SOC 6110: Political Sociology - Social Policy
Autumn 2017
Location: Rm 240
Tuesdays 2:10-4PM

Prof. David Pettinicchio
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Office: Rm 240
Office hours by appointment

Course Description:
This course examines the social and political context of policymaking – that is, how and why policies end up looking the way they do, and their social and political outcomes (whether intended or not). The course situates social policy within key theoretical debates in sociology, especially political sociology. For instance, what is the relationship between individual actors and the institutional contexts within which they work? Does policy change come slowly or does it happen in bursts? How much say does the public and social movements have in the policymaking process? In addition, we will cover numerous case studies embedded throughout the course ranging from disability, to gender, to the environment, to immigration.

Course Objectives:

• Expose graduate students to key theoretical concepts and debates in political sociology.
• Apply these theoretical frameworks to various empirical cases.
• Provide an opportunity for graduate students to develop a research proposal for a future paper/project.
• Prepare graduate students for the social policy comprehensive exam (note that readings including an asterisk are included in past versions of the social policy reading list).

Evaluation:
Graduate students will be evaluated in four ways: their attendance, meaningful contribution, and participation throughout the course, their research proposals (and presentation), and their discussion-leading exercise.

The research proposal (5 double-spaced pages) will outline the objectives of a new project or paper. It must address an existing debate related to political sociology and social policy. Students must articulate a clear research question, situate it in the existing literature, describe a proposed methodology to address the research question, and importantly, discuss the significance of the project (i.e., the “so what?” question).

An outline (2-3 double-spaced pages) of the research question, significance of the question, and brief contextualization of the question, is due earlier in the course so that I can provide feedback before the full proposal is due.
Graduate students will also briefly present their proposals at the end of the course followed by group discussion. This provides an opportunity for peer feedback – comments, suggestions and advice that can be used in moving forward with the project/paper.

Graduate students will also lead discussion on a chosen week. There will be an opportunity to sign-up for the topic of choice. There should be at least 2 discussion leaders per week, although the final number will depend on enrollment. In addition to facilitating discussion, a 2-3 page double-spaced memo analyzing and critiquing the main arguments and debates will be turned in on the discussion leader’s week. Each memo should contain 2-3 discussion questions meant to help facilitate in-class discussion.

Memo: 25%
Final research Proposal: 60%
Participation/Leading Discussion: 15%

The final research proposals are given grades of A, A- or B+, etc. All other activities, including memos, are evaluated on a pass/fail basis.

****All work should be submitted in class (hardcopy) on the due date. Under extenuating circumstances, work can be placed in my department mailbox or sent via email. Please notify me before hand if a circumstance (such as illness for instance) prevents you from submitting work or acting as discussion leader.****

Students should of course be familiar with policies on plagiarism:
http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/facultyandstaff/Pages/Academic-Integrity.aspx

Course Schedule:

*** Note that some readings will be made available on Blackboard. Other readings can be easily accessed online through Google Scholar, JSTOR, etc. ***

**Week 1 Introduction – What is Social Policy? (Sept. 12)**

Titumus, Richard. 1974. What is Social Policy?


**Week 2 Theoretical Framework I: The Macro Level (Sept. 19)**


**Week 3 Theoretical Framework II: Micro-Level Considerations (Sept. 26)**


**Week 4 The Welfare State (Oct. 3) ***Outline of Proposal Due.***


**Week 5 Social Inequalities & Exclusion (Oct. 10)**

* Philip Oreopoulos "Why Do Skilled Immigrants Struggle in the Labour Market? A Field Experiment with Sixty Thousand Resumes."

Maroto, Michelle and David Pettinicchio. 2014. Disability, structural inequality, and work: The influence of occupational segregation on earnings for people with different disabilities.”Research in Social Stratification and Mobility. 38:76-92


Week 6 The Politics of Retrenchment & Neoliberalism (Oct. 17)


Week 7 Agenda Setting Processes (Oct. 24) ***Proposal outlines returned with feedback***


Week 8 Do Public Preferences Matter? (Oct. 31)


*****NOV 7 No Class – Reading week.*****

**Week 9 The Role of Social Movements and Political Advocacy (Nov. 14)**


**Week 10 Understanding Policy Outcomes and Policy Feedbacks (Nov. 21)**


**Week 11 Presentations/Discussion (Nov. 28)**

Week 12 (Dec 5) *** Research Proposals due ****