



Teaching Public Policy

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Summary

- The ideal of the master science.
- Bifurcation of the policy field.
- A combined conception of the policy field.
- Teaching undergraduates.
- Teaching graduate students.
- Obstacles in academe.
- Conclusion.



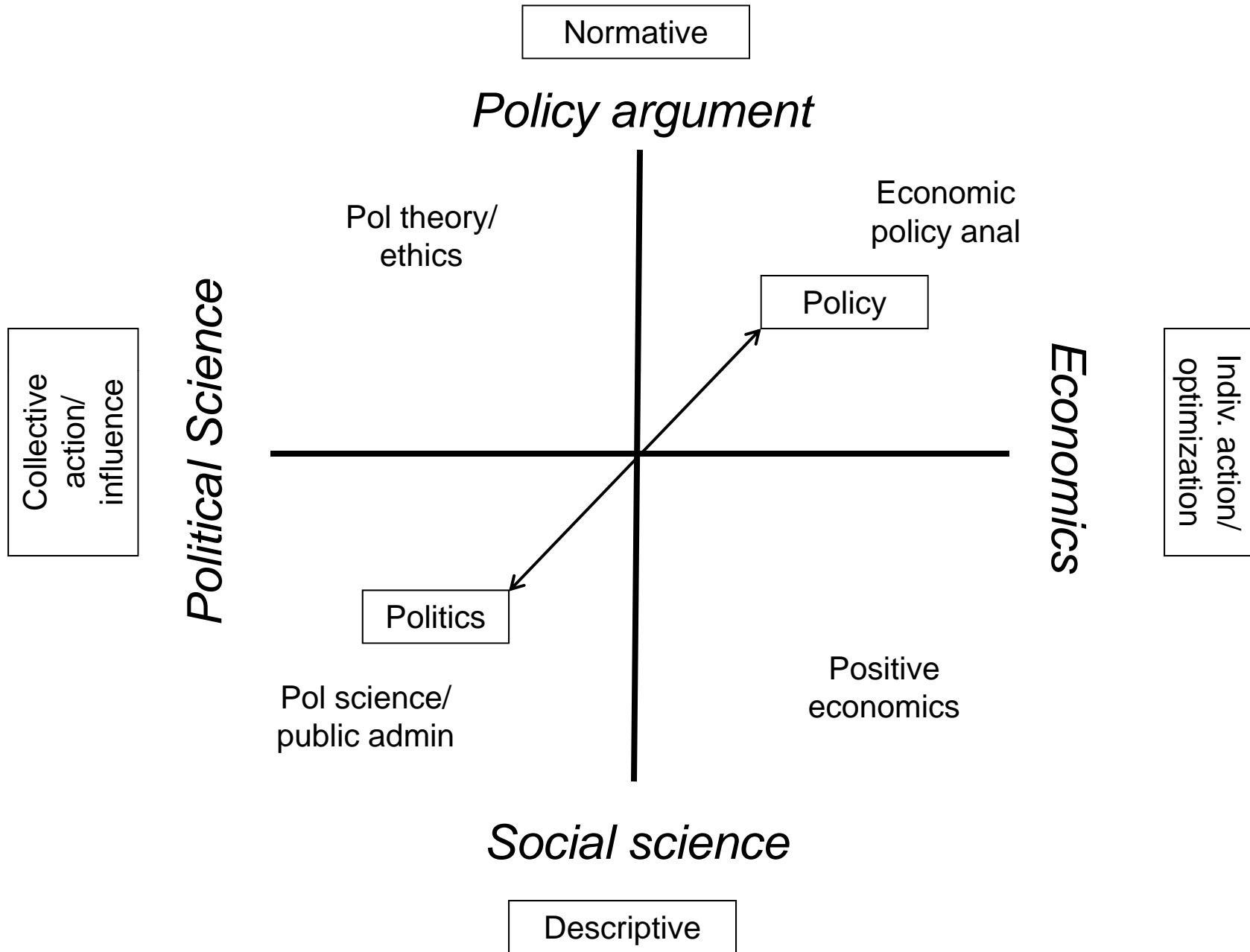
The public policy field:

- To the ancients, politics was the master science, uniting policy and politics.
- But in today's public policy, policy and politics are typically separated.
- Economists teach the one, political scientists the other, with little unity.
- This weakens the policy field.



A combined approach:

- Scholars should argue policy on the merits, then *go on* to politics and administration.
- Policy \longrightarrow Politics: changes in process may be needed to achieve best policy.
- Policy \longleftarrow Politics: infeasibility may force reconsideration of policy goals.
- Policy and politics are not separate but linked in a high-level systems analysis.





Teaching undergraduates:

- Begin with political process, then policy analysis.
- Tough to convince students that everything in *Washington* isn't "political."
- Policy analysis exercise: students address a major national problem using both policy and political analysis.



Teaching graduate students:

- Seminar for MA students in pol science, Ph.D. students in public policy.
- Begin with policy analysis, go on to political analysis.
- Treatment is more academic, theoretical.
- Course examines works that combine policy and political argument about problems.
- Students write papers combining policy and political analysis.



Examples of works combining policy and political argument:

Derek Bok, *The Trouble with Government*.

Kevin Kosar, *Failing Grades*.

Allen Schick, *Federal Budgeting*.

Paul Tough, *Whatever It Takes*.

David Whitman, *Sweating the Small Stuff*.



Obstacles in academe:

- Combined conception demands unusual breadth from scholars, contrary to academic incentives.
- Lasswell's "policy sciences" weren't rigorous enough to satisfy academe.
- Academic research is becoming more ingrown and scholastic.



Scholasticism in policy research:

- Economists study social conditions, ask changes in policy, but neglect gov itself.
- Such research has little governmental or institutional content.
- Political scientists seek rigorous modeling of policy process, but neglect the substance of policy.



Conclusion:

- The combined conception comes closest to capturing actual statecraft.
- To realize it is contrary to current academic trends.
- But work on policy problems may also promote greater breadth in academe.