

Understanding Politics and Public Policy

Foundations and Core Concepts

POSC 315: Introduction to Public Policy

Lecture 9-2: Policy Analysis Part 2

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Analyst Roles

Objective Technician:

- Independent, neutral
- Predicts outcomes, avoids advocacy

Client's Advocate:

- Supports client's position
- Strategic use of evidence

Issue Advocate:

- Uses analysis to push societal goals
- Accepts role as political actor

Bardach's Eightfold Path

- Define the problem
- Assemble evidence
- Construct alternatives
- Select criteria
- Project outcomes
- Confront trade-offs
- Decide
- Tell your story

Two Logics of Policy

Economic Rationality (Analysts):

- Transparent assumptions
- Compare alternatives systematically

Political Rationality (Policymakers):

- Incentive-driven
- Selectively emphasize data
- Consider feasibility

Bridging the Logics

- Both views are valid
- Policy isn't purely rational — or irrational
- Political realities matter
- Good analysis blends rigor with context

Why Politics Matters

- Explains “irrational” outcomes
- Informs institutional design
- Prepares analysts to act strategically
- Values and preferences matter in policy

Evolution of the Profession

- More diverse, specialized roles
- Analysts are not neutral technicians
- Engagement and inclusion are emphasized
- Technical skills still essential, but not enough

Let's Try It: Wild Horse Case

The Problem: Wild horse overpopulation on public lands

Goals: Sustainability, ecological health, humane treatment

Alternatives:

- Adoption
- Fertility control
- Habitat expansion

Criteria: Cost, effectiveness, feasibility, animal welfare

Video: Horse Rich and Dirt Poor

Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/q6h242vy'q8>

Reflections on the Case

- Balance values: ecology, economy, ethics
- Mix of strategies may be required
- Must account for stakeholder perspectives
- Evaluation + adaptation are key to success

That's All for Today

Questions? Comments?