Understanding the Politics of Public Policy
Outline

- Models and theories of public policy
- Policy process model
  - problem definition and agenda setting
  - policy formulation
  - policy legitimation
  - policy implementation
  - policy evaluation/policy change
- Instruments of public policy
- Policy typologies
Models of Public Policy

- Elite theory
- Group theory
- Institutionalism
- Rational choice theory
- Political systems theory
- Policy process model
Policy Process Model
Policy Cycle

Problem definition/
Agenda setting

Policy formulation

Policy legitimization

Policy change

Policy evaluation

Policy implementation
Problem Definition

- Often difficult to define a problem
- What is a current problem?
- Why is it a problem?
- Definition is based on your own perspective
- Who’s involved?
Agenda Setting

- Systemic vs. government agenda
  - **systemic**: public is aware of and may be discussing
  - **government**: considered to be those issues and problems that policymakers are addressing at a certain time

- What issues would you consider to be on the government agenda currently?
Streams of Agenda Setting

Problem stream

Policy stream

Political stream

Opportunity for agenda items
Explanations for Agenda Setting: Problems, Politics, Participants

- Problems
  - mandated items
  - magnitude of problem
  - focusing events (e.g., Sept. 11, Love Canal)
  - relationship to symbols
  - absence of private means
  - spillover impacts
  - analogy to other problems
Explanations (cont’d)

- Politics
  - political process change
    » change in administration, public opinion, etc.

- Visible participants (entrepreneurs)
  - president and staff
  - congressional leadership
  - media
  - interest groups
## Influences on Agenda Setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of conflict is HIGH</th>
<th>Level of salience is HIGH</th>
<th>Level of salience is LOW</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crime, Gun control</td>
<td>WORST CHANCE</td>
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<td>Abortion rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level of conflict is LOW</td>
<td>BEST CHANCE</td>
<td>Pork-barrel projects (e.g., research grants, water projects)</td>
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<td>Airline safety</td>
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Policy Formulation

- Debate over alternative policy choices
- Importance of policy analysis
- Actors provide their preferred positions
- Who’s involved
  - bureaucracy, EOP
  - legislature/staff
  - interest groups
Policy Legitimation

- Appropriateness of government action
- Important for garnering support
- Deals w/two major issues
  - Substance of the policy
  - Process of adopting the policy
Policy Implementation

- Where actual intervention is seen
- Activities that put programs into effect
  - money spent
  - laws passed
  - regulations formulated
- Done mostly by executive branch through regulations
Policy Evaluation and Change

- Step often disregarded in process
- Difficult to identify the goals of a program and if they were achieved
- Different types of impacts
  - direct vs. indirect
  - short-term vs. long-term
- Hopefully, will feed information back into the policy process
Instruments of Policy

- Regulation
- Government management
- Taxing and spending
- Market mechanisms
- Education and information
Lowi Policy Typology

- Distributive policy
  - individualized grants and programs

- Redistributive policy
  - one gains from another’s loss

- Regulatory policy
  - government restriction of choice