

## POLITICAL SCIENCE 541

### POLICY FORMATION, IMPLEMENTATION, AND EVALUATION

SPRING 2011: Andrew McFarland

This course does not cover the standard evaluation literature, as defined by statistical analysis of policy outcomes. But political evaluation of policy outcomes is also important, and there is much here about that.

In my last 15 years I have not been categorized as “public policy” here at UIC. I have been labeled as “American politics,” “interest groups,” and “political movements.” However, public policy is listed as one of my three fields with the American Political Science Association.

Accordingly, to explain the basis for the organization of this course, I am presenting my background and activity in the public policy field, as what I have done and published is intertwined with my presentation of public policy processes. I do this in order to help any students outside of the Political Science program decide whether to take this class; most such students would be concerned with the application of the theory in the class to a job in the policymaking process. The reading and lectures for this class are not idiosyncratic, but on the whole, mainline political science in its study of American politics, policy processes, and public administration.

#### Instructor’s Public Policy Background.

As a senior professor at UIC my career has gone through different, but related periods. In a nutshell, I was very active in the public policy field in an earlier phase of my career, during 1974-1985 in which I lived in Washington, D.C. for half this time, performing various types of research related to public policy and to public interest lobbying. That was quite some time ago, but I am excited to think about public policy issues this semester, and to turn back into this field. I must add that all of my work in my career (six solely authored books, three co-edited books) has been linked to public policy, as the term political process indicates. The political process forms public policy, and political processes continue after legislation and executive action, during the implementation of policy. I consider my major book *Neopluralism: The Evolution of Political Process Theory* to be thus linked to the theory and study of public policy.

I am best known as the author of three books about public interest groups and I have forthcoming volumes about “creative participation,” the initiation of action by citizens to counteract the power of previously unaccountable elites such as corrupt officials or officials in other countries. Such research speaks to public policy because there is a natural tendency for power cliques (such as the iron triangles) to undermine the implementation of policies for the common good to be benefit of small, special-interest political-economic coalitions. In other words some areas such as environmental policy are much more likely to be formulated in the common good if there are public interest lobbies active in both the formation and implementation processes.

I was a student of Aaron Wildavsky (1930-1993), almost a legend in political science, normally categorized as a public policy and public administration intellectual, who was the founding dean of the Berkeley School of Public Policy (1969). As an undergraduate I was a student of Aaron's and provided research assistance for the landmark book *The Politics of the Budgetary Process* (1964), which was the second most cited public administration work by 1974. Of course this was an earlier generation, and Wildavsky's incrementalism has been subsumed under the "politics of attention" rubric put forth by Frank Baumgartner and Bryan Jones, some of whose work I have assigned for this class. Actually this whole line of thought springs from the classic *Administrative Behavior*, written by the Nobel Prize winner Herbert Simon, when he still considered himself a public administration specialist with a Political Science degree. While in Washington 1974-1985, I was a Guest Scholar at Brookings for no less than five years, as they provided me with letterhead, an office, and services, although I was not a member of their paid staff. I achieved some attention as I was also under contract for a year with the American Enterprise Institute, one of the few persons ever to have a simultaneous affiliation, however tenuous, with both the liberal and the conservative think-tanks. At this time, I was influenced by the intellectual trend of valuing deregulation, that is moving away from the liberal expansion of government associated with scholars such as John Kenneth Galbraith in the direction of the ideas of Milton Friedman, James Q. Wilson, Charles Schulze, and Alfred Kahn. It did not seem to me to be contradictory to advocate the enforcement of government regulations in the areas of environmental and anti-corruption policy by means of influential public interest lobbies, as I was espousing in my writing. My final experience in Washington was as a political science staffer to the abortive Jimmy Carter Commission, "The President's Commission for a National Agenda for the Eighties." I worked with the subcommittee of elites in charge of proposing political reform measures, such as restructuring the calendar of presidential primaries. But we had a section on the administration of the executive branch, for which we put forth modest proposals, such as the circulation of top managers around different agencies. Regulation theory, then a hot topic, was put under a different subcommittee for greater emphasis.

During 1978-79, and 1981-84 I was a visiting professor at the University of Chicago, mostly based in the M.A. in Public Policy program, which preceded the current Harris School. I taught three times the required introduction to public policy class. I did not have a regular position at UC, and thus accepted a job with the UIC Political Science Department classified as American Public Policy. For about five years, I taught a lot of public policy, including Policy Implementation three times, mostly to students in the earlier version of the UIC MPA program. I was pleased that four of these students eventually held cabinet-level positions in the government of the state of Illinois. Of course my version of public policy courses at UC and UIC was oriented around political science theory with a good measure of treatment of interest groups and lobbying. However, around 1990, the present CUPPA was formed, and the Political Science Department put less emphasis on public policy studies. As part of this institutional change my interests turned more to the theory of neopluralism.

This biographical sequence illustrates the apparent nature of enrollment for this class, Political Science 541. I will teach for doctoral students in Political Science, perhaps more interested in certain theoretical formulations in our field, which will be measured by the doctoral exam in the American Politics field, with a public policy question as 25 percent of the exam. But as I have in the past, I will seek to bring in information and medium-level generalization and ideas about administrative decision-making of concern to students taking a degree in public administration. Yet of course public administration students are interested in a theoretical, academically general

perspective on their discipline. [Herbert Simon wrote his doctoral dissertation about efficiency in the Chicago Fire Department, eventually producing a theoretical tour-de-force. Nobel Prize winner Elinor Ostrom wrote her dissertation on the coordination of water resource utilization among competing water districts in Los Angeles County. This was the foundation for her famous work about overcoming cooperation dilemmas.]

### The Instructor's Views as Reflected in the Structure of the Class.

As a theoretical structure to orient the class, I am using my theory of "neopluralism." Actually my neopluralism is a condensation of a large amount of work by leading scholars of American politics and public policy over two generations, particularly 1961-1995. In fact my statement of neopluralism is not particularly controversial, although some would prefer to subsume my theory under some other approach. Leading scholars of American politics such as Frank Baumgartner, Bryan Jones, John Kingdon, Jeffrey Berry, Paul Quirk, and Theodore Lowi have accepted neopluralism as at least a good mode for presentation of two generations of research in the field.

Neopluralism evolved in four steps, each of which is a theory of power, of political process, and of policymaking, usually seen in separate issue areas of American public policy. Each of the four can also be applied to urban politics. These ideas are discussed in the initial lectures for the class. In this syllabus, I am omitting the first step, group theory, as distracting from the presentation.

Step one: traditional pluralist theory. Robert Dahl and Charles E. Lindblom argue that "power" means changing the actions of other actors against resistance in the line of one's own intentions. Power is not the same as "resources," such as institutional position, money, or prestige; these are resources expended in the process of exercising power. Policy studies are centered around the empirical observation of who-wins, and who-loses, which is not the same as the study of the possession of social status, money, etc. Dahl, Lindblom, and their students find that empirical study of policymaking reveals that there are usually a variety of actors exercising power. Others dubbed this "the pluralist theory" of power and policymaking, which was at the center of political science discussion during 1961-1970. The pluralist theory of policymaking was seen to be the opposite of a power-elite theory of policy making, one group controlling all important issues.

Step two: multiple elite theory. This is my term for the dominant policymaking theory in political science in the 1970s. It is primarily associated with the Cornell professor, Theodore Lowi, but was adopted by a number of other influential political scientists. The multiple elite theorists agreed with Dahl that an overall national power elite (C. Wright Mills) did not exist. However, these writers disagreed with Dahl's tendency to find pluralism in various issue areas. Instead, the multiple elite theorists argued that issue areas had their own separate power-elites, restricted to that one issue area. These critics of Dahl generally focused on some version of the iron triangle idea as the common type of elite found in an issue area: a special-interest coalition of aligned interest groups, a friendly legislative committee, and a government agency captured by the rest of this coalition and subsequently working in tandem with them. This is obviously a policy formation and implementation theory; it tends to state that policymaking is captured by the "iron triangle" in the implementation process. Dealing with such observations got the instructor interested in public interest lobbies as means of exercising countervailing power to the "iron triangle." I am not so interested in the legal approach, but the more usual emphasis is to try

to enforce laws and regulations that will enable the original legislative intent to be realized against unrepresentative special interests (Lowi's view).

Step three: neopluralist theory. The multiple elite theory seemed to be a realistic, empirical alternative to Dahl's pluralist theory. However, subsequent empirical work found that while some policy issues might be captured in the policymaking process, other areas indeed manifested a diversity of influential actors, but the empirical observation of diversity should not be confounded with a finding of fair or democratic policymaking. The neopluralists would agree that particularly before the 1960s, many issue areas seemed to be controlled by particular elites, such as in the case of trucking regulation, airline regulation, numerous agricultural policies such as milk production, sugar import quotas, and so forth. However, studies of such areas as pesticide regulation, air pollution regulation, food stamps policy, changes in tobacco regulation, and civil rights policy indicated a variety of groups having influence. In addition attention to policy areas over a period of about twenty years, sometimes indicate fluctuations between elitist control and influences of diverse actors. During the G.W. Bush Administration, for instance, federal policy on air pollution moved back towards the pole of control by an alliance of industry, a do-little federal EPA, and business oriented legislators. While one might still find a certain diversity of influence during this period (1990 air pollution amendments could not be repealed), one could not argue that there was some equal or fair balance of influence over policymaking among businesses and public interests. Neopluralism means a finding of diversity of actors with influence within some issue area without making a claim that this constitutes fair or representative policymaking. Neopluralism admits that traditional iron triangles may still exist in the procurement of DOD weapons or in agricultural areas.

As part of the development of neopluralist theory, political scientists had to struggle to deal with Mancur Olson's theory of the logic of collective action. Olson pointed out that public policies provide public goods, outputs such that if provided for one, they are provided for all. Therefore individuals or single organizations lack incentive to contribute to a lobby for a public good, because if the lobby succeeds, they will "free ride," i.e. get the public good anyhow. Then how can the policymaking process reflect groups other than those organized by only a few contributors? We can postulate that individuals have altruistic motives, in addition to self-oriented material motives, and let it go at that as an explanation for the mobilization of interest groups with a larger number of contributors. Altruism is important. But altruism can be supplemented by observing that within complex policy processes, there exist communications networks among participants, many of whom have an occupational stake in some policy area. Since about 1985, political scientists always pay attention to such networks, as they can be the basis for organization in spite of the logic of collective action. In addition to organization, such issue networks or policy networks play an important role in framing the exposition of issues, such as in the process preceding the writing of major legislative bills in an area. Baumgartner et al found that once the process of lobbying the U.S. Congress begins, the issues in dispute have already been defined or "framed."

In addition to altruism as a singular motive, and in addition to issue networks, common-interest groups are spun off from social/political movements. Such social movement organizations and public interest groups represent the development of activists moving back into the political system and organizing within it. In the U.S., environmentalists seem to be the outstanding example of such influence, as well as groups spun off from the civil rights movement, the women's movement, etc. In spite of the logic of collective action, then, countervailing power

groups do form within policy processes, mitigating elitist power and diversifying power, without necessarily attaining a point of decision-making fair to all.

The latter portion of my *Neopluralism* is an extension of the core argument just outlined. My view of American politics and policymaking is that it cycles between times of business dominance (1890s, 1920s, 1950s, 1980s), and periods of reform dominance (1900s, 1930s, 1960s, 2009-). This is the straightforward view of American history as set forth by the Arthur Schlesingers, Sr. and Jr. A major effect of the first year of the Obama Administration is the reversal of a large number of minor and middle level practices of the G. W. Bush Administration, which refused to limit business power in administration in numerous instances, framing measures as “too much government regulation,” “interfering with the rationality of the market,” and so forth. The most striking example is the decision of the Obama EPA to consider release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere as part of its policymaking purview. Of course the most important of such policies was the lacking of regulation of innovative (and apparently destructive) practices of the financial industry, an instance of business power. I argue that it is often helpful in understanding policymaking to know whether it is being conducted in a business or a reform era. of American history.

### Models of Power and Theories of Policymaking

Dahl’s pluralism, Lowi’s multiple elitism, and neopluralism are each linked to a theory of policymaking. At Yale Robert Dahl and Charles Lindblom were intellectual collaborators, and Lindblom (an economist) set forth the theory known as “incrementalism” for public policymaking in the fragmented, kaleidoscopic world of issue areas described in Dahl’s theory of pluralist power. Lindblom observed a multiplicity of actors (administrators, politicians, interest groups) within a particular issue area, all adjusting their actions to one another in a complex mutual process of small steps, small changes in action, known as “increments.” For instance, in the national budgetary process, Lindblom’s student Wildavsky found that agencies proposed, and OMB and legislative committees controlled budget changes as increments, as small changes to existing figures—another four percent this fiscal year. Policy discussion revolved around analysis of proposed incremental changes, rather than a holistic analysis of an entire policy. Following Herbert Simon, Lindblom and Wildavsky argued that this was a well-reasoned, common-sensical way to make public policy, because rationalistic theorizing about an entire policy output is simply impossible, especially as the political aspects cannot be quantified. However, critics of incrementalism argued the inherent conservatism of such an outlook, confined to small changes in the status quo. In addition, evidence began piling up that while budget changes in American policymaking were normally incremental, at times there were sudden increases or decreases that did not fit into the incremental theory.

Multiple-elitists, such as Lowi, argued that different types of policymaking required different models. While some areas seemed to reflect an incrementalist model of mutual adjustment among power groups, according to Lowi other areas reflected the predominant influence of some elite coalition, which in my interpretation, could take a public policy in some special interest direction in many increments, resulting in an outcome many would regard as extreme. But Lowi and other multiple elitists did not give emphasis to the idea of incrementalism.

This is how we got to the theory of punctuated equilibrium, subsequently advanced into the theory of the politics of attention by Baumgartner and Jones. These two scholars accepted the

idea of incrementalism as the ordinary state of affairs, although the precise relationship is a bit ambiguous because they use terms such as “policy equilibrium.” An equilibrium might fluctuate rapidly back and forth, but in Baumgartner and Jones’ descriptions of policies, the equilibrium moves slowly, similar to what we would expect from incrementalism. But the authors’ major point is known as “policy punctuation.” They point to policy areas such as nuclear power plant construction, the regulation of smoking, or federal concern for urban affairs. Political attention, budget allocation, and regulation of some such policy areas was characterized by sudden shifts, or punctuations, rather than a continual stream of incremental change. Policy seems to move from a first equilibrium in a sudden shift to a new equilibrium, which is qualitatively different. In the politics of attention model, the authors emphasize that the first equilibrium builds up policy outputs which are dysfunctional, or politically excessive in the minds of the public and politicians. Reforms are framed and put on the public agenda; as the reforms are adopted, the policy area shifts into a qualitatively new equilibrium or stage. Baumgartner and Jones imply that it is somewhat more important to study the rapid punctuations, rather than the incremental changes in the relatively long periods of policy equilibrium.

I think it possible that the Baumgartner and Jones theory is basically the final point in a history of theorizing about public policy, that went from Herbert Simon, through Lindblom, to these two authors. In any event, this theory subsumes the incrementalist theory into a broader framework. And thus it subsumes the theory that went with pluralism. The authors call the observations of the multiple elitists the finding of “policy monopoly,” meaning an elite controls. However, their theory subsumes Lowi’s type of theory in its observation that the policy monopoly is often subject to producing political excess, leading to political punctuation and reform.

### Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies

John Kingdon’s book is now a foundational work for public policy studies and political science. It embodies most of the neopluralist concepts of political process stated above. Actually it is based on the “garbage can model” of organizational decision-making in which organizational behavior is not viewed as primarily a rational optimizing of some goal, but rather as a complex, somewhat unpredictable series of events and decisions in which random events “are thrown into the can.” [Michael Cohen, James March, and Johan Olsen]. Graduate students and more advanced researchers usually find Kingdon’s model of the evolution of the framing of problems, the evolution of framing of solutions, the focusing event and the window of opportunity, and the uniting of problems and solutions into a program by a political entrepreneur to be useful. Kingdon took this model from the study of organizations and applied it to the political process of legislative decision-making.

### Implementation

My mentor Aaron Wildavsky is often credited with sparking the empirical study of policy implementation with his book *Implementation* with Jeffrey Pressman (1970). While this book has a neoconservative bias, it was provocative in pointing out that complex social reforms initiated in Washington were unlikely to work very well, mainly due to the complexity of administrative implementation, orders of complexity added by the need to have “partisan mutual adjustment,” as Lindblom would put it. However, the subsequent study of policy implementation

did evolve from neoconservatism to perhaps a reformist bias, in a particular concern for the multiple elitism of Lowi's model. A different term for multiple elitism is "policy capture," perhaps by "iron triangles," and obviously if policy is captured and redefined away from the original legislative and judicial intent, there is a problem of policy implementation. I have always considered my own concern for public interest lobbying as directly linked to a concern for policy implementation. I have not required much reading on implementation other than the textbook. Students who want more can go to the landmark book *Implementation and Public Policy* by Dan Mazmanian and Paul Sabatier. I will write a lecture about policy implementation using the perspective of neopluralism and the need for countervailing power to special interest groups.

### Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis

Paul Pierson's work brings in the historical dimension to policy formation and implementation. In addition Pierson focuses more on institutions than other readings which refer to processes of action or to systems of action. Pierson refers to "path dependency" of policy through time, indicating that policy stays on the same path while ordinarily making incremental changes. This contrasts to Baumgartner and Jones, who see policy as ordinarily a stable system in equilibrium, rather than focusing on the path, although the system (or path) can suddenly change during policy punctuation. I like to bring in my reformulation of the Schlesinger theory of American history, politics, and policy as the alternation of business dominance versus reform periods.

### Last Half of the Class

**Student presentations:** Students will present a summary of their papers. This need not be elaborate; the fun and interest in this is to acquaint others with interesting and significant policies and policy issues. This helps ground the class in facts and events. I think of a summary as being 15 minutes. The amount of class time for this depends on the enrollment, uncertain until the second week of the semester. The instructor may intersperse student reports with lecture material.

**Comparative Politics:** Almost of all the material in this class will be derived from American politics and policymaking situations. This is related to the goals of preparation for doctoral exams in this field in the Political Science Department, while students in the Public Administration department are likely to be involved in American public decision-making processes. Nevertheless, as we all know, one of the fastest ways to learn about one's own system is through comparison with other systems. Accordingly, I will present the idea of corporatist decision-making, prominent in Europe, and contrast it with neopluralism. The two are brought together in my book, not assigned for this class, *Cooperative Pluralism: The National Coal Policy Experiment* (1993), in which business executives and environmental leaders attempted to arrive at a joint platform on strip-mining issues.

Not all policymaking is neopluralist, elitist, or corporatist. Even in the U.S., sometimes there is statist policymaking, the situation in which a centralized national governmental institution makes policy with less influence from legislators and interest groups than in neopluralist processes.

In general, U.S. foreign policy is statist; so is interest rate regulation by the Federal Reserve Board.

In the last class I will attempt a re-synthesis of material presented in the class, and address other questions that remain.

### **Textbooks:**

These should be available at the Student Union bookstore or from amazon.com etc.

**The Public Policy Theory Primer:** Kevin B. Smith and Christopher W. Larimer. Westview, 2009. Be careful in ordering this book as there are several with similar names, including another by Kevin Smith. It can be found in amazon under textbooks, by listing Kevin B. Smith, and go to author page for Smith. This is available in paper for about 29 dollars.

**Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies: 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.** John W. Kingdon. The latest edition is published in 2010 by Longman and has an addendum about health policy. I ordered this edition from the bookstore. Several students likely already own this book in some earlier edition, and you may use that. This book may be the major book in public policy processes frequently assigned at UIC.

**Neopluralism: The Evolution of Political Process Theory.** Andrew S. McFarland. University Press of Kansas. 2004. Paper. This book states many of my assumptions about the working of the American political process, especially in the implementation stage. It also states a theory of political power, which can be applied to urban politics as well as to national policy processes. I also present a historical dimension for public policy.

**Agendas and Instability in American Politics.** Frank R. Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones. Second edition. University of Chicago Press. 2009. This book adds 37 pages to the first edition, which some students already possess. Like Stone's book, this is a political science standard for this type of class.

**Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis.** Paul Pierson. Princeton University Press, 2004. The path dependence model is the main alternative to the Baumgartner and Jones, "politics of attention" model. This theory is favored by political scientists conducting historical institutional and comparative-politics research.

### **Data Sources [not required].**

The Baumgartner-Jones combine has assembled all sorts of data on Washington policymaking since 1947. The data is coded by policy area, and includes appropriations, congressional bills, references in the *New York Times* and *Congressional Quarterly*, and public opinion polls. See [www.policyagendas.org](http://www.policyagendas.org)

There are about 100 case studies of policymaking in a random sample of issues, 1999-2002, on file at Penn State University. This is the data base for the book *Lobbying and Policy Change*. The case studies are accessible from the web and are not copyrighted. But remember, this was

a random sample of issues, so you may have an important issue, but it did not fall within the sample. See <http://lobby.la.psu.edu> [the letter l as in L.A.]

### **Class requirements for grade**

A first requirement is a 15 page paper, applying some of the theory from the class to a public policy area or issue of the student's choice. This paper is not expected to be definitive, but the goal is to get the student more acquainted with policymaking in some area, and to think about such policymaking in theoretical terms. The choice of topic has to be cleared with the instructor; usually e-mail will suffice. The student is expected to give a 15 minute presentation about the paper in the 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> week of the class.

There will also be an out-of-class final, covering the class lectures and the reading, which obviously is treated in the lectures. The final will consist of an eight page answer to a general question (or questions) posed by the instructor. There will be a strict deadline for the submission of the out of class final.

The paper and the final will each count 50% of the grade. Students who skip more than three classes are warned this could affect their grade. Students contributing substantially to class discussion will get an A if other grades average in the ambiguous B+ area.

I will come with prepared lectures for the classes, except for the student presentations. These lectures will be distributed by a mode to be determined, given budgets for xeroxing. My lectures are meant to be interrupted by questions and statements, since the lectures will be fully written out to give coherence

### **Instructor Contacts**

My office is 1123 BSB. I am on campus almost every afternoon. E mail [amcfarla@uic.edu](mailto:amcfarla@uic.edu)  
Office phone 312-413-3776 Mailbox 1102 BSB

### **Semester Schedule**

**The class meets Wednesday afternoons, 330–600 in 1171 BSB.**

January 12.  
Smith & Larimer, Ch. 1.  
McFarland, Chs. 1, 2.

January 19.  
McFarland, Chs. 3, 4, 5.  
Smith & Larimer, 2, 3, 4.

January 26.  
Read about half of the Kingdon book.  
Pages vary with edition.

February 2.  
Finish reading the Kingdon book.  
Pages vary with edition.

February 9.  
Baumgartner & Jones, Intro., 1-6.  
McFarland, Chs. 6, 8.

February 16.  
Baumgartner & Jones, Chs. 7-10.

February 23.  
Baumgartner & Jones, Chs. 11-14.

March 2.  
Implementation.  
Smith & Larimer, Chs 7, 8.

March 9.  
Begin reading Pierson, *Politics in Time*

March 16.  
Finish reading *Politics in Time*.

March 23.  
Spring vacation.

March 30.  
Student presentations.

April 6.  
Student presentations.  
**Fifteen page paper due by class time.**

April 13.  
Corporatism, environmental negotiation.  
McFarland, Ch. 7.  
Catch up on earlier reading.

April 20.

Statist policy making, foreign policymaking.

Smith & Larimer, Chs. 5, 6.

April 27.

Conclusion and summary class.

Smith & Larimer, Chs. 9, 10.

Final exam question handed out or e-mailed (possibly on the 26th).

**May 4, Wednesday exam week; 600 P.M.**

**Final exam papers due. E-mail or my office, 1123 BSB.**