

Seminar 5 — Integrating the Part-1 Toolkit

IR227 Politics of Change

July 2026

What you'll do in 90 minutes

[Bridge to seminar] *Take a real policy episode. Apply 3–4 frameworks from Sessions 1–5. Identify what each framework lights up and what each misses. Propose which Cairney combination strategy fits.*

- Six cases, three pairs.
- Each group: 3–4 students, one case.
- Framework selection, primary deployment, integration reflection, plenary.

Three methodological points up front

1. A framework is “used” only if it produces a specific, defensible claim about the case. Name-dropping is not deployment.
2. The Cairney reflection is the seminar’s payoff. Defend the combination strategy against the alternatives.
3. The within-pair contrast is the cross-cutting analytical move.

Six cases, three pairs

Pair archetype	Case A	Case B
Paradigm shift	UK 1979–81 (Thatcher)	Australia 1983–96 (Hawke–Keating)
Veto-player + commitment	US BBB → IRA (2021–22)	EU Green Deal (2019–25)
Informal + drift	Italian welfare-state evolution	Indian farm laws 2020–21

Within each pair: same archetype, different politics / institutions / outcome. (Cairney 2013; Hall 1993)

The Part-1 toolkit, recapped

Fifteen frameworks across five sessions:

- **Session 1.** Path dependency, critical junctures, gradual change.
- **Session 2.** Multiple Streams Framework (MSF).
- **Session 3.** Punctuated Equilibrium (PET), Advocacy Coalitions (ACF), policy feedback.
- **Session 4.** MLG, MLP, polycentric governance.
- **Session 5.** Hall's three orders, discursive institutionalism (Schmidt), veto-player theory (Tsebelis), dynamic-inconsistency (Bueno de Mesquita; Acemoglu on the political-replacement extension), informal institutions (Helmke), drift / conversion / layering / displacement (Streeck and Thelen).

Recap: Cairney's three combination strategies

Framework: Three combination strategies

Synthesis Build a single integrated theory drawing on multiple frameworks.
Demanding; rare.

Complementary Use different theories for different aspects of the case. Most common.

Contradictory Compare what each theory says; choose via scientific-principles
“shootout.”

None is universally superior. (Cairney 2013)

Phase 1 — framework selection and deployment (25 min)

For your case:

1. Select 3–4 frameworks from the toolkit.
2. For each, identify the analytical move it makes on the case.
3. Each framework deployment must produce a specific claim. Name-dropping doesn't count.
4. Be ready to defend why *these* frameworks rather than others.

Phase 2 — what each misses; what the integration adds (20 min)

1. For each framework, identify what it does *not* light up.
2. What does the multi-framework integration produce that no single framework would?
3. Identify the binding theoretical constraint — the feature of the case that requires more than one framework.

Phase 3 — drafting + Cairney reflection (10 min)

Case: The diagnostic memo

- One paragraph: case analysis with the chosen frameworks. Name the specific claims, not the framework labels.
- Two-to-three sentences: Cairney reflection. Which combination strategy fits — synthesis, complementary, or contradictory — and why?

Phase 4 — plenary (25 min)

Within each pair: one group presents the analysis. The other group adds the contrasting point.

- Paradigm shift: UK vs. Australia — same archetype, different political route.
- Veto-player + commitment: US vs. EU — same archetype, different institutional configuration.
- Informal + drift: Italian welfare vs. Indian farm laws — same archetype, very different political systems.

Then: cross-cutting Cairney reflection. Did certain combination strategies recur across pairs?

Three things to take away

1. Disciplined deployment beats encyclopaedic deployment. Three frameworks deployed precisely outperform fifteen invoked vaguely.
2. The within-pair contrast tests how frameworks apply across political contexts. Frameworks generalise as conceptual tools; their application is always context-specific.
3. The Cairney typology disciplines integration. (Cairney 2013) Make the choice defensible.

Part 1 is complete.

- Cairney, P. (2013). **“Standing on the Shoulders of Giants: How Do We Combine the Insights of Multiple Theories in Public Policy Studies?”** In: *Policy Studies Journal* 41.1, pp. 1–21.
- Hall, P. A. (1993). **“Policy Paradigms, Social Learning and the State: The Case of Economic Policy-Making in Britain”**. eng. In: *Comparative Politics* 25, pp. 275–96.