

## **I. Announcements**

*A. Email requirement—some but not all have met this. Do it soon! No need to wait!*

*B. Any questions about the course? Any problems with getting the books?*

## **II. Questions:**

*A. How many of you have had the introductory American politics course in college, either here or elsewhere?*

*B. How many of you had to take a government or civics class in H.S.?*

## **III. Today's lecture: an overview of public policy as a field of study**

*A. Let's start by asking: what is public policy?*

### **1. How did I define it in my book?**

- a) What government does or chooses not to do
- b) In a way, this means what we, as a people, decide to do or not to do about public problems

### **2. Let's consider some aspects of public policy, then**

- a) What sort of things does the government do? In other words, what goods and services does government provide? At what level of government?
- b) What does government not do at all? That is, what is pretty much left up to the private sector (or mostly to the private sector?)
- c) What does government do that it does pretty well?
- d) What does government do that it does pretty poorly?

### **3. Do you think that people pay much attention to policy? Why or why not?**

### **4. Conclusion: The point of politics, I believe, is to make public policy: elections and "politics" are all about public policy**

- a) The Alberto Gonzales scandal has, at its heart, a policy dimension, and a deep constitutional question: what are the powers of the presidency?

*B. What this course does is really two things*

**1. Introduce the policy process and seek to explain how policy is made**

**2. Outlines how we study the policy process. And the things we talk about here are relevant to your careers as citizens and as students of public policy or any body of knowledge.**

*C. The history of the study of public policy*

**1. Policy studies originate in the study of politics**

**2. The study of politics is very ancient**

a) Involves the study of power and allocation of resources

b) Politics='Who gets what'

**3. The study of public policy dates to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

***D. The Field of Public Policy***

**1. “The study of public policy is the examination of the creation, by the government, of the rules, laws, goals, and standards that determine what government does or does not do to create resources, benefits, costs and burdens.” (Birkland 2001)**

a) In the 1940s and 1950s, a shift away from institutions and toward individual behavior.

b) Thus, the two main traditions in political science: institutionalism and behaviorism.

**2. Review the definition of the study of public policy I just gave you.**

a) Is there anything in that definition that would limit policy studies to only political scientists?

b) What other disciplines are involved in studying public policy and helping to make it?

***E. The study of public policy as a science or a discipline***

**1. What do you think of when you think of “science”?**

**2. What does the word “science” mean?**

a) According to Wikipedia: “Science (from the Latin scientia, 'knowledge') is a system of acquiring knowledge based on the scientific method, as well as the organized body of knowledge gained through such research.”

**3. What is the scientific method?**

- a) The statement of a hypothesis—often the “null hypothesis”
- b) Gathering data
- c) The testing of the hypothesis
- d) Determining whether the null hypothesis is rejected, or whether it cannot be rejected.

**4. Differences between natural and social sciences**

- a) Natural sciences often, but not always, can study phenomena using controlled experiments
- b) Social sciences often, but not always, must use “quasi experimental” or other designs without good or even perfect controls
- c) The natural sciences often operate under a “paradigm” or a body of beliefs about science shared by all participants in the scientific process
- d) The social sciences are generally non paradigmatic.

**5. Why does this matter?**

- a) We can say that the social sciences are sciences—methodological differences don’t denigrate these as sciences
- b) Of course, this is all the ideal type—often, hypotheses are not tested, and we often use brute force, or guesstimates (wing loading on planes)
- c) But the point is that students of policy—of both the process and the substance of policy tend to seek knowledge and evidence of claimed phenomena.
- d) Example: There is a proposal in Wade county and statewide to allow counties to impose up to a 1 percent real estate transfer tax that would help pay for growth. Thus, a \$200k house sale would yield a transfer tax of \$2000. (<http://www.itsabadidea.org/home/>)
- e) The realtors® claim that this would “tax the equity in people’s homes” (not true—you’d pay whether you had equity or not) and would depress housing sales. They also claim that the transfer tax keeps property taxes artificially low by subsidizing property taxes.

f) How might you test the null hypothesis: that a real estate transfer tax doesn't depress home sales?

g) How might you test the hypothesis that property taxes aren't subsidized?

***F. Summary***

- 1. What we do is a science, with some background in the social sciences broadly**
- 2. Public policy is influenced by, and influences, many disciplines**
- 3. In the future, we will learn that scientific knowledge of any sort is not the only thing that policy makers consider, and is often not the most important thing.**