

Political Science 3610: Winter 2010
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Public Administration in Canada

Objective

The primary objective of the course is to provide an introduction to some of the critical challenges of implementing or sustaining policy preferences or choices across jurisdictions and policy fields. Public policy matters because it provides an opportunity to effect changes based on core community values rather than inevitable external forces, such as modernization, international terrorism, or economic globalization. Yet, there are various governance challenges connected with getting shovels in the ground, getting powerful professions (such as doctors) in the case of primary health reform, or oil companies, in the case of climate change, to collaborate and accept new technical-political decisions, let alone support them or promote them. Nor is it easy to train, maintain, or recruit the number of nurses, doctors, and other professions required to effectively sustain primary health care reform. In the past, industrialization or even programs such as medicare created all kinds of governance challenges and expectations. As one might expect, there has been much critical debate on how these inherited structures and processes have shaped the pace and direction of policy implementation ever since. Whether in the area of security in airports, or coordinating flu shots across the country, there are always questions about whether new policy ideas can be implemented quickly. Public administration is a salient issue that affects everyone.

The course is designed to offer critical insights and valuable information on the challenges of implementation, policy learning, capacity building, and working collaboratively across silos (whether departmental, jurisdictional, or professional) in a highly decentralized capitalist and federal country. Emphasis in the course is placed on better understanding the challenges connected with administration and putting into practice new policy visions. These include: sustaining coalition support, evidence, legitimacy, training programs, and other elements essential for building new viable public policy pathways and partnerships. For example, Prime Minister Harper has raised questions about the political-economic viability of certain environmental policy reforms and whether these will ever be capable of promoting integration, new partnerships and effective outcomes. He argues these radical approaches are non-starters and there is a need for a more collaborative approach that takes into account economic costs.

Public policy involves a clear choice to prepare the way for deliberate action for particular issues or problems. Public policy may also be a non-decision where there is little interest or desire shown for launching new legislation, partnerships, or resources required for sustaining a new policy framework. Discussions on climate change, energy policy, regulating banks, municipal restructuring, health reform, for

example have raised critical debates and raised different perspectives on the role of state public policy in defining and solving both domestic and international problems. The course is designed to deal with key ideas, institutions, and interests but in a way that is relevant and timely for the challenges of implementation or public administration. While the course will have a clear state-centred bias, we will focus much attention on the role of civic society processes and mechanisms (interest groups/social movements) also.

The intent of the course is to encourage discussion and interaction, but in a way that facilitates the sharing of knowledge and experience together. Debates over public administration are informed by key concepts and theories that are relied upon to make sense of reality and changing conditions. Problem-solving and scenario construction exercises have attracted much theoretical debate and attention in political circles. In your research paper, there will be an ample opportunity to employ different concepts in your case-studies as you provide critical insights on the factors that shape policy outcomes.

Required Text:

Herman Bakvis, G. Baier, D. Brown, editors, *Contested Federalism*, 2009.

Grades:

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| Mid-term Exam | 30% |
| Research Paper | 40% |
| Final Exam | 30% |

Readings and Lecture Themes:

Introduction: Public Administration

M. Howlett, M. Ramesh, and A. Perl, *Studying Public Policy*, Chapters 1-2, 7.

Lydia Miljan, *Public Policy in Canada*, Fifth Edition, Chapters 3-4. (reserve)

Herman Bakvis, et. al., *Contested Federalism*, Chapter 1-4.

David Johnson, *Thinking Government: Public Sector Management in Canada*, Second edition, Chapter 2. (reserve)

Gregory Inwood, *Understanding Canadian Public Admin*, 3rd, Chapter 7. (on reserve)

Context and Challenges of Modern Governance

Leslie Pal, *Beyond Policy Analysis*, Third Edition, Chapter 2. (on reserve)

Howlett, Ramesh, Perl, Chapter 3.

David Johnson, *Thinking Government: Public Sector Management in Canada*, Chapters 1,3,5. (on reserve)

Herman Bakvis and Grace Skogstad, editors, *Canadian Federalism: Performance, Effectiveness, Efficiency. Chapters 5, 6.* (on reserve)

Stephen Tomblin, "Creating a More Democratic Health System," in Tom McIntosh, Pierre Forest, and Gregory Marchildon, editors, *The Governance of Health Care in Canada, originally a Romanow Commissioned discussion paper, and published by University of Toronto Press, 2004.* (on reserve)

Steven Rosell, *Renewing Governance*, Preface, Chapter 1. (on reserve)

Herman Bakvis, et. al., *Contested Federalism*, Chapters 6,7,8,9.

Public Administrative Methods for Making Sense and Responding to Challenges

Howlett, Ramesh, Perl, Chapters 7,8.

Leslie Pal, *Beyond Policy Analysis*, Chapter 7. (on reserve)

Gregory Inwood, *Understanding Canadian Public Administration*, Chapters, 8, 9. (on reserve)

Herman Bakvis, *Contested Federalism*, Chapters 8,9, 10,11,12.

David Johnston, *Thinking Government*, Chapters 5, 6, 8. (on reserve)

Implementation

Howlett, Ramesh, Perl, Chapters 5,6, 7, 8.

Leslie Pal, *Beyond Policy Analysis*, Chapter 5,6. (on reserve).

Gregory Inwood, *Understanding Canadian Public Administration*, Chapter 10.

Paper Assignment

The primary objective of the research paper is to apply key concepts and theories found in public administration to generate new critical insights on patterns of implementation or the pace or direction of policy change (or lack thereof). Policy viability or sustainability is very much connected to context and the prospects (resources available) for effecting new patterns of transformation.

For example, New Public Management (NPM) has attracted much attention in the public administration literature, and there has been much discussion about how various constraints (interests, cultural, or institutional forces) made it more difficult to effect these changes in countries like Canada. With so much academic and political attention focused on NPM, it would be useful to explore this debate in your own research paper.

On the other hand, there is much to be gained by learning more about the challenges of maintenance and recruitment, communication, governance and other factors that ultimately shape policy innovation. Each of these topics has been researched in-depth and it would be interesting exploring the challenges of training and recruiting doctors and nurses, or finding ways to collaborate across jurisdictions or policy fields.

The same can be said of for issues of leadership, democracy, managing human resources, fiscal management, accountability, ethics, and other critical questions and debates. The course devotes much attention to understanding the challenges of public administration, such as maintenance and recruitment of Health Human Resources, or restructuring cabinet, but it does by focusing on broader questions of historical and political context.

Each research paper should be approximately 12 pages (double spaced) and will be due March 25, 2010. The paper will be evaluated based on Content (use of appropriate sources, including course readings); Argument (Do you present a coherent and reasonable argument? Is it consistent with, and supported by evidence? Is it logically consistent? Does it take into account major alternative arguments?); Organization (clear introduction, setting out the central topic(s) or question(s), and how you will proceed to address them; systematic exposition of policy ideas, not straying from the topic, leading to conclusion); Style (grammar, literacy; intelligibility of expression; acknowledgement of sources; consistent reference style).

There are a variety of options or themes that students might want to explore, but it is crucial to pick something that interests you. It helps that the policy literature offers various examples that can be borrowed to launch a research paper. It might be useful to focus on a specific policy field in the way that Lydia Miljan or Stephen

Brooks have done in the past. For examples, they have provided a summary of drivers/constraints that have shaped or influenced patterns of administration, implementation, or lack thereof. Maintenance and recruitment of health professionals (doctors, nurses, managers) has received much attention in the literature. You could write a paper that explores the problem, and what, if anything has been done to solve it through needs-based planning or management.

Why has it been so difficult to push climate change or other environmental issues onto the public agenda? Prime Minister Harper has suggested that the Liberal party has produced policies that are not economically or politically viable. What do you think?

Why has privatization become so prominent, even in the health field. What contextual changes have influenced this trend?

What accounts for the recent history of NPM? What were the drivers or constraints? Why has it been so difficult to implement in Canada, compared with other countries?

Public policy is about telling stories about reality, and generating data and evidence in pursuit of a new vision. The original 1867 Nation-building campaign emerged during a period of industrialization when there was much economic conversion and sense of crisis. Macdonald had to mobilize support for his national dream and build the infrastructural and coalition support essential for establishing the new regime. Regimes involve an inter-play among ideas, interests, and institutions and the context in 1867 was very different than the national context today. For example, there was limited public or civil society engagement.

Canada has had three National policies and each had a different set of ideas, institutions, and interests. The paper provide an opportunity to highlight these stories, and to focus on the role of ideas, institutions, and interests in explaining different policy histories and the challenges posed for implementation. For example, environmental policies (or lack thereof) are often described as a product of decentralization (province-building and/or continentalism). On the other hand, many critics think that embedded social welfare traditions in Canada have posed challenges for boosters of privatization or NPM

There are several examples of papers that could be written for this course. However, the intent is to use new policy skills and concepts to make sense of outcomes. Health prevention, promotion, and primary health care reform have been popular ideas, but with obesity on the rise and the bio-medical model still a powerful force, there have been limits to reform. It would be useful to explain why. It would also be useful to explore the challenges of effecting health public policy reform in the United States. Another example involves the debate over New Public Management and how these new changes were thought by boosters as "inevitable." Despite boosters of the new framework, there have been challenges in different contexts. For example, Canada has been less responsive to such changes (see Dunn, Savoie, Tomblin).

To be sure, the new reality of the environment has caused all kinds of problems for agenda-setting, and putting in place new solutions. As a result an interesting paper might trace how this issue emerged and the challenges posed for problem-definition and implementing solutions. In the area of the fishery, there has been much critical debate about fish farming, the best policy approach for regulating the fishery, markets, technology, and who should be responsible for evaluation. It would also be useful to write a paper on the challenges of terrorism and the problems generated by government in defining and implementing new security policies.

Getting a consensus on economic development has never been easy and is reflected in the fact that we never had regional development policies or equalization until 1957. Why did it take so long to get a consensus and what accounts for the challenges of implementation. If you choose to write this kind of paper be sure to highlight key ideas, stakeholders, institutions and interests.

In the public policy literature, as evident in your readings there are several themes or stories you could tell. These include:

Institutionalized Cabinet

Public Sector Financial Management

Fiscal Federalism

Human Resources

Royal Commissions

Management Reform: (Keynesianism, intergovernmental/interprofessional collaboration, New Public Management, Incrementalism, Rational Planning, Partnerships)