EDPS620 -- EDUCATION POLICY ANALYSIS*
Fall Semester, 2011

Instructor: Professor Betty Malen, 2110(c) Benjamin Building
Course Date, Time and Location: Mondays, 4:15 - 7:00 PM, 2102 Benjamin Building
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COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course is an introduction to a set of diverse, discipline-based conceptual perspectives (or analytic frameworks) that can be used to uncover and interpret policy purposes, provisions, processes, and outcomes. The perspectives were selected because they (a) undergird much of the literature in education policy, (b) provide a foundation for seeing how both applications and critiques of these perspectives have precipitated the development of additional, alternative frameworks, and (c) offer insights regarding "avenues for influencing policy," a quality particularly important for those who wish to exercise leadership in educational settings. The course also draws on these perspectives to assess the power and limits of policy as a “solution” to complex social problems. For students wishing to concentrate their graduate studies on education policy, the course provides a foundation for further course work, independent reading and research in education policy and a closely allied field, educational leadership. For students seeking to explore the terrain, the course offers students the opportunity to develop a multi-faceted picture of educational policy developments and a clearer understanding of the many ways policy shapes the education enterprise.

MAJOR OBJECTIVES: The course seeks to:
1. Introduce a variety of conceptual perspectives and literature bases that can be used to examine policy purposes, processes, contents and outcomes;
2. Provide opportunities to articulate and apply these perspectives to case examples of policy in action within different arenas (e.g., K-12 institutions, higher education institutions, governmental agencies in the US and in other countries);
3. Develop an understanding of the power and limits of policy as a lever for influencing/improving educational organizations;
4. Identify “avenues for influencing policy”; and
5. Stimulate interest in further study of education policy and awareness of the complex, interdisciplinary, at times controversial nature of education policy analysis.

*Draws on course developed with Mike Knapp, University of Washington, Seattle, WA.
GENERAL CONTENTS, STRUCTURE & APPROACH: The course is organized around three topical units: (1) conceptions of the nature, power, and limits of policy; (2) analysis of policy and policymaking from different perspectives; and (3) identification of strategies for integrating perspectives and influencing policy. The units will be explored through a combination of readings, discussions, lectures, case applications, and written assignments.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: The course requirements include:

1. Reading Assignments. Each student is responsible for all required readings specified on the syllabus and other readings which may be assigned during the semester (when the instructor learns more about students’ interests/backgrounds).

   Readings include major excerpts from the books *Agendas, alternatives and public policies* by John Kingdon and *Essence of decision* (second edition) by Graham Allison & Philip Zelikow. These books are available at the UMCP bookstore and in the UMCP library; the instructor keeps a set that students may borrow. Readings also include articles and papers that are posted on the Blackboard website.

   Taken together, the classic and contemporary publications define, illustrate and apply concepts presented and discussed in class sessions in ways that accommodate different learning styles and academic interests. Sample student-produced policy cases demonstrate how students might carry out a multiple perspective analysis on a policy of particular interest to them. These selections are prioritized (i.e., required and recommended designations on the attached course calendar). Throughout the semester, the instructor may distribute or post online mini policy cases and more popular press policy documents to illustrate various ideas emphasized in class sessions. The syllabus contains general suggestions for approaching the readings; students will find specific study guides for each unit posted under course documents. In some readings, language choices are problematic (e.g., gender biased). While such language choices are understandable given the time period when the pieces were written, they are not appropriate.

2. Class Participation. Each student is expected to participate in course discussions and activities through homework assignments noted on the course calendar and through questions, critiques, illustrations, suggestions and other forms of feedback (e.g., alternative interpretations of ideas/issues, reactions to student approaches to their policy papers and critiques of their arguments/interpretations) in class sessions and related conferences.

3. Policy Case Analysis Paper. Each student is expected to develop a written analysis of a policy case. Students are encouraged to select, in consultation with the instructor, a salient policy, one they are curious about, can secure information about and can analyze carefully and even-handedly. The case analysis will be done in an iterative fashion, with installments handed in to the instructor for feedback throughout the semester. Installments will generally be short (e.g., 8-12 pp.). Altogether, the final version of the case analysis will be approximately equivalent to a 35-50 page term paper. The installments and their due dates are briefly described below. Detailed instructions for each installment are posted as course documents. With the author's permission, a student's policy analysis may be shared with the class.

   **Installment 1: Description of the Policy Case** (8-10 pp). Due on 10/10/11.
This piece will describe a policy in a particular setting. At a minimum, the installment should (a) identify the policy, its stated purpose(s) and formal provisions, and the institutional setting in which it operates; (b) characterize the policy using concepts from the readings (e.g., domain, type), (c) provide a brief synopsis of the "origins" of the policy (e.g., how/when/why it was proposed/enacted/implemented; the impetus for it, sentiments surrounding it); (d) delimit the stage(s) in the process and note the time frame on which the analysis will focus; (e) identify the key actors (individuals, organizations) shaping the policy and major events occurring within the context particularly during the "stage" and time-frame of the case; and (f) acknowledge, in the script or in an explanatory note, the information base used to develop the policy case (e.g., documents, brochures, reports, your own observations as an observer or participant, informal interviews you have or might conduct). Extant data that can be helpful in describing aspects of the policy's purposes, provisions and "origins," as well as aspects of the policy context may be available. Note/assess what you have. These elements of the policy case may be addressed in a variety of ways and in a different order than that noted above. The point is to provide an analytic depiction of the policy (what sort of beast are you studying?) and its evolution in a particular setting (how/why was the policy initiated? how has it unfolded?).

Installment 2: First Portion of the Case Analysis (Revised description of policy case noted above and analysis from a rational perspective) (15-20 pp). Due on 10/24/11.

This installment is equivalent to the first third or so of the term paper. It includes three parts: (1) an introduction to the whole seminar paper (that is, the multi-perspective analysis of a policy case); (2) a revised case description; and (3) an analysis of the case from a rational perspective. The analysis section will lay out key components of a rational framework derived from the readings and apply these ideas to the case.

Installment 3: Analysis of the Case from an Organizational or Political Perspective (8-10 pp). Due on 11/28/11.

In this installment, students will examine the case with a second set of conceptual lenses, drawn from organizational or political perspectives. The organization and content of this installment will parallel the rational analysis section included in Installment 2.

Installment 4: Completed Case Analysis (Installments 2 and 3, analysis of case from one additional perspective and a conclusion section) (35-50 pp). Due on 12/12/11.

The completed case includes the earlier installments in revised form, a new section (in which the case is examined from a perspective not yet deployed) and a conclusion which offers an integrated interpretation of the case (drawing on all perspectives used in the paper), discusses the strengths/limits/implications of the paper and assesses the utility of a multiple perspectives approach to policy analysis.

STUDENT ASSESSMENTS, GRADES: Course grades will be based on instructor assessments of class participation (25%) and written assignments (75%). Participation grades will be based on the quality rather than the number of responses; on evidence of informed/insightful contributions to the issues being addressed; and on the content of homework assignments noted on course calendar. Paper assessments will be based on the following criteria: systematic articulation and application of the conceptual frameworks, coherent organization, cogent reasoning, capacity to tether the paper to
readings; use of information to support interpretations, appropriate use of the English language. "Re-writes" are permitted; in some cases, rewrites may be required. If students have questions or concerns about the grades/feedback they receive, they should speak with the instructor, directly. Per university policy, students may also appeal grades. The procedures for doing so are contained in the graduate studies handbook. Students may contact the department chair for further information and assistance.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** Per the Student Honor Council's request to post this notice: "The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information please visit http://www.shc.umd.edu."

**DISABILITY-BASED ACCOMMODATIONS:** Any class member who has a documented disability and wishes to discuss academic accommodations should contact the instructor as soon as possible.

**RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES:** Students will not be penalized because of observances of their religious beliefs. Whenever possible, students will be given reasonable time to make up any academic assignment that is missed due to participation in a religious observance. It is the student's responsibility to inform the instructor as soon as possible of any intended absences for religious observances.

**MEDICALLY-NECESSITATED ABSENCES:** Absences for illness will be accommodated under the conditions specified in the university policy. For more information, see (http://www.president.umd.edu/policies/v100g.html). Students should contact the instructor if they will miss more than one class for medical reasons and discuss how to document the medically-necessitated absences and how to make-up the missed class sessions.

**INVITATIONS, SUGGESTIONS:**

a) Conversations and conferences re: the written assignments or other course-related matters can be initiated at any time throughout the semester, in class sessions or at other times.

b) In preparing for class, students are encouraged to (i) "map" the readings, make notes regarding the purpose, thesis, major lines of argument and quality of evidence used to develop the ideas; (ii) "step back" and ask what the readings say about the session topics identified on the syllabus and then (iii) "step back" again and ask how the readings relate to the course aims (e.g., what they say about the nature of policy). Following each class, students are encouraged to re-read or otherwise review the articles/chapters to clarify ideas, clinch insights, generate additional questions, etc. As the study guides suggest, "mapping" readings is part of the homework for class sessions; revisiting readings is built in to several sessions. If talking about the readings with others helps, consider forming an "in person," "by phone" or "on email" study group. These strategies may or may not work for everyone. Try them; modify them; invent alternatives.
c) In developing the written assignments, consider the following process: keep a record of ideas/insights/issues; put the ideas in outline form (sentence outline if possible, but a phrase outline may be a way to get started); talk through the ideas with another person; write a draft; interrogate your script; share a draft and invite candid reaction; weigh the feedback; rewrite.

d) Review the writings on “writing” included at the end of the course documents section of the Blackboard website; these works address issues associated with the development of a coherent line of argument as well as issues associated with the clear and compelling expression of ideas. Check out Bonnie Trenga’s 2006 book, The curious case of the misplaced modifier: How to solve the mysteries of weak writing. It’s a helpful (and entertaining) tool available through amazon.com.

**COURSE QUALIFIERS:** The course is an introduction to, not an in-depth treatment of, policy analysis. The topics illustrate rather than exhaust the full range of issues that could (and arguably should) be examined. The topics included are complicated and controversial; they warrant more attention than can be given in a single semester, 3 credit course. Research methods (beyond the concern for the relationship between evidence and inference and the caution to keep the strength of the claims made in line with the strength of the evidence considered) get short shrift.

**TOPICAL OUTLINE AND COURSE CALENDAR**

**Unit I: CONCEPTIONS OF THE NATURE, POWER, AND LIMITS OF POLICY**

This section of the course seeks to clarify key terms (policy and policymaking) and related concepts, such as policymaking systems, stages, levels, and arenas; policy types, domains, and instruments. In addition, this part of the course raises questions about the degree to which policies can influence events within educational institutions and sets the stage for a more detailed examination of policy and policymaking from a set of diverse, discipline-based “theories.”

**September 12: Introduction to the Course**

In addition to providing an overview of course units, requirements, assumptions, logistics, and the like, the first session will begin to familiarize students with a conceptual vocabulary for talking about policy and policymaking in education (or in any realm of public policy). Students will be introduced to competing definitions of policy, along with alternative ways of characterizing policies and depicting phases of the policymaking process. Students will be given some "boundary definitions" of key terms and concepts. This introduction will start a conversation about terms and concepts that will continue in the following class. Students will be given criteria to apply in selecting their policy cases as well as sample policy cases that cover a wide range of domestic and international issues and that focus on developments at various levels of the policy system and on different phases of the policy process.

**September 19: Clarifying Vocabulary and Using the Vocabulary to Develop a Policy Case**

This session seeks to (1) decode more systematically key terms used in discussing policy, (2) illustrate how those terms can help lay out a policy case, and, if time permits, (3) begin to explore the underlying debate regarding the power and limits of policy, the actual and potential
influences of policy on educational institutions, and the different views about the prospects for policy becoming a potent (or impotent) vehicle for addressing educational problems.

**Readings (Required)**


The "policy case" section (not the whole paper) in any one of the following papers:
*Garran, Chris (2000). Taking from the rich to give to the poor, taking from the white to give to the black: South Africa's pursuit of equity through its national policy of teacher redeployment.


*Radomsky, Carol (2007). Continuing the commitment: The university partnership policy of the Peace Corps Alumni Association for Philippine Development.

Gillespie, Collen (2010). “We have to review for the science MSA…and it’s kind of a futile thing”: A multiple perspectives analysis of eight teachers’ implementation of science MSAs.


**Homework Assignment:** Designate how a policy case addresses the components of the policy case and identify at least three instances where the author used (or could have used) concepts/readings to characterize policy provisions/policy processes. This assignment is groundwork for an in class group activity. If students miss this activity, they must see the instructor to complete this exercise.

**Readings (Recommended):**

September 26: Unpacking the Impact Debate, Developing the Policy Case, Using the Readings as Tools to Characterize Policy Provisions and Processes

This session focuses on the impact debate (introduced in the previous sessions), raises questions about the intent, design, coordination, implementation and effects of policy on individuals and institutions and identifies a series of hypotheses about why policies do and do not produce "promised" results. This session also provides opportunities to discuss issues related to developing the policy case. Students should bring four copies of a one- to two-page summary of the stated aims and formal provisions of the policy they will study.

Readings (Required): Review last week's readings with an eye toward the effects policy may produce and the reasons why policy "succeeds" or "fails." Consider the different criteria/standards for judging whether a policy "works" and the various reasons for the mixed reviews of policy offered in (or implied in) the readings. Also read:


Readings (Recommended):


October 3: Unpacking the Process Dimensions and Using the Readings as Tools to Develop the Policy Case

This session will focus on concepts that may be particularly useful for describing
and interpreting policy processes. In addition, we will address issues associated with the development of the policy case (Installment #1), particularly those issues related to how students have or might use the course concepts/readings to help layout the policy case. **Students should bring four copies of an outline of their policy case.**

**Readings (Required):** Kingdon, *Agendas, alternatives and public policies*, pp. 90-244.

**UNIT II: POLICY ANALYSIS: ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES**

This part of the course introduces students to five perspectives for analyzing and interpreting policy. We use a common set of analytical categories (purpose, process, outcomes, "theories of action" and underlying assumptions) to describe and contrast the five perspectives. Classes will focus on (1) presenting the key elements of each perspective, (2) discussing the sets of perspectives; (3) identifying what the perspectives do and do not illuminate, and (4) applying the perspectives to students' cases and other “mini” cases or policy scenarios.

**October 10: Overview of a Multiple Perspectives Approach to Policy Analysis and Rational Perspectives on Policy (Installment #1 Due)**

This session will (1) discuss the over-arching framework used to organize the discussion of alternative perspectives, and (2) introduce rational perspectives. Rational perspectives treat policy as a purposeful course of action aimed at solving an identified problem. Analysts viewing policy from this perspective focus on the means-ends relationships between policy and its stated outcomes. Students will focus on how problems are defined and how alternatives are assessed in terms of costs, benefits, and prospects for solving the "problem."

**Readings (Required):**
Review Kingdon, pp. 90-115 and read:


Readings (Required, one of the two):


Readings (Recommended):


October 17: Organizational Perspectives on Policy

These perspectives treat policy as the invocation of organizational habits. Motivated by the desire to maintain stability, policy actors resurrect familiar routines and attach them to new problems. Rather than search for conscious problem solving processes (as rational perspectives assume), analysts concentrate on organizational traditions, routines and standard operating procedures and examine how organizational propensities may supersede, and even substitute for, the purposeful actions of organizational members.

Readings (Required):
Review Kingdon, pp. 116-144, and read

*Malen & Knapp (1997). Multiple perspectives article, organizational perspectives section


*Radomsky, organizational perspective section of paper.


Readings (Recommended):

October 24: Political Perspectives on Policy (Installment #2 Due).
Policy may be understood as an effort to regulate conflicts among the various parties and interests involved in organizational decisions. Rather than focusing upon rational problem-solving processes or organizational routines, the analyst concentrates on the interplay of influence among competing actors, who bargain, negotiate, compromise and otherwise accommodate conflicts stemming from diverse views and values, vested interests, unequal power relations and the inevitable competition for scarce resources.

Readings (Required):
Review Kingdon, pp. 145-164 and read


Readings (Recommended):


October 31: Symbolic Perspectives on Policy

Policy may be understood as symbolic action, an attempt to create images of social conditions and institutional actions that may or may not be associated with actual circumstances or events. Here the analyst focuses on actors' attempts to construct symbols which legitimate the institutions and shape perceptions of and responses to social problems and policy options. Read on.

Readings (Required):
*Malen & Knapp article, symbolic perspectives section.


Readings (Recommended):


November 7: "Working" the Various Lenses

This session provides opportunities for students to practice articulating the key tenets of these perspectives and using them to examine policy cases. Students should come prepared to discuss how various perspectives fit (or fail to fit) their cases.

Readings: Review course readings (published pieces and unpublished student papers) with an eye toward how they can be used to bolster the layout of the perspectives and the application of those perspectives to the policy cases students in this class are developing.

November 14: Normative Perspectives on Policy

Analysts can (and arguably should) draw upon normative perspectives when they examine policy developments. These perspectives focus on the relationship between public policy and social values. Accordingly, the analyst seeks to identify the explicit and implicit values embedded in policy, and the likely consequences of different policy options for fundamental values such as equity, quality, efficiency, or choice in educational institutions. In this session, students will be introduced to the key elements of this approach to policy analysis and will practice applying them to case materials.
Readings (Required):
* Malen & Knapp article, normative perspectives section.

* Garran, Hershey and Phillips-Patrick, normative perspectives sections.


Readings (Recommended):
Rein, Martin (1972). Policy analysis: A personal approach; The fact-value dilemma; and Values, social science and public policy, in Author, Social Science and Public Policy. New York: Penguin Books. This classic treatment of normative issues is a thoughtful, provocative and instructive treatment of the interplay between personal values, social values and policy analysis.


November 21: Analyzing Policy from Multiple Perspectives

In this class, we step back from the discussion of particular perspectives to (1) understand how more than one perspective can be used to make sense of policy, and (2) practice using various perspectives on particular cases.

Readings (Required):

All sections of a student paper. Students should be prepared to summarize how the student paper they have read defines, then uses the various perspectives to analyze the case. This assignment is in preparation for an in-class group activity. If students miss this activity, they are required to meet with the instructor to complete this exercise.

Readings (Optional):


**Unit III: INTEGRATING PERSPECTIVES AND INFLUENCING POLICY**

No one perspective captures all aspects of a policy in action; together, they help the analyst and the policy actor “make sense” of policy and policymaking. Based on a fuller understanding of
what policy is and does, the analyst and policymaker are in a position to imagine various ways to shape and influence policies in action. In this part of the course, we will address these sorts of issues, by discussing how the five perspectives, taken together, offer a rich picture of policies in action and generate insights regarding attempts to influence policies.

**November 28: Integrating Multiple Perspectives on Policy: How Do They "Explain" Policy? What Do They Say About Influencing Policy? (Installment #3 Due)**

This class brings the five perspectives together by examining how they overlap, complement and compete. We will focus on how the five perspectives help explain policy cases and help illuminate the debate about the power and limits of policy. Drawing on all five perspectives, students will identify the possibilities and limitations of policy as a force in educational institutions, including the multiple purposes policy may serve, the multiple effects it may produce, the varied criteria used to determine whether policy "works" and the various reasons for its effects. Given a rich, realistic picture of policy's reach and influence, students will then interpret what they have learned for those engaged in policymaking (not necessarily in a formal policymaking role). Thus the class shifts focus from questions of policy's influence on events to notions of policy actors' influence on policies. In addition, this session considers if and how we might use policy analyses (of various sorts) to foster learning (individual and/or organizational) and engender improvements in educational organizations and related contexts.

**Readings (Required):**


***Students should be ready to talk about how various perspectives are (or are not) helping them interpret their policy cases and how multiple perspectives are (or are not) generating insights regarding strategies for influencing policy.***

**Readings (Recommended):**


**December 5: Re-working the Perspectives, Sharing the Insights**

This session will be used to help students refine the line of arguments in their own papers
and to hear what other students are learning from the analysis of their policy cases.

December 12: Appraising a Multiple Perspectives Approach; Evaluating the Course; Highlighting Options for Further Study (Installment #4 Due).

This session steps back to appraise the approach emphasized in this course. Is it a useful approach? for whom? Can it generate more robust theories? expose influence strategies? engender individual/organizational learning? We will give these and other issues touched upon in class sessions center-stage billing. A major portion of this final meeting will be devoted to a discussion/assessment of the course, an overview of options students might consider should they wish to pursue work in policy studies, and individual conferences to arrange for completion of student papers.