The Public Policy Process
This Session’s Objectives

- Learn why you’re here!
- Understand course objectives
- Understand the course structure
- Review the course schedule
Some information about you?

- Please introduce yourself
  - Name
  - Home town
  - Where you went undergrad, and your major
  - What would you say is the biggest problem the United States faces today, right now?
  - Why are you in the course?
Involvement in politics

- How many of you have been active in politics or policy making in any form?
- What are your impressions of your experience?
- Do you think the government is a “force for good” or “interferes too much”?
- Do you trust government to do the right thing most of the time?
Let’s Dive Right In

• For the next 5 to 10 minutes:
  ○ Find a partner or two
  ○ Think about a problem that you strongly believe that should be solved somehow through public policy (government action)
  ○ Tell the problem to your partner—why do you feel this is a problem?
  ○ Your partner will write down your problem and why you think it’s important. So explain it clearly!
  ○ Each partner will have 1 minute to describe your problem and why it’s important.
Some Foundational Questions

- Define public policy
- Define politics
- Define interest group
- Define problem
- Define news media

- All of these things are what the class is about
Some potential definitions

- Politics: “who gets what, when and why”
- Politics: “the authoritative allocation of values”
- Public policy: the things government chooses to do or not to do.

- Are these definitions adequate? Incomplete? How could they be improved?
“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 2005).
Why Study Public Policy

- **Scientific Reasons**
  - To help us better understand the nature of political behavior and its relationship with policy making

- **Professional Reasons**
  - To learn the skills involved in policy analysis

- **Political Reasons**
  - To provide you with the tools to have an influence on the system
Course expectations

- Professionalism
- Excellence in analysis
- Excellence in communication
Course Structure

- Lectures
- Active engagement and discussion
- Policy memos and the portfolio
- In-class midterm
- Final
Learning Goals

- Identify and explain the dominant theories of how public policy is made in the United States.
- Understand the social, political, economic, and technical environments in which public policy is made.
- Compare traditional methods of policy analysis with a political approach to analyzing public policy.
- Recognize effective and ineffective evidence and rhetorical appeals in the policy process.
- Explain aspects of the policy process in concise, non-technical language that any colleague or supervisor can understand and use in pursuit of an organizations’ goals.
Learning Goals

- Compare, contrast, and critique these theories as they apply broadly to the policy process, and to specific cases encountered in seminar and in their own research.
- Explain, using current theories of the process, how public policies came to take their current form.
- Clearly present evidence, data, and logic through sound written and oral communications skills.
- Effectively use advanced library and database tools to understand the nature and history of a policy issue.
I assume...

- That you are able to write clearly and professionally in English.
- That you are familiar with the basic concepts underlying the research tools available to you in a modern academic library, including on-line catalogs and databases.
- That you know how to use basic tools in a professional manner, such as word processing, spreadsheet, and presentation software.
I assume...

- That you have a basic understanding of American politics and government.
- That you care about particular issues of public policy and politics, and are motivated to work toward addressing public problems.
- That you are committed to this course and that you intend to fully participate in the course and in the assignments.
- That you are able to manage your time in such a way as to meet your commitments to this course.
Refer to the syllabus for this part:

Linkages and Summary

- What does this have to do with PA?
- What does this course have to do with any career?
- What does this have to do with academia?