



SOC 825

Activism and Policy Design

S2 Evening 2017

Dept of Sociology

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Convenor & Lecturer

Shaun Wilson

shaun.wilson@mq.edu.au

Contact via email responses within 24 hrs

TBA - we have moved offices.

5-6pm Wednesdays or by appt | Class time 6-8pm WEDS | W5A 204

Credit points

4

Prerequisites

Admission to MPASR or GradDipPASR or GradCertPASR or MSocEntre or MPPP or GradDipPP or GradCertPP or MPlan or MGlobalHlthDevStud or MPH or MDevStud

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

This unit examines the broader process of policy development, focusing on how different actors attempt to influence policy development. The unit covers a range of actors, from political parties, Ministers and the bureaucracy to social movements, business lobby groups and community organisations. The unit considers how these groups shape policy making and policy outcomes.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

Understand the dynamics of social and political change and its impact on policy

Understand contemporary theories of the state, political and social power

Develop critical knowledge of the dynamic processes of policy formation and contestation in politics

Develop greater historical, conceptual and empirical knowledge about contemporary social movements and contentious actors

Understand the difference between routine and contentious politics

Develop knowledge of theories of policy making

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due
Hot topic participation	20%	No	During semester
Assignment	25%	No	11 October 2017 11.55PM
Weekly participation	5%	No	Ongoing
Final exam	50%	No	Exam period

Hot topic participation

Due: **During semester**

Weighting: **20%**

Choose a group and participate in a **hot topic discussion** that lasts for up to 45 minutes.

The groups (between 2 and 4 people) will develop a response to one of the hot topic questions. Ideally, preparation will take place outside class-time, in a meeting or via email/phone.

In each of the weeks, the assigned group will need to prepare materials and a strategy for sparking a broader discussion in the class. Formats could include speakers taking 'for' and 'against' positions, or providing some visual stimulus or reading material to generate further debate and discussion. Rather than a straightforward presentation (of 'neutral facts'), I am looking to see how the groups can mix evidence and normative *arguments* so that the issues at stake, as well as the tension points, in these debates can be clearly identified for everyone in class.

To get things started, some material for each topic will be provided on iLearn.

Tasks are:

- (i) a **one-page** written summary of the main features of the debate or discussion with references
- (ii) **your contribution** to a class discussion which might include speaking from notes, encouraging debate and discussion
- (iii) **your ability to respond** to any questions and comments from class members and from the lecturer

Marking guidelines

Items (i) above will be awarded a score out of 10 marks. Items (ii) and (iii) will also be assessed out of a total of 10 marks. The latter mark will be your own individual assessment score.

On successful completion you will be able to:

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- Understand the difference between routine and contentious politics
- Develop knowledge of theories of policy making

Assignment

Due: **11 October 2017 11.55PM**

Weighting: **25%**

This assignment requires you to answer **five questions** on interesting problems confronting activists, social movements and policymakers.

The format is short answer responses of up to 500 words each (total word count = 2,500 words).

Submit via Turnitin on Wednesday October 11 (11.55PM).

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Develop knowledge of theories of policy making

Weekly participation

Due: **Ongoing**

Weighting: **5%**

This unit is run with plenty of time for weekly discussion that requires active participation and engagement. Getting involved in discussions is important to the unit's success and to your mark overall.

You'll also need to attend 80% of classes and will be graded for participation and evidence of preparation for class (completed readings, etc).

So, that would mean around 10 out of the 13 weeks of classes.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Understand the dynamics of social and political change and its impact on policy
- Understand contemporary theories of the state, political and social power
- Develop critical knowledge of the dynamic processes of policy formation and contestation in politics

- Understand the difference between routine and contentious politics
- Develop knowledge of theories of policy making

Final exam

Due: **Exam period**

Weighting: **50%**

A **final 2 hour** exam will ask you to complete 20 multiple choice questions (approx 20 minutes) and 5 short answer questions (approx 20 mins each).

A comprehensive **study guide** for this exam will be provided in either week 12 or 13, depending on the timing of the exam.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Develop knowledge of theories of policy making

Delivery and Resources

As mentioned, the unit will be run as a graduate seminar with an emphasis on discussion and participation. You can expect around 50-70 minutes of discussion and a 30 minute mini-lecture from me that develops the discussion further, covers key concepts and ideas, and asks questions of the group.

The main thing is to keep in touch with the readings. It will make a major difference to your participation and enjoyment of the course. I'll give

advice to busy students about how to manage the readings so that they are easy to keep track of.

Unit Schedule

Week	Topic	Date	Hot topic week
Part 1: Introductory weeks -- exploring the field			
1	Introduction -- background concepts	2 August	
2	What is activism? What are social movements? (Theory I)	9 August	
3	Movement-state interactions: political opportunity structures (Theory II)	16 August	Hot topic: Is there a role for law-breaking civil disobedience in liberal democracies?
Part 2: Patterns of social participation and activism in Australia and the United States			
4	Black lives matter	23 August	Hot topic: Do social movements only produce 'backlash' movements -- or is there progress?
5	Gun violence and firearms policy Assignment available	30 August	

6	Social and political participation: analysis of trends in survey data from Australia and elsewhere	6 September	
7	When unions and environmentalists enter politics: From movements to parties	13 September	Hot topic: Unions - now irrelevant or more important than ever?
<i>mid semester break</i>			
8	Change from within: Femocrats and HIV activists use bureaucratic agency to meet social challenges	4 October	Discussion: waves of feminism -- what's changed?
9	Lobbying for policy change (Note: Assignment due this Weds via Turnitin)	11 October	Hot topic: What are anti-corruption movements and who joins them?
<i>Part 3: Contemporary problems and extensions</i>			
10	Social movements and lethal conflicts	18 October	Hot topic: Is populism destroying our ability to make rational policy? A focus on immigration and climate policies.
11	Advocacy coalitions (Theory III)	25 October	
12	Digital mobilisation	1 November	Hot topic: Is digital activism leading social movements nowhere?
13	Conclusion and course wrap	8 November	Study guide for exam released

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](#). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

Academic Honesty Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html

Assessment Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy_2016.html

Grade Appeal Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/gradeappeal/policy.html>

Complaint Management Procedure for Students and Members of the Public http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/complaint_management/procedure.html

Disruption to Studies Policy (in effect until Dec 4th, 2017): http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html

Special Consideration Policy (in effect from Dec 4th, 2017): <https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policies/special-consideration>

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the [Learning and Teaching Category](#) of Policy Central.

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of

Conduct: https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/

Results

Results shown in *iLearn*, or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in [eStudent](#). For more information visit <ask.mq.edu.au>.

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

Learning Skills

Learning Skills (<mq.edu.au/learningskills>) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module for Students](#)
- [Ask a Learning Adviser](#)

Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at <ask.mq.edu.au>

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Graduate Capabilities

PG - Capable of Professional and Personal Judgment and Initiative

Our postgraduates will demonstrate a high standard of discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgment. They will have the ability to make informed choices and decisions that reflect both the nature of their professional work and their personal perspectives.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcome

- Understand the dynamics of social and political change and its impact on policy

Assessment task

- Weekly participation

PG - Discipline Knowledge and Skills

Our postgraduates will be able to demonstrate a significantly enhanced depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content knowledge in their chosen fields.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Understand contemporary theories of the state, political and social power
- Develop critical knowledge of the dynamic processes of policy formation and contestation in politics
- Develop greater historical, conceptual and empirical knowledge about contemporary social movements and contentious actors
- Understand the difference between routine and contentious politics
- Develop knowledge of theories of policy making

Assessment tasks

- Assignment
- Weekly participation
- Final exam

PG - Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

Our postgraduates will be capable of utilising and reflecting on prior knowledge and experience, of applying higher level critical thinking skills, and of integrating and synthesising learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments. A characteristic of this form of thinking is the generation of new, professionally oriented knowledge through personal or group-based critique of practice and theory.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Understand the dynamics of social and political change and its impact on policy
- Understand contemporary theories of the state, political and social power
- Develop critical knowledge of the dynamic processes of policy formation and contestation in politics

- Understand the difference between routine and contentious politics
- Develop knowledge of theories of policy making

Assessment tasks

- Assignment
- Weekly participation
- Final exam

PG - Research and Problem Solving Capability

Our postgraduates will be capable of systematic enquiry; able to use research skills to create new knowledge that can be applied to real world issues, or contribute to a field of study or practice to enhance society. They will be capable of creative questioning, problem finding and problem solving.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcome

- Understand the dynamics of social and political change and its impact on policy

Assessment task

- Assignment

PG - Effective Communication

Our postgraduates will be able to communicate effectively and convey their views to different social, cultural, and professional audiences. They will be able to use a variety of technologically supported media to communicate with empathy using a range of written, spoken or visual formats.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcome

- Develop greater historical, conceptual and empirical knowledge about contemporary social movements and contentious actors

Assessment tasks

- Hot topic participation
- Weekly participation

PG - Engaged and Responsible, Active and Ethical Citizens

Our postgraduates will be ethically aware and capable of confident transformative action in relation to their professional responsibilities and the wider community. They will have a sense of connectedness with others and country and have a sense of mutual obligation. They will be able to appreciate the impact of their professional roles for social justice and inclusion related to

national and global issues

This graduate capability is supported by:

Assessment tasks

- Assignment
- Weekly participation

More detail on the content of the unit

In democratic societies, we may think of policy-making as a technical process dominated by elite actors such as politicians in parliaments, analysts and bureaucrats, and lobbyists connected to 'big interests' or think-tanks. This view of policy-making is a fair representation of reality for the most part, but it leaves out one other important set of influences—the impact of those 'from below' who make up a variety of social forces and movements that act collectively to pressure for policy change and reform. Political systems produce stable structures through which policy can be produced and influenced through 'routine' channels (parliaments, committees, etc.) Occasionally, policy change involves a level of contention and conflict that forces actors to move beyond routine channels and to engage in the policy process in more activist ways.

Activism at all levels of policy-making thus involves the mobilisation of resources and power of different kinds, not only to promote particular interests but often to engage in paradigmatic and symbolic struggle over the definition, scope and meaning of policy interventions. Policy activism in turns depends on access to power, resources and networks of different kinds. A large business is likely to have access to money, advertising, influential networks, and law in the pursuit of interests whereas a community group attempting to prevent a freeway or mining project is unlikely to have such resources and will draw on collective action, symbolic challenges, access to allies, and public opinion in making its voice heard.

Of course, activist appeals are shaped by the political and policy opportunity structures that will also shape the dynamic field of the contest over policy and also shape the likelihood of success.

This course draws on themes in political sociology, social policy, policy studies, political science and political economy to help account for concepts, debates and unresolved questions about the contestation of policy in democratic societies. The subject matter is at the fascinating intersection of state structures, social movement and activist contention, and the procedures and opportunities involved in policy-making. Course content ranges from the theoretical and conceptual to the empirical and practical.

I very much hope you enjoy the course and feel comfortable to participate.

Changes since First Published

Date	Description
03/08/2017	I have made changes to the timing and content of one of the lectures (on social and political participation) so that it has a more global focus, and I have altered the content of discussions and 'hot topics' to reflect student interest and background.

