

Vesalius College

Course description

Course title: Comparative Public Policy

Course code: POL 361E

Teacher responsible: M. Th. JANS

Course description:

Introduces theoretical approaches to public policy analysis and presents contributions from pluralism, public choice, welfare economics, new institutionalism, governance, class analysis and rational choice perspectives, to public policy analysis. Focuses on different stages of the policy cycle (agenda setting, policy formulation, decision making, implementation and evaluation) as well as on policy failure and success. Examines the design, management and implementation of large public policy projects. Provides comparative analysis of project failures and successes to give an integrated and applied view on public policy that builds on the preceding theoretical sections.

Course objectives:

At the end of the course module students should have acquired the following skills and knowledge:

- Ability to present the main features of approaches to policy analysis (public choice, welfare economics, pluralism, corporatism, transaction economics, statism, marxist approaches, new institutionalism, multilevel governance)
- Knowledge of actors and institutions relevant for public policy analysis
- Understanding and capacity to analyze the main stages of the policy cycle (agenda-setting, policy formulation, decision-making, implementation, evaluation, policy termination)
- Ability to identify the main theories and concepts related to each phase of the policy process (multiple streams, rational techniques, incrementalism, irrational approaches, policy communities, networks, bottom-up and bottom up approaches, etc.)
- Knowledge of approaches that are not directly related to the policy cycle (network analysis, advocacy coalition framework, punctuated equilibrium theory)
- Capacity to apply the theoretical concepts and insights to a policy change or policy innovation (final paper)

Grade weighting scheme:

(1) midterm = 20% (2) final exam = 30% (3) oral presentation of research proposal and of final paper = 20% (4) final paper = 30 %

Used course material (handbooks, readers, readings, newspapers, magazines) and references:

The course materials consist of (1) PowerPoint presentations of the lectures (2) a textbook: Howlett, M., Ramesh, M. (2003) *Studying public policy. Policy cycles and policy subsystems*. Oxford & Ontario: Oxford University Press, second edition.