

POL 207: AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS AND PUBLIC POLICY

WEEK	LECTURE TOPIC
Module 1: Institutions and Actors	
1	Introduction and Overview
2	Government, Parliament, and Policy
3	Policy Actors and the Media as Policy Agenda Setters
Module 2: Economics and Ideology	
4	Ideology, Economics, and Public Policy
5	From Keynes to Neoliberalism
6	<u>**No Classes – Easter Monday holiday**</u>
Module 3: Case Studies in Governance, Power, and Policy	
7	Markets and Market Failure
8	Power and Public Policy: from Pluralism to Structuralism
9	The Nuts and Bolts of Policy: from Identification to Evaluation
10	<u>**Preparation for major essay: no lectures or tutorials**</u>
Module 4: Policy in Action and Conclusions	
11	Economic Policy
12	Social and Welfare Policy
13	Conclusions

Topic 1: Introduction and Overview

What is policy?

- Public policy is inherently + unavoidably political
- Involves political decisions made that necessitate the weighing of competing interests and values within the constraints of institutional framework (i.e. laws)
- 2 different views on what policy is or should be:
 - (i) Policy is the result of authoritative or authorised choice
 - (ii) Policy is the result of structured interaction

Definitions:

"What governments do, why they do it and what difference it makes" – Dye 1972

"A political agreement on a course of action (or inaction) designed to resolve or mitigate problems on the political agenda" – Fischer 1995

"An action which employs governmental authority to commit resources in support of a preferred value" (Considine 1994)

"The dynamic and value-laden process through which a political system handles public problems"

1. Authorised choice model of policy

- Classical view of policy – premised on the assumption that policy is made by rational choices exercised by a singular political actor
 - Rational = assumes that policies are responses to pre-existing problems
 - Dalton suggests that the rationality model was developed in the US in a social ethos in which all things were viewed as possible and within human control
- Policy realm about policy from above: those with authority (the elite) make policy
- Incontrovertible characteristics:
 - (i) Purposive
 - (ii) Considers ends and means
 - (iii) Involves action or inaction
 - (iv) Must be more than political rhetoric
- Policy seen as pursuing governmental goals and decisions
- Straightforward process:
 - Identify problem → decide solution → implement solution
 - Considered "value-neutral"
 - Rests on the assumption that the policy decision-makers will act in society's best interest as though this best interest can be known objectively (Dalton, 1996)

Liberalistic in nature:

- Attempts to abstract policy from social reality
- avoids dependence on any special theory of human personality (in the sense of attributing to all human beings a determinate nature, or essential desires and inclinations)
- Sandel says modern liberalism is a 'language of strangers' that employs a doctrine of estrangement
- To be independent, rational choosers, we must deny constitutive attachments to others
- Rational choices do not pay credence to the actual situations of actual people
- Policy makers cannot be objective as a result of human nature

Commented [AF1]: Must criticise this model of policy because it abstracts choices from social reality – fails to realise that policy makers are human beings with biased agendas -- to be effective policy, choices must be in respect to the specific circumstances of specific people

Commented [AF2]: Having the power to establish or give organized existence to something

2. Policy as structured interaction

Hal Colebatch 1998:

"no single decision maker addressing a clear policy problem: it focuses on the range of participants in the game, the diversity of their understandings of the situation and the problem, the ways in which they interact with one another, and the outcomes of this interaction. It does not assume that this pattern of activity is a collective effort to achieve known and shared goals."

- The role of government in policy is not seen as a unified and decisive actor pursuing an agenda of its own choosing
- Government is seen as:
 - (i) An arena in which political actors interact to produce policy
 - (ii) Responders to the actions of other participants in order to determine what issues or problems will be considered and what actions will be taken in response

Communitarian in nature:

- Emphasis on membership in community, having loyalties and attachments that serve to define people's identity as opposed to liberal espousal "I am an independent free chooser"

Power in Politics

Policy is inherently political and, therefore, policy is imbued with power and power struggles
: *the ability of individuals and groups to further their own interests via their capacity to exert control and influence*

What public?

- Policy decisions are made by a public body, namely governments + constitutive institutions of the state, whose actions have the force of the law
- Institutions of the state:
 - Parliaments
 - Government departments and agencies
 - Courts of law that enforce, interpret and develop the law

Therefore, Public Policy = an exercise of special sovereign power which has the ability to call on public resources and legal coercion in ways that private enterprises cannot



What is the role of the state in people's lives?

Agency v Structure Debate

- Agency: individual autonomy and capacity to act independently
 - Structure: social norms, institutions and distinctions
 - Raises questions of causality:
 - Whether policy decisions are the result of unconstrained exercise of individual or collective agency by political actors, OR
 - Whether such decisions are the product of a structure over which agents have very little control
- } Both influence human behaviour

Public and Private Sectors

- Division b/n public and private sector is not impermeable
- The spheres are “intertwined at every level” (Mark Considine)
- Economic efficiency has seen the government outsource traditional governmental roles to private corporations
 - ‘hollowing out of the state’ thesis
- Areas of public concern (DV and sexual assault) have been dragged into the public realm by activists
- The role of the state is not fixed – open to debate and challenge and is influenced by political ideology
- Therefore, public policy is in a constant state of flux and change, lending a dynamism to the field of public policy

Types of Public Policy

Public Policy can be divided into:

1. Substantive (have a firm basis in social reality and therefore important)
 - policies that deal with substantive problems or issues
 - e.g. defence, social security, national security etc.
2. Procedural
 - Concern the process by which something is to be done or who is going to act
 - E.g. rules about how governmental officials carry out duties, areas over which government has authority

Lowi classifies Public Policy in 3 ways:

1. Distributive
 - Distributive policies concern the allocation of services/benefits to members of society or the whole of society (e.g. building roads, disability funds)
2. Redistributive
 - Deliberate relocation of wealth from higher to lower income individuals
 - E.g. tax transfer system (welfare)
3. Regulatory
 - Regulation of individual or group behaviour, usually through rules that are monitored
 - Also, self-regulatory – as they are usually controlled by the regulated groups
 - E.g. business codes of conduct for lawyers

Commented [AF3]: This method of classification considers the effects policies have on society

Material: tangible, concrete sources and substantive power

e.g. provisions of public housing

Symbolic: social values such as social justice or patriotism

e.g. proclamation of public holidays such as Australia Day and ANZAC Day

Commented [AF4]: Ostensibly material policies may be rendered largely symbolic if there are not enough resources or implemented ineffectively

Fenna's classification of Policy into 5 Issues (PDCIR)

1. Production Issues
 - Aimed at increasing standard of living and economic wealth
 - E.g. Gross Domestic Product, reduce unemployment
 - Central to policy work
 - BUT difficult to **control**
2. Distribution Issues
 - Sharing of wealth and opportunity amongst sections of society
 - Policies are a response to the fact that capitalism produces inequalities

Commented [AF5]: In a capitalist society (rather than a controlled economy) governments can only influence economy through:

- Tax
- Spending
- Official interest rates

- Redistributive measures serve to compensate for these inequalities
 - E.g. welfare, subsidised housing, public education, access to free healthcare
3. Consumption Issues
- Consumption of goods and services as the result of the wealth we produce + the impact of that consumption on quality of life
 - E.g. Tobacco, Sustainable Futures, Sugar etc.
4. Identity Issues
- How a population defines itself as a nation with a sense of common citizenship, even amongst diverse groups
 - Race relations and discrimination
5. Reflexive Issues
- Policies concerned with the way in which policy in itself are made
 - E.g. media regulation and public consultation

Commented [AF6]: Subsidise: support an organization or activity financially

Commented [AF7]: Asking whether or not curtailing the agency of citizens is necessary to prevent health/life issues in the future.

How should we think about policy?

Hal Colebatch settles the agency v structure debate through proposing that the most productive way to think about policy is as:

“an organisational construct that has both a vertical (authorised choice) and a horizontal (structured interaction) dimension”

Vertical:

- Authority of the governments that make policy in a purposive, autonomous and goal-orientated fashion
- Decisions of authorised leaders

Horizontal

- Interaction amongst a range of participants
- Claims of stakeholders

It should be the goal of policy practitioners to reform their practice in order that it more closely resembles the ‘ideal’ of the authorised choice perspective. H/W in practice policy is messy

Policy plays a role in forming perceptions of social problems

- ‘wicked problems’ like poverty are thought of as needed to be managed, not solved
- Usually policies are put forward to solve problems e.g. water shortages

Australian public policy in a globalised world

- Globalisation is the key challenge to contemporary public policy
- Economic, cultural and social integration
- Reduces the role played by governments in determining public policy – people are more informed and able to compare policies
- Fears for the end of nation states as countries “race to the bottom”, sacrificing social and environmental protections for investment
- Globalisation counterposed to public policy as economic concerns reign over social ones

Hay’s 4 reasons why globalisation and public policy don’t mix well:

1. Globalisation necessitates the “privatisation and technicisation” of public policy. Therefore, it is less public and less democratic
2. States must provide an environment that is conducive to capital, investment and profit maximisation. Public Policy is usually subordinate to economic concerns
3. Diminishes the autonomy and policy-making capacity of nation states
4. Convergence b/n states, thereby restricting policy makers autonomy

Recap

'public policy'?

- “What governments do, why they do it and what difference it makes” – Dye 1972
- “A political agreement on a course of action (or inaction) designed to resolve or mitigate problems on the political agenda” – Fischer 1995
- “An action which employs governmental authority to commit resources in support of a preferred value” (Considine 1994)
- “The dynamic and value-laden process through which a political system handles public problems”
- The rules, acts and legislation or norms and values that empower the government in their decision making.

central concerns within public policy academia

1. Conceptualising public policy as structured interaction or authorised choice model.

2. Agency v Structure Debate

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Federalism – system whereby we have two levels of government: State and Federal

S51 Constitution: separation and division of powers

Federal powers:

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| • Defence | • Trade |
| • Immigration | • Postal services |
| • Foreign affairs | • Taxation |

State Powers:

- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| • Health | • Police |
| • Schools | • Housing |

FEDERAL	STATE/TERRITORY	LOCAL
The federal government raises money to run the country by collecting taxes on incomes, goods and services and company profits and spends it on national matters: for example, trade, defence, immigration and the environment.	State/territory governments also raise money from taxes but receive more than half their money from the federal government and spend it on state/territory matters: for example, schools, housing and hospitals, roads and railways, police and ambulance services.	Local councils collect taxes (rates) from all local property owners and receive grants from federal and state/territory governments and spend this on local matters: for example, town planning, rubbish collection, water and sewerage, local roads and pet control.

impacts of globalisation on the formation of domestic public policy in Australia?

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Lecture 1: Introduction and Overview

What is public policy?

- A contested concept
- No single, agreed definition
- “laws are like sausages, it is better not to see them being made” (Otto Bismark) – when you study policy making and are involved in the policy making process, you are in the abattoir.

“a course of action or inaction chosen by public authorities to address a given problem or interrelated set of problems” – Pal

“public policy is an action which employs governmental authority to commit resources in support of a preferred value” – Considine

“public policy is shaped by individuals with ideas in action within institutions” – Hawker, Smith and Weller

THREE Common Interactions

1. Ideas
2. Actors
3. Institutions

The Australian policy context themes

1. The parliamentary system
2. The federal system (the KEY driving factor behind policy)
3. Intergovernmental relations
4. Australian settlement

The Australian System of Government

- **Responsible government:**
 - Legislative powers exercised by parliaments
 - Executive authority and the management of government resources undertaken by ministers (individually and collectively) plus administrative authorities in government
 - Judicial: the application and interpretation of the law

Commented [AF8]: •Ensures ministerial responsibility, accountability
•Each tier acts as a check and balance
•Ensures sole power never vests in one actor – prevents arbitrary power

Government to Governance

Governance:

“the institutional arrangements for debating, considering, deciding, prioritising, resourcing, implementing and evaluating public policy”

“governance includes relationships and networks between the public, private and not-for-profit sectors; it included formal and informal means of policy persuasion”

Commented [AF9]: Elevated form of government that utilises an integrative approach to policy to ensure wide reach and effective implementation