Comparative Public Policy

The course introduces students to debates in public policy and then examines the changing nature public policy provision in a number of policy areas: Civil service reform, education, welfare, the environment, food safety and financial regulation. In general terms the case studies draw on experience from the anglo-saxon public policy world (Ireland, the UK, New Zealand and Australia). The course seeks to explore the rise of state intervention in the post war period under the aegis of the Keynesian welfare state and attempts at reform thereafter that have been informed by the ideas of the New Right.

The first section of the course introduces students to debates about the nature of state intervention and the role of pressure groups in the formation of policy. The aim of this section is familiarise students with competing views of the role of the state and pressure groups in the policy making process (pluralism, the New Right, Marxism etc). Students are expected to complete a mid term MCQ exam and a final exam (2hrs).

The second section of the course explores the rise of public service provision (and regulation) and the challenge presented to that form of provision from advocates of the free market (New right). The topics covered include Civil service, public and private partnerships, education, unemployment and welfare, environmental and food regulation. Students will be expected to answer two short questions (30mins) in the exam on this section.

The final section examines current debates about risk and regulation in the areas of the environment, food safety, blood financial regulation. Students are expected to answer one exam question from this section (one hour).

Learning Outcomes:

Identify and explain key terms in the field of public policy and distinguish between different theoretical approaches.

Construct arguments in the respective public policy areas using theoretical and conceptual frameworks

Analyse trends identified in public policy fields across the individual countries/policy fields examined in the course.

Assess the arguments and evidence surrounding current controversies in public policy.
Two Core Texts:


Pluralism


The New Right


Fordism and Post Fordism


Marxist state theory.
Sassoon, Anne Showstack (1987). Gramsci's politics. Minneapolis:University of

Civil Service Reform: Globalisation, “Hollowing out of the State”, public and private partnerships


Education


Unemployment and the Welfare State

Environmental Policy:


Food Safety:


Risk and Public policy: Food, environment, blood and Financial regulation


Food:


Environment:


Risk and Blood: AIDS Haemophilia and Hep C


¹ After a prolonged political struggle New Labour acquiesced finally to demands for an Inquiry. However, it was not statutory, lacking power to compel anyone to give evidence. The Department of Health declined to provide witnesses, though it did supply documentation, because the Inquiry was deemed ‘unnecessary’. Crucial Departmental papers of Lord Owen and Lord Jenkin were destroyed. Lord Jenkin was of the opinion that this had been done ‘with intent, to draw a line under the disaster’ (Archer, 2009, p. 70). Lord Jeffery Archer chaired the Inquiry.
Risk and Financial Regulation