UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Public Policies: Decision and Implementation

2425-2-E1601N067-E1601N055M

Learning objectives

The course aims to provide students with the essential tools to analyze, understand, and critically discuss public policies, as well as the reasons behind their successes and failures. By the end of the course, students will be able to identify and analyze a public issue and the characteristics of the policy processes designed to address it. This includes examining the stages of the policy process, decision-making models, key actors, resources, interaction strategies, and what is at stake.
Throughout the course, practical examples of public policies will be presented and discussed to illustrate the topics covered in lectures.
Students will also have the opportunity to further explore selected cases of public policies—also through the contributions of guest speakers—and to apply the proposed analytical methods. These case-based discussions will help students appreciate the practical relevance of the conceptual tools introduced in class.
The course will also introduce some key concepts related to policy evaluation, which will be further developed in the dedicated module to follow.

Contents

The first module focuses on the analysis of public policy as an applied science aimed at identifying solutions to issues of collective relevance. The objective is to provide a framework for the discipline that is both theoretically grounded and empirically relevant. Particular attention will be devoted to the following topics: (a) politics and public policies; (b) types of policies and policy instruments;(c) models and theories of the policy process; (d) policy design; (e) key elements of the process: actors, resources, stakes, and interactions; (f) decision-making strategies; (g) policy implementation.
Lectures will be complemented by practical exercises based on case studies.

Detailed program

Lectures (March–April 2025):
Every 3 to 4 lecture modules, dedicated sessions will be organized to review and discuss key topics with students, as well as to apply concepts through practical activities. These sessions will focus on:

- Introductory concepts
- The policy process
- Evaluating public policies
- Decision-making models
- Policy actors: characteristics and resources
- What is at stake
- Modes of interaction and strategic approaches
- Case studies
- Guest talks
- Student presentations
- Summary and in-depth lectures

Prerequisites

No prequisites

Teaching methods

Lectures, online exercises, and group work to be carried out either remotely or in class (depending on feasibility).

Assessment methods

The final assessment consists of a written exam, including multiple-choice and/or open-ended questions based on the assigned readings. The exam duration is 2 hours.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Dente, Bruno. 2011. Le decisioni di policy. Bologna: Il Mulino.
Students are required to study the entire book.

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION