P05 / Foundational Works in Public Policy Studies: Harold D. Lasswell

Topic : POLICY DISCOURSE AND CRITICAL POLICY RESEARCH

Chair : Eve Seguin (Université du Québec à Montréal)

Second Chair : Nick Turnbull (University of Manchester)

Third Chair : Guy Lachapelle (Concordia University)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Harold D. Lasswell is a founding scholar of public policy studies. The programme of *policy sciences* he developed in the 1940s and 1950s is widely regarded as the founding act of the field. The seven-stage policy process he conceptualized in 1956 subsequently led to a number of models, with the five-stage policy cycle still in use today in spite of successive waves of criticism. His lifelong commitment to interdisciplinarity has become a major concern in contemporary political science. And recently, his work even found echoes in unexpected quarters such as Science & Technology Studies.

However, Lasswell's work has influenced quite different trajectories in policy studies and the legacy of his thought is unclear. On the one hand, it is analytical in important respects, for example in the stages model of the policy process and the scientific conception of problem solving in public policymaking. But on the other hand, critical policy analysts have drawn on Lasswell's concern for human values and his origins in American pragmatist philosophy to build upon his ideas to develop a more process-oriented, interpretive vision of policymaking that is opposed to positivist and analytical frameworks in policy theory.

Given these alternative uses of Lasswell's thought, and set in the larger context of the retreat from government to governance, this is a good time to evaluate the work of this founding scholar in order to determine the relevance of his ideas and to reflect upon the trajectory of the policy sciences.

The aim of the panel is to revisit Lasswell in order to deepen our understanding of his work and testify to its enduring influence, even for those who seek to distance themselves from his approach(es). More specifically, our goals are to:

- Situate his work in the historical context of pragmatism and behavioralism in the United States.
- Re-examine or critically re-evaluate his key works and studies.
- Assess which aspects of his work remain relevant for the study of contemporary political phenomena.
- Further develop his ideas for the theory and practice of public policy, for instance the use of the hard sciences in policy analysis, the problem orientation, and the divide between academia and policy practice.
- Apply his categories and insights in studies in many subfields of political science such as public policy studies, policy sciences, political power, political communication and propaganda, political psychology, and political theory.

CALL FOR PAPERS

We are seeking presenters for a panel on Harold D. Lasswell.

Papers are welcome that situate Lasswell's work in the historical context of pragmatism and behavioralism in the United States; re-examine or critically re-evaluate his key works and studies; assess which aspects of his work remain relevant for the study of contemporary political phenomena; further develop his ideas for the theory and practice of public policy, for instance the use of the hard sciences in policy analysis, the "problem orientation", and the divide between academia and policy practice; or apply his categories and insights in studies in many subfields of political science such as public policy studies, policy sciences, political power, political communication and propaganda, political psychology, and political theory.

Paper proposals that do not fit neatly in any of the above goals are also welcome and will be given proper consideration.

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Session 1Foundational works in public policy studies: Harold D. Lasswell

Friday, June 28th 08:00 to 10:00 (MB 2.265)

Discussants
Eve Seguin (Université du Québec à Montréal)
Nick Turnbull (University of Manchester)

Harold Lasswell’s Forgotten Lesson in Political Science
Eve Seguin (Université du Québec à Montréal)

Symbols of the Policy Sciences: Reframing Lasswell’s Framework
Doug Torgerson (Trent University, Canada)

A rhetorical reinvention of Lasswell’s seven stages of the decision process
Nick Turnbull (University of Manchester)
Robert Hoppe (University of Twente)

How to make political science more scientific? Between multidisciplinarity, interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity research
Guy Lachapelle (Concordia University)

Rediscovering Pragmatism as the Origin of the Policy Sciences
William Dunn (University of Pittsburgh)