PPPA 6006: Policy Analysis
Section 10, Spring 2017

Class Meetings: Wednesdays, 3:30-5:30, SEH7040
Instructor: Peter Linquiti, PhD (linquiti@gwu.edu)
Office Hours: By appointment (MPA610)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides an introduction to policy analysis for masters students. Weimer and Vining define policy analysis as "client-oriented advice relevant to public decisions and informed by social values."

Wildavsky – one of the founders of the modern discipline of public policy studies – says that policy analysis *"can be learned but not taught"* and Bardach suggests that "policy analysis is *more art than science*. It draws on *intuition as much as on method*." To get the most out of the class, students need to actively engage the material, and to learn by doing rather than only by listening to lectures.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will be able to identify and define public problems, identify and evaluate policy solutions, and make educated recommendations to policymakers.
- Students will be able to critically evaluate policy-relevant information by assessing the accuracy and completeness of such information and identifying the values and perspectives inherent in it.
- Students will understand the strengths and limitations of various approaches to policy analysis.
- Students will gain a basic understanding of the principles of program evaluation.
- Students will improve their ability to bring clarity to complex policy issues in both written work and oral presentations.

READINGS

There are two required textbooks
- Bardach and Patashnik, A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis, 5th Ed, 2016.
- Eggers and O'Leary, If We Can Put a Man on the Moon, 2009.

All other readings will be available on Blackboard (blackboard.gwu.edu).

Several readings are brief. This does not mean that they are simple or straightforward, but only that you are reading an excerpt selected to help you focus on what's most important in an author's work.

Several readings are labeled as "case materials." These readings demonstrate the practical implications of more theoretical readings. Case materials will be the basis of class discussion; students should bring a copy to class. Students *do not* need to master the specific policy details in case materials. Instead, materials should be read holistically to identify linkages to core course concepts.

Each student will be assigned several readings from the syllabus. These assignments are made by group, with groups identified on the syllabus. Group membership will be posted on Blackboard before the second class. If you are a discussant, please study your reading and be prepared to launch the discussion with a provocative question, a comparison to another reading, or a point that was difficult to understand. Your discussion of assigned readings will be a factor in your class engagement grade.

CLASS SCHEDULE AND OUTLINE

The course outline generally matches the eight steps in Bardach & Patashnik's book.

Session 1 (January 18): Laying the Foundations

- Key Topics
  - Course Logistics, Syllabus, Introductions
  - A Definition of Policy Analysis
  - A Definition of the Policy "Cycle"
- Readings
  - Bardach & Patashnik, "Introduction," pp xv-xx.[1]
  - Eggers and O'Leary, Preface and Introduction.
  - Weimer and Vining, *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice, 5th Ed*, "What is Policy Analysis?" pp 23-26, 2010. (One of the most widely used texts in MPP programs. As we'll see later in the course, there are other schools of thought, but W&V give us a good starting point.)
  - deLeon and Martell, *Encyclopedia of Public Administration and Public Policy, 2e*, "Policy Sciences Approach," pp 1495-1498, 2008. (The roots of public policy analysis as a distinct discipline lie in Lasswell's work. We'll discuss Denver's T-REX project in class, either this week or next.)
  - Flyvbjerg, *Making Social Science Matter,* Chapter 1, "The Science Wars: A Way Out," pp. 1-4, 2001. (A brief argument that social sciences and natural sciences are inherently different. Aristotle's concept of phronesis lies at the foundation of policy analysis.)
  - Piketty, *Capital in the 21st Century,* "A Debate without Data?" pp 2-3, 2014. (Ignore the fanfare about this French neo-Marxist and focus on his advice about avoiding a "dialogue of the deaf".)
- Assignments: None

Session 2 (January 25): Policy Analysis in a Post-Truth World

- Key Topics
  - Critical Thinking as a Means of Deconstructing the Issue Rhetoric
  - Inquiry vs. Advocacy
  - Evidence for Citizens vs. Evidence for Policy Analysts
- Readings
  - Kirp, *Policy Notes,* "Does Policy Analysis Matter? Are We Still Relevant?" Spring 2012. (Kirp was one of the first faculty members at U.C. Berkeley's School of Public Policy in the late 1970s.)
  - Eggers and O'Leary, Chapter 1. (Pay particular attention to the "Tolstoy Trap.")
  - Wade et al, *Psychology, 11th Ed.,* "Thinking Critically," pp 6-13, 2014. (Yes, it's from a Psych 101 textbook, but the message couldn't be more relevant to policy analysis.) **(A)**
  - Garvin and Roberto, *Harvard Business Review,* "What You Don't Know About Making Decisions," September 2001. (The focus is on the corporate sector, but concepts in this reading – especially the difference between inquiry and advocacy – apply equally to the public sector.) **(B)**
  - *The Economist,* "The Post-Truth World: Yes, I'd Lie to You," September 10, 2016; Inskeep, *National Public Radio*, "A Finder's Guide to Facts," December 11, 2016; Williams, *Christian Science Monitor,* "Post-Truth: What Oxford's Word of the Year Says about Modern Discourse," November 16, 2016; and *BBC News,* Video Clip, "Fake News & Post Truth," www.youtube.com/watch?v=8QVqwNLJb7s. (As you read/view these 4 items, think not as a citizen reading the news, but as a policy analyst deciding what constitutes evidence that you can rely upon.) **(C&D)**
  - Linquiti, *Deconstructing Environmental Policy Claims,* January 2017. (I developed this paper for my Environmental Policy class, but it is broadly applicable to all sorts of claims made in the policy world. It's a working draft; comments are welcome!)
- Assignments: None

[1] If a particular reading does not indicate an assigned group (i.e., A, B, C, or D), then all students should read that item. In addition, even if you're not assigned a particular reading, you should still skim it, so that you can follow the class discussion.

Session 3 (February 1): Policy Analysis & Systems Thinking

- Key Topics
  - Systems-Oriented Thinking
  - Stocks & Flows
  - Balancing & Reinforcing Feedback Loops
- Readings (No reading assignments this week; all students should do all readings.)
  - Hennessey, *How Much Advice does the President Need?,* December 17, 2016. (A quick read to motivate the idea that policy decisions typically get made in complex systems. For this class session, we'll consider primarily policy issues, rather than political issues.)
  - Video Clips: There are links on Blackboard to eight short videos on different aspects of systems thinking. Before watching them, revisit the story of cholera in London from the Introduction to the Eggers & O'Leary book, in particular, their observation that "the system is invisible." These clips all come from Climate Interactive, so most of the examples are drawn from climate change and global warming, but the concepts discussed are equally applicable to virtually all public policy issues. They total just over an hour, although you might find that YouTube's speed control lets you watch at a faster pace without missing substance. I suggest you watch the videos before tackling the Sterman reading. Once you watch the clips and read Sterman, you're ready to do the Mitchell et al. reading (which will be the basis of a graded in-class exercise).
  - Sterman, "Sustaining Sustainability: Creating a Systems Science in a Fragmented Academy and Polarized World," 2012. (This reading is a bit dense; read it holistically for core themes, rather than trying to master all of the details.)
  - Mitchell et al., *The Psychiatric Clinics of North America,* "Obesity: Overview of an Epidemic," December 2011. You do not need to read the section on "Health Risks Associated with Obesity" (we will take as a given that obesity is a public health concern) nor the section on "Strategies for Getting Out of the Obesity Epidemic" (at this point in the semester, we are focused on problem diagnosis, not solution analysis). In this week's class, you will work in small groups to build a system map (like the one in the Climate Interactive video on Natural Gas & the Climate) of the problem of obesity in the U.S. You don't need to do any additional research on obesity beyond the assigned article. It would be a good idea to come to class with a rough draft of your map (not to turn it, but to use in the group exercise).
- Assignments: System Map (prepared in class)

Session 4 (February 8): Defining Policy Problems

- Key Topics
  - Tame vs. Wicked Problems
  - Problem Trees: Causes & Consequences
  - "Off-the-Shelf" Problems: Market Failures, Government Failures, Fairness and Equity
- Readings
  - Bardach & Patashnik, "Step 1-Define Problem" and "Step 2-Assemble Some Evidence", pp 1-18.
  - Rittel and Webber, *Policy Sciences,* Volume 4, "Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning," pp 155-169, 1973. (40+ years old, but still very relevant; Sections 2 and 3 are key.) **(A&B)**
  - Vesely, *Central European Journal of Public Policy,* "Problem Tree: A Problem Structuring Heuristic," Volume 2, pp 68-79, December 2008. (Skim the section on "Procedure.") **(C&D)**
  - Case Materials: Gladwell, *The New Yorker,* "Million Dollar Murray," February 13, 2006, and Newman, *U.S. News & World Report,* "One Woman's Fight to Rejoin the Middle Class," May 24, 2011. (These articles make a good argument that getting the problem definition right is a necessary – but not sufficient – condition for developing an effective policy solution.)
- Assignments: PS#1 distributed

Session 5 (February 15): Specifying Policy Alternatives

- Key Topics
  - "Off-the-Shelf" Policies
  - Policy Creation
  - The "Do-Nothing" (or Status Quo) Alternative
- Readings
  - Bardach & Patashnik, "Step 3-Construct the Alternatives," pp 18-27 and Appendix B, "Things Governments Do," pp 155-163. (Appendix B – a broad list of policy instruments – provides an excellent foundation for specifying policy alternatives.)
  - Eggers and O'Leary, Chapter 2.
  - Patton, Sawicki, and Clark, *Basic Methods of Policy Analysis and Planning, 3rd Ed*, Chapter 6, "Identifying Alternatives," pp 215-237, 2013. (This reading strikes a good balance between the discovery of existing policy alternatives and the creation of new alternatives.) **(A&B)**
  - Bravender, *Greenwire,* "Critics Shocked – Shocked – When Special Interests Sway Regs," December 15, 2014. **(C)**
  - Congressional Budget Office, *Transitioning to Alternative Structures for Housing Finance,* pp 1-6. December 2014. (You only need to read the summary of this CBO report; be sure you can articulate the different purposes of Tables 1 and 2.) **(D)**
  - Case Materials: Krauss and Mouawad, New York Times, *"Accidents Surge as Oil Industry Takes the Train,"* January 25, 2014. (Think about the types of policy alternatives that should be considered to address this problem; the article will be the basis of an in-class exercise.)
- Assignments: PS#1 due

Session 6 (February 22): Implementation and Policy Design

- Key Topics
  - Logic Models
  - Complexity of Joint Action
  - Program Execution
- Readings
  - Bardach & Patashnik, Part III, "Handling a Design Problem," pp 113-124.
  - Eggers and O'Leary, Chapters 4 & 5.
  - W.K. Kellogg Foundation, *Logic Model Development Guide*, Chapter 1, "Introduction to Logic Models," pp III - 14, 2004. (Often used for program evaluation, logic models are also very handy tools when designing policy alternatives.) **(A&B)**
  - Johnson, *Washington Post,* "Maryland Looks to Connecticut for Health Exchange Answers," May 31, 2014. (Are we looking at a failure of theory, or of implementation?) **(C)**
  - Strelneck and Linquiti, *Environmental Technology Transfer to Developing Countries: Practical Lessons Learned During Implementation of the Montreal Protocol*, pp 1-12, Fall 1995. (Sections 2 and 3 are the most important parts of this reading; skim the other sections.) **(D)**
  - Case Materials: *Washington Post*, "Obama to Announce $100 Million Plan to Train New Educators," February 6, 2012. (This article describes an initiative that the President proposed a few years ago. Think about using both the logic model framework and the stakeholder-based process analysis from the Strelneck reading to map out implementation issues that might be associated with this program. This reading will be the basis of an in-class exercise.)
- Assignments: PS#2 distributed

Session 7 (March 1): Developing Evaluation Criteria

- Key Topics
  - "Off-the-Shelf" Criteria: Cost, Efficacy, Equity, Administrability
  - Analytic vs. Values Plotlines
  - Unintended Consequences
- Readings
  - Bardach & Patashnik, "Step 4-Select the Criteria," pp 27-46.
  - Franklin, Letter to Joseph Priestley on Prudential Algebra, September 19, 1772. (In a single paragraph – the second – Ben makes the case for careful consideration of criteria.) **(A)**
  - Munger, *Analyzing Policy,* "Selection of Criteria," p 8, 2000. (A succinct summary.) **(B)**
  - Stone, *Policy Paradox: Art of Political Decision Making*, selections from "Part II-Goals," 2012. (This reading is a bit dis-jointed, but worth slogging through. Stone defines five important criteria for thinking about public policies, but describes each in a somewhat different fashion. This reading is a mix of snippets of text and summary tables.) **(C&D)**
  - Case Materials: ProCon.org, *"Should Social Security be Privatized?,"* August 28, 2015. (As you review this piece, think about what criteria should be used to evaluate proposed reforms to the social security system. We will do an in-class exercise based on this reading.)
- Assignments: PS#2 due; PS#3 distributed

Session 8 (March 8): Projecting Outcomes based on Models of Human Behavior

- Key Topics
  - "Seeing" the Future Impacts of Today's Policy Choices: "Disciplined Guesswork"
  - Constructing Alternate Futures: Policy Flight Simulators
  - The Importance of the Baseline
- Readings
  - Bardach & Patashnik, "Step 5-Project the Outcomes," pp 46-65.
  - *The Economist,* "Predicting the Future: Unclouded Vision, Book Review of Tetlock & Gardner's Superforecasting," September 26, 2015, and Frick, *Harvard Business Review,* "What Research Tells us About Making Accurate Predictions," February 2, 2015. (Read together to get an understanding of Tetlock's work). **(A)**
  - Stone, *Huffington Post,* "Understanding Cause and Effect," July 27, 2013. (Four examples of why, without an analytic baseline, you can't sort out cause and effect.) **(B&C)**
  - Friedman, *The Microeconomics of Public Policy Analysis,* Chapter 2, "An Introduction to Modeling," pp 19-25, 2002. (Using models to predict consequences of policies.) **(D)**
  - Case Materials: Congressional Budget Office, *Cost Estimate: S.801 Caregiver and Veterans Health Services Act of 2009,* August 31, 2009. (Don't worry about the details other than the estimate for Section 102's stipends to caregivers on page 5; we'll go over that section in class.)
- Assignments: PS#3 due

March 15 – No Class – GW Spring Break

Session 9 (March 22): Projecting Outcomes using Evidence and Experience

- Key Topics
  - Causal Inference
  - Demonstration Projects & Policy Experimentation
  - Uncertain Outcomes

- Readings
  - Bardach & Patashnik, "Part IV, Smart (Best) Practices," pp 125-139.
  - Trochim, *The Research Methods Knowledge Base, 2nd Ed*, Section 1-2d, "Introduction to Validity," pp 20-23, 2007. (A framework for thinking about the conditions under which evidence can be seen as a reasonable proxy for the "truth".) **(A)**
  - Nathan, *Social Science and Government: The Role of Policy Researchers*, Chapter 4, "Hurdles of Demonstration Research," pp 59-79, 2000. (The focus here is on internal validity.) **(B)**
  - Cartwright and Hardie, *Evidence-Based Policy,* pp ix-7 and 80-84, 2012. (The focus here is on external validity. Their references to RCTs – randomized controlled trials – can be read broadly to refer to all research designs deemed internally valid. Don't worry about the cryptic reference to layer cakes on p 82.) **(C)**
  - Ryan, *Scrapping the Jargon and Entering the Discussion,* October 20, 2010. (Explains how careful analysis improved the design of the US Visa Waiver Program.) **(D)**
  - Case Materials: Baker, Chen, and Li, *Nationwide Review of Graduated Driver Licensing,* February 2007. (Ask yourself how the evidence in this study can be used to project the outcomes of new policies. An in-class exercise will be based on this reading.)
- Assignments: Group project topics distributed

Session 10 (March 29): Making Policy Tradeoffs

- Key Topics
  - System 1 (Intuitive) and System 2 (Deliberative) Modes of Thinking
  - Cost-Benefit, Cost-Effectiveness, & Multi-Attribute Analysis
  - Tips & Tricks for Tradeoffs: Dominated Alternatives, Thresholds, Breakeven Analysis
- Readings
  - Bardach & Patashnik, "Step 6-Confront the Tradeoffs" and "Step 7-Stop/Focus/Narrow/Deepen/ Decide!" pp 65-72.
  - Kahneman Interview - The Guardian, www.youtube.com/watch?v=RHmXPyX7czU. (All students should watch this four-minute video prior to class.)
  - Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow,* Chapters 1, 2, & 3, 2011. **(A)**
  - Weimer and Vining, *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice, 5th Ed*, "Choosing a Solution Method," pp 354-359, and "Assessment: Comparing Alternatives across Incommensurable Goals," pp 374-375, 2010. (The essential piece of this reading is the typology of five solution methods and the circumstances under which each is applicable.) **(B&C)**
  - Milbank, *Washington Post,* "Obama, Lost in Thought," April 26, 2011. (Set aside your views of the Obama Presidency, and focus on the two modes of thinking described by Milbank). **(D)**
  - Case Materials: Gladwell, *The New Yorker,* "The Order of Things," February 14/21, 2011. (Don't worry about which sports car you should buy, focus on his critique of ranking schemes.)
- Assignments: PS#4 distributed

Session 11 (April 5): Telling the Story in a Post-Truth World

- Key Topics
  - Protecting Your Credibility
  - Bringing Clarity to Complexity in Writing and Presentations
  - Making Tradeoffs (again)
- Readings
  - Bardach & Patashnik, "Step 8-Tell Your Story," pp 72-82.
  - Eggers and O'Leary, Chapter 8.

- Levitt and Dubner, *Think Like a Freak,* "How to Persuade People Who Don't Want to be Persuaded," pp 167-188, 2014. **(A)**
- Jason F., *37signals.com,* "The Class I'd Like to Teach," November, 2005, and Wiens, *Harvard Business Review,* "I Won't Hire People Who Use Poor Grammar," July 20, 2012. **(B)**
- Mintrom, *People Skills for Policy Analysts,* "Giving Presentations," pp 90-117, 2003. (This reading will be helpful as you prepare for your capstone project.) **(C)**
- Rosenwald, *Washington Post,* "Serious Reading Takes a Hit," April 6, 2014. (Come to class with some ideas for how a policy analyst can speak to the TwitterBrain.)
- Eblin, *A Five Step Plan for Speaking Truth to Power,* govexec.com, September 14, 2011. (The audio clip mentioned in this blog is worth a listen. **(D)**
- Congressional Budget Office, *The Supplemental Nutrition Program: Infographic,* April 2012. (Come to class with your suggestions for improving this infographic.)
- Case Materials: Improving Health in the Marshall Islands, Blackboard. (In addition to the reading, view these three online videos. This material will be used for an in-class group exercise.)

- Assignments: PS#4 due

Session 12 (April 12): Politics & Policy Analysis

- Key Topics
  - Politics & Policy: Two Sides of the Same Coin?
  - Dealmaking
  - Methods for Integrating Political Analysis into Policy Analysis
- Readings
  - Bardach & Patashnik, Appendix D, "Strategic Advice on the Dynamics of Political Support," pp 173-179.
  - Eggers and O'Leary, Chapter 3.
  - Buchler, *The Conversation,* "Does Nonpartisan Journalism Have a Future?" January 5, 2017. **(A)**
  - Wheelan, *Introduction to Public Policy,* "Balancing Substance and Politics," 2011, pp 519-520. (Understanding the difference between wonks and hacks is important.)
  - Lowenthal, *Intelligence: From Secrets to Policy,* 5th Edition, 2012, pp 2-5, (Could the norms for CIA analysts be relevant to policy analysts dealing with politicians in the unclassified world?) **(B)**
  - Mead, *Journal of Public Affairs Education,* "Teaching Public Policy: Linking Policy and Politics," 19(3), pp 389-395, 2013. (Only 6 pages are required; scan the rest if you're interested.) **(C)**
  - Mead, *Policy Sciences,* "Only Connect: Why Government Often Ignores Research," Vol 48, pp 257-266, 2015. (Only 10 pages are required; scan the rest if you're interested.) **(D)**
  - Case Materials: Scheiber, *The New Republic*, "The Memo that Larry Summers Didn't Want Obama to See," February 22, 2012. (Should policy analysts do political analysis?)

Assignments: None

Session 13 (April 19): Group Presentations

Session 14 (April 26): Alternative Paradigms for Policy Analysis

- Key Topics
  - Government Failure
  - History of Policy Analysis as a Discipline
  - The 8-Fold Path & the Policy Cycle: Great Recipes, Helpful Metaphors, or Useless Distractions?

- Readings
  - Eggers and O'Leary, Chapters 6 & 7 (recommended, not required).
  - Weimer and Vining, Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice, 5th Ed, "Problems Inherent in Bureaucratic Supply," and "Problems Inherent in Decentralization," pp 178-189, 2010. (Even though we have a public policy problem, government may be unable to deliver a solution.) **(A)**
  - Moran, Rein, and Goodin, (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy*, Chapter 2, "The Historical Roots of the Field," deLeon, pp 39-47, 2006. (A nice summary of the field; note that Sections 3 and 4 are not part of the assigned reading.) **(B)**
  - Fry & Raadschelders, *Mastering Public Administration*, "Charles Lindblom: Probing the Policy Process: Policymaking as Analytical and Interactive Process," pp 273-276, 2008. (Despite the date, most of the work described in this reading was done between 1955 and 1990.) **(C)**
  - Stone, Policy Paradox: Art of Political Decision Making, "Why This Book?," pp 1-15, 2012. (Stone tackles the traditional "rationalist" school of policy analysis in a comprehensive critique.) **(D)**
  - Cairney, *The Politics of Evidence-Based Policy Making,* Chapter 2, "The Role of Evidence in Theories of the Policy Process, 2015. (Note Cairney's opening observation that modern-day EBPM is very similar to the post-war articulation of the policy sciences as synoptic rationality. Don't worry about mastering all of the theories of the policy process that Cairney mentions; the key takeaway for this section of the reading is that the synoptic rational model embedded in the policy sciences viewpoint doesn't do a very good job of accommodating the ways that the policymaking process actually operates on a day-to-day basis.)
  - Schultze, *The Politics and Economics of Public Spending*, pp 74-76, 1968. (A modest, but powerful, claim for the value of analysis.)
  - Case Materials: Alpert, *Washington Post,* "Can Government Learn to Fail Fast?," April 12, 2014; Hawkins, *Greater Greater Washington,* "Public Officials who Communicate their Plans, Listen to Feedback, and then Fix Mistakes Aren't Idiots," October 9, 2015; Tankersley and Matthews, *Washington Post,* "Can We Have an Evidence-Based Government?," April 16, 2013. (Read these three blog posts and think about whether we can actually put Lindblom's advice into practice.)
- Assignments: None; Final Policy Analysis papers are due by 5pm in hardcopy to the instructor's mailbox in MPA601, on Wednesday, May 10.

GRADING
- System Map (5%)
- Four Problem Sets (10% each)
- Group Presentation (15%)
- Final Policy Analysis (15%)
- Class Participation/Engagement/Reading Summaries (25%)

Grades for assignments and for the course as a whole reflect the following philosophy:
- A Excellent: Exceptional work for a graduate student. Work at this level is unusually thorough, well reasoned, creative, methodologically sophisticated, and well written. Work is of exceptional, professional quality.
- A- Very Good: Very strong work for a graduate student. Shows signs of creativity and a strong understanding of appropriate analytical approaches, is thorough and well reasoned, and meets professional standards.
- B+ Good: Sound work for a graduate student; well reasoned and thorough, without serious analytical shortcomings. Indicates the student has fully accomplished the basic objectives of this graduate course.
- B Adequate: Competent work for a graduate student with some evident weaknesses. Demonstrates competency in the key course objectives but the understanding or application of some important issues is less than complete.
- B- Borderline: Weak work for a graduate student but meets minimal expectations. Understanding of key issues is incomplete. (A "B-" average in all courses is not sufficient to sustain graduate status in 'good standing.')

- C+/ C / C- Deficient: Inadequate work for a graduate student; rarely meets minimal expectations for the course. Work is poorly developed or flawed by numerous errors and misunderstandings of important issues.
- F Unacceptable: Work fails to meet minimal expectations or course credit for a graduate student. Performance has consistently failed to meet minimum course requirements. Weaknesses and limitations are pervasive.

EXTRA CREDIT

The opportunity to earn extra credit *may* be offered throughout the semester. Such situations may arise when our discussion takes us to an interesting topic where our collective understanding is limited. I will then announce in class an assignment in which a student spends less than an hour outside of class researching the topic and, *within one week*, writing me an email on what they found. Students completing the assignment will have the grade on one of their problem sets raised by one grade step.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON REQUIRED ASSIGNMENTS

- Problem Sets: Four problem sets will test whether students have grasped certain core concepts. *Note that, after the fact, students often report that problem sets are harder than they look!* Students are encouraged (but not required[2]) to work on the problem sets in groups of no more than four and provide a single submission to be graded. Some problem set content may be similar to that used in prior classes; current students may not consult prior students about such assignments, nor may students use in any way answer sheets that have been previously distributed. Students are reminded of their obligations under GWU's Code of Academic Integrity.
- Group Policy Analysis and Presentation: Groups of about 3-4 students will conduct and present in class a policy analysis structured around Bardach's Eightfold Path. Groups are free to arrange their work as they think best, but experience suggests that at least two out-of-class meetings will be needed. Groups will be formed randomly (to mimic most work settings where one does not get to select one's colleagues). Topics will be broad issue areas or proposed solutions; thus, the group's *first task* will be to identify and succinctly define a policy problem to be analyzed. Groups will give an oral briefing and provide a hardcopy of presentation slides to the instructor. (A written report is not required.) Groups should plan on presenting for 15 minutes and then leading a substantive class discussion of the presentation for an additional 15 minutes. It's fine for one or two group members to not participate in the presentation itself, but then these group members should play a prominent role in the discussion. The presentation should make a cogent and compelling case in support of the recommended alternative, without minimizing its downsides. Groups need not conduct a detailed political analysis of the alternatives – the focus here is policy analysis. Grading will be based in equal parts on the quality of the analysis, the coherence and clarity of presented material, and the professionalism of the verbal presentation. (By the way, former students say this assignment is good preparation for capstone.)
- Final Policy Analysis: Students can choose any policy issue of interest, but should frame their analysis *narrowly enough to do a good job within the course schedule*. Students should also select a notional client (i.e., a policymaker such as Mayor of Chicago, Assistant Secretary of Defense, Miami Public Works Director) with at least some power to address the issue. Identify the root causes of the policy problem and its most important consequences. Use *both* evidence *and* logic to demonstrate why the problem needs to be addressed. One-sided arguments and exaggerated rhetoric are rarely convincing. Provide four to five *credible* policy alternatives that merit your client's consideration. Explain the rationale behind each and briefly describe how it would work.

[2] It is understood that competing time demands may make it hard for some students to schedule time to work in a group.

Alternatives should be conceptually distinct rather than slight variations of one another. One of your options should be a "status quo" alternative. Describe the evaluation criteria that should drive the decision about which alternative to select. Some criteria may be important not because your client cares about them, but because other stakeholders care about them.

The student should then project the performance of alternatives, assess the tradeoffs among alternatives, and recommend an alternative. The analysis should demonstrate the student understands course readings and be based both on logic and on the presentation and critique of relevant evidence. A complete criteria-alternatives matrix should be included, with a short phrase in each cell of the matrix that describes the relevant projected outcome. You may also include a numeric rank or rating in each cell, if you believe that doing so will clarify the decision-making process. The memo should start with a succinct one paragraph summary of the analysis and recommendation. This summary should clearly articulate the tradeoffs associated with your recommendation. Finally, include a 140-character tweet (without a URL) that captures the essence of your work, without falling into the trap of the post-truth world.

The memo is limited to 3,500 words. Please use the word count feature of your word processing software and include the total word count on the first page of your submission. Citations should be on a separate page and do not count against the word limit.

Submissions should be written in memo format. Academic prose or an essay format is not appropriate; instead, *apply the guidelines on Blackboard under "Writing Resources."* You will likely find the word limit to be a significant constraint. It should not be construed as an invitation to provide a cursory or superficial summary. Rather, the limit is meant to push you to craft concise and to-the-point prose without sacrificing analytic rigor.

☞ Tip: The Final Policy Analysis paper will be *much easier* to write if you pick a topic early in the semester and then make notes specific to your paper throughout the semester as we work through Bardach's Eightfold Path. We will spend a few minutes in each class session discussing individual students' plans for their paper.

- Class Participation/Engagement/Reading Summaries: Policy analysis is a collective activity that benefits from discussion and debate. And, as more art than science, learning to do policy analysis depends on active student engagement (hence, the weight of 25% assigned to the course participation grade). Students are expected to contribute to class discussions with critical thinking, creative suggestions, and substantive questions. Students will be called on by name when they are a discussant, or if class discussion bogs down or only a narrow range of perspectives is being heard.

WRITTEN WORK

Policy writing is different from academic writing. Getting good at it takes practice. A well-written policy analyses is concise, to-the-point, and written in Plain Language. The first time they read it, your audience should be able to:

- Find what they need;
- Understand what they find; and
- Use what they find to meet their needs.[3]

Before submitting written work for this class, consult the "Writing Resources" on Blackboard. Please also be sure to proofread your work. Typos, misspellings, and grammar mistakes will result in grade reductions. Especially if English is not your first language, consider taking advantage of GW's Writing Support Program which offers free, one on one service (writingcenter.gwu.edu).

[3] http://www.plainlanguage.gov/whatisPL/index.cfm

Course Effort

Pursuant to Federal regulation and the requirements of Middle States Commission on Higher Education, you should know that 112.5 hours of work is required for a 3-credit course. We will meet 14 times for 2 two hours (28 hours). In addition, you should expect to spend 3 hours per week preparing for class (42 hours). The final 42.5 hours will be spent outside of class on graded assignments.

Additional Policies and Information

- Civility: Higher education works best when it becomes a vigorous and lively marketplace of ideas in which all points of view are heard. Free expression in the classroom is an integral part of this process. At the same time, higher education demands that all of us approach the enterprise with empathy and respect for others, irrespective of their ideology, political views, or identity.
- Class Decorum: Texting, side conversations, or using your laptop for anything other than taking notes is an inappropriate use of class time. Those who do these things may think their actions are unobtrusive, but they are actually quite conspicuous. It's distracting both to me and to your classmates, and will result in a significant decrease in your class participation/engagement grade.
- Attendance: Please try not to miss class! Policy analysis is a skill that is learned by doing and we will be practicing these skills in class. If you do miss a class, please let me know in advance; make sure you get notes from a classmate, and download assigned materials from Blackboard.
- Blackboard: Blackboard will be used to communicate with students. Please make sure that you can access the course and that you regularly check whatever email account Blackboard uses for you. If you have problems with Blackboard, contact the Helpdesk at 202-994-5530 or helpdesk.gwu.edu.
- Turning Things In: Assignments are due in hardcopy. Electronic submission is not permitted. Multi-page assignments should be stapled; covers are unnecessary. Pages should always be numbered.
- Late Work: Late work will incur a one-grade-step reduction (e.g. from an A- to a B+) per day.
- Academic Honesty: Except for Problem Sets, students may not work together on any assignment. All examinations, papers, and other graded work products and assignments are to be completed in conformance with the George Washington University Code of Academic Integrity. (see studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity). Please note the prohibition on consulting former students or relying on prior answer keys when completing problem sets.
- Incompletes: A student must consult with the instructor to obtain an "incomplete" before the last day of class. Consult the TSPPPA Student Handbook for the relevant CCAS policy.
- Grades: No grade changes can be made after the conclusion of semester, except for clerical error.
- Syllabus: This syllabus is a guide to the course. Sound educational practice requires flexibility and the instructor may revise content and requirements during the semester.
- Accommodation for Students with Disabilities: If you need additional time or other accommodation due to a disability, let me know in first week of the class. For accommodation on the basis of disability, you need to provide documentation to the Office of Disability Support Services.
- Religious Holidays: Please let me know during the first week of the semester if you will miss a class to observe a religious holiday. You will be allowed to make up missed work without penalty.
- University Student-Support Resources: Help with academic, social, and personal issues is available 24/7 from the University Counseling Service (202-994-5300 or counselingcenter.gwu.edu).