

Spring 2011  
Implementation and Impact  
RPOS 506 (5520), RPOS 506R (6713), RPUB506 (524)  
**M 05:45:00\_PM-08:50:00\_PM**  
Prof. Robert Nakamura  
**HS0012**

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Office Hours

Monday, 320 Milne 3:30 to 5:30

Tuesday and Thursday, Basement Humanities, 1:30 to 2:30

Course Description:

This is a course on policy implementation, the stage of the policy process during which decisions are supposed to get translated into actions intended to produce results. We will treat implementation as a problem that people must deal with across policy areas. Thus the course will cover case studies in a diverse set of problem areas: unemployment, welfare reform, environmental protection, democratization and war.

The study of policy implementation began over thirty years ago with the publication of Pressman and Wildavsky's classic study. Since then, work in this field has taken a number of forms and involved many disciplines. Like many areas in the policy sciences, two different goals propel efforts: a practical concern with improving policy outcomes and a scholarly interest in understanding why implementation outcomes vary.

The practical portion of this course is centered on answering a simple set of questions: "Why is it so hard to get things done and what can be done about it?" Implementation has been called the most problematic part of the policy process because of the difficulties encountered in translating policy into action. To do something about implementation problems requires a better specification of the difficulties at the outset. It also requires a sensitivity to the dynamic elements of the processes of policy making, implementation and evaluation. The readings are directed toward providing students with the background to deal with the questions posed.

On the scholarly side, implementation research has dealt with a variety of topics including the development of conceptual frameworks for understanding the process, case studies of specific implementation activities, and the exploration of approaches intended to improve the fit between what policy makers intend and what happens.

Scholarly interest in policy implementation crosses disciplines. The work produced has reflected the diverse backgrounds of the researchers. Political scientists have typically focused on questions of how power concerns shape

what happens and why, public administration specialists have looked at organizational routines and strategies to improve the process, and people in specific social policy areas (such as education, health care and criminal justice) have sought to develop a body of problem-oriented applied research such as a search for best practices and more robust policy tools.

In addition, there are many different -- but not mutually exclusive -- understandings of how the world works underlying the different approaches mentioned above. Those who accept the micro-economic paradigm stress the role of incentives and disincentives, those with a more sociological orientation emphasize the part played by values, norms and social structures, those who think in terms of information processing models pay most attention to how feedback shapes behavior. A students of public management stress the role of new public managers in infusing their organizations with purpose and direction.

Each view of how the world works is also the basis for an analysis on why a particular policy failed to achieve implementation and what might be done about it. Poorly structured incentives, fix the incentives. Insufficient commitment or acceptance of values supportive of policy, deal with this through selection, training, and monitoring. And so on.

We will also look at a variety of approaches which have been developed to help counter implementation problems. These include greater attention to policy design and the implementation requirements of alternative designs, a greater emphasis on the role of leaders and public managers and providing them with tools necessary to shape the implementation process, and the use of alternative ways of delivering on public policy goals (privatization, contracting out, etc.).

This course has three main practical goals. First, to acquaint students with the major approaches and problems found in implementation research. Second, to show how these techniques may be combined to better analyze cases and to identify the factors associated with successes and failures. And third, to help practitioners better identify potential implementation pitfalls as well as to identify the conditions under which different countermeasures would be useful.

#### Required Readings:

Robert Behn, *Leadership Counts: Lessons for Public Managers*, Harvard University Press, paperback.

Robert Nakamura and Thomas Church, *Taming Regulation*, Brookings Institution Press, paperback.

George Packer, *Assassins Gate*, paperback.

Jeffrey Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky, *Implementation*, University of California Press. paperback

Malcolm Sparrow, *Regulatory Craft*, Hopkins, paperback.

There are additional readings indicated on the syllabus as e reserve. To access these, you have to go to the University Library website, e reserve section and follow the instructions. The password for this course will be announced during class.

Grading:

Grades will be based on the following:

1. Quality of discussion questions submitted for the assignments (due dates noted). 5%
2. A prospectus for the term paper. 5%
3. An oral presentation of the term paper research. 15%
4. A term paper based on an original case study in policy implementation. 70%
5. Class participation. 5% (worth a half grade up or down)

## Weekly Schedule

NOTE: 3 discussion questions on each week's readings are due on the Sunday night (by midnight) preceding the Monday class. They should be sent to rn382@csc.albany.edu

1. Introduction, Mon., Jan. 24

Fill out information sheet

2. Implementation Begins with Pressman and Wildavsky, Mon., Jan 31

Jeffrey Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky, Implementation.

3. Frameworks for Studying Implementation, Mon., Feb. 7

Robert Nakamura and Frank Smallwood, The Politics of Policy Implementation (e reserve)

4. Policy Making and Policy Implementation: Rational, Incrementalist and Political Models, Mon., Feb. 14

Lindblom, The Science of Muddling Through (e reserve)

Kingdon, selection (e reserve)

Nakamura, The Textbook Policy Process (e reserve)

Weimer and Vining, Market and Government failure articles (e reserve)

Mon., Feb. 21 NO CLASS

5. The Complexity of Joint Action, Implementation Games and Fixers, Mon., Feb. 28

Eugene Bardach, Implementation Game (e reserve)

6. Fixing and the New Public Management, Mon., Mar. 7

Robert Behn, Leadership Counts

PROSPECTUS DUE

7. Policy Tools and Implementation Implications, Mon., Mar. 14

Salamon, Selection from the Tools of Government, e reserve

Elmore, Policy Implements, e reserve

3 discussion questions due by via e mail by midnight the day before.

MAKE APPOINTMENTS THIS WEEK TO DISCUSS TERM PAPER

PROSPECTUS

8. Research Design for Studying Implementation Cases and Regulation, Mon., Mar. 21

Church and Nakamura, Cleaning Up the Mess, selection on strategies (e reserve)

Sparrow, The Regulatory Craft

9. Implementation Regulatory Policy Reform, Mon., Mar. 28

Nakamura and Church, Taming Regulation

Kagan, adversarial legalism article, e reserve

10. The Iraq War as an Implementation Case Study, Mon., April 4

Packer, Assassins Gate

Kent Weaver, implementation article e reserve

11. Student Presentations, Mon., April 11

Mon., April 18 No classs

Mon., April 25 No class

13. Student Presentations, Mon., May 2

14. Student Presentations, Special Class Meeting, Wed. May 4 (different day, same room and time)

Papers Due

PLEASE FILL OUT THE FOLLOWING SHEET  
STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET FOR POS/PUB 506

1. Name

2. Print E mail address

3. Graduate program and specialization

4. Other policy courses.

5. What policy areas (if any) are you interested in?

6. Other Relevant policy background (employment, etc.):