinking about them is necessary to have a good sense of what you know and what you are still uncertain about. To assist you in preparing readings for seminar, the following steps are recommended:

**Step One:** Do you understand the basic terms and concepts used by the author?
: list the concepts with which you had difficulty
: try to write an explanation or definition for a few of these

**Step Two:** What is the central point or argument that the author is trying to make?
: what is most important about what the author has said?
: what are the interesting questions or hypotheses being addressed?
: try to write out in two sentences at most what you think the main point/most important point/most interesting questions or hypotheses of the reading

**Step Three:** How has the author organized his or her argument? What are the steps or major themes?
: write down what you see to be the steps in the argument
: ask yourself what would be the logical way to discuss the various sub-topics

**Step Four:** What evidence and methodology has the author used to support the argument?

**Step Five:** How does the reading relate to other material examined in the course?
: play the devil's advocate and query whether the reading provides anything new
ask or state how the new material substantiates or contradicts point(s) raised in earlier readings or seminars

**Step Six**: How do you evaluate the presentation by the author?
- now is the time for you to say what you think: is the author credible? What parts of the argument are persuasive and what parts are less so? Prepare to justify your conclusions.

This sequence of steps is designed to ensure you understand the author's concepts and his or her argument before you evaluate the author's claims. Evaluation thus follows comprehension. Keeping written notes as you proceed through the sequence of steps gives you the basis for active participation in the seminar.