

# NEWS

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## Correction

We regret omitting the names of the authors of two teaching notes in the Fall, 1982 NEWS:

"The Dimensions of Democratic Citizenship" by Mary E. Hawkesworth, U. of Louisville  
"U.S. Human Rights Policy and the Concept of Natural Rights" by Robert H. Puckett, Indiana State U.

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by Douglas Amy, Oberlin College

"Throughout most of the 19th century the most important course in the college curriculum was moral philosophy, taught usually by the college president and required of all senior students. The moral philosophy course was regarded as the capstone of the curriculum. It aimed to pull together, to integrate, and to give meaning and purpose to the student's entire college experience and course of study. In so doing it even more importantly sought to equip the graduating seniors with the ethical sensitivity and insight needed in order to put their newly acquired knowledge to use in ways that would benefit not only themselves and their own personal achievement, but the larger society as well."

Douglas Sloan

## Introduction

During the last decade, textbooks and courses in political science have increasingly included substantive policy issues as part of their subject matter. This focus on public policy has made it more difficult for political scientists to ignore the moral and ethical dimensions of politics, for as soon as one begins to analyze these policy choices, it becomes clear that one cannot fully examine them without grappling with the moral and ethical questions that lie at their heart.<sup>1</sup> For example, one cannot properly analyze an energy policy proposal to deregulate natural gas without coming to grips with the equity questions involved. Nor can one adequately study health care policy without dealing with the pivotal issues of justice and equity concerning who should get health care and why. To ignore or downplay these kinds of moral questions runs the risk of rendering one's analysis superficial and/or irrelevant.

Indeed, ignoring the study of the moral dilemmas contained in policy choices not only makes for poor

analysis, it also is an abdication of part of our responsibility as teachers of political science. An important part of that responsibility is to educate future citizens and policymakers, to give them the analytical tools that will help them to make intelligent political and policy choices. If we were to omit or only give minimal consideration to the analysis of questions of freedom, justice, equality, etc., we would send students away without all of the analytic skills they need to make the difficult decisions they will inevitably face.

Unfortunately, however, these important moral and ethical questions tend to remain at the periphery of most political science courses. They are often only dealt with in passing, and it is sometimes thought that they are only relevant in political theory courses. In a study done for the Hastings Center, Peter Steinfels found that even in graduate programs in public policy analysis, moral questions were often given short shrift.<sup>2</sup> Even in programs which claimed to be sensitive to the ethical dimensions of policy issues, Steinfels found students complaining that these questions received little systematic or serious attention.

"One student, for example, at a school where faculty members appeared quite open and concerned about ethical issues, noted that such considerations were almost always taken up at the end of a class or at the end of a course — and frequently fell victim to insufficient time. The other students present agreed with this observation and interpreted it as a sign that despite faculty good will, ethical questions were given second-class status."<sup>3</sup>

Undoubtedly, this reluctance to address these issues is not due to the belief that moral issues are irrelevant to policy decisions — but rather

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Policy Analysis

## An Examination of Recent Textbooks

by Douglas M. Fox  
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Policy analysis is one of the most frequently used buzz terms in public administration and political science. A recent spate of textbooks indicates that a substantial segment of the MPA curriculum is devoted to the study of policy analysis. In this essay, we will examine the concept and practice of policy analysis as defined by its various proponents.

How do the authors whose work we scrutinize define the term? For Duncan MacRae and James Wilde, "policy analysis is the use of reason and evidence to choose the best policy among a number of alternatives." This definition closely resembles that of Edith Stokey and Richard Zeckhauser, who are concerned with "The advantages and disadvantages of each course of action." Harry Hatry and his colleagues, as well as Grover Starling offer more comprehensive, multi-step definitions, including problem identification, goal statement, assessment of pros and cons of alternatives, selection of one alternative and implementation strategies. Theodore Poister emphasizes "The relationship between the content of policies and programs and the subsequent consequences and outcomes they produce, an approach similar to Barry Bozeman's stress on "The impact of policies." This leaves us with the always skeptical Aaron Wildavsky, who is reluctant to define the term at all. After 17 pages of discussion of problems relating to policy analysis, Wildavsky offers us this definition: "An activity creating problems that can be solved." Such a definition fits Wildavsky's pedagogical approach of teaching policy analysis backward, i.e., "...apply strong criteria to good data, go on to create criteria and discover alternatives, and after numerous trials, formulate a problem at the very end."

All these definitions, however different

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