The Public Policy Process
Evidence based policy advocacy

- Evidence
  - Some evidence is better than other evidence
  - More evidence is usually better than less evidence
  - Without evidence, we cannot affectively advocate (is this true?)

- Policy
  - What government chooses to do or not do
  - What we ask or induce government to do.

- Advocacy
  - Making an argument based on
    - Evidence
    - Logic
    - Appeals to emotion, to logic, to values, or to interests
What we have done this semester

- Simulated a dynamic policy making environment—a new presidency
- Gathered evidence on problems
- Sought to understand the agenda
- Studied policy alternatives and tools
- Made recommendations about
- Better memos and papers used evidence and sound argumentation.
- Papers improved a great deal over time.
Why these themes?

- Advocacy is more than just “making an argument”
- Much policy advocacy is thin on evidence
- Evidence, at the professional level, is valuable
- Evidence can, over the long run, positively influence policy and policy outcomes
- The ability to use evidence and express an argument clearly, in a variety of media, is central to your professional success.
Theory in the Policy Process

- The challenge—balancing theory with practice
  - This course tilts more toward practice.
- Should our clients be concerned with theory?
- Why, then, do we learn theory?
  - To organize our thinking
  - To find common themes so that we don’t have to reinvent our analytical techniques
- What is the value of scholarly or theoretical research to people seeking to actually work in policy, rather than just those who wish to study it?
Some comments on the portfolio

- **Stronger portfolios will**
  - Be well written
  - Professionally formatted
  - Reflect a semester’s worth of research
    - Better: scientific and academic sources
    - Adequate: quality news sources
    - Inadequate: CNN, Fox News, etc., or claims made by groups with a stake in the problem (dig deeper)
  - The goal: something you can use as a writing sample and as proof of your skills.
Format of the portfolio

- You have lots of choices, but I would like to see
  - A cover page
  - The separate memos (you can number individually or continuously)
  - All in one file: lastname_portfolio.docx or .doc
  - Make sure you have made any changes you want to make before submitting.
    - Be sure that any comments, revisions, etc. are removed. Submit a clean copy!
In your final memo you were asked to provide three policy alternatives, including the “let current trends continue” alternative. But in that memo I did not ask you to make a case for one of those options. In this essay, provide a recommendation, in now more than 1000 words, of which alternative we should select. You should select—and prove—an alternative that will do more to ameliorate the problem you have identified than will the other alternatives. In writing this essay, you may expand on any one of the alternatives you described, or may develop a new alternative based on any rewrite of that memo. The best essays will contain a realistic policy idea with extensive evidence to suggest that the alternative will work.
Describe what we mean by policy implementation, and explain how policies often seem fail during implementation. What might causes of these failures be? Then explain how we might structure policies to improve their prospects for implementation.
In the next-to-last lecture, we discussed how we can think of the academic and technical study of policy as a science. What does it mean to say that studies of policy are “scientific”? In what ways are formal studies of policy scientific? In what ways is the scientific study of policy more difficult than studies in the “hard” sciences, such as physics or biology or chemistry? Does it even matter that we study policy scientifically? How are scientific studies of policy used in “real world” policy making? How can knowledge derived from research and theory help you to be a more effective policy designer, implementer, or advocate?
Kingdon’s “streams model” is a way of describing how features of the political, problem, and policy streams combine in a “window of opportunity” for policy change. Using the policy problem you have studied this semester, describe the features of each of these streams in your policy area. Explain whether a window of opportunity has actually opened for policy change; if such a window has not opened, explain why it hasn’t, and how groups might work to pry open these windows.
What’s Next?

- Remember to keep in touch right through finals!
  - Everything is due May 7.
  - I will have all rewrites back on Thursday at the latest
- How many are graduating this year?
- Where do you want to work? What sort of work do you want to do?
- How will learning about public policy help you in
  - Your job?
  - Your civic life?
- What was missing from what you learned here?
- Teaching evaluations!