

COMPARATIVE PUBLIC POLICY

POLS*3670

Fall 2026

University of Guelph

Professor Carmen Jacqueline Ho

Time: T/Th 5:30 PM - 6:50 PM

Class Location: RICH 2529

TA: To be confirmed

The course assessments and due dates may change

The official syllabus will be available on Courselink on the first day of class

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Public policies shape our lives in countless ways. They affect the quality of healthcare we receive, the food available in our grocery store, the education we have access to, and the environment in which we live, amongst other things. This course explores the *political factors* that influence these public policies. Political factors – grouped broadly under the heading of interests, institutions, ideas, and international factors – can help us understand the nature and characteristics of the different public policies that impact our lives. For the everyday person, understanding the politics of policymaking will help in making sense of the world in which we live. For policy professionals, this course will provide the analytical tools needed to navigate the complicated set of politics that can facilitate, or frustrate, various policy agendas.

The course begins by covering the theoretical building blocks. It introduces students to the policymaking process, and we discuss what public policies are and why they matter. We then examine how issues emerge, agendas get set, and policies developed, implemented, and evaluated in the “stages” of the policymaking process. Following this, we transition into a discussion of the politics of policymaking, exploring how domestic factors shape the policymaking process and public policies. These factors, often called the “3is,” refer to interests, institutions, and ideas. In addition, we examine the influence of international factors on the domestic policymaking process and public policies. The course focuses on social policies and the welfare state to illustrate key arguments.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, students will be able to do the following:

- Describe the policymaking process (agenda setting, policy formulation, decision-making, policy implementation)
- Explain how political factors (interests, institutions, and ideas) shape public policies
- Explain how international factors influence public policies
- Conduct basic policy analysis and explain what factors shaped a public policy and how

COURSE ASSESSMENTS

Assignment	Weight	Submission	Due Date
Test I - short answer/essay	15%	In class	To be announced
Test II - multiple choice	20%	In class	To be announced
Presentation	30%	Courselink Dropbox and Discussion Board	To be announced
Test III - multiple choice	35%	In class	To be announced