

Issues in Social Policy

Psyc*6270 – Winter 2012

Lecture times: Wednesday, 8:30am-11:20am

Lecture venue: MACK304

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Course Overview

This doctoral course examines historical developments and selected contemporary policy domains in Canada. Topics may include policies affecting children, families, the elderly, First Nations people, the mentally and physically disabled, and one parent families. The course also addresses the interplay between social and psychological research and policy formation, as well as the use of social policy as an instrument of social change.

This year, the course will focus on processes of public engagement as a mechanism for policy input. We will use a topic as a focal point for collective readings and discussion. The common topic for this year’s course will be the social and ethical implications of New Born screening, and the use of New Born Bloodspots for biomedical research. Students may choose to use either the common topic to develop their own ideas or another topic that is related to their own research. In addition to examining the use of public participation more generally, the course will cover analysis of the chosen topic for issues requiring policy interventions; identification of aspects of the topic that might warrant public input; clarification of empirical versus normative analyses that might be conducted on the topic; preparation for a hypothetical public deliberation event on the topic.

Course Content and Objectives

There is increasing emphasis on involving publics in meaningful ways in many areas of policy. One promising mechanism to emerge in this regard is public deliberation. This course will focus on the theory and practice of public deliberation as a way of developing and documenting policy input from an informed lay (i.e., non-expert) public.

Specific objectives and skills to be developed include:

- Distinguishing between normative and empirical modes of argument
- Understanding of different types of public engagement
- Introductory understanding of deliberative theory
- Ability to analyse social issues for appropriate avenues of public input
- Theoretical understanding of how to implement public deliberation
- Ability to analyse social issues relative to current policy frameworks
- Ability to analyse modes of accountability for the implementation of public input in policy
- Ability to evaluate process and outcomes of public deliberation.

Assessment

There will be three main components for assessment:

1) *Class participation – 20%*

Based on ability to engage in discussion; quality of preparation of readings.

2) *2 Oral presentations – 2* 20% for total of 40%*

Content of presentation to be based on readings discussed in class and student's formative ideas to be developed further in written paper.

3) *Major written paper – 40%*

Content and due date for paper to be negotiated between instructor and student during class.

Written Paper Guidelines

- The purpose of the assignment is for you to develop skills in blending normative arguments relevant to policy with empirical work in the context of public engagement
- Choose a suitable title for your assignment that reflects the issues you are addressing and is within the scope of the topic
- The paper must include a meaningful engagement with relevant literature on the subject; ensure that you provide a solid overview of relevant studies and/or theory on your chosen topic
- Please use 1.5 or double spacing and 12-point font

- Use page numbers, reasonable margins, and don't forget to include your name and student number
- Citations and references should follow the APA guidelines
- The assignment must be original
- AVOID PLAGIARISM – this means that all ideas you use in your paper that come from your readings need to be cited; where quotes are used, make sure you give page numbers; distinguish clearly between your own thinking and arguments, and what you have read somewhere else and are using for your paper; READ the university guidelines regarding academic integrity here: <http://www.academicintegrity.uoguelph.ca/>
- Please submit a **hard-copy and an electronic version** of the assignment

General

Please familiarize yourself with the student responsibilities for the Department of Psychology. You can read them here: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/psychology/page.cfm?id=745>.