



SOCI8075

Policy Ideas in Focus: Framing Policy Problems

Session 1, In person-scheduled-weekday, North Ryde 2025

School of Communication, Society and Culture

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff
Professor of Sociology and Unit Convenor
Shaun Wilson
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Contact via Email
Room B250 Level 2, 25B Wally's Walk
By email appointment or Zoom

Credit points
10

Prerequisites
Admission to MPSP or MPASR or GradCertPASR or GradDipPASR

Corequisites
POIR8090 or SOCI8080

Co-badged status

Unit description
Policies embody ideas about what governments can and should do, and how. These ideas 'frame' the problems policies address and how those problems will be solved. Policy ideas vary between policy domains and between countries and they change over time. Policy ideas are mobilised and contested by policy actors seeking changes that align with their own interests or those of their constituencies. When new ideas enter the policy process, they may offer genuinely novel solutions to old problems or renew the attractiveness of discarded approaches. New ideas can also function as solutions in search of problems. In this unit, students study policy documents and research resources to gain a critical understanding of how ideas can frame the definition of policy problems and their solutions. Because policy ideas travel, the unit considers the mechanisms and actors involved in what researchers call policy transfer or policy mobilities. Following an introduction to the role of ideas in policy, the unit is taught in three modules, each exploring the history, contours and impacts of a 'big idea' that has come into public and social policy in recent decades. Ideas in focus may include a subset of: brain and mind sciences, New Public Management, big data and governance by algorithm, social investment and asset-based social policy, user choice, sustainability, resilience, and well-being.

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:

ULO1: Demonstrate understanding of theory and debates about the role of ideas in shaping policy.

ULO2: Demonstrate understanding of the history, contours and impacts of some important policy ideas.

ULO3: Develop a critical appreciation of alternative ways policy problems can be framed.

ULO4: Apply theoretical and substantive knowledge to analyse policy documents.

ULO5: Communicate research findings and views accurately and effectively using a variety of written and spoken techniques.

General Assessment Information

Late penalties

Unless a Special Consideration request has been submitted and approved, a 5% penalty (of the total possible mark) will be applied each day a written assessment is not submitted, up until the 7th day (including weekends). After the 7th day, a mark of '0' (zero) will be awarded even if the assessment is submitted. Submission time for all written assessments is set at 11.55pm. A 1-hour grace period is provided to students who experience a technical issue.

This late penalty will apply to non-timed sensitive assessment (incl essays, reports, posters, portfolios, journals, recordings etc). Late submission of time sensitive tasks (such as tests/exams, performance assessments/presentations, scheduled practical assessments/labs etc) will only be addressed by the unit convenor in a Special consideration application. Special Consideration outcome may result in a new question or topic.

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due
Policy idea analysis	30%	No	Monday 7 April at 11.55 PM
Policy idea analysis	30%	No	Monday 5 May at 11.55PM
Active participation (on-campus)	10%	No	Weekly or during campus sessions
Policy theory reflection	30%	No	Friday 30 May at 11.55PM

Policy idea analysis

Assessment Type ¹: Case study/analysis

Indicative Time on Task ²: 30 hours

Due: **Monday 7 April at 11.55 PM**

Weighting: **30%**

Apply theories in analysis of a policy idea and/or document

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Demonstrate understanding of theory and debates about the role of ideas in shaping policy.
- Demonstrate understanding of the history, contours and impacts of some important policy ideas.
- Develop a critical appreciation of alternative ways policy problems can be framed.
- Apply theoretical and substantive knowledge to analyse policy documents.
- Communicate research findings and views accurately and effectively using a variety of written and spoken techniques.

Policy idea analysis

Assessment Type **1**: Case study/analysis

Indicative Time on Task **2**: 30 hours

Due: **Monday 5 May at 11.55PM**

Weighting: **30%**

Apply theories in analysis of a policy idea and/or document

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Demonstrate understanding of theory and debates about the role of ideas in shaping policy.
- Demonstrate understanding of the history, contours and impacts of some important policy ideas.
- Develop a critical appreciation of alternative ways policy problems can be framed.
- Apply theoretical and substantive knowledge to analyse policy documents.
- Communicate research findings and views accurately and effectively using a variety of written and spoken techniques.

Active participation (on-campus)

Assessment Type ¹: Participatory task

Indicative Time on Task ²: 10 hours

Due: **Weekly or during campus sessions**

Weighting: **10%**

Do reading preparation for seminars, engage with online materials, actively participate in on-campus class activities.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Demonstrate understanding of theory and debates about the role of ideas in shaping policy.
- Demonstrate understanding of the history, contours and impacts of some important policy ideas.
- Develop a critical appreciation of alternative ways policy problems can be framed.
- Communicate research findings and views accurately and effectively using a variety of written and spoken techniques.

Policy theory reflection

Assessment Type ¹: Reflective Writing

Indicative Time on Task ²: 30 hours

Due: **Friday 30 May at 11.55PM**

Weighting: **30%**

Critical reflection on theories of the role of policy ideas in policy development and change

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Demonstrate understanding of theory and debates about the role of ideas in shaping policy.
- Communicate research findings and views accurately and effectively using a variety of written and spoken techniques.

¹ If you need help with your assignment, please contact:

- the academic teaching staff in your unit for guidance in understanding or completing this type of assessment
- the [Writing Centre](#) for academic skills support.

² Indicative time-on-task is an estimate of the time required for completion of the assessment task and is subject to individual variation

Delivery and Resources

Welcome to this Unit!

This semester we cover an area of policy studies that focuses on the role of **ideas** -- creative solutions -- in what's called the policy process. By the end of the Unit, you will have a good understanding of how ideas help 'broker' solutions to complex problems and help bring policy actors together in alliances and coalitions to make change. You'll also have a stronger understanding of the dilemmas and problems facing policymakers and how social science concepts add greatly to your practical awareness of these problems.

This year all four sessions will be delivered by me (Shaun Wilson) and we'll focus on policy ideas and conflicts associated with social policy and the welfare state. Depending on student interest, the assignment questions may broaden out to the application of policy ideas in other areas.

In 2025, **Policy Ideas** is delivered on the MQ campus in four day-long sessions starting at 10am. Our room is 25WW GA06 Tutorial Room.

The dates are:

Monday **10 March** (starting 10am)

Monday **31 March** (starting 10am)

Monday **28 April** (starting 10am)

Monday **19 May** (starting 10am)

Online students can keep in contact through the recorded parts of these sessions and also through the weekly online discussion group which I will maintain and contribute to.

I will cover this in more detail in our first day session on Monday 10 March. The lecture components of these day-long sessions will be recorded.

Looking forward to meeting you in person

Shaun Wilson (Convenor)

Unit Schedule

SOCI/X 8075 Schedule of teaching this Semester

Module number	Day-long lecture/ seminar topics	Date and times
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One	Introduction to basic concepts (we cover why ideas matter in policy and how they are framed and include illustrations) Presented by Shaun Wilson	Monday 10 March 10 am to 4pm
Two	Choice as a policy idea (analysis of Australian social policy and the role of choice in framing, policy design, and service delivery) Presented by Shaun Wilson	Monday 31 March 10am to 4pm
Three	Value and social investment as policy ideas (how 'values' are measured and how those decisions affect policy. Broad benefit of a social investment model focused on wellbeing). Presented by Shaun Wilson	Monday 28 April 10am to 4pm
Four	The care economy as a policy idea (a closer look at why means and its application to public and social policy). Presented by Shaun Wilson	Monday 19 May 10am to 4pm
<i>lecture content will be recorded for online-flexible students in SOCI 8075 and SOCX 8075</i>		

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](https://policies.mq.edu.au) (<https://policies.mq.edu.au>). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

- [Academic Appeals Policy](#)
- [Academic Integrity Policy](#)
- [Academic Progression Policy](#)
- [Assessment Policy](#)
- [Fitness to Practice Procedure](#)
- [Assessment Procedure](#)
- [Complaints Resolution Procedure for Students and Members of the Public](#)
- [Special Consideration Policy](#)

Students seeking more policy resources can visit [Student Policies](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/policies) (<https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/policies>). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.

To find other policies relating to Teaching and Learning, visit [Policy Central](https://policies.mq.edu.au) (<https://policies.mq.edu.au>) and use the [search tool](#).

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: <https://students.mq.edu.au/admin/other-resources/student-conduct>

Results

Results published on platform other than [eStudent](#), (eg. iLearn, Coursera etc.) 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 connect.mq.edu.au or if you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

Academic Integrity

At Macquarie, we believe [academic integrity](#) – honesty, respect, trust, responsibility, fairness and courage – is at the core of learning, teaching and research. We recognise that meeting the expectations required to complete your assessments can be challenging. So, we offer you a range of resources and services to help you reach your potential, including free [online writing and maths support](#), [academic skills development](#) and [wellbeing consultations](#).

Student Support

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

Academic Success

[Academic Success](#) provides resources to develop your English language proficiency, academic writing, and communication skills.

- [Workshops](#)
- [Chat with a WriteWISE peer writing leader](#)
- [Access StudyWISE](#)
- [Upload an assignment to Studiosity](#)
- [Complete the Academic Integrity Module](#)

The Library provides online and face to face support to help you find and use relevant information resources.

- [Subject and Research Guides](#)
- [Ask a Librarian](#)

Student Services and Support

Macquarie University offers a range of [Student Support Services](#) including:

- [IT Support](#)
- [Accessibility and disability support](#) with study
- Mental health [support](#)
- [Safety support](#) to respond to bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and sexual assault

- [Social support including information about finances, tenancy and legal issues](#)
- [Student Advocacy](#) provides independent advice on MQ policies, procedures, and processes

Student Enquiries

Got a question? Ask us via the [Service Connect Portal](#), or contact [Service Connect](#).

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.

Unit information based on version 2025.01R of the [Handbook](#)