The Policy Process in Local Government

Public Administration 9902B
Political Science 9524B
Winter 2017

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 1-3pm, or by appointment

Time and Location: Wednesdays, 4:00–6:00pm, SSC 4255

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 particular 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 explore the range of municipal policy instruments; and we focus on policy leadership and the role of public engagement in local policy processes. We then synthesize what we have learned by looking at the specific dynamics of policy-making in the fields of urban development and social and environmental policy. We conclude by discussing issues and challenges related to municipal policy implementation.

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

Course Website: The syllabus, assignments, and some readings (see below) will be posted on OWL. 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 2015 or 2016 should already have this textbook. For those who do not have it, it is available through Amazon.

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 – 20%

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

Case Analysis of Problem Definition / Framing – 15% Due in class Week 6 (Feb 15)

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. This assignment has three components:

a. Research Proposal – 15% Due in class Week 7 (Mar 1)

You will develop a 1,500 word (approx.) proposal outlining your intended research project, including a research question, brief background, intended research methods, and sources. Detailed guidelines for the proposal will be distributed in Week 5 of the course.

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

You will prepare a very brief presentation highlighting your research question and main findings, following the “three minute thesis” format. Details will be discussed in Week 9.

c. Research Paper – 45% Due in class Week 11 (Apr 5)

You will write a research paper (max. 5,000 words) on your chosen topic. Detailed guidelines will be distributed in Week 5 of the course.

Course Policies:

Late Penalties: All written assignments must be handed in at the start of the class in which they are due. 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 11: Introduction to Studying Public Policy


**Week 2** Jan 18: Municipalities and Policy-Making


**Week 3** Jan 25: The Context for Local Policy-Making


**Week 4** Feb 1: Problem Definition, Framing and Agenda-Setting


**Week 5**  
**Feb 8: Policy Diffusion and Policy Instruments**

Readings:  


**Week 6**  
**Feb 15: Policy Leadership and Governing Coalitions**

Readings:  


For review (most students read this in PA9903):


**Week 7**  
**Mar 1: Engaging the Public: Possibilities and Challenges**

Readings:  


For review (most students read this in PA9903):

**Week 8**  
**Mar 8: Policy-Making for Urban Development**  
Readings:  


**Week 9**  
**Mar. 22: Social and Environmental Policy-Making in Municipalities**  
Readings:  


Supplementary reading:


**Week 10**  
**Mar. 29: Policy Implementation**  
Readings:  


**Week 11**  
**Apr. 5: Course Conclusion and 3MT Presentations**