1. The professor’s approach

This class is for public policy students intent on working in a diverse set of contexts—including developed and developing contexts. Many governments in these contexts struggle to ‘get things done’. This reflected in prominent and less prominent public policy implementation gaps, historically low public confidence in governments across the world, and the stubborn presence of many public problems years after good policy ideas were proposed as solutions and even ‘implemented’ through budgets and projects and the like.

Having witnessed and even participated in many disappointing engagements in the early part of his career, Professor Andrews decided about a decade ago to focus his research and teaching on questions of implementation. He wanted to better understand why public policy implementation seemed so difficult, and how it could be made more effective, more often, and in more places. This course shares what he has learned in this period, with the aim of helping students in their own efforts to get things done in public policy implementation.

The first message you will hear is that policy implementation often poses a more complex challenge than many policy professionals seem to recognize, but the management methods we commonly rely on for implementation (emphasizing ‘plan and control’) often do not provide the capabilities needed to address such complexity. The second message is that alternative management methods exist (promoting ‘search and discover’) that can help governments develop capabilities better suited to address implementation complexity.

Combining these messages, the course narrative holds that policy professionals can help to improve implementation results by building multi-method capabilities and learning how to match
these methods to the types of implementation challenges they face. Put differently, policy professionals can improve their implementation potential by establishing toolboxes with many tools and learning how and when to use the different tools in this toolbox.

Ideas shared in the course come from various sources; including policy implementation, project management, and public organizations literatures. The course does not cover everything in these literatures, or offer absolute answers to all questions about implementation. The goal is not to be comprehensive in this manner. It is, rather, to provide a set of thoughtful and practical ideas for students to work with while at Harvard and in their future careers.

2. Class venue and times

Where we meet: Rubenstein 304 (R304)

When we meet: On Monday and Wednesday mornings, from 8:45 am to 10 am

Except the first class, which meets in R304, but on Friday 6 September, 8:45 am to 10:00 am

Please note that shopping sessions are in R304 as well, on Wednesday September 4, 10:15-11:30
3. Class Schedule (draft as at August 9, 2019)

Materials, session descriptions and class preparation advice is on Canvas.

Week 1, class 1

1. FRIDAY, September 6
   A new minister in government: “I have a good idea, how do I ‘get it done’?”
   
   NOTE THAT CROSS REGISTRATION APPLICATIONS BEGIN ON THIS DATE

Week 2, classes 2 and 3

2. MONDAY, September 9
   A new minister in government: “This seems difficult”
   You: “Actually, it’s often just impossible…”

   NOTE THAT CROSS REGISTRATION APPROVALS BEGIN ON THIS DATE

3. WEDNESDAY, September 11
   A new minister in government: “Where do you start with these impossible tasks?”
   You: “Let’s deconstruct what we mean by ‘implementing public policy’”

   NOTE: HKS ADD/DROP AND CROSS REGISTRATION DEADLINES ARE ON SEPTEMBER 12

Week 3, classes 4 and 5

4. MONDAY, September 16
   You: “Let’s continue deconstructing the impossible”

5. WEDNESDAY, September 18
   A new minister in government: “What does success and failure involve?”

Week 4, classes 6 and 7

6. MONDAY, September 23
   A new minister in government: “What do we need to achieve more success, more often?”
   You: “The key is to build your system’s capability…”

7. WEDNESDAY, September 25
   You: “Plan and control: conventional system capabilities you are advised to cultivate”

Week 5, classes 8 and 9

8. MONDAY, September 30
   You: “These are the ‘people and organization requirements’ for plan and control.”
9. WEDNESDAY, October 2
The new minister: “Command and control sounds great, but does it always work?”

10. MONDAY, October 7
The new minister: “How do we do plan and control as well as possible, given the limits?”

11. WEDNESDAY, October 9
You: “Unknowns: The kryptonite of plan and control”

Week 6, classes 10 and 11

12. WEDNESDAY, October 16
The new minister: “Are there other strategies to adopt in the presence of unknowns?”
You: “How about this 3-stop continuum of implementation strategies?”

NOTE: WE WILL DO A MID-COURSE EVALUATION ON OCTOBER 16

Week 7, class 12

13. MONDAY, October 21
The new minister: “How does adaptive implementation work?”

14. WEDNESDAY, October 23
You: “Here is an example of an adaptive method in practice.”

Week 8, classes 13 and 14

15. MONDAY, October 28
You: “These are the ‘people and organization requirements’ for adaptive implementation.”

16. WEDNESDAY, October 30
The new minister: “Adaptive implementation sounds great, but does it always work?”

Week 9, classes 15 and 16

17. MONDAY, November 4
The new minister: “Tell me about emergent implementation.”

18. WEDNESDAY, November 6
You: “Here is an example of facilitated emergence in practice.”

Week 10, classes 17 and 18
NOTE, THERE IS NO CLASS ON MONDAY, NOVEMBER 11

19. WEDNESDAY, November 13
You: “These are the ‘people and organization requirements’ for adaptive implementation.”

Week 12, classes 20 and 21

20. MONDAY, November 18
The new minister: “What do ‘facilitated emergent’ teams look like?”

21. MONDAY, November 20
The new minister: “Facilitated Emergence sounds great, but does it always work?”

Week 13, class 22

22. MONDAY, November 25
You: “Choosing your approach is key; and you might even consider a blended approach.”

NOTE, THERE IS NO CLASS ON WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 27

Week 14, classes 23 and 24

23. MONDAY, December 2
You: “Managing your funders, and their evaluation methods, to support the right approach.”

24. WEDNESDAY, December 4
You: “You also need to know how YOU might bias your choice of implementation approach.”

4. The ‘active case’ teaching device and student assessment

All students will identify a public policy issue they care about implementing—in a familiar context—in the first week of class. They will then work on that issue throughout the course, applying ideas from class to assignments related to that issue.

This is what we call an ‘active case’. It will be the vehicle through which students reflect on ideas shared in class. It will also be the primary vehicle the instructor uses to assess student engagement, understanding and reflection on course material.

Each student will produce four ‘active case’ products during the semester, to allow ongoing reflection on what we are doing in class and for grade allocation. Each student will also do a peer review (randomly allocated) of three of these products, to ensure everyone reflects on the material through the eyes of others as well. These peer reviews will also be part of student assessment.

Dates and grade allocations related to these ‘active case’ products and peer reviews are as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Due date</th>
<th>‘Active case’ product</th>
<th>Peer review required?</th>
<th>Peer review due date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friday 9/27</td>
<td>My impossible case</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Monday 9/30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday 10/18</td>
<td>Plan and control for my case?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Monday 10/21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday 11/22</td>
<td>Search and find for my case?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Monday 11/25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday 12/6</td>
<td>Reflecting on my toolbox</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each of the four active case products will count for 18% of your final grade (and each will thus be graded out of 18, with the four accounting for 72% of your overall assessment). You will be graded based on your clarity, reflection, and effort.

Each of the three peer reviews will count for 6% of the final grade (so the 3 together account for 18% of your overall assessment). You will be graded based on the thoughtfulness and usefulness of your reviews.

A final 10% of your overall assessment will reflect class contribution. This will be assessed in various ways, including through attendance. More details will be provided.

Students should note that the final grade distribution in this class will adhere to the HKS guidelines: the top 10% will receive A grades, the next 15% will receive A- grades, the next 50% will receive B+ grades, and the final 25% will receive B grades or below.

Students should also note that assignment submission deadlines will be strictly enforced. Any assignment (active case product or peer review) submitted after the deadline (when the Canvas system no longer accepts submissions) will receive a score of zero. The only exception is for students who have a legitimate, accepted reason for not submitting their assignment. This is generally—limited to medical or other exceptional personal reasons.

The procedure for getting an extension from any assignment is as follows: students must submit an email to Stacy Hannell (Stacy_hannell@hks.harvard.edu), with supporting documents (if sick, provide a doctor’s note, for instance). Ms. Hannell will then check with the director of the student’s degree program to inform them of your situation and verify that you should get an extension. If the degree program administrator verifies this, then you will be given the extension (and Stacy Hannell will inform you of the decision and the new due date of your assignment). Please note: you should not ask Professor Andrews or any of the Teachers’ Assistants for extensions. They are not involved in the procedure.

5. Expectations

We typically have big, diverse, classes in this course. This kind of class only works if everyone is respectful, engaged, and committed. As such, there are some expectations of each participant. These will be enforced:

- Students must be in class before the official start time, and may not leave before official end.
  It is disruptive when students enter late or leave early.
- Students need to listen and participate in class, respectfully and thoughtfully.
Students will be expected to read material and engage with ideas presented in the material before class. If students come into class unprepared it can be very disruptive.