



*The School of Law and Government
Master's Programme in Public Policy*

Political Theory and Public Policy

LG 5060

Fall 2022



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Lecture and class discussion: Tuesdays btw 6-8 pm
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Please book a slot as explained below.

Module description

What drives us to change the existing social and economic structures and/or practices via public policy? This motivation for social change is often informed by our values, views and visions for a better future. However 'better' may be defined. This is a module that will give us a space to think about, discuss and clarify our understanding of values and value trade-offs underpinning policy decisions.

The Political Theory and Public Policy module invites you to engage with highly contentious political questions regarding what values should public policies be based on. Different from an empirically grounded investigation of public policies that we will engage in other modules such as Public Policy Analysis, this module promotes careful and critical assessment of the normative foundations of public policy decisions.

The module aims to deliver this promise in three ways. First, it will introduce the original classical texts of key social thinkers that are relevant to the study of public policy and focuses on their various justice conceptions based on the ideas of liberty, efficiency, equality and social welfare. Second, it will juxtapose these values to challenge you to recognise the potential trade-offs and moral complexities involved in public policy decisions. Third, it will challenge you to apply an analytical approach to identifying values underpinning public policy decisions and forming normative opinions in response to these.

In a democratic environment, our opinions about what the best policy should achieve are naturally (and fortunately) diverse. Also, public policies cover a wide range of activity domains and values that we (as well as the general public, different organised groups and policymakers) find relevant and desirable may vary across different policy sectors. This module does not aim at resolving these value conflicts or coming to definitive conclusions about these age-old questions. Instead, the objective is to equip you with the necessary conceptual and analytical tools that will help you to identify values underlying public policies, to recognise trade-offs in setting policy objectives and to think critically about them and their real-world implications.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

LO1 Be aware of the values that underpin public policies,

LO2 Follow the philosophical debates around values and public policies,

LO3 Identify value trade-offs in setting policy objectives,

LO4 Compare and analyse normative positions taken by different stakeholders on policy-related issues,

LO5 Apply these insights to policy debates and public policy analysis by forming and being aware of your own normative opinions.

Assessment overview

In this module, I expect you to:

- read the assigned material before the class;
- attend lectures and class discussions regularly;
- participate in the activities in the class discussions.

There are three means of assessment in the course:

- a reflection paper on the core reading of one week;
- a response paper on a policy report;
- a policy debate analysis.

All assignments must be submitted via the Loop page of the module and be assessed following the Postgraduate Marking Scheme of the School of Law and Government at the DCU.

Late submissions are not permitted unless evidence of exceptional circumstances is provided (e.g., medical certificates) to the Registry.

Before submitting any material, I would ask you to familiarise yourself with the University's regulations on **plagiarism**, which are available here: https://www.dcu.ie/system/files/2020-09/1_-_integrity_and_plagiarism_policy_ovpaa-v4.pdf Please remember to **cite your sources properly**.

- (1) **Reflection paper (30%) (Deadline:** Last Sunday (until 5 pm) **before** the class that the reading is assigned for)

You are asked to summarise the main argument(s) and key concept(s) of the reading material (Paragraph 1), write down what you personally find most thought-provoking about them (including your criticisms and/or appraisals) and explain why so (Paragraph 2). The average length of these reflections should be around 800 - 1000 words (excluding bibliography and footnotes). You are expected to submit one short reflection paper during the semester. In other words, you will select one week on which you will submit a short reflection. Short reflections must be submitted on Sundays (until 5 pm) **before** the class that the reading is assigned for. For example, if you choose to write a reflection on the second week's reading, then you must submit your reflection on 18 September (while the lecture and class discussion will take place on 20 September). Please submit your short reflections via Loop.

(2) Response paper (30%) (Anytime until the last day of classes: December 2, 5pm)

You are asked to find yourself and read a policy report/paper that sets out policy recommendations (most of them do!). It can be published by a national think tank organisation, United Nations agency (UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA etc.) or any other international organisation such as the World Bank and the OECD. It can be on any public policy issue or sector. You will then be expected to identify which values underpin their approaches to the policy issues they address in the select report and their policy recommendations; and/or what value trade-offs you can spot in their approaches and recommendations. Your paper should include convincing evidence from these reports (in the form of direct quotes) that shows specific values that these organisations hold as being core. The average length of response papers should be around 2000 words (+/- 200 words, excluding bibliography and footnotes).

(3) Policy debate analysis (40%) (Anytime until the last day of classes: December 2, 5pm)

You will submit a policy debate analysis paper on a public policy debate of your choice. It must start with information on what the issue at stake is, which organised actors are behind the select policy or what the major parties are to this debate, what the broader positions are (you need at least two!) and which political theory concepts, as well as frameworks, you think are relevant in analysing the issue at hand. Finally, I want you to make your own case. Explain what your stance is about these competing frameworks. Take a side or create your own position. Include your own voice. Your policy debate analysis papers should be around 2500 words in length (+/- 200 words, excluding bibliography and footnotes).

Referencing style

Referencing style for this module is Harvard. I would like you to kindly use this style in all your written assignments for this module. This referencing style is one of the most commonly used one in social sciences. Basically, in Harvard style, we use in-text citations such as this (McMenamin, 2012) and include a reference list at the end of the text (such as McMenamin, I., 2012. 'If money talks, what does it say? Varieties of capitalism and business financing of parties', *World Politics*, 64(1), pp. 1-38.). A quick guide is available to you here: https://www.nmhs.ucd.ie/sites/default/files/harvard_guide_november_2018.pdf

Official means of communication in this module

You are expected to closely follow the Loop page for this module. I will reach out to you on any issues related to this module only via Loop and by email (please check the email address that appears on the DCU system). Please note that it is my policy not to answer student emails at weekends and weekdays after 5.30pm.

If you would like to talk to me outside of the class, please book a slot here from the available slots between 4 and 6pm on Tuesdays (except the reading week): <https://calendly.com/volkan-yilmaz/office-hours-for-volkan-yilmaz> I normally allocate 10 minutes for each student. Please let me know if you think you will need more than 10 minutes. You may choose to meet in person (Henry Grattan Building, GLA CG47) or online. When you book a slot, please let me know in advance with an email whether you would like to meet in person or online, which module you want to talk about and what your question is. If you cannot make it to my office hours because you have a regularly conflicting schedule, please let me know via email and I will do my best to accommodate you.

I am here to help in whatever way I can. However, please note that I am not in a position to provide one-to-one (or one-to-small-group) catch-up lectures. You will have the recording of each week's live lecture available on the Loop page of this module. But if there are still things that are not clear to you, you can always send me an email or make an appointment with me.

The organisation of the module

The module will be delivered through **live sessions** that will take place **via Zoom**. We have been allocated two hours each week (**Tuesdays between 6 – 8pm**). I will deliver the lecture in the first 40 minutes of our weekly sessions and receive any questions that you might have on the lecture immediately after the lecture. We will then give a 15-minute break. After the break, we will continue with a class discussion. Please make sure to **read the assigned material** for the respective week (see folders for each week on the Loop page) **before our live sessions** as this will substantially increase the quality of our classes.

Only lectures **will be recorded**. You will also find the presentation slides of the recorded lectures in each week's folder. **This means that Q&A sessions on lectures and our class discussions will not be recorded, and thus will not be available to you later.** However, a great deal of learning takes place through the interactions of motivated participants. You will have a lot to learn from other participants of this module, therefore, I will invite you to attend all sessions.

Outline of the module and readings list

Week 1 (13 September) *Introduction and overview*

Week 2 (20 September) *Justice as Liberty*

Hayek, F.A. 2011. *The Constitution of Liberty*, The University of Chicago Press, pp. 57-72.

Week 3 (27 September) *Justice as Fairness and Equality I*

Rawls, J., 1982. Social Unity and Primary Goods in (ed.) A. Sen, B. Williams. *Utilitarianism and Beyond*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 159-173.

Week 4 (4 October) *Justice as Fairness and Equality II*

Wollstonecraft, M., 1999. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Oxford University Press, pp. 84-104.

Week 5 (11 October) *Equality of Outcomes or Equality of Opportunities?*

Arneson, R.J., 1989. Equality and Equal Opportunity for Welfare. *Philosophical Studies*, 56(1), pp.77-93.

Week 6 (18 October) *Liberty-Equality Trade-Off?*

Nozick, R., 1974. *Anarchy, State and Utopia*. Blackwell Publishing, pp. 149-164.

Reading week (no class on 25 October)

Week 7 (1 November) *Satisfying Needs and/or Wants within the Planetary Limits?*

Gough, I., 2015. Climate Change and Sustainable Welfare: The Centrality of Human Needs. *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 39(5), pp.1191-1214.

Week 8 (8 November) *Equality-Efficiency Trade-Off?*

Okun, A.M., 2015. Equality and Efficiency: The Big Trade-off. *Brookings Institution Press*, pp. 1-10; 86-93.

Week 9 (15 November) *Equality-Diversity Trade-Off? I*

Fraser, N., 1995. From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a 'Post-Socialist' Age. *New Left Review*, (212), pp.68-93.

Week 10 (22 November) *Equality-Diversity Trade-Off? II*

Cho, S., Crenshaw, K.W. and McCall, L., 2013. Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 38(4), pp.785-810.

Week 11 (29 November) *Universalism or Selectivism in Social Welfare?*

Titmuss, R., 2006. Universalism versus Selection. In *The Welfare State Reader*, Polity Press, pp.40-48.