PPPA 6011
Intro to Public Policy/
Politics & Policy Analysis
Fall 2015

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Class Meetings
Wednesdays, 3:30-5:20, Rome #201 OR
Wednesdays, 6:10-8:00, Phillips #B156

Office Hours
Tuesdays, 3:00-5:00
And by appointment

Overview
This course serves as an introduction to the field for students entering the Master of Public Policy (MPP) program. The organizing theme of this course is the “policy orientation” which centers on two concerns: (1) understanding the policymaking process and (2) serving the intelligence needs of decision makers. To these ends, we will study alternative models of policy analysis and theories of the policymaking process. Throughout the course, we will examine the politics of the policy orientation, its effects upon the profession of policy analysis, and its contribution to the health of our representative democracy.

Note: This course is designed for students with a working knowledge of U.S. political institutions and the policymaking process. Students without this background should instead enroll in PPPA 6011 (Politics and Policy Process) and PPPA 6006 (Policy Analysis).
Learning Objectives

- Define policy analysis and explain how the work undertaken by policy analysts varies across settings and has changed over time.

- Develop and analyze alternative policy proposals across key criteria (e.g., effectiveness, sustainability) in order to provide clear policy recommendations

- Understand policy feedback effects and accurately assess the likelihood of successful policy implementation and policy sustainability over time

- Appreciate the political and institutional constraints on policymakers, policy analysts, and policy proposals within our system of governance

- Recognize the significance of agenda setting as a form of political power and develop strategies for increasing attention to overlooked problems or perspectives

- Evaluate the role of interest groups, coalitions, and policy networks in organizing political conflict and shaping policy outcomes

- Appreciate the challenges and opportunities facing a policy analyst in our political institutions and develop strategies for increasing the odds that your policy analysis will be appropriately used

- Recognize the advantages and limitations of policy analysis within a representative democracy, and critically evaluate the appropriate role for policy analysts in the policymaking process

- Understand the interdependence of politics and public policy—how political forces shape policy choices and how policy choices reshape future political dynamics

Course Materials

Most of the materials for this course are posted on our course Blackboard page (blackboard.gwu.edu), or consist of blog posts or news articles with links provided in the course outline below. Other required readings are drawn from the following three books, which students should purchase before the second week of class.


Course Requirements

Class Preparation and Participation (25%). This is a participation-based course in which all students are expected to attend and actively participate in class discussions. Grades will be based on attendance (no more than one excused absence), as well as the degree to which students’ comments reflect: careful preparation for class (reading and reflecting on assigned readings); adherence to rules of civil discourse (disagreeing in a polite and respectful way); and analytic thinking in which course material is applied to policy cases/current issues. There will also be in-class activities/assignments for which students can earn class participation credit.

Mini-Memo (5%). After the first week of class, students will prepare a 1 pg. memo to the Mayor of Snoweville advising her on how to budget for snow removal services in the next fiscal year. Note: During our first class, we will discuss this assignment in detail. Therefore, this is primarily aimed at providing students with experience writing for a policy audience. (For those new to memo writing, refer to the additional resources posted in Blackboard.)

Policy Project (70%). The rest of the class assignments will focus on a specific policy proposal selected by the student (i.e. raise the minimum wage in Washington, DC, repeal the Cadillac tax in the ACA, increase the charge for plastic bags at grocery stores, decrease foreign aid to Afghanistan – or anything else!). Each assignment is described below.

• **Description of Policy (5%).** In one or two paragraphs (less than ½ a page), describe the policy that you plan to focus on for this class. Provide a rationale for why it is a good policy that a policymaker should adopt as a top priority.

• **Trade-off Matrix (5%).** Create a 1 pg. trade-off matrix including: the status quo, your policy proposal, and 2-3 policy alternatives. Evaluate each alternative on 3-4 criteria (as discussed in class).

• **Memo 1: Policy Proposal (10%).** Write a 2-pg. memo addressed to a specific policymaker who could advance your policy proposal. Include a description of the policy and highlight important trade-offs that structure support/opposition for the policy. If applicable highlight changes in the policy design that could address these trade-offs. (Do not include the trade-off matrix.)

• **Short Essays (25%).** Write two short (~ 2 pg.) essays explaining what the theories covered in the previous three class sessions suggest about the political feasibility of your policy. The majority of the essay should be written as an academic paper with the professor as the audience; however the essay should end with a stand-alone paragraph translating the content of the essay into a clearly-articulated political strategy recommendation written as you would express it to a policymaker not familiar with the academic literature (and who had not read the rest of the essay).

• **Memo 2: Policy and Political Strategy (25%).** Write a 3-4 page memo on your policy proposal—drawing from Memo 1 and your two essays. The memo should: be addressed to a specific policymaker who could champion the policy, include a summary of the policy and important aspects of its policy design and discuss its political feasibility, including promising strategies for enhancing the political feasibility of your recommended policy proposal.
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 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 course objectives.

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.

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.

Course Schedule At-a-Glance

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<tr>
<th>Unit I: Policy Analysis</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>DUE</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>9/02</td>
<td>The Policy Orientation</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>9/09</td>
<td>Policy Studies as a Field</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>9/16</td>
<td>Approaches to Policy Analysis</td>
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<td>Mini-Memo: Snow Planning (BB24)</td>
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<th>Unit II: Policy Design</th>
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<td>4</td>
<td>9/23</td>
<td>Policy Tools</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>9/30</td>
<td>Criteria, Values, and Trade-offs</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>10/07</td>
<td>Policy Feedback</td>
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<td>Policy Proposal Summary (BB24 &amp; C4)</td>
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<td>Trade-off Matrix (BB24 &amp; C4)</td>
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<th>Unit III: Policymaking Process</th>
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<tr>
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<td>10/14</td>
<td>Institutions and the Status Quo</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>10/21</td>
<td>Friction Model of Policy Change</td>
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<td>3:30-5:00</td>
<td>*Optional, but strongly recommended Panel on Policy Analysis Careers Room MPA #B09</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>10/28</td>
<td>Pluralist Pathway</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>11/4</td>
<td>Partisan Pathway</td>
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<td>Expert Pathway</td>
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<td>11/18</td>
<td>Symbolic Pathway</td>
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<td>Essay 1: Literature from class 7-9 (BB24)</td>
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<th>Unit III: Policy Applications</th>
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<td>11/25</td>
<td>*No class; Happy Thanksgiving</td>
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<td>Essay 2: Literature from class 10-12 (BB24)</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>12/02</td>
<td>Political Analysis</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>12/09</td>
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<td>Memo 2: Policy Proposal &amp; Strategy (BB &amp; C4)</td>
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Note: Codes in parentheses indicate how to submit each assignment. BB 24 indicates the need to upload the assignment in Blackboard (BB) at least 24 hours before the next class session. C indicates that you should bring the assignment to class, with the following number indicating the number of copies you should bring (such that C 5 indicates to bring five copies of the assignment to class on the day it is due).
Course Outline and Reading Assignments

UNIT I: POLICY ANALYSIS

Class 1. The Policy Orientation (Sept. 2nd)


James Curry (2015), *To be effective legislators, Members of Congress need expert resources of their own.* [http://www.scholarsstrategynetwork.org/content/be-effective-legislators-members-congress-need-expert-resources-their-own](http://www.scholarsstrategynetwork.org/content/be-effective-legislators-members-congress-need-expert-resources-their-own)

DUE: Mini-Memo 1 *(BB 24: upload to Blackboard 24 hours before Class 2)*
Write a 1 pg. memo to the Mayor of Snoweville advising her on how to budget for snow removal services in the next fiscal year. Note: During our first class, we will discuss this assignment in detail. Therefore, this is primarily a writing assignment—aimed at providing experience writing for a policy audience. (For those new to memo writing, refer to the additional resources posted in Blackboard.)

Class 2. Policy Studies as a Field (Sept. 9th)


Class 3. Approaches to Policy Analysis (Sept. 16th)


DUE: Policy Proposal: Summary *(BB24 & C4: upload to Blackboard 24 hours before Class 4 and bring four copies to class).* In one or two paragraphs (less than ½ a page), describe the policy that you plan to focus on for this class.

UNIT II: POLICY DESIGN

Class 4. Policy Tools (Sept. 23rd)


Mini-case: Submerged State

Class 5. Criteria, Values, and Trade-offs (Sept. 30th)

Watch: Jonathan Haidt on “Moral Values Framework,”
http://www.ted.com/talks/jonathan_haidt_on_the_moral_mind?language=en#t-10588


**DUE: Trade-off Matrix:** (BB24 & C4: upload to Blackboard 24 hours before Class 6 and bring four copies to class). Create a trade-off matrix including the status quo, your policy proposal, and 2-3 policy alternatives. Evaluate each alternative on 3-4 criteria, presented in 1-page matrix (as discussed in class).

Class 6. Policy Feedback (Oct. 7th)


Why it is so hard to get rid of tax breaks:
http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonkblog/wp/2013/12/19/the-way-congress-funds-clean-energy-is-a-mess-max-baucus-has-a-better-idea/


**DUE: Memo 1: Policy Proposal** (BB: upload to Blackboard before Class 7). Write a 1-2 page memo addressed to a policymaker who could advance your policy proposal. Include a description of the policy and highlight important trade-offs that structure support/opposition for the policy. If applicable, highlight changes in the policy design that could address these trade-offs. (Do not include the matrix.)
UNIT III: POLICYMAKING PROCESS

Class 7. Fragmentation and the Status Quo (Oct. 14th)


Class 8. Friction Model of Policy Change (Oct. 21st)


Mini-case: Confederate Flag

Optional, but highly recommended

Career Panel on Policy Analysis
Friday, October 23rd
3:30-5:00
MPA #B09

Class 9. Pluralist Pathway (Oct. 28th)


The future of farm bills. From The Monkey Cage blog: [http://themonkeycage.org/2013/06/the-future-of-farm-bills/](http://themonkeycage.org/2013/06/the-future-of-farm-bills/)

### DUE: Essay 1 (BB24: upload to Blackboard 24 hours before Class 10)

In a 2-page essay explain how the key concepts related to fragmentation, status quo bias, the friction model, and the pluralist pathway apply to your policy proposal. End with a one paragraph “political strategy recommendation” based on the content of the essay but written as you would address the policymaker in Memo 1.

### Class 10. Partisan Pathway (Nov. 4th)


**Mini-case: ObamaCare**


### Class 11. Expert Pathway (Nov. 11th)


Class 12. Symbolic Pathway (Nov. 18th)


Ashley Koning and David Redlawsk (2013), The conservative case for same-sex marriage. http://themonkeycage.org/2013/03/the-conservative-case-for-same-sex-marriage-is-it-working/

Also see: http://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2015-pace-of-social-change/

Mini-case: JVTA

- http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/blog/jvta-passed-senate-labor-trafficking-issues-remain

DUE: Essay 2 (BB24: upload to Blackboard before Thanksgiving). In a 2-page essay explain how the partisan, expert, and symbolic pathways apply to your policy proposal. End with a one paragraph “political strategy recommendation” based on the content of the essay but written as you would address the policymaker in Memo 1.

Class 13. Political Analysis and Strategy (Dec. 2nd)


DUE: Memo 2: Policy Proposal and Political Strategy (BB & C4: Upload to BlackBoard and bring 4 copies to class 14). Write a 2-3 page memo that updates Memo 1 to include both a summary of the policy and recommendation regarding promising strategies for enhancing the political feasibility of your recommended policy proposal.

Class 14. Political Strategy (Dec. 9th)

More Information on Academic Policies @ TSPPPA

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 our website 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:** Please consult the “policies” section of the GW student handbook for the university code of academic integrity. Note especially the definition of plagiarism: “intentionally representing the words, ideas, or sequence of ideas of another as one’s own in any academic exercise; failure to attribute any of the following: quotations, paraphrases, or borrowed information.” 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.

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, change content and requirements during the semester.

7. **Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:** In order to receive accommodations on the basis of disability, a student must give notice and provide proper documentation to the Office of Disability Support Services, Marvin Center 436, 202-994-8250. Accommodations will be made based upon the recommendations of the DSS Office.