

Syllabus

Course Description

Course Title	Introduction to Public Policy
Course Code	27168
Course Title Additional	
Scientific-Disciplinary Sector	GSPS-02/A
Language	English
Degree Course	Bachelor in Economics, Politics and Ethics
Other Degree Courses (Loaned)	
Lecturers	dr. Benedetta Carlotti, Benedetta.Carlotti@unibz.it https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/economics-management/academic-staff/person/45699
Teaching Assistant	
Semester	First semester
Course Year/s	2
CP	6
Teaching Hours	36
Lab Hours	-
Individual Study Hours	-
Planned Office Hours	18
Contents Summary	The course explores how policies are shaped, implemented, and evaluated across different contexts. Students will engage with key theories of the policy process and apply them through hands-on experiences, including fieldwork and collaboration with local stakeholders. The course emphasizes critical thinking and equips students with tools to analyze decision-making dynamics and evaluate public policies. Through interactive lectures and practical exercises, students gain a comprehensive understanding of the actors, institutions, and mechanisms that drive policy-making.
Course Topics	This course is offered as "free choice" within the BA in Economics,

	Politics, and Ethics (EPE) and falls within the disciplinary field of Political Science. It examines public policy processes involving a wide range of actors, including policymakers, grassroots movements, and civil society organizations. In addition to providing an overview of the main theoretical approaches and their application to the study of policy processes, the course offers an applied learning component. Students will engage in policy evaluation activities and interact directly with local stakeholders, such as policymakers, practitioners, and representatives of civil society organizations. Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to: • Demonstrate a solid understanding of the main theoretical approaches to the study of public policy processes • Apply these theories to analyze how policy decisions are made and how policies take shape in practice • Understand the key stages of the policy-making process, from agenda-setting and formulation to implementation • Identify the role of political actors and organized interests in shaping policy outcomes • Recognize how institutional contexts enable and constrain the policy-making process • Critically analyze public policies • Apply qualitative methods of policy evaluation, such as interviews, participant observation, and focus groups. The course equips students with the analytical tools necessary to understand policy-making at the local, national, and international levels. It is structured around three main components: 1. The study of public policy and its context: this section introduces the concept of public policy, the main theoretical approaches, and the role of contextual factors. 2. The emergence of policy: this section examines the key stages of the policy cycle, including problem definition, agenda-setting, the identification and selection of policy alternatives, and implementation. 3. Evaluation, feedback, and change: this section focuses on policy evaluation and processes of policy learning and change. It also provides students with the opportunity to apply theoretical and methodological tools in an empirical setting.
Keywords	public policy, policy-making, field research

Recommended Prerequisites	
Propaedeutic Courses	None
Teaching Format	The course includes lectures, seminars with experts, and active student involvement in policy evaluation tasks based on real local case studies.
Mandatory Attendance	Recommended, but not required
Specific Educational Objectives and Learning Outcomes	ILO (Intended Learning Outcomes) ILO 1 Knowledge and understanding ILO 1.1 political parties, interest groups, movements ILO 2 Ability to apply knowledge and understanding ILO 2.1 ability to understand, analyse and identify political decision-making processes ILO 2.2 ability to analyse a technical text using appropriate theoretical tools ILO 2.3 ability to produce a reasoned text on a political science topic ILO 3 Making judgements ILO 3.1 Acquisition of the capacity for judgement and methodological tools useful for the critical analysis of data, sources, assumptions and implications of scientific practice, and of the political, ethical and legal context within which economic phenomena are set and with which they interact ILO 4 Communication skills ILO 4.1 Proficiency (oral and written) in Italian, German and English, including translation between these languages. Intercultural competence. Conceptual awareness, synthesis and written expression, particularly in the drafting of scientific or science-based documents ILO 5 Learning skills ILO 5.1 Promotion of critical thinking and analytical skills to focus

	on complex problems in their long-term dynamics and the variety of their implications, including ethical ones
Specific Educational Objectives and Learning Outcomes (additional info.)	This course aims to provide students with a solid understanding of decision-making patterns across local, national, and international contexts. It enables students to identify the key drivers of public decisions and to compare how these dynamics vary across different policy environments. The course equips students with the analytical tools necessary to understand and critically assess policy positions and preferences. Throughout the course, students will engage with processes of policy formation and negotiation, gaining insight into the factors that shape and influence these processes. A core objective of the course is to develop students' ability to critically analyze the public policy process and to understand the relationships between policy actors and institutions. Students will also learn to evaluate policy-making dynamics in a structured and critical manner, and to communicate their analyses using appropriate academic and professional language. The course includes engagement with original research articles, enabling students to develop the skills required to read, synthesize, and summarize academic texts effectively. Finally, the course offers a practical, hands-on component in public policy evaluation (see assessment section for further details), allowing students to apply theoretical and methodological knowledge in an empirical context (see Assessment section for further information)
Assessment	Please note that even if course attendance is not mandatory, it will determine different exam modalities. This course defines students upon attendance as follows: - Attending students: all those students who take part in both the class project and the organized class excursion (see below) - Non-attending students: all those students who NEITHER participate in the class project, NOR will take part to the organized excursion This distinction is mirrored in the exam modalities as follows: - Attending students' final evaluation: - 60% course project (ILOs assessed: 2.1; 2.3; 3.1; 4.1; 5.1)

	- 40% written exam (ILOs assessed: 1.1; 2.2; 4.1) - Non-attending students: - 100% written exam (ILOs assessed: 1.1; 2.1; 2.2; 2.3; 3.1; 4.1; 5.1) Further details: - Course project: the course offers students with the possibility to take part to a policy experiment done in collaboration between local stakeholders (policy makers, practitioners and civil society associations). Students who take part to the course project will be expected to: - Participate in an organized local excursion (expenses covered) organized during the regular course timetable - Participate in guest lectures and seminars organized during the regular course timetable - Participate in empirical policy evaluation sessions organized during the regular course timetable - Participate to the realization of a report (written individual contribution expected) to be shared with local stakeholders concerning the obtained results - Written exam (attending students): for all attending students (see above) the written exam is constituted of 2 written questions regarding the aspects treated during the course project and the course itself - Written exam (non-attending students): for non-attending students (see above) the assessment consists of a written exam covering the topics treated during the course. Please note that a list of arguments that will be part of the non-attending exam format will be shared in due time during the lectures. Please note that this exam modality will have the following structure (duration 2hrs): - 20 quick answer questions (0.5 points each) - 4 Analytical questions with a maximum of 8 lines answer (2.5 points each) - 2 Analytical questions with a maximum of 15 lines answer (5 points each)
Evaluation Criteria	The evaluation criteria apply to both attending and non-attending students (please note that non-attending students will be exclusively judged through the written exam) and are to be intended as such:

	- Written exam (both attending and non-attending students): Students will be judged on their ability to recall and apply the content of the readings. Particular attention will be given to the precision and appropriateness of written production, alongside with their ability to reason critically about political concepts (public-policy related) and phenomena. -Course project (only for attending students): Students will be judged on the basis of the following criteria: Methodological preparation: clarity and appropriateness of the research design Data collection and facilitation: ability to manage qualitative data collection respectfully and effectively, including preparation, moderation, note-taking, and adherence to basic ethical principles. Analysis and interpretation: capacity to identify relevant patterns, critically discuss findings, and relate empirical insights to public-policy concepts covered in class. Group collaboration: quality of teamwork, division of tasks, and contribution to the collective project outcome. Written output: clarity, structure, and coherence of the final project report, including appropriate use of course concepts, accurate referencing, and professional presentation.
Required Readings	M. HOWLETT, M. RAMESH, A. PERL, Studying Public Policy, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009.
Supplementary Readings	
Further Information	
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Sustainable cities and communities, Reduced inequalities