

International Policy Labs

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This interactive course explores how to design and implement solutions to public policy problems, specifically those with international linkages. The aim of the course is two-fold : on the one hand, to familiarise oneself with design thinking and participatory decision-making techniques. On the other, to apply those techniques in a series of practical exercises linking analysis and action. At the end of the course, students can expect to be equipped with practical tools for policy formulation and presentation, and to have gained a better understanding of international affairs.

Policy labs are interactive formats to design policies with the aim of significantly improving the lives of those targeted by policy measures. They are based on the assumption that the success of proposed policies hinges not only on the analytical skills of political practitioners, but significantly on the ability to discover and communicate actual policy needs of target audiences, as well as specific local knowledge which can prove decisive with regards to actual uptake and policy effectiveness. In an international context, an additional layer of complexity is added to policymaking, given the multiplication of actors involved in the drafting and delivery of policy, and in the diffusion of responsibility and accountability in the process.

The course is composed of nine two hour-long sessions. Each class will be interactive, and mix teacher interventions and short student presentations. During the first five sessions, students will study different policy lab formulas and participatory techniques, each time focusing on a specific international policy conundrum in relation with relevant actors such as international, supranational, national and non-governmental organisations. A special emphasis will be put on writing policy briefs for decision-makers. Topics will include subjects as diverse as poverty alleviation, the fight against climate change, the promotion of gender equality, defence co-operation or combatting financial crime. Students should prepare for each session by studying the specific policy lab format to be discussed and by completing the readings on the relevant international question in advance. Material for each session will be made available online, and at the beginning of each class, students will sit short quizzes to test their acquired knowledge. The second half of the course will be dedicated to the guided selection, preparation and running of an International Policy Lab by students, as well as on the practice of writing policy briefs and policy recommendations.

Assessment: In-class participation, including quizzes (20%), presentations or short written notes (40%), final assessment (a written briefing for policymakers with policy recommendations based on a policy lab discussed during class) (40%).

Introductory readings (further material will be made available per session) :

Allio, Lorenzo (2014), *Design thinking for public service excellence*, UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence, <https://www.undp.org/publications/designthinking-public-service-excellence>

Cairney, Paul (2016), *The politics of evidence-based policy making*, Springer, <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1057/978-1-137-51781-4> (a summary can be found here: <https://paulcairney.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/cairney-2017-oxford-politics-of-ebpm.pdf>)

International Development Research Center (IDRC-CRDI), Canada, "How to write a policy brief", <https://www.idrc.ca/en/how-write-policy-brief>

Kaner, Sam (2014), *Facilitator's guide to participatory decision-making*, John Wiley & Sons (an older version of the first chapter can be consulted here: <https://download.e-bookshelf.de/download/0000/5874/32/L-G-0000587432-0002384959.pdf>)

Kimbell, Lucy (2015), *Applying design approaches to policy making: discovering Policy Lab*, University of Brighton,
https://researchingdesignforpolicy.files.wordpress.com/2015/10/kimbell_policylab_report.pdf

Lewis, Jenny M. (2021), "The limits of policy labs: characteristics, opportunities and constraints", *Policy Design and Practice*, 4:2, 242-251, DOI: [10.1080/25741292.2020.1859077](https://doi.org/10.1080/25741292.2020.1859077)

Oliver, Kathryn, Cairney, Paul (2019), "The dos and don'ts of influencing policy: a systematic review of advice to academics", *Palgrave Commun* 5, 21 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-019-0232-y>

Ben Williamson (2015), "Governing methods: policy innovation labs, design and data science in the digital governance of education", *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 47:3, 251-271, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/00220620.2015.1038693?needAccess=true>