**Discussion Questions for 17.317, U.S. Social Policy**

**Part IV: Policy in Practice**
- This part of the course examines a number of policies in practice. We will both employ what we've learned so far to examine new policy areas as well as learn about new concepts like implementation and the political implications of program design.

**Implementation: The Case of Rehabilitation in Prison**
- Today we examine implementation, using a case study of implementing social policy in prison settings. This may seem like an unusual case to examine, but it gives insight into an important aspect of social policy that we'd otherwise miss, and also shows how bureaucratic cultures can have significant impacts on the implementation of policy
- To begin: What is the goal of incarceration?
    - Keep criminals off the street to deter crime
    - Rehabilitate them (although this not a stated goal of Dept of Justice)
    - This is what interests the author: how are these people going to be reintegrated into society? Any preparation has to come from the prison experience
- Why is there skepticism among many observers about whether rehabilitation works
- Definition: Implementation is the "carrying out or execution of a program that has been adopted by legislation or by executive or judicial order." Let's say you are charged with studying the implementation of a policy. How would you go about doing that?
    - could look at policy outcomes
    - could look at policy activities
- Most implementation studies look at policy outcomes and are disappointed. Why?
- Instead she examines policy activities. What are the potential conflicts between the short goal of the prison – keeping peace among inmates – and the long-term goal of rehabilitation?
- Why does rehabilitation programming work in some prisons but not in others?
    - Attitudes of correctional officers
    - Social organization of officers and program staff
    - Resources
    - Incentives for prisoners
    - Culture and values
    - Different values can serve same function, can be functional equivalents
        - Appleton: experimentation, professionalism
        - Beaverton: policy, excellence
- Communication as a value
    - These programs are threatening to other prisoners, maybe even to other staff (say if they don't have college degrees)
    - But if high value is placed on communication, then can see how programs can help prison's goal of security; can help ease relations among staff; can help ease relations with prisoners who are the adversary
- Are there incentives in place, and do these match the existing institutional values
- Bottom line: implementation failures might seem to be a result of incompetence or deliberate resistance, but instead are due to mismatch between programs and their institutional context

- And, need to evaluate processes, not just outcomes if want to understand the course of implementation.
    - Staff and target groups are policy *makers* in their own right
    - The policies have to fit their needs and contexts; a policy design that worked in one context may not work in another
- This will become relevant for the next two sessions, where we discuss the ramifications of policy designs themselves – whether a policy is successful depends on the expectations, orientations, culture of those who implement it and those who receive it.