

Judy Layzer

11.007 Day 10 Notes: **Defining Problems--Interests, Experts, and the Media**

INTERESTS, EXPERTS, AND THE MEDIA

Today we're talking about the role of interests, experts, and the media in defining problems in politics.

Up until now, we've been talking about problem definition, but we've been pretty vague about *who* is doing the defining and *how* exactly a definition gets crafted and disseminated.

Interests

What do we mean by "interests" in politics?

What are the implications of this definition—what do interests do?

If you have an interest in a policy, what's the first step in getting your voice heard by government?

Why is organizing so important?

What's the main challenge to organizing interests in politics?

So let's think about how interest groups influence politics. If interest groups' main purpose is to achieve their policy objectives, what sorts of things do you expect to see them doing and why?

Who, according to West and Loomis, is likely to be advantaged in the struggle among interests to influence policy, and why?

What, if any, are public-interest groups' advantages?

Why do politicians listen to interest groups?

Experts

What's the role of experts in all of this?

The Media

What role do the media play?

Why are the media so important?

What sorts of factors determine whether or not the media is likely to disseminate your version of a story?

CASE: HEALTH CARE

Use the ideas developed in the reading so far to explain the fate of President Clinton's health care plan.

What, objectively, was the condition of health care at the beginning of the 1990s?

As we know, deteriorating conditions are not enough to make something a public/political problem. *How did health care get on the national political agenda?*

How did the Clinton administration define the problem of health care?

How did the opposition define the problem?

What role did the media play in determining which definition would prevail?

What sorts of proposals were floating around in the policy community in the early 1990s?

The Clinton administration put together a task force led by Hillary Clinton and Ira Magaziner to develop its own approach. What did this approach look like?

What, according to the administration, were the goals of its approach?

What was the window of opportunity the administration was hoping to capitalize on?

Why weren't supporters of the health care plan able to capitalize on this WOO—to link their preferred solution to the problem?