

COURSE SYLLABUS

Title: Agenda setting and issue definition

Professor: Sébastien Guigner, PhD, Assistant Professor of Political Science

Credits: 4

Language of instruction: English

Course objectives : Understanding why people, media and decision-makers pay attention to one issue and not another

Course description: Any public policy supposes a problem. However, sociologists and political scientists have shown that public problems are not immediately obvious. No phenomenon is a public problem in itself, public problems are socially constructed: phenomena become public problems when they have been presented – properly – as such. Moreover, the definition of a public problem does not inevitably leads to a policy. In a word, there is no mechanical linkage between problems and policies. The process is not completely predictable, but neither is it random... logics can be identified. Basically, this course (a lecture) is concerned with how problems are formed and framed, and how they become – or do not become – items on the agenda. After having introduced the notion of agenda setting, the course develops the so-called “social problem” approach, then it exposes leading concepts to explain the character of the agenda in modern times.

Bibliography :

- Cobb R. W., Ross M. (eds) (1997), *Cultural Strategies of Agendas Denial : Avoidance, Attack and Redefinition*, Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.
- Dearing J. W., Rogers E. M. (1996), *Agenda-setting*, Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Gusfield J.R. (1981), *The Culture of Public Problems: Drinking–Driving and the Symbolic Order*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Spector M., Kitsuse I.J. (1977), *Constructing Social Problems*, Menlo Park: Cummings.
- Stone D. (2002), *Policy Paradox. The art of political decision making*, New York/London : Norton & Company.

Evaluation: Oral exam

Available on moodle: yes (power point presentations)