Syllabus

Public Policy Analysis

Instructor: Peter Levine, Tufts University: Lincoln Filene Professor and Associate Dean; appointments in Tisch College, Political Science, Philosophy and Civic Studies

Objectives

To learn to analyze institutions and develop strategies that improve the world by changing these institutions or creating new ones. A good strategy must be *just* (which requires normative argument), *effective*, and *politically viable*.

Summary of Content

The class will first investigate one policy question together. That question is: Which students should attend which k-12 schools in the USA, and who should decide that matter? Concrete policy options include mandatory assignment to neighborhood public schools, school choice, charter schools, vouchers, etc. Every student will write a short paper on that topic.

Each student will then select one policy issue and write three 5-7-page essays that connect to produce one policy memo on that issue. As students conduct research for their individual papers, in class, we will discuss methods and theories of policy analysis.

Our overall framework will the Institutional Analysis and Design (IAD) framework developed by Elinor Ostrom and colleagues. We will use it both for the k-12 school example and for each student's individual project.
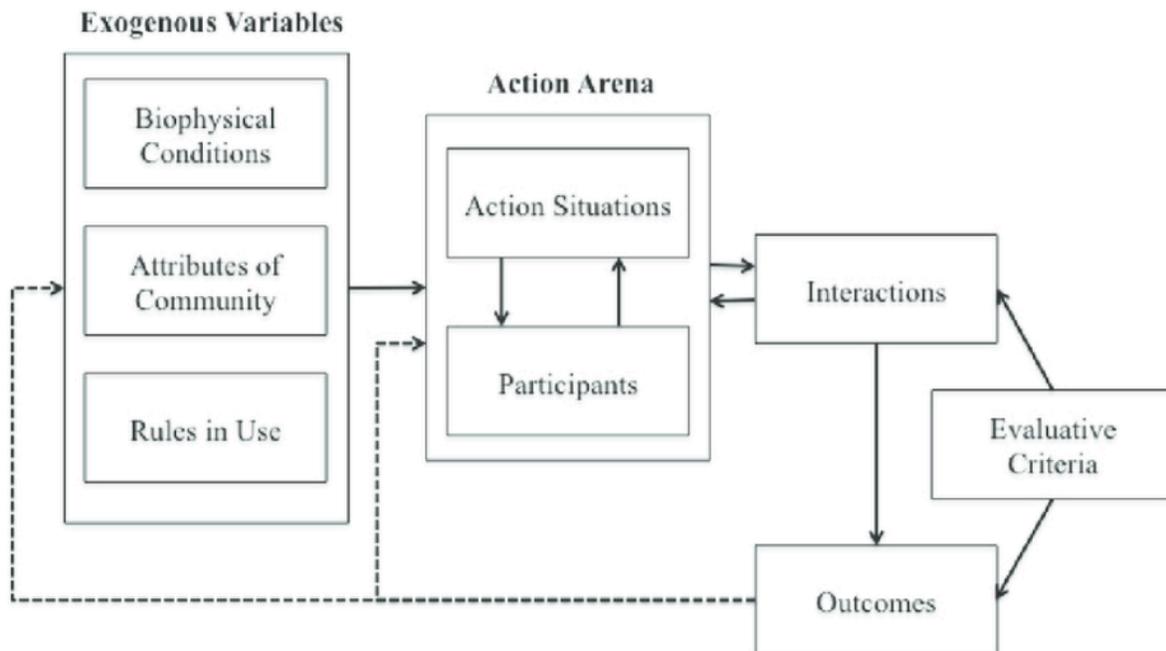
Working with this framework, we will pose these questions:

1. What is the institution? What is its name? How would you define it uniquely, and which people, resources, locations, etc. does it involve?
2. What problem or set of problems interests you about it? This problem may be a failure (the institution doesn't yield the intended results) or an injustice (it has *bad* results), or it could be the intellectual problem posed by its success: why does this institution work and can we replicate it?
3. What other institutions are closely related to it, and how?
4. Which institutional form(s) does it reflect, e.g., a government, a firm, a market, a network, an association, a community?
5. What are important relevant biophysical conditions? What natural resources does it use, and which natural processes come into play? What characteristics of these resources and processes are relevant to the institution: e.g., scarcity, fragility, adaptability, ability to reproduce and grow, interdependence, tendency to move?
6. What are important technological conditions, where "technology" means the relevant affordances and limitations that have been created–or will predictably be created–by human beings?
7. What cultural meanings (in the sense of Geertz 1973) are involved? Are these meanings shared or disputed?
8. To what extent can we detect wholes, rhythms, hierarchies, and networks (Links to an external site.) in the institution (C. Levine 2015)? How do these forms interrelate?
9. What official, formal, usually written rules govern the institution? What are its rules-in-use? (These may diverge from the official rules.)
10. Are the rules grounded (Links to an external site.)in phenomena beyond the institution? For instance, an institution might use a currency whose value is

determined by other institutions. Tufts runs on an academic calendar related to the solar calendar, which is grounded in the motion of the earth. (Grounding is different from causation.)

11. What goods are relevant? Who has which kinds of ownership over which goods? Are the goods subtractable? Are they excludable?
12. Who are the relevant actors?
13. What choices confront each actor? What does each actor know about the available choices?
14. What does each actor value, and why?
15. Under what conditions do the actors choose (e.g., with or without discussion, once or repeatedly, simultaneously or in turn, with or without knowledge of what the others are choosing)?
16. What are the consequences of the most important or most likely combinations of choices made by all the actors?
17. Are these consequences desired by the actors?
18. Are these outcomes desired by people who are *not* among the actors?
19. Are the outcomes fair or just by various normative criteria?
20. Are they sustainable–meaning a) literally repeatable many times, and/or b) good for nature?
21. How do the outcomes affect the issues raised in questions 1-15? In other words, do the outcomes of the institution change the institution itself, in a feedback loop?
22. What deliberate changes in institutional forms (4), technologies (6), meanings (7), rules (9-10), or values (13) would produce preferable outcomes according to the criteria raised in questions 18-20?
23. How can we go about altering the institution in the light of 22?

Book to purchase

1. Sigal R. Ben-Porath and Michael C. Johanek, *Making Up Our Mind: What School Choice is Really About* (University of Chicago Press, 2019)
2. Robert Pondiscio, *How The Other Half Learns: Equality, Excellence, and the Battle Over School Choice* (Avery 2019)

These will be in the bookstore but you are welcome to purchase electronic versions instead.

All other readings are articles or scanned book chapters available through Canvas.

Grading rubric:

- Four 4-6 page papers: the first on school choice and the other three on a single topic of your choice. Those three papers will combine to form one substantial policy paper: 15% each = 60% total
- Presentation of your policy paper in class: 20%
- Class participation: 20%

Criteria for assessing class participation:

1. Attendance.
2. Engaging in a discussion that is informed by the assigned texts.
3. Focusing on the topic and the texts, which does not preclude drawing connections beyond them.
4. Being responsive to other students. Responsiveness needn't always be immediate, verbal, or occur within the class discussion itself.
5. Building on others' contributions, and sometimes making links among different people's contributions or between what they have said and the text.
6. Demonstrating genuine respect for the others, where respect does not require agreement. In fact, sometimes respect requires explicit *disagreement* because you take the other person's ideas seriously.
7. Taking risks, trying out ideas that you don't necessarily endorse, and asking questions that might be perceived as naive or uninformed.
8. Seeking truth or clarity or insight (instead of other objectives).
9. Exercising freedom of speech along with a degree of tact and concern for the other people.
10. Demonstrating responsibility for the other students' learning in what you say (and occasionally by a decision not to speak).

Technology policy: Laptops and phones have been shown to be distracting in seminars. They distract not only the person who uses them but also other students who can see them open. However, some students may reasonably choose to read the assignments in digital form rather than print them and may wish to consult the assigned texts during class. Therefore, electronic devices are not banned, but students are expected to keep them closed *except* when specifically looking for sections of the readings that are relevant to the conversation. Notes should be taken by hand on paper. One of the easiest ways for me to assess overall class participation is by deducting points for students who appear to be misusing technology in class.

Wed. Jan 15

Introductions. Some preliminary discussion of school choice based on our own experiences

Part I: School Choice

Wednesday, January 22

The original argument for choice

- Chubb, John E., and Terry M. Moe. "America's public schools: Choice is a panacea. (Links to an external site.)" The Brookings Review 8.3 (1990): 4-12.

Mon, January 27

Historical overview

- Sigal R. Ben-Porath and Michael C. Johanek, Making Up Our Mind: What School Choice is Really About, pp. vii-81

(Johanek will visit class via videoconference.)

Mon., January 29

Values: What are We Trying to Acccomplish?

- Sigal R. Ben-Porath and Michael C. Johanek, pp. 83-129

Monday, February 3: no class (instructor is traveling)

Wed. Feb 5

Does Choice Work? Qualitative evidence

- Robert Pondiscio, *How the Other Half Learns: Equality, Excellence, and the Battle Over School Choice* (2019); especially recommended pages: 3-51, 77-104, 111-113, 156-163, 175-179, 184-194, 210-219, 257-267, 271-279, 295-311, 320-340.

Visitor: Robert Pondiscio.

Monday, Feb. 10

Does choice work? Quantitative outcome studies

- Abdulkadiroglu, A., Angrist, J., Dynarski, S., Kane, T., & Pathak, P. (2011). [Accountability and flexibility in public schools: Evidence from Boston's charters and pilots. (Links to an external site.)](#) The Quarterly Journal of Economics 126(2), 699-748.

Wed. Feb 12

A Case Study with Multiple Perspectives

Meira Levinson, "[Is Pandering Ethical? Power, Privilege, and School Assignment, (Links to an external site.)](#)" in Levinson and Jacob Fay, Dilemmas of Educational Ethics: Cases and Commentaries, pp. 143-78

(Feb 17: no class; President's Day)

First paper due: 4-6 pages about school choice

Part II: Other Issues

Wed., February 19

Policy analysis: mainstream approaches

- Bardach, E. *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis* (2000), excerpts

Thursday, Feb 20, makeup day for President's Day

Unpacking institutions

In class, we will build and operate an extremely simple institution by playing a "tragedy of the commons" game. We will apply the IAD framework to it.

- Ostrom, Elinor. 1987. "An Agenda for the Study of Institutions." Public Choice 48:3-25. Reprinted in McGinnis (2000), Chapter 3.

Mon, Feb. 24

In class, we will apply the IAD framework to school choice. (No additional reading assignment)

Due by midnight: an email proposing a topic for your individual papers.

Wed Feb 26: class content to be announced.

Monday, March 2

Rules

- Toulmin, Stephen. 1974. "Rules and Their Relevance for Understanding Human Behavior." *In Understanding Other People*, ed. Theodore Mischel, 185-215. Oxford: Blackwell. Excerpts: pp. 189-214.

Wednesday, March 4

Attributes of community: Example # 1, the community's social capital

- Coleman, James S. "Social capital in the creation of human capital (Links to an external site.)." American journal of sociology 94 (1988): S95-S120.

Monday, March 9

Attributes of community: Example #2, the community's culture

- Clifford. Geertz,, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight (Links to an external site.)." Daedalus, vol. 101, no. 1, Myth, Symbol, and Culture (Winter, 1972), pp. 1-37 (

Wednesday, March 11

Games: players, situations

- Roger Fisher and William Ury, Getting to Yes, 📄 excerpts.

Second paper due: 4-6 pages presenting a public policy issue in terms of "players," choices, and outcomes. Prompt is here.

(March 16-19 is Spring Break)

Monday, March 23: No class. The University has decided to extend spring break.

Wednesday, March 25: Exit Voice and Loyalty

Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970, excerpts 📄.

Monday, March 30

Evaluative Criteria: 1) Cost-benefit analysis

NOTE: I have changed the readings to make them more timely and easily accessible remotely.

- A one-page explanation of "cost benefit analysis (Links to an external site.)" from the CDC.
- Robert Verbruggen, "A COVID Cost-Benefit Analysis (Links to an external site.)," The National Review, March 23, 2020.
- Sven Ove Hannson, "Philosophical Problems in Cost-Benefit Analysis 📄," Economics and Philosophy, 23 (2007) 163–183 doi:10.1017/S0266267107001356

Wednesday, April 1

Evaluative Criteria: 2) Rule of law

- Scalia, Antonin. "The rule of law as a law of rules." *U. Chi. l. reV.* 56 (1989). You may read just pp. 1175-1180 (Links to an external site.). In addition, read James Madison, The Federalist #62 (Links to an external site.), only the section marked by Roman numeral V.

Monday, April 6

Evaluative Criteria: 3) Rights

- "Rights (Links to an external site.)" in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy-- skip sections 2 and 3.

- Ronald Dworkin, "[Rights as trumps (Links to an external site.)](#)" pp. 153-167, but you can stop on p. 159 (at "Hart's Objections").

Wednesday, April 8

Evaluative Criteria: 4) Equity or Equality

- Tim Scanlon, "[When Does Equality Matter? (Links to an external site.)](#)"

Monday, April 13

Types of institution

- Levine, Caroline. *Forms: Whole, rhythm, hierarchy, network*. Princeton University Press, 2017, excerpts.

Third paper due: 4-6 pages analyzing the value conflicts and choices raised by your policy issue

Wednesday, April 15

Complexity and Wicked Problems

-
  o Rittel, H., M. Webber, "Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning," Policy Sciences 4(1) (1973) 155-169

Monday, April 20: No class: Patriot's Day

Wednesday, April 22: How policy gets made

- Sabatier. P.A. and C.M. Weible. The Advocacy-Coalition Framework: An Assessment. 189-220
- Schlager, E., C.M. Weible (2013). New Theories of the Policy Process. Policy Studies Journal, 41(3), 389-396.

Wednesday, April 22

Discussions of students' work in class

Discussions of students' work in class

Monday, April 27

Discussions of students' work in class

Fourth paper due: 4-6 pages presenting and defending a policy recommendation on your issue.