Western University
Department of Political Science
The Policy Process in Local Government
Public Administration 9902B
Winter 2019

Instructor: Martin Horak
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Time and Location: Wednesdays, 4:30–6:30pm, SSC 4255 (a.k.a. your second home)

Course Description: Building on PA9901 (Advanced Local Government), this course introduces students to selected aspects of the academic literature on public policy-making, and examines these in the Canadian municipal context, with particular (but not exclusive) emphasis on Ontario applications and examples. We begin by discussing how the distinct features and constraints of local government shape the scope and character of municipal policy-making. We then examine how policy problems are framed and how they emerge on municipal agendas; we discuss policy innovation and diffusion; we focus on policy leadership and the role of public engagement in local policy processes; and we discuss policy instruments and implementation. We then synthesize what we have learned by looking at the specific dynamics of policy-making in the fields of urban development and social policy.

Format: Lectures, class discussion, occasional group exercises, and student presentations.

Course Website: The syllabus, assignments, and some readings (see below) will be posted on OWL. Written assignments will be accepted by OWL only. Announcements will be made using the OWL system, which links to students’ UWO e-mail addresses, so please make sure to check your UWO e-mail regularly.

Reading Materials: The course uses three chapters from the following textbook:

Students who took PA9901 in fall 2017 or 2018 should already have this textbook. For those who do not have it, it is available through Amazon and other retailers.

Most other readings are available electronically through the UWO libraries system, or through web links included in the syllabus below. Remaining readings will be posted at least one week in advance of the relevant class in the “Resources” section of the OWL website.
Evaluation:

Participation – 15%

This course demands active, thoughtful participation by students in class discussion and in-class work. This in turn requires that you complete all required readings in advance of the class for which they are assigned.

Case Analysis of Problem Definition / Framing – 15%  
Due on OWL Feb 6 (Week 5)

You will select a case of a contested municipal policy problem / issue, and develop a brief (about 1,500 words maximum) analysis of alternative definitions / framings of the problem advanced by various actors in the case. Detailed guidelines will be distributed in Week 3 of the course.

Research Project

Your will design and complete your own research project, in which you will analyze a specific municipal or intergovernmental policy process using theories and concepts discussed in the class. Working professionals are encouraged to examine a policy process that relates to their professional experience and/or interests. Detailed guidelines will be distributed in Week 5 of the course. This assignment has four components:

a. Research Outline – 10%  
Due on OWL Feb 13 (Week 6)

You will develop a two-page (approx. 750 words) outline of your research project, including a draft research question, brief background, and a plan for completing the work.

b. Peer Review – 10%  
Draft for peer review due on OWL Mar 20 (Week 9)
Peer review of draft due on OWL Mar 27 (Week 10)

You will submit a first draft of your final paper for anonymous review by one of your classmates; the following week, you will submit a review of a draft by one of your peers.

c. “Three Minute Thesis” (3MT) Presentation – 5%  
In class Apr 3 (Week 11)

You will prepare a very brief presentation highlighting your research question and main findings, following the “three minute thesis” format.

d. Research Paper – 45%  
Due on OWL Apr 3 (Week 11)

You will write a research paper (max. 5,000 words including references) on your topic.

Course Policies:

Late Penalties: All written assignments must be submitted on the due date. Late assignments are subject to a penalty of 2% per day off of the assignment mark, weekends included. If you anticipate having trouble meeting a deadline, please speak with the instructor as soon as possible. Extensions will only be granted in the case of documented extenuating circumstances.
Electronic devices: In order to ensure a classroom free from distractions, please refrain from using phones during classes, and use laptops and tablets for course-related activities only.

Academic integrity: Scholastic offences are taken seriously. Students are directed to read the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

Course Schedule and Required Readings

NB: Readings available electronically through UWO libraries are marked with an asterisk (*).

Week 1 Jan 9: Introduction to Studying Public Policy


Week 2 Jan 16: Municipalities and Policy-Making

n.b. read this piece with an eye analytical themes and conclusions only; no need to absorb all the empirical details.


Week 3 Jan 23: The Context for Local Policy-Making

Week 4  
**Jan 30: Problem Definition, Framing and Agenda Setting**

**Readings:**


Week 5  
**Feb 6: Policy Diffusion and Policy Innovation**

**Readings:**


Week 6  
**Feb 13: Policy Leadership and Governing Coalitions**

**Readings:**


For review (most students read this in PA9903):


**Feb 20: No Class**

Week 7  
**Feb 27: Engaging the Public: Possibilities and Challenges**

**Readings:**
Week 8  
Mar 6: Policy Instruments and Implementation

Readings:


Mar 13: No Class

Week 9  
Mar 20: Policy-Making for Urban Development

Readings:


Week 10  
Mar 27: Social Policy-Making in Municipalities

Readings:


**Week 11**  Apr 3: Course Conclusion and 3MT Presentations

No readings