

Syllabus

Course description

Course title	Policy Design, Democracy, and Citizen Engagement
Course code	27603
Scientific sector	SPS/04 - GSPS-02/A
Degree	Master in Public Policy and Innovative Governance LM-63
Semester and academic year	1st semester 2025/2026
Year	1 st
Credits	8
Modular	No

Total lecturing hours	48
Total lab hours	-
Total exercise hours	-
Attendance	Recommended, but not required
Prerequisites	None
Course page	https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/economics-management/master-public-policy-innovative-governance/

Specific educational objectives	<p>The course belongs to the scientific area of Political Science (SPS/04 - GSPS-02/A).</p> <p>The focus is largely theoretical with a strong policy angle, with invited speakers from different areas of both PA and the 3rd sector. The course illustrates the ways democratic concerns translate into policies, citizens' initiatives, and the design features of political institutions. It addresses the merits and strengths of the recent ideational turn in political science and public administration, focusing on the role of (creative) ideas in policymaking and on how citizens participate in knowledge co-creation for sustainability transitions.</p> <p>Among the educational objectives is to show that, over and beyond the use of incentives to influence people's behavior, initiatives aimed at shaping democratic experience and "everyday politics" are tools that help citizens develop new democratic habits. A part of the course is on political communication, understood as a two-way process that links citizens with institutions.</p>
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Scientific sector of the lecturer	SPS/04 - GSPS-02/A Political Science
Teaching language	English
Office hours	<p>24 hours Office hours are scheduled before the course starts, but in general they take place before and after each lecture (or by appointment). MySNS – My timetable Webpage: https://www.unibz.it/en/timetable/?sourceId=unibz&department=26&degree=14100</p>
List of topics covered	<p>Design thinking in policymaking; the “ideational turn” in political science and public administration; the “European Democracy Action Plan”; patterns and strategies of citizens’ engagement; the active role of citizens in sustainability transitions research; the potential of social media for the innovation of public sector organizations; “everyday politics” and democratic experience as new frames for devising policies.</p>
Teaching format	<p>Lectures, invited speakers (practitioners and administrators), group discussions, students’ presentations on case studies, and in-class labs. Guest lecturers will be occasionally invited to contribute to the course with their first-hand experience, to explain how institutions connect with citizens. In-class workshops, ‘ted’ presentations, and labs are tools used to engage students on practical activities, like organizing a Ted, drafting a report, making a presentation, and writing a project.</p>
Learning outcomes	<p>Knowledge and understanding: Students will acquire a deep understanding of the scholarly discourse and debates surrounding the methodologies and strategies of (democratic) policy design, with a special focus on studies on co-creation and co-design as novel approaches to public sector innovation. Students will understand the role of innovation and creative thinking in formulating policies with democratic potential.</p> <p>Applying knowledge and understanding: Students will work in groups of 3 or 4 people to draft a project or policy initiative, they will gain hands-on experience in assessing the impact of policies. The class will simulate the application to European calls like CERV or Creative Europe, to foster citizen engagement and promote democratic development.</p>

	<p>Making judgments: Students will acquire specific abilities as to the ideational step in devising democratic policies. They will appreciate ideas, contexts, and policy measures on their imagined potential for democratic development.</p> <p>Communication skills By critically engaging with diverse theoretical perspectives and real-world policy initiatives, students will strengthen their ability to make informed and reflective judgments about the design and implications of public policies. The course cultivates evaluative skills by encouraging students to assess how democratic values, institutional design, and ideational dynamics shape policy outcomes. Through analysis of case studies, dialogue with practitioners, and exploration of participatory processes, students will learn to weigh normative considerations, competing interests, and contextual constraints, developing a more nuanced and ethically grounded approach to policymaking.</p> <p>Learning skills Students will develop the ability to identify thematic connections and establish relationships between various cases and analytical contexts. They will learn to systematically categorize new problems and create appropriate taxonomies, enhancing their analytical capabilities in policy design, democracy, and citizen engagement within political processes.</p>
Assessment	<p>For Attending Students Students can earn between 1 to 4 additional points by engaging in group-work.</p> <p>For Attending and Non-Attending Students The final exam consists of 22 MC questions (1 point each) plus a short (maximum 350 words) essay (maximum 10 points).</p>
Assessment language	English – B1 level in English is required to do the exam
Evaluation criteria and criteria for awarding marks	Specific instructions on the composition of the grade and the grading strategy will be uploaded in the Teams' course folder on week 3.
Required readings	<p>Bason, C. (2014). <i>Design for Policy</i> (London: Routledge)</p> <p>Béland, D., & Cox, R. H. (2011). <i>Ideas and politics in social science research</i> (New York, NY: Oxford University Press)</p>

Vlassis, A. (2019). "The international politics of the nexus 'culture and development': four policy agendas for whom and for what?" *The Routledge Handbook of Global Cultural Policy*, pp. 417-429

Ansell, C. & Torfing, J. (2014). *Public Innovation through Collaboration and Design* (London: Routledge)

Cardullo, P. (2022). *Citizens in the 'Smart City': Participation, Co-production, Governance* (London: Routledge)

Huttunen, S., Ojanen, M., Ott, A., Saarikoski, H. (2022). "What about citizens? A literature review of citizen engagement in sustainability transitions research". *Energy Research & Social Science*