

SOC478H1S
Social Context of Public Policy
University of Toronto
Class hours: Tuesdays 14:00 — 16:00
Location: FE 41

Instructor: Sébastien Parker

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Office Hours: By appointment using Quercus Calendar

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Statement of Acknowledgement

We acknowledge this sacred land on which the University of Toronto operates. It has been a site of human activity for 15,000 years. This land is the territory of the Huron Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. The territory was the subject of the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and Confederacy of the Ojibwe and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. Today, the meeting place of Toronto is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in the community, on this territory. [*Council of Aboriginal Initiatives, 2014*]

Course Description

This course explores how policy processes and frameworks need to be evaluated in light of the social context in which they are developed. Factors to be considered include the interplay between public values and expectations and public policy; the implications of cultural diversity and demographic change, and understandings of ethical principles of conduct in public organizations. A related goal is to help students learn how to use empirical research to answer highly contested issues in policy circles and in public life. These objectives are pursued by introducing students to major trends in inequality in Canada, assessing these trends within a comparative context, reflecting on their normative implications, and examining alternative policy responses to these developments. Restricted to 4th-year sociology majors and specialists.

Prerequisites:

1.0 SOC FCE at the 300+ level

Evaluation Components

Type	Due Dates	Weight
Participation	Ongoing	30%
Reflection pieces	Ongoing	40%
Research paper	April 5	30%

Grading Descriptions

(1) Active ongoing participation (30%):

Throughout the term, students are expected to remain actively engaged. Every week, there will be guiding questions for the readings. Students are expected to prepare assigned readings with the questions in mind to share their perspective and insight during the classroom discussions. Students will do especially well if they sustain active engagement throughout the term. Favorable marking will also be attributed to students who seek to engage with their peers and favor a positive classroom experience.

(2) Reflection pieces (4 x 10%):

Four times during the term, students will write reflection pieces. The goal, in 1½ to 2 typed, single-spaced pages, is to showcase meaningful engagement with specific aspects of the week's readings in a concise and creative fashion (e.g., by drawing connections across readings, adjudicate, or reconcile perspectives when prompted). Reflection pieces must engage with at least two readings and must be submitted before the seminar or else they will not be accepted.

(3) Research paper (30%)

The final requirement is a paper of 6 to 10 pages not including references, 12-point font, single-spaced. The topic must first be cleared with the instructor.

General Policies

Handing in assignments

All assignments must be submitted electronically via Quercus.

Deadlines

The assignments are due online via Quercus. Please refer to the Due Dates stated on page 1 of the Syllabus and the Course Schedule.

Accessibility

If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility> as soon as possible.

Student Responsibilities and Expectations

Email Policy

I will respond to your email within two business days (48 hours, except weekends and holidays). In an email exchanges, you must use your official University of Toronto email. Please also include the course code (SOC478) in the subject line and your full name and student number in your message. Please do not send a repeat email (e.g., "did you get my email?").

In general, please treat emails as you would any other professional communication. You should be respectful in the way you address the instructor. Email is most suitable for questions that are clear, concise, and easily answerable. If you need help on course material, I strongly encourage you to attend office hours or make an appointment. For all general inquiries, please refer to the course syllabus.

Grade Appeals

The instructor and teaching assistants do their best to mark work fairly, consistently, and accurately. Nevertheless, one of us may unintentionally err in our marking duties. For basic mathematical errors, simply alert the TA of the error. In the case of more substantive appeals, you must wait at least 24 hours after receiving your mark. If you wish to appeal, please submit a thorough written explanation to your Instructor of why you think your mark should be altered. If your appeal is deemed appropriate, the entirety of your test/assignment will be re-graded. Please note that upon re-grade your mark may go down, stay the same, or go up. You have 7 days after receiving a mark to appeal it.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is fundamental to learning and scholarship at the University of Toronto. Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community ensures that the U of T degree that you earn will be valued as a true indication of your individual academic achievement and will continue to receive the respect and recognition it deserves.

Familiarize yourself with the University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>). It is the rule book for academic behaviour at the U of T, and you are expected to know the rules.

The University of Toronto treats cases of academic misconduct very seriously. All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following the procedures outlined in the Code. The consequences for academic misconduct can be severe, including a failure in the course and a notation on your transcript. If you have any questions about what is or is not permitted in this course, please do not hesitate to contact me. If you have questions about appropriate research and citation methods, seek out additional information from me, or from other available campus resources like the [U of T Writing Website](#). If you are experiencing personal challenges that are having an impact on your academic work, please speak to me or seek the advice of your college registrar.

Course Schedule

Required readings

All course readings are accessible electronically. Unless otherwise noted, course readings will be uploaded on Quercus. Please refer to the proper week in the Modules tab.

Week 1 (January 11)*Course overview & introduction*

Readings:

Prasad, M., 2018. Problem-solving sociology. *Contemporary Sociology*, 47(4), pp.393-398.

Week 2 (January 18)*Culture, institutions, and the emergence of economic discourses*

Readings:

Prasad, M., 2005. Why is France so French? Culture, institutions, and neoliberalism, 1974–1981. *American Journal of Sociology*, 111(2), pp.357-407.

Fourcade, M., 2009. *Economists and Societies: Discipline and Profession in the United States, Britain, and France, 1890s to 1990s*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press [selection].

Somers, M. and Block, F., 2005. From poverty to perversity: Ideas, markets, and institutions over 200 years of welfare debate. *American Sociological Review*, 70(2), pp.260-287.

[optional*] *Read:* DiPrete, T.A., 2007. What has sociology to contribute to the study of inequality trends? A historical and comparative perspective. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 50(5), pp.603-618.

Week 3 (January 25)*Varieties of welfare regimes*

Readings:

Thelen, K., 2014. *Varieties of Liberalization and the New Politics of Social Solidarity*. New York, Cambridge University Press [selection].

Wilensky, H. L. 2002. *Rich Democracies, Political Economy, Public Policy, and Performance*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press [selection].

Chauvel, L. and Schröder, M., 2014. Generational inequalities and welfare regimes. *Social Forces*, 92(4), pp.1259-1283.

[optional*] *Consult:* <https://www.policyimpacts.org/>

Week 4 (February 1)*Welfare policy preferences, persistence, and retrenchment*

Readings:

Brooks, C. and Manza, J., 2008. *Why welfare states persist: The importance of public opinion in democracies*. University of Chicago Press [selection].

Hacker, J.S., 2004. Privatizing risk without privatizing the welfare state: The hidden politics of social policy retrenchment in the United States. *American Political Science Review*, 98(2), pp.243-260.

Margalit, Y., 2013. Explaining social policy preferences: Evidence from the Great Recession. *American Political Science Review*, 107(1), pp.80-103.

[optional]. *Look into:* <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/introducing-evidence-based-policymaking-collaborative>

Week 5 (February 8)

Welfare policy outcomes, effects, and paradoxes

Readings:

Eger, M.A., 2010. Even in Sweden: the effect of immigration on support for welfare state spending. *European Sociological Review*, 26(2), pp.203-217.

Vlandas, T. and Halikiopoulou, D., 2019. Does unemployment matter? Economic insecurity, labour market policies and the far-right vote in Europe. *European Political Science*, 18(3), pp.421-438.

Brady, David, and Amie Bostic. "Paradoxes of social policy: Welfare transfers, relative poverty, and redistribution preferences." *American Sociological Review* 80, no. 2 (2015): 268-298.

[optional] *Look into:*

<https://www.nccmt.ca/uploads/media/media/0001/01/c3374b8be4b35e1340385f1b593d3bb9f50f6a38.pdf>

Week 6 (February 15)

Global-national civil society for policy reforms

Readings:

Hafner-Burton, E.M. and Tsutsui, K., 2005. Human rights in a globalizing world: The paradox of empty promises. *American Journal of Sociology*, 110(5), pp.1373-1411.

Longhofer, W., Schofer, E., Miric, N. and Frank, D.J., 2016. NGOs, INGOs, and environmental policy reform, 1970–2010. *Social Forces*, 94(4), pp.1743-1768.

Htun, M. and Weldon, L., 2012. The civic origins of progressive policy change: Combating violence against women in global perspective, 1975–2005. *American Political Science Review*, 106(3), pp.548-569.

[optional]. *Look into:* <https://www.effectivealtruism.org/articles/introduction-to-effective-altruism/>

Week 7 (February 22)

Reading Week

Week 8 (March 1)*National & subnational contexts of policies*

Readings:

Campbell, J.L. and Pedersen, O.K., 2014. *The national origins of policy ideas*. Princeton University Press [selection]

Baumgartner, F., and Jones, B. 2015. *The Politics of Information: Problem Definition and the Course of Public Policy in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press [selection].

Niedzwiecki, S., 2018. *Uneven social policies: The politics of subnational variation in Latin America*. Cambridge University Press [selection].

[optional]. *Listen to:* Welsh, J. on the ‘Return of History’ here: <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/the-2016-cbc-massey-lectures-the-return-of-history-1.3695531>

Week 9 (March 8)*Policy diffusion – global and local*

Readings:

Velasco, K., 2018. Human rights INGOs, LGBT INGOs, and LGBT policy diffusion, 1991–2015. *Social Forces*, 97(1), pp.377-404.

Simmons, B.A. and Elkins, Z., 2004. The globalization of liberalization: Policy diffusion in the international political economy. *American Political Science Review*, 98(1), pp.171-189.

Dokshin, F., 2016. Whose backyard and what’s at issue? Spatial and ideological dynamics of local opposition to fracking in New York State, 2010 to 2013. *American Sociological Review*, 81(5), pp.921-948.

[optional]. *Read:* Jordan, A. and Huitema, D., 2014. Innovations in climate policy: the politics of invention, diffusion and evaluation. *Environmental Politics*, 23 (5).

Week 10 (March 15)*Perspectives on the influence of advocacy, public opinion, and social movements*

Readings:

Burstein, P., 2014. *American public opinion, advocacy, and policy in congress: What the public wants and what it gets*. Cambridge University Press [selection].

Amenta, E., Caren, N. and Olasky, S.J., 2005. Age for leisure? Political mediation and the impact of the pension movement on US old-age policy. *American Sociological Review*, 70(3), pp. 516-538.

Stokes, L.C., 2020. *Short circuiting policy: Interest groups and the battle over clean energy and climate policy in the American States*. Oxford University Press, USA [selection].

Steil, J.P. and Vasi, I.B., 2014. The new immigration contestation: Social movements and local immigration policy making in the United States, 2000–2011. *American Journal of Sociology*, 119(4), pp.1104-1155.

[optional]. *Listen to:* <https://www.listennotes.com/podcasts/the-ezra-klein-show/were-on-the-precipice-of-a-my7jto4GQPd/>

Week 11 (March 22)

Deliberative and participative policy implementations

Readings:

Fournier, P., Van Der Kolk, H., Carty, R.K., Blais, A. and Rose, J., 2011. *When citizens decide: Lessons from citizen assemblies on electoral reform*. Oxford University Press [selection].

Fishkin, J., Siu, A., Diamond, L. and Bradburn, N., 2021. Is Deliberation an Antidote to Extreme Partisan Polarization? Reflections on “America in One Room”. *American Political Science Review*, 115(4), pp.1464-1481.

Hennen, L., Van Keulen, I., Korthagen, I., Aichholzer, G., Lindner, R. and Nielsen, R.Ø., 2020. *European e-democracy in practice*. Springer Nature Open [selection].

Sintomer, Y., Röcke, A. and Herzberg, C., 2016. *Participatory Budgeting in Europe: Democracy and public governance*. Routledge [selection].

[optional]. *Listen to:* <https://conversationswithtyler.com/episodes/audrey-tang/>

[optional]. *Read:* Fung, A., 2006. Varieties of participation in complex governance. *Public administration review*, 66, pp.66-75.

Week 12 (March 29)

The good, bad, and ugly of Big Data relative to predictions, evaluations, and decision-making

Readings:

Eubanks, V., 2018. *Automating inequality: How high-tech tools profile, police, and punish the poor*. St. Martin's Press.

Höchtel, J., Parycek, P. and Schöllhammer, R., 2016. Big data in the policy cycle: Policy decision making in the digital era. *Journal of Organizational Computing and Electronic Commerce*, 26(1-2), pp.147-169.

Blumenstock, J., Cadamuro, G. and On, R., 2015. Predicting poverty and wealth from mobile phone metadata. *Science*, 350(6264), pp.1073-1076.

[optional]. *Consult:* <https://civicdatadesignlab.mit.edu>

[optional]. *Listen to:* <https://www.carasantamaria.com/podcast/julia-lane>

[optional]. Read: <https://citizenlab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/IHRP-Automated-Systems-Report-Web-V2.pdf>

[optional]. Read: <https://hdr.mitpress.mit.edu/pub/56lnenzj/release/1>

Week 13 (April 5)

Wrap-up, summative reflections, and discussion of final research paper