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Course Description

The course analyzes some of the major theoretical traditions that have contributed to the explanation and analysis of public policy in Canada. It ranges widely over disciplines and debates both domestic and international, with an emphasis on constructive comparisons and the assessment of various approaches.

By the conclusion of the course, you will understand the main approaches to policy analysis as it is currently practiced. You will be able to situate them in the history of social scientific thought, and explain their strengths and weaknesses. You will also have become familiar with a range of important scholarly journals publishing in the broad and diverse field of policy analysis, and with the practical landscape of public policy development and studies in our time.

The course is a seminar, and responsibility for leading particular sessions will be shared among class members.

Required Texts


Evaluation

Journal review  10%   due Sept 15, 2008
Essay            60%   due Nov 24, 2008
Book review     20%   due Dec 6, 2008
Class participation  10%

Assignments

Assignment 1:   Journal review    due September 15, 2008

The purpose of this assignment is to ensure that all members of the class begin the course with a strong understanding of the scholarly journals in which research and analysis relevant to public policy may be found. Members of the class will select a set of journals from a list provided by the professor. They will review the full publication record of each journal, and come prepared to discuss the journals in class. The emphasis should be upon (1) a general characterization of the types of articles selected by the journal for publication (consider discipline, focus, topics, and analytical or ideological stance, for example) and (2) changes in the journal’s content over time. If a journal that you believe is important does not appear on the instructor’s list, it may be added with the consent of the class.

You will be graded on the content of your oral presentation and any written material you might prepare for the class discussion.

Weight:       10% of course grade

Assignment 2:    Essay    due November 24, 2008

You have a choice.

(1) Choose one of the debates or issues posed by any of the contributions in Jeremy Leonard et al, A Canadian Priorities Agenda: Policy Choices to Improve Economic and Social Well-Being. Respond to the positions outlined. You may focus on method or substance, but in all cases, your answer should make use of some of the readings for the course.

OR

(2) Isolate an issue that has arisen in the course of your readings for the course, or in class discussion. Develop and defend an argument that is related to some of the main themes under discussion in the course.

For either option:
Write an essay of 2,500 to 3,500 words. The theme you chose should be obviously related to the study of public policy, but that is the only limitation. In grading, I will assess accuracy (concerning the views upon which you are commenting), logic (strength of argumentation), and clarity of expression.

Assignment 3: Book review due December 6, 2008

Write a review of one of the books on the list provided by the instructor, with the aim of assessing or situating the book in the scholarly literature, or in public policy, relying upon the concepts covered in the course. Your model for the book review should be those published in scholarly disciplinary journals – choice of discipline is up to you.

Length: 700 words
Weight: 20% of course grade

Class participation will be assessed on the basis of your participation throughout the course, as well as your performance in leading one or more class discussions. The assessment will be based on the extent to which you appear to have read and understood the readings, and your responsiveness to discussion and debate.
Syllabus

Week 1: Policy Analysis in Context September 8, 2008

This week introduces the class to the course, and also to the broad field of policy analysis. We will discuss the historical development of the main strands of social analysis that now shape and sustain the practice of policy analysis and review its many present-day expressions and debates.

Arrangements will be made for the completion of the first assignment, which is due September 15.

Week 2: The Journals September 15, 2008

Policy analysis is not an academic discipline, but rather an activity that draws upon many disciplines and areas of human knowledge. It follows that there is no set of academic journals that comprehensively and conclusively define the field. Nevertheless, there are a number of journals, published in Canada and elsewhere, in which a good selection of relevant and important analyses relevant to public policy analysis may be found.

Members of the class will present their analyses of some of these basic journals, with the object of sharing what they have learned with their classmates and ensuring that everyone gains some understanding of the breadth and diversity of the field. The work that we do in this class will also be helpful to you as you prepare to develop a thesis topic and later, as you consider venues for the publication of your work.

Week 3: Social Science and Public Policy September 22, 2008


Elshtain, Chapters 1 and 2.

**Week 4: The Origins of Modern Ideas September 29, 2008**


**Week 5: Twentieth Century Ideas in Historical Perspective October 6, 2008**


Elshtain Chapter 20.


**Week 6: Canadian Foundations October 20, 2008**


Week 7: Public Choice October 27, 2008


Week 8: The “New” Canadian Political Economy November 3, 2008


Week 9: Ideas, Institutions and Processes I November 10, 2008


Week 10: Ideas, Institutions and Processes II November 17, 2008


Week 11: Debates November 24, 2008


Elshtain Chapter 22.


Week 12: Debates

December 1, 2008


This class consists of a structured discussion of Leonard et al. Details to be provided in class.
Selected Public Policy Journals

Canadian Public Policy
Canadian Review of Social Policy
Studies in Political Economy
Canadian Journal of Political Science
Canadian Journal of Sociology and Anthropology
Policy Sciences
Policy Studies
Policy Studies Review
American Review of Public Administration
Environmental Politics
Global Environmental Politics
Social Policy and Administration
European Journal of Social Policy
Journal of Policy Analysis and Management
Economic Policy
Canadian Journal of Development Studies
Journal of Comparative Public Policy
Journal of Policy Analysis and Management
Journal of Public Economics
American Economic Review
Policy and Politics
Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory
The Economists’ Voice” [http://www.bepress.com/ev]
American Review of Public Administration
Governance
Journal of European Public Policy
Policy Studies Journal