



APPLIES TO ACADEMIC YEAR 2007/2008

GRA 5920 The Political Economy of Government: Public Policy and Reform

Program

Advanced Specialization Course (MSc), Master of Science in Political Economy

Responsible for the course

Rune Sørensen

Department

Public Governance

Term

According to study plan

ECTS Credits

6

Language of instruction

English

This is one of the School's four courses dedicated to core questions in political economy, in this case public policy and the reform of public services. It is primarily designed for students taking the MSc in Political Economy and therefore assumes some knowledge of political processes and policy making.

The central themes include public goods and service provision, comparative public policy and public sector reform.

Objective

This course focuses on questions related to the provision of public services and public sector reforms. Although advanced industrial countries face many of the same public policy problems such as aging populations, growing expectations, rising costs of public services and declining performance in some public sectors, they have responded to these problems in a wide variety of ways. The course takes a comparative approach to public policy, covering variations of public service provisions that range from extensive welfare states to those more heavily reliant on market-based solutions. It thus addresses the main categories of policy instruments that can be used in a variety of policy areas, as well as variations in the size and type of government activities in liberal democracies. To what extent do governments redistribute resources to reduce income disparities, and what is the political logic underlying the search for equality? Why do some governments employ decentralised agencies and others rely on local governments? What is the meaning of "privatisation", and which are the gains (if any) of contraction service production out? It is often claimed that government institutions suffers from inertia, and that reforms are too late and too small to be efficient. The course addresses these questions and comparative public policy reform at the levels of design and implementation, and examines questions of both institutional and organisational reform.

Prerequisites

Bachelors' degree qualifying for admission to the MSc Program

Compulsory literature

Books:

Le Grand, Julian. 2003. Motivation, agency, and public policy : of knights and knaves, pawns and queens. Oxford : Oxford University Press. kap.1-kap.8.

Collection of articles:

Compendium of Journal Articles

Recommended literature

Other:

Individual journal articles and book chapters available in the library and/or electronically will be

recommended as further reading.

Course outline

1. Public policy and public service provision. Theories of public goods and service provision. Policy instruments: regulation, financing and production. The size of public sector: Driven by demand or supply?
2. Comparative public policy institutions. Politicians, civil servants and key actors. Power, control, transparency and evaluation. Comparative analysis of institutions and perspectives on control. Incentive structures, cooperation and competition within the state.
3. Efficiency and democracy. Institutional design. The search for equity: insurance or income redistribution? Designing public policy reforms. New Public Management reforms. Decentralisation (delegation, marketisation or local democracy?). Contracting out and competition.
4. Modernising governance. Institutional change, operationalisation of reforms. NPM reforms and the New Governance debate. Operationalising contracting out, public-private partnerships.
5. Implementation and organisational design, organisational theory and comparative analysis, how organisations work and develop. Organisational parameters of public policy reform, implementation deficits.

Computer-based tools

None

Course structure

36 hours.

Specific Information regarding student evaluation will be provided in class. Please note that while attendance is not compulsory in all courses, it is the student's responsibility to obtain any information provided in class that is not included on the course homepage/Blackboard or text book. Homepages and/or Blackboard are not designed for the purpose of students who choose not to attend class.

Evaluation

30% Class work (in the form of a mix of some/ all of the following: hand in of case write ups, projects, and homeworks; case presentations and class participation; in class midterm and quizzes). Final written 3 hour exam accounts for 70% of the grade. Both parts of the evaluation need to be passed in order to get a grade in the course.

Evaluation code(s)

GRA 59201 accounts for 100 % of the final grade in the course GRA 5920.

Aids at the examination

Bilingual dictionary

Makeup exam

Re-takes are only possible at the next time a course will be held. When course evaluation consists of class participation or process elements, the whole course must be re-evaluated when a student wants to retake an exam. Retake examinations entail an extra examination fee.

Honor Code

Academic honesty and trust are important to all of us as individuals, and represent values that are encouraged and promoted by the honor code system. This is a most significant university tradition. Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the ideals of the honor code system, to which the faculty are also deeply committed.

Any violation of the honor code will be dealt with in accordance with BI's procedures for cheating. These issues are a serious matter to everyone associated with the programs at BI and are at the heart of the honor code and academy integrity. If you have any questions about your responsibilities under the honor code, please ask.