"Narrative Politics in Public Policy: Legalizing Cannabis" by Hugh T. Miller

Published by Palgrave Macmillan

New Book takes a narrative approach to studying public policy and administration

Hugh T. Miller, Ph.D., Professor of Public Administration, is the author of the newly published "Narrative Politics in Public Policy: Legalizing Cannabis."

When reality is confusing, ambiguous, or uncertain, humans create narratives to impose order and to generate meaning and understanding. In conditions of democratic pluralism, these narratives may contradict one another. In the context of public policy discourse, policy narratives compete for dominance, enactment, and formal legitimacy. "Narrative Politics in Public Policy" takes cannabis policy to be the exemplary discursive field in a U.S. policy environment where 50 different states have 50 different policy regimes, with most of them directly contradicting policies of the federal government.

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"The Narrative Politics model attributes agency to narratives, treating them as political contestants in a policy arena. Policy narratives compete for dominance, leading to enactment, leading to action and institutionalization."

- Hugh Miller,
Professor of Public Administration

This research addresses important dynamics such as how one comes to identify with and subscribe to a policy narrative; how narratives evolve and adapt over time; how enacted narratives negotiate with managerial narratives during implementation, and how fully institutionalized narratives remain true (or not) to the original founding policy narrative. Throughout the policy process and over time, cannabis policy narratives contest one another for legitimacy and advantage.

"The turn to narratives is one of the most important theoretical developments in policy studies in recent times. Hugh Miller's book further advances the approach in significant ways. Principally, he demonstrates the semiotic role symbolic connotations play in interpreting policy narratives. Employing cannabis policy as a case study, the work also more generally shows how narratives drive policy processes and the political struggles that shape them. This book is recommended for those interested in gaining a deeper theoretical understanding of policy politics, as well as the uses of interpretative policy analysis." – Prof. Frank Fischer, Humboldt Universität, Berlin

Miller adopted a narrative approach to studying public policy and administration with his 2012 book "Governing Narratives: Symbolic Politics and Policy Change (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press) and also in a 2018 article published in Critical Policy Studies titled "Narrative Subscription in Public Policy Discourse." His other books include "Postmodern Public Policy" and, with the late Charles Fox, "Postmodern Public Administration."

Miller has been at FAU since 1996. He has served as director of the School of Public Administration and associate dean for the College of Design and Social Inquiry. He received his Ph.D. in Public Administration from American University.

"Narrative Politics in Public Policy" is available at
springer.com/in/book/9783030453206

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