Political Science Y673: Introduction to Institutional Analysis and Development
Friday 10 AM - 12 noon, 513 N. Park
Professor Mike McGinnis (mcginnis@indiana.edu)

This seminar introduces graduate students and visiting scholars to the basic principles and selected applications of the “Bloomington School” of institutional analysis as developed by Vincent and Elinor (Lin) Ostrom and their many colleagues associated with the Ostrom Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis, an interdisciplinary research and teaching center that has been at Indiana University since 1973. We will begin by examining the research for which Lin was awarded the 2009 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences, on “economic governance, especially the commons.” We will then examine a few other central works in the Bloomington School tradition, including Vincent’s distinctive interpretation of the U.S. Constitution and a study of police services in Indianapolis from the early days of the Workshop. For the remainder of the course we will examine current research projects on collective action, resource management, climate change, health care reform, and democratic governance. We will pay particular attention to analytical challenges which remain to be resolved within this influential tradition. Among these challenges are a fuller representation of ecological dynamics, learning and evaluative processes, contributions of legal and other formal institutions, and the pervasive influence of culture and power.

All seminar participants will submit a research paper for a “mini-conference” to be held during finals week; but each paper will be presented by someone other than the author. This unusual practice is a locally-grown institution of the Ostrom Workshop, and we have found that this procedure ensures that the author receives quality comments and suggestions from several faculty members, fellow seminar participants, and other participants. Papers will also receive a grade from the course instructor, and the remainder of their course grade will be determined by class participation and by the quality of short memos on the assigned readings.

Y673 is listed as a Political Science seminar, but enrollment is open to students from all departments and schools. (Please contact the instructor or Amanda Campbell, acperry@indiana.edu, for permission to enroll for credit.)
In this seminar about a dozen faculty members from the School of Public and Environmental Affairs and from the Department of Political Science will lead discussions on a wide range of research topics related to the study of public policy, public administration, and/or political science. Their common goal is to select readings that help students understand what counts as a good research question in the many different subareas of the policy field, and to show by illustration what types of research methodologies can be used to answer these questions. Our primary concern will be on understanding the policy process in the United States, especially the goals and capabilities of major policy actors and the contexts which shape their patterns of interaction.

The selection of topics was guided by the organization of the most recent version of this course taught by Professor Evan Ringquist, who passed away earlier this year. Prof. Ringquist was widely versed in the study of environmental policy, policy analysis, and the design of policy instruments, and his loss has been deeply felt by all of his colleagues.

Prof. McGinnis, who teaches a different version of this core seminar every other fall semester, is coordinating this new version, and will be responsible for assigning grades to students. Students will be asked to read widely on a range of topics, and their mastery of this subject will be evaluated through two take-home exams, a presentation on a specific assigned reading during one class session, and the quality of their participation in class discussion throughout the semester. There are no formal requisites, but students who have not taken previous coursework in public policy are encouraged to read an undergraduate textbook for background. Please contact the instructor if need any more information.

This cross-listed seminar is the required core seminar for students enrolled in the Joint (POLS-SPEA) Ph.D. program in Public Policy, but each session has also included several students from other schools and departments. We encourage as wide a range of student participation as possible. After all, critical issues of policy design and implementation abound in all areas of academic study and practice.