1. **Name of Course:** Critical Policy Studies

2. **Lecturer:** John Clarke

3. **No. of Credits and no. of ECTS credits:** Two

4. **Semester:** Fall 2016 (two classes per week between 24 October and 5 December 2016)

**Course Description:**

Policy has emerged as an increasingly politicized field of governmental action, both within and across nations. This politicization goes alongside attempts to de-politicize policy, claiming that it is merely a matter of technocratic, administrative or managerial judgements of efficiency or effectiveness. At the same time, policy increasingly involves the action of non-state agencies – as government and governance become entangled in new formations.

Such changes have prompted the development of new approaches to policy studies, taking their place alongside older critical resources that explore new configurations of ideologies and interests. As a field, policy studies has been marked by various ‘turns’: such as the discursive turn; the argumentative turn, the interpretive turn and the cultural turn. This proliferation of critical approaches has helped to call into question the domination of rationalist, institutionalist and positivist perspectives on policy and the policy process.

The course is organized to consider different axes of critical approaches, focusing on forms of critique and analysis that are centred on:

- Identities, interests and ideologies;
- Interpretive and argumentative orientations;
- Discourse, knowledge and power;
- States and non-state organizations
• politics, policies and practices; and
• global-transnational dynamics

In the process, I hope we can make the course will reflect on the problems of it title. What modes of being critical are available? What happens to policy as an object of study in critical analysis? What approaches to critically studying policy are available, of interest and of valu

The learning outcomes of the course are that by the end of the course students should be able to:

• Identify key developments in contemporary approaches to studying policy;

• Contrast different critical perspectives;

• Reflect on the ways of being critical and their implications;

• Address systematically different views of power and authority in studying policy

• Offer accounts of the changing relations of governmental formations and the policy process;

• Engage in collective discussion about the contemporary politics of policy;

• Write a critical review of one approach within critical policy studies;

• Produce an essay presenting a critical analysis of a clearly defined issue in a chosen policy field.
NB: I hope the sessions will be conversational, rather than a lecture/questions format. That places a weight on sharing readings and reflections. In session 1 we will try to work out a way of working together and distributing responsibilities.

Sessions:

1. Studying Policy Critically (24 October 2016)

Policy sciences have conventionally been ‘handmaiden’ subjects: knowledge applied instrumentally in the service of state objectives. What, then, does it mean to study policy critically and why should we engage in the worlds of policy in this way?

Readings:


2. What’s at stake in critical policy studies? Policy, Politics and Power. (24 October 2016)

What does it mean to bring policy into an engagement with concepts of politics and power? Neither of these terms is unproblematic but it is clear that they have been central to the endeavour of studying policy critically. In this session we will consider what difference these keywords make to thinking about policy.
Readings:


3. Policy and Social Divisions: Inequality, Interests and Ideologies (7 November 2016)

From Marx's discussion of the Enclosure Laws to Harvey's account of the anti-social tendencies of neo-liberalism, the point of departure for many critical studies of policy has been the interests and power of capital. This session focuses on the problem of how to understand the intersection of social divisions, welfare and states.

Readings:


4. Policy as Knowledge, Power and Discourse (7 November 2016)

The ‘discursive turn’ has added new resources to critical policy analysis by drawing attention to the constitutive work of policy. Foucault’s work has been taken up in very different ways by scholars examining policy. It has also added to a revitalization of institutionalist analyses. In this session we will consider some of the possibilities and problems of viewing policy in this way.

Readings:


5. Policy as Institutions: the state (14 November 2016)

Policy is associated with state-centred analyses, given its official, authoritative or legitimate status. But how are we to conceptualise the institutional field of the state and its articulation with policy? In this session we will explore some of the competing conceptions of state form.

**Readings:**


6. Policy beyond the state? (14 November 2016)
Increasingly, the centrality of the state to the organization, ordering and governing of social and economic life has been brought into question by the emergence of new sites and forms of rule. The blurring of boundaries between states and markets or between governmental and non-governmental organizations has demanded new analytic approaches. This session will consider the problems of thinking beyond the state.

Readings:


J. Clarke ‘Contesting civil society; contesting politics: a conjunctural view of the antagonisms of civil society.’ (Forthcoming?)

7. Policy Beyond the Nation? (21 November 2016)

Just as policy has moved to sites and practices beyond the state, so too has it moved beyond the nation. Policy scholars have (like tohers) addressed the dynamics of globalization, regionalization, Europeanization and the problems of spatially complex and multi-scalar formations.
8. Policy as Practice (21 November 2016)

Is policy to be understood as the official statements and documents produced in the highest levels of the state or is it better understood as something constructed in practice? Since Lipsky’s discovery of the ‘street level bureaucrat’, policy in practice has become a focus of critical policy studies. In this session we will consider what happens to policy as it moves into practice and what different sorts of agents and agencies contribute to making policy.

Readings:


9. Affect, emotion and the subjects of policy (28 November 2016)

One of the most recent ‘turns’ in critical policy studies has been the engagement with issue of emotion and affect. Such issues de-centre the ‘rational man’ from the heart of political and policy sciences. In the process, they open new debates about how to think of the subjects of policy.

Readings:


feeling in policymaking, practice and participation, ed. E.Jupp, J.Pykett and F.Smith (Routledge)


For the most part, policy has been studied within the container of the national state. This methodological nationalism has come to be challenged on a number of fronts, not least by a concern with the transnational dynamics and relations that have shaped formations of nation, state and policy. In this session we will explore what it means to think about policy in movement – as a process of translation.

Readings:

R. Freeman ‘What is translation?’ Evidence & Policy, vol 5 no 4, 2009: 429-47


11. Austerity: conjunctural analysis and policy studies (5 December 2016)

A critical point of cross-over between critical policy studies and cultural studies has been the idea of ‘conjunctural analysis’. This session will explore the possibilities (and limitations) of conjunctural analysis for critical policy studies in the moment of ‘Austerity’.


J. Clarke ‘Articulating Austerity and Authoritarianism: re-imagining moral economies’ Paper for Manufacturing and Framing Austerity workshop, McMaster University, November.


The final session will reflect on some of the debates and arguments about critical policy studies examined in the preceding sessions. In particular, it will reassess the relationships between policy, politics and power. I have deliberately selected readings that aim to go beyond current policies to identify future lines of development. They do not all point in the same direction.
Readings:


