The Public Policy Process
Three Parts to Today’s Class

- Different types or ways of thinking about policy tools
- Different models of how we make decisions about what policy tools to adopt
- A more realistic model of the tool-problem-policy connection.
Some general concepts

- First, consider that all policies have goals
- Goals are related to outcomes
- What is the difference between a policy *output* and an *outcome*
  - What is an outcome?
  - What is a goal?
  - What are unintended outcomes?
  - Why do they happen?
What happens during the “agenda-setting process”?

- The issue moves to some point on the agenda
  - Systemic
  - Institutional
  - Decision
- Only a few decisions make it to the institutional agenda
- And not all decisions that get there pass—very few make it to the decision agenda
- This lecture is about how decisions are made in the decision agenda
## Elements of Policy Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Questions to ask</th>
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<tr>
<td>The goals of the policy</td>
<td>What are the goals of the policy? To eliminate a problem? To alleviate a problem but not entirely eliminate it? To keep a problem from getting worse?</td>
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<td>The causal model</td>
<td>What is the causal model? Do we know that, if we do X, Y will result? How do we know this? If we don’t know, how can we find out?</td>
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<td>The tools of the policy</td>
<td>What tools or instruments will be used to put the policy into effect? Will they be more or less coercive? Will they rely more on incentives, persuasion, or information? Capacity building?</td>
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<td>The targets of the policy</td>
<td>Whose behavior is supposed to change? Are there direct and indirect targets? Are design choices predicated on our social construction of the target population?</td>
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<td>The implementation of the policy</td>
<td>How will the program be implemented? Who will lay out the implementation system? Will a top-down or bottom-up design be selected? Why?</td>
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Stone’s Types of Policy tools

- Inducements
- Facts
- Rules
- Rights
- Powers
Inducements

- Based on rewards, or their withdrawal
- Involves the inducement giver, the receiver, and the inducement itself.
- Assumes the target is a rational actor
- Examples: tax deductions, pay raises, bonuses for completing work early, bonuses for increased efficiencies, etc.
Problems with inducements:

- The target’s perception of the inducements
- The target is not often a sole unitary actor
- The inducement may disrupt personal and social relationships
- Slow, time-consuming
- Applying a penalty hurts the very thing one is trying to protect,
- People and organizations will try to reap the reward without making the desired change in behavior.
Facts

- Use of facts to persuade people is a very common tool in American politics.
- Good as an appeal to rationality and logic
- Bad when it’s just propaganda, questionable science, or dogma
- Just because you lay out some rational, sound facts doesn’t mean that they will be met with unquestioning acceptance and behavior based on that acceptance.
- Is there a universal standard for “facts”?
Rules

- Statute laws, case law, regulations, etc.
- Prescribing or proscribing behavior
- How rules work
  - They are indirect (they work broadly over all classes or groups of people or organizations)
  - They work because they are assumed to be legitimate (the government has a right to make the rules)
  - Tend to have a conditional/situational aspect: if...then.
The challenge: striking a balance between precision and flexibility

- Anatole France: “The law in its majesty equally prohibits the rich and the poor from stealing bread and sleeping on park benches.”

How might you apply this insight to current issues in policy debate?
Benefits of precision

- Treating like alike
- Shield from the whims of government
- Predictability
Problems with precision

- Leads to different cases being treated alike
- Stifle creative response to new situations
- Leads to a belief that a certain amount of vagueness and discretion is good.
The government can create rights, but more often it is individual action, through the courts, that creates new rights or enhances enforcement of existing ones.
Rights are not self enforcing

- First, the right must be claimed by an individual, making the rights-seeker sort of weak.
- Second, the right must be proclaimed by some legitimate, authoritative body such as a court.
- Third, the right must be enforced. This can be difficult sometimes.
  - “The courts as “the least dangerous branch”
  - The rights seeker as supplicant.
Do all possible policies fit into Stone’s typology?

- What are the strengths of this approach?
- What are its weaknesses?
- Could we develop other typologies of policy tools?
An economic model of policy tools
- Favor individual freedom and choice
- Therefore tend to favor noncoercive rules
- Coercion to correct economic errors, such as income tax

A political model of policy tools
- “Any instrument [or tool] can theoretically accomplish any chosen aim, but governments prefer less coercive instruments unless forced by either recalcitrance on the part of the subject and/or continued social pressure for change to utilize more coercive instruments.”
- Think about the provisions of the health care bill—are some provisions more or less coercive? Why?
On what dimension can we assess policy tools?

- The extent to which a policy tool involves more coercion or more incentives
- Are all policies just one or the other?
- Is there an ideological dimension to policy tool choice?
- If so, does ideology influence the causal story behind problems?
- Does the nature of the causal story influence potential tool choice?
- Keep all this in mind when we talk about decisions
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<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>“The nature of activity in which government is engaged”</td>
<td>“outright money payments”</td>
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<td>“provision of goods and services, including information”</td>
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<td>“legal protections, such as monopolies or guarantees”</td>
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<td>“restrictions/penalties,” such as regulation or criminal laws.</td>
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<td>“Structure of the delivery system”</td>
<td>Direct – Federal gov’t is sole actor</td>
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<td>Indirect – Provision through an intermediary</td>
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<td>“Degree of centralization”</td>
<td>Centralized: Social Security</td>
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<td>Decentralized: Forest Service, Park Service</td>
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<td>“Degree of automaticity”: “the degree to which [programs] require detailed administrative action”</td>
<td>More automatic: Tax incentives</td>
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<td>Least automatic: Welfare, other entitlements.</td>
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A Broad Set of Policy Tool Definitions

# Models of Decision Making

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<th>Rational comprehensive</th>
<th>Bounded rationality</th>
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<td>1a. Clarification of values or objectives distinct from and usually prerequisite to empirical analysis of alternative policies.</td>
<td>1b. Selection of value goals and empirical analysis of the needed action are not distinct from one another but are closely intertwined.</td>
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<td>2a. Policy-formulation is therefore approached through means-end analysis: First the ends are isolated, then the means to achieve them are sought.</td>
<td>2b. Since means and ends are not distinct, means-end analysis is often inappropriate or limited.</td>
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<td>3a. The gist of a “good” policy is that it can be shown to be the most appropriate means to desired ends.</td>
<td>3b. The test of a “good” policy is typically that various analysts find themselves directly agreeing on a policy (without their agreeing that it is the most appropriate means to an agreed objective).</td>
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<td>4a. Analysis is comprehensive; every important relevant factor is taken into account.</td>
<td>4b. Analysis is drastically limited: (i) Important possible outcomes are neglected; (ii) Important alternative potential policies are neglected; (iii) Important affected values are neglected.</td>
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<td>5a. Theory is often heavily relied upon</td>
<td>5b. A succession of comparisons greatly reduces or eliminate reliance on theory.</td>
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Some questions?

- Do we generally get ideas on the agenda, *then* design solutions to problems?
- When are potential policy solutions joined to problems?
- Who designs policy solutions, including the tools?
- Can tools exist separately from problems?
Kingdon’s Streams Model

Streams come together. Why and when?
Next

- Next Week: Policy Implementation, Failure, and Learning
- In Two Weeks: Theories of the Process