



TEL AVIV אוניברסיטת תל אביב
UNIVERSITY תל אביב

Full Syllabus



Course Title

Public Policy and Global Challenges

Lecturer

Dr. Michal Linder Zarankin

Semester

A

Course requirements

Attendance (75% Mandatory), weekly assigned articles, reflection essay & policy brief, policy critique presentations, final exam.

Final grade components

Reflection essay (15%), Policy Brief (20%), Policy Critique Presentation (15%), Final Exam (50%)

Course schedule

Class no. / Date	Subject and Requirements (assignments, reading materials, tasks, etc.)
#1 (19.10)	Introduction and Overview What does it mean to study public policy? Understanding the scope and domains of the policy process
#2 (26.10)	Defining Public Policy and its Significance Challenges and opportunities in policymaking
#3 (2.11)	Agenda Setting and Focusing Events <i>Why do some issues receive attention while others are ignored?</i>
#4 (9.11)	Training Modules & Simulation (online) Converge Natural Hazards Center, University of Colorado https://converge.colorado.edu/resources/training-modules
#5 (16.11)	Policy Design, Implementation & Learning Did the program work as expected? What does it mean to learn from policy failures? Reflection Essay due
#6 (23.11)	Policy, Society and Public Trust How do governments build trust and maintain social cohesion while responding to complex crises?
#7 (30.11)	Guest Lecture – Public Policy in Practice
#8 (7.12)	Theory to Practice I – Governing Risk Before Disasters How can policy reduce disaster risk? Policy Brief due
#9 (14.12)	Theory to Practice II – Governing Response, Recovery and Community Resilience How can policy support recovery and transformation?
#10 (21.12)	Policy Making under Uncertainty



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#11 (28.12)	Analyses of significant disasters and their responses - Comparative Disaster Policy Debate (online)
#12 (4.1)	Presentations
#13 (11.1)	Presentations
Mandatory Course Reading List	
Classes 1–2: Introduction to Public Policy and Emergency Management	
• Drabek, T. E. (2005). Theories relevant to emergency management versus a theory of emergency management. <i>Journal of Emergency Management</i>, 3(4). • Cairney, P. (2015). How can policy theory have an impact on policymaking? The role of theory-led academic–practitioner discussions. <i>Teaching Public Administration</i>, 33(1), 22–39. • Jones, B. D. (1999). Bounded rationality. <i>Annual Review of Political Science</i>, 2, 297–321.	
Class 3: Agenda Setting and Focusing Events	
• Birkland, T. A., DeYoung, S. E., Waugh, W. L., Jr., & Weiner, E. (2021). During disaster: Refining the concept of focusing events to better explain long-duration crises. <i>International Review of Public Policy</i>, 3, 5–28. • Bacchi, C. (2016). Problematizations in health policy: Questioning how “problems” are constituted in policies. <i>SAGE Open</i>, April–June.	
Class 4: Training Modules and Simulation	
• Selected training module from the CONVERGE Natural Hazards Center, University of Colorado Boulder: https://converge.colorado.edu/resources/training-modules No additional academic reading is required for this class.	
Class 5: Policy Design, Implementation and Learning	
• Birkland, T. A. (2009). Disasters, lessons learned, and fantasy documents. <i>Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management</i>, 17(3), 146–156. • Nohrstedt, D. (2022). When do disasters spark transformative policy changes and why? <i>Policy & Politics</i>, 50(3), 425–441.	
Class 6: Policy, Society and Public Trust	
• Elliott, J. R., & Pais, J. (2006). Race, class, and Hurricane Katrina: Social differences in human responses to disaster. <i>Social Science Research</i>, 35(2), 295–321. • Zhai, W., et al. (2024). Disaster misinformation and its corrections on social media. <i>Annals of the American Association of Geographers</i>.	
Class 7: Guest Lecture – Policy in Practice	
• A short policy document or publication related to the guest speaker’s area of expertise will be assigned before the session.	
Class 8: Theory to Practice I – Governing Risk Before Disasters	
• Berkes, F. (2007). Understanding uncertainty and reducing vulnerability: Lessons from resilience thinking. <i>Natural Hazards</i>, 41(2), 283–295.	



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- United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. (2022). *Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2022: Our World at Risk—Transforming Governance for a Resilient Future*.

Class 9: Theory to Practice II – Governing Response, Recovery and Community Resilience

- Aldrich, D. P., & Meyer, M. A. (2015). Social capital and community resilience. *American Behavioural Scientist*, 59(2), 254–269.
- Tierney, K. J. (2020). Pandemic and disaster: Insights from seventy years of social science disaster research. Social Science Research Council.

Class 10: Policymaking under Complexity and Uncertainty

- United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. (2022). *Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2022: Our World at Risk—Transforming Governance for a Resilient Future*.
Selected section on systemic risk, uncertainty, and risk governance.
- Djalante, R. (2012). Adaptive governance and resilience: The role of multi-stakeholder platforms in disaster risk reduction. *Natural Hazards and Earth System Sciences*, 12(9), 2923–2942.

Class 11: Comparative Disaster Policy Debate

- Short case studies, policy reports, and executive summaries related to the disasters selected for the comparative policy debate will be provided before the session.

Classes 12–13: Student Presentations

No additional mandatory reading.



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Course Overview

This course is one of the mandatory elective courses in the International Master's Program in Disaster Management at the Gray Faculty of Medical & Health Sciences, Tel Aviv University.

The course introduces students to the major theories, concepts, and approaches in public policy, with a particular emphasis on policymaking in the context of disasters and complex global crises. **Throughout the course we address one central question: How can public policy help societies anticipate, respond to, recover from, and adapt to complex crises and disasters?**

Public policy is examined as a dynamic process involving multiple actors, institutions, interests, and governance arrangements operating under conditions of uncertainty, limited information, and competing priorities. Throughout the course, students explore the policy process, from agenda setting and policy design to implementation, learning, and policy change, and examine how governments and societies respond to contemporary challenges such as natural hazards, climate change, pandemics, armed conflicts, and post-disaster recovery. Using real-world case studies, policy simulations and class debates, students will strengthen their ability to critically evaluate public policies and develop practical policy recommendations for disaster risk reduction, emergency management, and community resilience.

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Understand the major theories, concepts, and stages of the public policy process.
- Explain how public policies are formulated, implemented, evaluated, and adapted in the context of disasters and complex crises.
- Analyse the roles of governments, international organizations, civil society, and other stakeholders in shaping public policy.
- Critically assess policy effectiveness, implementation challenges, and policy learning using real-world case studies.
- Apply public policy concepts to disaster risk reduction, emergency preparedness, response, recovery, and resilience.
- Develop evidence-informed policy recommendations through policy briefs, policy critiques, simulations, and class discussions.
- Strengthen critical thinking, analytical, and communication skills in an international and interdisciplinary learning environment.

Please note: Attendance (minimum 75%) and submission of all course assignments are mandatory. Selected sessions will be delivered online.