

PIA3241: POLICY PROCESSES AND INSTITUTIONS

Effective Term

Semester A 2025/26

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

Policy Processes and Institutions

Subject Code

PIA - Public and International Affairs

Course Number

3241

Academic Unit

Public and International Affairs (PIA)

College/School

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

Course Duration

One Semester

Credit Units

3

Level

B1, B2, B3, B4 - Bachelor's Degree

Medium of Instruction

English

Medium of Assessment

English

Prerequisites

Nil

Precursors

Nil

Equivalent Courses

SA/POL3202 Policy Models and Processes; SA/POL 3241 Approaches in Policy Making and Analysis / POL3241 Policy Processes and Institutions

Exclusive Courses

Nil

Part II Course Details

Abstract

This course aims to develop students' knowledge of different approaches in policy making and reflect critically the significance of policy analysis. To do so, students will be asked to identify and re-examine the different elements, approaches and models in policy making and policy analysis, to debate selected contemporary public and social policies in Hong Kong from critical and analytical perspectives, and to generate ideas for innovative solutions. Upon completion of the course, students are expected to have gained a good intellectual foundation for more specialized courses in policy, administration and management.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs		Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Distinguish and understand major theories related to the policy cycle.			x	x
2	Identify the key stakeholders: individuals, groups, parties and coalitions involved in public and social policy making process, and explain how they influence policymaking		x	x	x
3	Given a prescribed scenario, describe how policies are formulated and analyse the effectiveness of policy instrument design		x	x	x
4	Given a prescribed scenario, describe how policies fail at the implementation stage and identify strategies for effective implementation			x	
5	Given a prescribed scenario, describe how policies can be evaluated and the pitfalls associated with the evaluation process.		x	x	

A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

LTAs		Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	Lecture	Students will acquire knowledge of key concepts and theoretical knowledge to analyse empirical cases. To achieve effective learning, students should read the required readings before lectures	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	
2	Presentation	To evaluate students' understanding of relevant concepts and theories of policy making; application of knowledge to a selected policy; and their communication skills.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	
3	Term paper	to engage with theories and concepts and analyse a specific public policy in Hong Kong.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	
4	In-class test	to apply theories and approaches in policymaking.	2, 3, 4, 5	
5	Discussion	to comment on the presentation and discuss the subject matter from alternative perspectives.	2, 3, 4, 5	

Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

ATs		CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("- for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	In-class test	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	30	To equip students with the ability to identify and apply theories and approaches in the policy process.	No
2	Presentation	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	20	To evaluate students' understanding of relevant concepts and theories of policy making; as well as application of knowledge to a selected policy; and their communication skills.	Yes

3	Term paper	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	40	Students should be able to make critical assessment of an empirical public policy by apply knowledge of the policy making process. Also, students should be able to analysis how changes in internal and external policy environment may impact on the policy making process.	No
4	Participation	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	10	Students should make contributions to discussion by drawing upon concepts and theories related to the policy making processes	Yes

Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Examination (%)

0

Assessment Rubrics (AR)**Assessment Task**

1. In-class tests

Criterion

Student' s ability to apply theories and concepts to a particular public policy effectively.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Effectively apply relevant concepts to a selected policy case; Empirical examples are consciously employed to illustrate the concepts in the assignment.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Apply some of the relevant concepts to a selected policy case; Empirical materials are rich but some information is less significant to the assignment.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Barely apply relevant concepts to a selected policy case; The assignment is overwhelmed by empirical cases.

Marginal (D)

An inadequate understanding of concepts in the course; unable to apply concepts to a selected policy case; Inadequate understanding of the selected policy case.

Failure (F)

No application of concepts to a selected policy case; Poor understanding of the selected policy case.

Assessment Task

2. Presentation

Criterion

Student' s understanding of relevant concepts and theories of policy making; and one' s analysis, synthesis and application of knowledge in a policy issue; Student' s communication skills

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Demonstrates a good understanding of theories and concepts; comprehensively apply knowledge to a selected policy;An excellent research on the selected policy;Ideas are clearly presented; Able to offer thoughtful answers to questions.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Demonstrates a good understanding of theories and concepts; apply some of the knowledge to a selected policy;A good research on the selected policy; Ideas are clearly articulated most of the time, but lack of clarity at some points;Able to offer good answers to some of the questions.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Demonstrates some understanding of theories and concepts; barely apply relevant knowledge to a selected policy;A fair research on the selected policy;Meaning is clear most of the time, with some difficulty in articulating ideas;Unable to offer answers to some of the questions

Marginal (D)

Demonstrates limited understanding of theories and concepts; Fail to apply most of the relevant knowledge to a selected case;An inadequate research on the selected policy;Meaning is clear some of the time, with difficulty in articulating ideas.Unable to offer answers to most of the questions

Failure (F)

Demonstrates significantly incomplete understanding of theories and concepts; No application of knowledge in a policy issue;Poor research on the selected policy;Meaning is rarely clear, with serious difficulty in articulating ideas.Unable to understand questions raised.

Assessment Task

3. Term paper

Criterion

Student' s understanding of relevant concepts and theories of policy making; and their analysis, synthesis and application of knowledge; Structure and organization of the paper

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Demonstrates comprehensive understanding of theories and concepts; consistent application of knowledge in a policy issue;Thoughtful policy recommendations are offered; Arguments are well-structured and supported by relevant concepts as well empirical examples. The writing is clear with proper citations.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Demonstrates good understanding of theories and concepts; frequent application of knowledge in a policy issue; Some useful policy recommendations are offered; Arguments are mostly well-structured and supported by some relevant concepts and empirical examples. The writing is mostly clear with proper citations.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Demonstrates some understanding of theories and concepts; occasional application of knowledge in a policy issue; Policy recommendations may not be prudent; Arguments are not well-structured, and lack support by relevant concepts and empirical examples. The writing does not flow and occasionally lacks proper citations.

Marginal (D)

Demonstrates limited understanding of theories and concepts; inadequate application of knowledge in a policy issue; No policy recommendation is offered; Arguments are unclear with little application of concepts and examples. The writing does not flow and lacks proper citations.

Failure (F)

Demonstrates significantly incomplete understanding of theories and concepts; no application of knowledge in a policy issue; Arguments are unclear with almost no application of concepts and examples. The writing does not flow and lacks proper citations

Assessment Task

4. Participation

Criterion

To make contributions to tutorial discussion by drawing upon concepts and theories related to the policy making processes

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Demonstrate full engagement in academic discussion during lectures and tutorials;

Good (B+, B, B-)

Demonstrate active engagement in academic discussion during lectures and tutorials;

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Demonstrate some engagement in academic discussion during lectures and tutorials;

Marginal (D)

Demonstrate limited engagement in academic discussion during lectures and tutorials;

Failure (F)

Demonstrate no engagement in academic discussion during lectures and tutorials;

Part III Other Information

Keyword Syllabus

Approaches in Policy making. agenda setting, Simon's bounded rationality, Lindblom's Incrementalism. Issue-Attention cycle. Policy Formulation. NATO framework. Policy instruments. Policy actors. Policy subsystems. Advocacy coalition framework. Networks and policy communities. Rational choice theory. Implementation, policy evaluation, administrative evaluation, judicial evaluation.

Reading List

Compulsory Readings

Title	
1	Knill, Christoph, and Jale Tosun. 2020. Public Policy: A New Introduction (2nd ed). London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
2	Birkland, Thomas A. 2016. An Introduction to the Policy Process: Theories, Concepts, and Models of Public Policy Making. 4th ed. New York: Routledge.

3	Cairney, Paul. (2019). Understanding Public Policy: Theories and Issues (2nd ed), London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
4	Scott, Ian. (2010). The Public Sector in Hong Kong. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Additional Readings

Title	
1	Anderson, J.E. (2003) Public Policy Making: An Introduction, Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
2	Bardach, Eugene (2000) A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis, New York: Chatham House.
3	Burns, John (2003), "The Policy Process in the HKSAR", in Nakamura, A., ed, Comparative Studies of Public Administration VIII, Eropa Local Government, Tokyo, pp.53-78.
4	Cohen, Michael et. al. (1972) 'A Garbage Can Model of Organisational Choice', Administration Science Quarterly, Vol.17 (1): 1-25.
5	Dunn, William (2004) Public Policy Analysis: An Introduction, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
6	Hill, Michael (2005) The Public Policy Process, 4th edition, Essex: Pearson Education.
7	Hogwood, Brian W. and Gunn, Lewis A. (1984) Policy Analysis for the Real World, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
8	Kingdon, John (1995) Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies, 2nd edition, Longman, NY, Ch. 5 and Ch.9.
9	Morse, Kristin and Struyk, Raymond J. (2006) Policy Analysis for Effective Development: Strengthening Transition Economies, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc.
10	Patton, Carl V. and Sawicki, David S. (1993) Basic Methods of Policy Analysis and Planning, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
11	Spicker, P. (1995) Social Policy: Themes and Approaches, Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall.
12	Weimer, D.L. and Vining, A.R. (2017). Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice, 6th edition, New York, NY : Routledge, 2017.