

Syllabus

Course description

Course title	Introduction to public policy
Course code	27168
Scientific sector	SPS/04
Degree	L33 – Economics and Social Sciences
Semester and academic year	1 st semester, 2017/2018
Year	Free choice course
Credits	6
Modular	No

Total lecturing hours	36
Total lab hours	-
Total exercise hours	-
Attendance	Suggested, but not required
Prerequisites	The study of the public policy process is part of the wider area of political studies. For this reason, successful completion of 'Political Science 1' is recommended in order to take full advantage of the lectures.
Course page	https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/economics-management/bachelor-economics-social-sciences/

Specific educational objectives	<p>The course focuses on the exploration of the public policy process in modern democracies, providing first an overview of the main theoretical approaches developed to study policy making and then applying these theories to the study of the policy process. Upon successful completion of this course, a student should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop a strong foundation of knowledge concerning major theories developed to study the public policy process; • apply these theories to study different aspects of how policy decisions are made and how policy is shaped in action; • understand the central components of the policy making process, from the emergence of policies in the agenda, to policy formulation and policy implementation; • identify the role of key political actors and organized interests in driving policy making; • recognize the role of institutions in enabling and constraining policy making; • Understand and critically analyze public policies.
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Lecturer	Luca Pinto Office SER E3.10 luca.pinto@unibz.it Tel. 0471/013278/79 https://www.unibz.it/it/faculties/economics-management/academic-staff/
Scientific sector of the lecturer	SPS/04
Teaching language	English

Office hours	Webpage: https://www.unibz.it/en/timetable/?department=26&degree=12833
Lecturing assistant	-
Teaching assistant	-
Office hours	-
List of topics covered	<p>This course provides an introduction to the public policy process in modern democracies. Studies of the public policy process focus on how policy decisions are made and how policy is shaped in action. In its simplest description, making policy implies three stages: the emergence of some priorities in the agenda, the formulation of a policy and its implementation. However, policies do not always follow this logical sequence. Most of the time the policy process resembles a tortuous path, with many feedback loops, carried out by diverse actors – politicians, pressure groups, civil servants, publicly employed professionals, academic experts and journalists. Thus, trying to understand how policy is made means to explore a complex, dynamic and multi-layered political process characterised by several actors with nested levels of interactions and uncertain inputs and outputs. To approach this complex phenomenon, the first part of the course will introduce a range of theories that have been developed to explain key aspects of the policy process. Since its study is essentially related to the exercise of power in making policy, most of these theoretical approaches investigate how power is distributed in society and embedded in political institutions. In particular, the course will explore the contribution made by structuralism, rational choice theory, network theory and institutionalism to the understanding of the policy process. The second part of the course will explore key aspects of the policy process – agenda setting, policy formulation and policy implementation – applying and assessing the theoretical frameworks introduced in the first part. More specifically, this part of the course will focus on the policy process as a political process, discussing topics such as the way in which public problems emerge, what instruments are chosen to achieve policy goals, and how policies are actually developed. Finally, the course will analyse some case studies of policy making within key policy areas.</p>
Teaching format	Frontal lectures
Learning outcomes	<p>Knowledge and understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the process by which public policy is made, including the actors and institutions that influence the public policy process; • Comprehend the key theoretical concepts and methodological issues underlying the study of the public process. <p>Applying knowledge and understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the relationship between theoretical and practical aspects of policy making; • Apply the different theoretical approaches developed to study policy making to various aspects of the policy process. <p>Making judgments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the ability to critically analyse the public policy process by identifying the connections between political actors and institutions and by comparing and contrasting different policy issues. <p>Communication skills</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acquire the ability to discuss and critically evaluate the dynamics of policy making and assess the role played by different actors and institutions, using the appropriate lexicon. <p>Learning skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exhibit knowledge and ability to comprehend and synthesize academic and professional research in the field of public policy.
Assessment	<p>For <i>attending students</i>, the assessment of the course will consist in two written exams:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a mid-term written exam, scheduled at the end of the first half of the course, that will cover the theoretical approaches to policy process analysis; a final written exam, scheduled at the end of the course, that will focus on the key aspects of the public policy process, from agenda setting, to policy formulation and implementation. <p>Both the exams will include a number of multiple-choice questions and up to three open-ended questions.</p> <p>For <i>non-attending students</i>, the evaluation will be based on a written exam covering the two required readings (see below) plus a further one – an article covering a case study in a specific policy area – which will be assigned on an individual basis. For this reason, non-attending students are invited to get in contact with the lecturer in good time before the exam.</p>
Assessment language	English
Evaluation criteria and criteria for awarding marks	<p>For attending students, the final grade will be the arithmetic mean of the two grades of the mid-term and final exams. Attending students who collect too many absences and/or fail to pass the mid-term exam will be considered as non-attending for evaluation. For non-attending students, the evaluation will be entirely based on a written exam.</p> <p>The written exams will be evaluated using the following criteria: clarity and preciseness of the answers, correctness of terms and definitions, ability to apply theoretical models, construction of valid arguments, analytical ability to evaluate.</p>
Required readings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Xun, Wu, Ramesh, M., Howlett, Michael & Fritzen, Scott A., 2017, <i>The Public Policy Primer: Managing the Policy Process</i> (Second Edition), London, Routledge. Hill, Michael & Varone, Frédéric, 2017, <i>The Public Policy Process</i> (Seventh Edition), London, Routledge.
Supplementary readings	Further readings will be communicated at the beginning of the course.