Course Description and Objectives

This is an introductory course to policy analysis. Policy analysts are responsible for defining and framing public problems, identifying and evaluating possible strategies for addressing problems, and recommending solutions that make the most sense. The goals of this course are to provide students with an understanding of the role that analysis plays in the policymaking process, to make students critical consumers of policy analysis, and to equip students with the basic skills necessary to write and present a professional policy analysis paper.

Student Learning Objectives:

The course relies primarily on case studies of important policy decisions as a learning strategy. By the end of the course, students will be proficient in:

- **The Tools of Policy Analysis:** Students will be able to identify and define public problems; identify and evaluate policy solutions; and make educated recommendations to policymakers.
- **Information Gathering:** Students will be able to cull, interpret, and evaluate policy-relevant information. This includes the ability to distinguish fact from fiction, assess the accuracy and completeness of information, and identify the values and perspectives inherent in such information.
- **Policy Analysis in Context:** Students will be able to explain the strengths and limitations of policy analysis; describe the relationship between policy analysis, politics, and the policy process in democracy; and define a range of economic, social, organizational and political factors influencing policy.
Blackboard

Blackboard will be used to post and update course materials so you should check it regularly.  http://www.blackboard.gwu.edu

Required Readings


Note that I sometimes update/revise the reading assignments a week or two before each class session. Therefore, please be sure to check the Blackboard syllabus rather than relying on the version distributed during the first class.

Weekly cases and other readings are available via hotlink within the Blackboard syllabus. Students do not need to master the specific policy details in case materials. Rather, the objective is to get a general idea of what was being done in the analysis, focusing on the topic relevant to the specific class topic.

Students should bring a copy of the case materials to class or can bring a laptop to pull up case materials for reference. Laptops can also be used to take notes but *not for web surfing or checking email during class*. (It is very distracting to students sitting behind you!)

Readings are required for the class in which they are listed.

Additional Readings:

A daily newspaper is required reading (e.g., NY Times, Wall Street Journal, or Washington Post), either paper copy or online, because we may be discussing current policy issues as they relate to policy analysis.

Assignments

Attached Files:

- [Peer feedback form (5).doc](attachment:Peer_feedback_form_(5).doc) (23.5 KB)

  - Problem Definition Memo 10%
  - Policy Analysis paper part 1 20%
  - Individual Policy Analysis paper 40%
COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Note on attached sample papers: Do not rely too heavily on attached examples. There is no single, correct way to structure a policy memo or analysis. You should tailor your memo to your specific client's needs and the nature of the policy issue.

Problem Definition Memo: Write a memo (up to 4 pages) introducing a public policy problem that you are interested in using as the basis of your full policy analysis paper. Focus only on the problem you would like to address, not the solutions. Write your memo in the form of a convincing argument about why the problem needs to be addressed. Bear in mind that one-sided arguments and exaggerated rhetoric are rarely convincing. Be sure to identify your client – not necessarily by name, but by position or role (e.g., Mayor of Chicago, Assistant Secretary of Defense, US Senator, City Public Works Director, etc.)

Sample problem memos - See also Problem Definition sections of full Policy Analysis papers below.

Louisiana Wetlands  PD 4 pg Louisiana wetlands(2).doc  Organ Policy  pd 4 pg Organ Policy(3).doc

Policy Analysis Paper Part 1 -

Problem Definition, Policy Alternatives, & Decision Criteria: Write up to 8 pages that includes a revised problem definition and set of alternatives and the decision criteria that you believe should drive the decision about which alternative to select. Some criteria may be important not because your client cares deeply about them, but because they reflect objections and concerns that other influential players may have. (See first sections of sample policy analysis papers attached below. Also note that in the Undocumented Student case, the analysis in incorporated with the description of the policy options. At this stage you should NOT be including analysis...just describe the policy options, what they are, how they would operate...not their outcomes on the criteria).

Individual Policy Analysis paper: Complete the policy analysis that was framed in Part 1. In particular, instructor comments on Part 1 should be addressed and then, based on Bardach’s Eightfold Path, the remainder of the policy analysis should be completed. This
means that the student will project the performance of alternatives, assess the trade-offs among alternatives, and make a recommendation. (maximum 15 pages plus references)

Policy Analysis Samples: Crystal Methamphetamine in Hawaii Crystal Meth in Hawaii - PA 2012.docx  De-Nuclearizing North Korea PA North Korea (new sample 2012).docx  Excessive Speculative Demand in the Housing Market China Speculative Housing

**Group Presentation:** Students will be formed into groups and provided with background papers that define a public policy problem and the client for whom an analysis is to be conducted. Groups will define criteria, select and analyze policy options, and make a recommendation during a 20 minute class presentation using PowerPoint slides. Up to 15 minutes will also be available for class discussion lead by the group members. All members will all receive the same grade for overall group performance. Each student is to fill out the peer assessment form attached at the top of the section. While the same grade is given to each member of the group, I reserve the right to reduce individual scores by up to 5 points if there is consistent feedback that someone didn't pull his/her weight.

Group Presentation Evaluation Form-4.doc

**Reference Materials**

fullbigdoc.pdf  Federal Plain Language Guidelines should be used as a reference.

**Grading**

**Notes:**
Staple papers; do not use plastic or other covers.
Late work will be penalized at a rate of 1 point per week day out of 100 point base for each assignment.

Grading is based on equal parts: style, logic, insight, analysis, documentation.

Style refers to correct grammar, spelling, and paper presentation (i.e. no typos). The goal is for professional-level writing style.
Logic is facilitated by using an introduction (stating the purpose and scope of the paper), section headings and subheadings, and a conclusion. It also involves logical connection of ideas throughout the paper.

Insight conveys your original thoughts and depth of understanding of the subject. This involves articulating the complexity of the issue in an understandable way without over-simplifying.

Analysis involves doing what the assignment asked for and making it clear that you understand the tools involved. This involves using correct terminology, providing a range of types of evidence to support your argument, and reaching a conclusion based on that evidence.

Documentation should include an appropriate number and range of sources. They should be presented in APA style of referencing. Class texts or other course readings should be referenced. Direct quotes should include page numbers.

Overall course grades 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. This grade 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 in the course. 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.

**Course Grades:**

Letter grading will be based on:

- 92.0+ A
- 90.0 - 91.9 A-
- 88.0 - 89.9 B+
- 86.0 - 87.9 B
- 84.0 - 85.9 B-
- 82.0 - 83.9 C+
- 80.0 - 81.9 C
- 78.0 - 79.9 C-
- Less than 78   F

**Supplementary Readings**


**Policies in Public Administration and Public Policy Courses**

1. **Incompletes**: A student must consult with the instructor to obtain a grade of I (incomplete) no later than the last day of classes in a semester. At that time, the student and instructor will both sign the CCAS contract for incompletes and submit a copy to the School Director. Please consult the TSPPPA Student Handbook or visit http://www.gwu.edu/~ccas/faculty/files/Incomplete_poli0.pdf for the complete CCAS policy on incompletes.

2. **Submission of Written Work Products Outside of the Classroom**: It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that an instructor receives each written assignment. Students can submit written work electronically only with the express permission of the instructor.

3. **Submission of Written Work Products after Due Date: Policy on Late Work**: All work must be turned in by the assigned due date in order to receive full credit for that assignment, unless an exception is expressly made by the instructor.

4. **Academic Honesty**: I support the GW Code of Academic Integrity. Any case of dishonesty, including plagiarism, will be referred to the Academic Integrity Council following the process provided in the link below. This policy states: “Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” For the remainder of the code, see: http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html

5. **Changing Grades After Completion of Course**: No changes can be made in grades after the conclusion of the semester, other than in cases of clerical error.

6. **The Syllabus**: This syllabus is a guide to the course for the student. Sound educational practice requires flexibility and the instructor may therefore, at her/his discretion, revise content and requirements during the semester.

7. **Laptops**: Laptops can be used in class for taking notes or referring to case materials, not for any other purpose.

8. **Collaboration**: Except on any assignment specified to be done in groups, all works should be individual effort.
9. University Policy on Religious Holidays:

1. Students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance;

2. Faculty should extend to these students the courtesy of absence without penalty on such occasions, including permission to make up examinations;

3. Faculty who intend to observe a religious holiday should arrange at the beginning of the semester to reschedule missed classes or to make other provisions for their course-related activities

10. DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES (DSS): Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office in Rome Hall to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/

11. UNIVERSITY COUNSELING CENTER (UCC) 202-994-5300 - The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include:

   - crisis and emergency mental health consultations

   - confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals

   http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices

12. SECURITY - In the case of an emergency, if at all possible, the class should shelter in place. If the building that the class is in is affected, follow the evacuation procedures for the building. After evacuation, seek shelter at a predetermined rendezvous location.
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Session 1: Introduction to the Course

Introduction to content and requirements of the course.
Discuss the role of analysis in policy-making and the basic approach to policy analysis.

- Bardach: Introduction, and Part I, Steps One & Two: Define the Problem and Assemble Some Evidence

Session 2: Perspectives on Policy Analysis

Introduction to the models of policy analysis and the attributes of policy analysts.

- Bardach, Part II: Assembling Evidence
- Visit and browse the web site for the National Center for Policy Analysis (http://www.ncpa.org). Explore the site to find out as much as you can about NCPA as an organization. Look at the various types of formats they use, examine one report and be prepared to discuss with the class whether you think it really was a policy analysis or not. See if they had addressed either of the topics of Immigration or Migration policy and Gun Violence.

- Assignment: Begin to pursue one of the following two issues: immigration/migration (in the U.S. and/or internationally) or gun violence in the U.S. (nationally or at the state level). Identify at least two organizations that do policy work (policy research, political advocacy, or policy analysis) on the issue. Get a sense of the scope of the problem. We will focus on different ways the problem is defined in the next class session; the goal at this point is to start building a general understanding of the scope of the issue and the key stakeholders involved in policy about it.

Think about the following questions when reviewing all cases in this course:

1. What is the problem? Has the author adequately justified why this is the appropriate focus? Is there adequate evidence to support the need for action at this time? Who is the audience for the analysis? Who is conducting it?
2. Criteria: Are the criteria appropriate and clearly defined? To they reflect the values of the client and/or the decision-maker? Are there other criteria that should have been included?

3. Alternatives: Are the alternatives clearly defined? Did the author justify why these were the appropriate alternatives to consider?

4. Analysis: Does the author use evidence (data, expert opinion, scenarios, etc.) as the basis for projecting the expected outcomes of each alternative?

5. Recommendation: Is there a recommendation or a conclusion? Whichever it is, is it justified by the analysis? Does the author address the weaknesses of any recommended action?

Session 3: Problem Definition

Identify the rationales for public intervention from the market perspective and the steps and difficulties involved in problem identification and verification.

Discuss the role of stakeholder groups in problem identification and definition.

Complete in-class exercise.

- Read sample Problem Definitions included in Syllabus and Assignments tab
- Problem Identification and Structuring (only need to read pp 32-48). Guess and Farnham.pdf
- Assignment: Bring to class two different definitions of one of the theme problems (immigration or gun violence). Be prepared to discuss 1) who were the client and the analyst for the policy work, and 2) how each definition would influence the types of policy options that could address the problem.

Session 4: Specifying Policy Alternatives

Identifying, creating, and/or modifying policy alternatives. Overview of how to describe and present alternatives.
• Bardach - Part I Step 3 and Appendix B
• Identifying Alternatives - patton and sawicki.pdf
• Thaler, Sunstein, & Balz, Choice Architecture, pp 1-17, April 2010. (Note: this reading hasn't been fully edited - nonetheless, the substance is pretty clear.) Thaler_Sunstein_Balz_Choice_Architecture.pdf

• Assignment: Bring to class brief descriptions of at least two policy alternatives that would address the problem (immigration or gun violence) as defined last week.

**Session 5: Implementation and Policy Design**

Logic Models for Characterizing Programs; Top-Down and Bottom-up Perspectives on Implementation

• Bardach - Part III
• Eggers and O'Leary. If We can Put a Man on the Moon: Getting Big Things Done in Government. p. vii-18. Man on the Moon.pdf
• Assignment: If any version of the policy options you identified have been tried anywhere (demonstration program, other country, other state, etc.), look at the literature to identify any implementation issues identified.

**Session 6: Developing criteria to use in comparison of alternatives**

Attached Files:

• Writing_for_Multiple_Audiences.ppt (87.5 KB)

The roles of values in development of goals and criteria. Examination of conflicts arising from alternative frameworks.

Bardach - Part I, Step 4

• Never the twain shall meet: Why do economists and environmental scientists have such a hard time communicating? - Never the twain shall meet.doc
• Irwin - Multi-Attribute Analysis
• Assignment: Identify all of the criteria that have been used in various studies of the policy problem (immigration/gun violence) in the literature you have identified.

Optional Readings:

Evaluating Options for U.S. Greenhouse-Gas Mitigation using Multiple Criteria. RAND 2009. (Read Summary and Chapter 3 (Normative Criteria); skim rest of the report) RAND_OP25

Session 7: Projecting and Comparing Policy Alternatives

Use of in-class case studies as examples of applying the policy analysis model.

• Bardach Part I, Steps 5 and 6
• Review the FEMA case study from session 2, focusing on evidence and analysis

• Pick one of the two cases below and review for clarity of criteria, alternatives, as well as for the type of analysis (skim the other so you will be familiar for class discussion).

• Policy Options for Reducing CO2 Emissions - CBO (Read the Summary; skim the rest). CBO-Carbon.pdf

• Assignment: Be prepared to discuss two types of evidence you have found used in analysis of your policy issue of focus (gun violence;migration), such as cost benefit analysis, correlation, expert opinion).

Session 8: Making Recommendations

Telling the Story: Getting to conclusions and/or recommendations
Bardach - Part I, Steps 7-8

• Exercise: Unnatural Causes - Marshall Islands Population Health. Review Case Details and watch video clips as this case will be the basis for a class exercise.
• Read case details Marshall (2).docx
• Video Clips: (view the first 2 (Atomic testing and Diabetes (the 3rd is optional)
• Assignment: Be prepared to discuss the types of recommendations made in policy work on the issues of concern. (e.g., was legislation proposed, general recommendations for states)

Session 9: Think Tanks and Social Science in Policy Analysis

Examination of who conducts policy analysis and policy research inside and outside of the government.
The role and financing of Think Tanks and policy analysis activities.

• Look at the "About" information on the website of at least think tanks that have been mentioned at some point this semester but about which you are not already familiar. Also examine the type of information they provide, focusing either on one of the topic issues we have been discussing, your individual policy topic, or your group policy topic. (See list in Powerpoint slides from session 2 for list of major think tanks.)

For Brian Elderbroom's presentation

• Read Executive summary and skim the rest: Justice Reinvestment - Urban Institute
• Pew Study on Prison time served

Session 10: Introduction to Program Evaluation

This class discusses the final phase of the policy analysis cycle: the evaluation phase.

• Program Evaluation: Chapters 1-4. GAO Designing Evaluations.pdf
• Project Hope

Session 11: Program Evaluation Cases

For the Teach for America and DC Opportunity Scholarship Program reports linked below, consider the following questions. We will be discussing these cases in class.

1) Describe the program
   • What were its goals and objectives?
   • Did they specify a logic model?

2) Did they specify evaluation questions?

3) What type of evaluation was conducted?
   • Input/Output/Outcome/Impact
   • Formative/Improvement/Summative
   • Ongoing/One-Shot/Other
   • Objective Observers/Participant

4) What type of research design was used?
   • Diagram it
   • Sample: Random/Convenience/Other
   • Comparisons: Random Allocation/Comparison Group/None
   • Data: Measures? Quantitative/Qualitative/Multi-method

5) What did they find?

6) Were there limitations due to the design?

7) How long did it take to complete the study?

• Teach for America TeachforAmericaBrief.pdf
• Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program: Final Report. 20104032-1.pdf
• GAO on DC OSP Coordination: Read "Highlights" and Appendix I "Scope and Methodology". GAO on DC Vouchers.pdf
Session 12: Alternative Policy Analysis Paradigms

Divergent Views on the Practice of Policy Analysis: Incremental Decision Making vs. Synoptic Decision Making

- Readings (This session has more readings than usual but most are short.)
  - Albert, *Washington Post*, “Can Government Learn How to Fail Fast?” 4/12/13. (This 2-page article identifies practical obstacles to incrementalism.)

- Readings for Triana McNeil, GAO.
  
  Read the GAO Highlights page for each of the following reports and skim the rest to become familiar with the methods used:


  Securities and Exchange Commission: Alternative Criteria for Qualifying as an Accredited Investor Should be Considered. [GAO-13-640](#).

  Small Business Administration: Office of Advocacy Needs to Improve Controls ... [GAO-14-525](#).

Session 13: Group Presentations

Can we have an evidence-based government? *The Washington Post*, April 16, 2013. Can we have an evidence-based government Wonkblog.html

Data Will Drive Innovation in Public Policy & Management Research (Pirog) 2014. [JPAM](#)

Session 14: Group Presentations and Wrap-up
FYI: Recent Story on the Marshall Islands