

PUBLIC POLICY DESIGN AND EVALUATION

PAPA 6224 – SPRING 2009

Prof. Matt Dull
Email: mdull@vt.edu
Cell: 202-821-3807

Meeting: Tuesdays 6:45-9:30
Office Hours: Tue. 3-6pm, or by appt.
Office: 703-706-8117

Description

This course offers a selective introduction to the theory and practice of public policy analysis and decision-making. Though still in many ways a new discipline, contemporary policy analysis and evaluation embrace a great variety of techniques and shifting disciplinary influences from economics and business analytics to ethnography. As a consequence, this introduction is selective, but I have tried to include a variety of policies and analytic approaches.

The course is organized around four objectives: 1) Building a common understanding of prominent concepts and techniques in policy analysis; 2) Becoming more informed consumers of evidence, particularly evidence organized around two models of decision at the core of contemporary policy analysis: economic utility and statistical inference; 3) Consider uncertainty, ambiguity, and social values in decision-making; and 4) Practice the craft of collecting and communicating policy evidence.

Course Readings

The following books will be used more or less in their entirety. Please acquire them:

David L. Weimer and Aidan R. Vining, 1999. *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice*, 3rd Edition, New York: Prentice Hall.

Jane E. Miller, 2005. *The Chicago guide to writing about multivariate analysis*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press. ISBN: 0226527832.

Eugene Bardach, 2004. *A Practical Guide For Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path To More Effective Problem Solving*, 2nd Edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press.
ISBN: 1568029233.

Two additional required books for doctoral students:

Giandomenico Majone. 1989. *Evidence, Argument, and Persuasion in the Policy Process*. New Haven: Yale.

James G. March. 1994. *Primer on Decision Making: How Decisions Happen*. Free Press.

Other required readings will be made available in electronic format. Also, because much of the semester is dedicated to thinking about quantitative analysis, it is also strongly recommended that you review a basic statistics text. Here are a few recommendations:

Robert M. Kaplan, 1986. *Basic Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences*. Allyn and Bacon, Inc.
Edward Tufte. 1974. *Data Analysis for Politics and Policy*. Prentice-Hall.

(<http://www.edwardtufte.com/tufte/dapp/>)

Kenneth J. Meier, Jeffrey L. Brudney, John Bohte, 2005. *Applied Statistics for Public and Nonprofit Administration*, 6th edition. Wadsworth.

The broad scope of the course means that we will dedicate too little time and attention for students interested in particular issues or techniques. Please feel free to approach me about reading further in any of the topics we cover. You may not have time during the semester, but be ambitious! Below are some general recommendations:

Policy Analysis and Evaluation

Laura I. Langbein and Claire L. Felbinger, 2006. *Public program evaluation : a statistical guide*. Armonk, N.Y., M.E. Sharpe. ISBN: 0765613670.

Carol H. Weiss, 1998. *Evaluation: methods for studying programs and policies*. Upper Saddle River, N.J., Prentice Hall. ISBN: 0133097250.

Quantitative Analysis (Intermediate)

Hair, Joseph, William Black, Barry Babin, Rolph Anderson, & Ronald Tatham. 2005. *Multivariate Data Analysis*. 6th Edition. Prentice Hall.

Damodar N. Gujarati, 1995. *Basic Econometrics*. 3rd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Budget Policy

Allen Schick and Felix LoStracco. 2000. *The federal budget: politics, policy, process*. Rev. ed. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Aaron B. Wildavsky and Naomi Caiden. 2004. *The new politics of the budgetary process*. 5th ed. New York: Pearson/Longman.

Interpretive and Critical Approaches

Randall S. Clemons and Mark K. McBeth, 2001. *Public Policy Praxis: Theory and Pragmatism*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. ISBN: 0130258822.

Anne Larson Schneider and Helen M. Ingram, 1997. *Policy Design for Democracy*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas. ISBN: 0700608443.

Deborah Stone 2002. *Policy Paradox : the art of political decision making*. New York, Norton.

Information and Decision

Michael Lewis, 2003. *Moneyball : the art of winning an unfair game*. New York: W. W. Norton.

James C. Scott. 1999. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. Yale.

Course Components

Coursework is organized into five components:

- **Reading Response & Facilitation (15%)** – Each course participant will assume responsibility for writing a response paper and facilitating discussion on **3 (three)** course readings during the semester. Two tasks are involved:
1. Post a response paper of roughly 250 words to Scholar by the Monday before the class meets to discuss the reading. Response papers should include: 1) A clear and concise summary of one idea or technique explored in the reading that you important or interesting; 2) A brief response to the idea or technique identified in #1. Offer some insight: How does this point relate to other course concepts? Is it consistent with your professional experience? In terms of covering the readings, response papers should emphasize substance – what you think is important – over comprehensiveness.
 2. Contribute to class discussion by helping to summarize the reading and sharing your response with the class. **No long formal presentations.** Facilitators may bring or post an optional single double-sided sheet of paper summarizing the reading.
- **Memos (40%)** – Participants will complete **five (5)** roughly 500-word memos responding questions related to issues relevant to the course. Memos may draw on examples and evidence you deem relevant, but all memos should include a concise summary of relevant course content. Topics are listed below:

Memo #1 (2/2) – Write a memo briefing a new member of Congress who favors funding for pre-K education advising her on the usefulness of research employing random assignment. Use specific examples to highlight the factors that should be kept in mind when interpreting evidence based in part on the use of random assignment.

Memo #2 (2/16) – Discuss the trade-off between the problems of type 1 and type 2 error described in “A Terrible Trade-off.” What should be considered in balancing the risks of type 1 and type 2 error in drug regulation?

Memo #3 (3/2) – Define a policy problem. Write a memo proposing a goals/alternatives matrix weighing policy alternatives. Discuss what additional information would be required to effectively assess the alternatives you specify.

Memo #4 (4/6) – Describe EITHER a) Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index; OR b) the American Customer Service Index Government Satisfaction Scores. How is the index measured? What useful information does it provide?
http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2009
http://www.theacsi.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=27&Itemid=62

Memo #5 (4/27) – TBA

Memos will not be assigned a letter grade. Instead, I'll assign each a number 1-5, where: 5=Excellent, 4=Very good, 3=Good, 2=Fair, 1=Poor. Here are the grading parameters I will follow, where each category holds roughly equal weight:

Assignment – Does the paper respond effectively to the question or assignment?

Analysis – Does the paper develop a clear and credible logic? Are the claims and conclusions supported by the material presented in the paper?

Grounding – Does the paper build on firm theoretical and factual foundations? Does the author make effective use of course materials?

Readability – Is the paper well-organized and written? Is the language clear? Is the paper generally free of typos, grammatical errors, and other distractions?

- **Final Policy Memo (20%)** – Participants will complete a final policy memorandum of no more than 2500 words. Written for a client identified in consultation with the course instructor, the memorandum should describe a policy problem and propose a decision or initiative addressing this problem. Proposals (250 words) are **due March 16th (3/16)**. This assignment will be discussed further in class.
- **Peer Groups (10%)** – Course participants will be assigned to Peer Groups. Peer groups are expected to read, discuss, and offer feedback on each other's work during the course of the semester as course participants develop the final policy memo. To incentivize good peer group citizenship, at the conclusion of the semester, participants will be asked to evaluate each others' contributions to their peer groups and their peer group's performance overall. Each member will anonymously assign a number 1-5, where: 5=Excellent, 4=Very good, 3=Good, 2=Fair, 1=Poor. This evaluation should be based on the quality, consistency, and usefulness of contributions to the peer group as a whole. This evaluation will not translate directly, but will be considered when assigning participants' final grades. Additional details regarding the group projects will be addressed in class.
- **Course Contribution (15%)** – Participants are expected to complete the readings, attend class, and contribute to discussion both on Blackboard and during class.

Course Schedule

1. Information and Decision (1/19)

- Charles Lindblom, 1959. "The Science of 'Muddling Through'"
- Leigh Buchanan and Andrew O'Connell, 2006. "A Brief History of Decision-Making," *Harvard Business Review*.
- John S. Hammond, Ralph L. Keeney, and Howard Raiffa, 2006. "The Hidden Traps in Decision-Making," *Harvard Business Review*.

2. Causal Inference and Policy Decision (1/26)

- Clinton T. Brass, Blas Nunez-Neto, and Erin D. Williams. 2006. "Congress and Program Evaluation: An Overview of Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs) and Related Issues." Congressional Research Service. Report for Congress. RL33301. <http://digital.library.unt.edu/govdocs/crs/permalink/meta-crs-9145:1>

Discussion

- US Dept of Education, 2003. "Identifying and Implementing Educational Practices Supported by Rigorous Evidence: A User Friendly Guide." <http://www.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/rigorousetid/rigorousetid.pdf>
- William T. Gormley, 2007. "Early Childhood Care and Education: Lessons and Puzzles," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*.
- Pew Charitable Trusts, 2009. "Votes Count: Legislative Action on Pre-K Fiscal Year 2010." October. http://www.pewtrusts.org/uploadedFiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/Reports/Pre-k_education/LegislativeReport_Oct2009.pdf?n=1510

3. What is Policy Analysis? (2/2)

- Weimer and Vining, 1999. Ch. 2
- Janet Musso, Robert Biller, and Robert Myrtle. 2000. "Tradecraft: Professional Writing as Problem Solving," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 19(4), 635-646.
- Edward Tufte. 1974. Ch. 1. *Data Analysis for Politics and Policy*. Prentice-Hall. (<http://www.edwardtufte.com/tufte/dapp/>)

4. The Analyst's Dilemma (2/9)

- Weimer and Vining, 1999. Ch. 3
- Miller, Benjamin, and North, 2005. "Terrible Trade-off," p. 10-17.
- Diedtra Henderson, 2007. "Burden of Proof" *The Boston Globe*.
- Mark McClellan, 2007. "Drug Safety Reform at the FDA – Pendulum Swing or Systematic Improvement." *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Discussion

- Milton Friedman, 1966. "The Methodology of Positive Economics" <http://academic2.american.edu/~dfagel/Class%20Readings/Friedman/Methodology.pdf>
- Orly Lobel Amir Lobel. 2009. "Book Review: Stumble, Predict, Nudge: How Behavioral Economics Informs Law and Policy." *Columbia Law Review*. http://www.columbialawreview.org/assets/pdfs/108/8/Amir_Lobel.pdf
- Gerd Gigerenzer. 2008. "Why Heuristics Work." *Perspectives on Psychological Science*. http://www.unil.ch/webdav/site/determinismes/users/cclavien/public/Gigerenzer_WhyHeuristicsWork.pdf

5. Landing on Your Feet (2/16)

- Weimer and Vining, 1999. Ch. 10, "Landing on Feet"
- Bardach, Part I, "The Eightfold Path"

6. Goals & Alternatives (2/23)

- Weimer and Vining, 1999. Ch. 11, “Goals/Alternatives Matrices”
- Bardach, Parts 2 & 3
- Miller 1-4

7. Efficiency and the Economic Model (3/2)

- Miller Ch. 5-8
- Weimer and Vining, 1999. Ch. 4, “Efficiency and the Idealized Competitive Model”
- Carol Graham, 2005. “The Economics of Happiness” *World Economics*.

Discussion

- Helen Johns and Paul Ormerod, 2007. Ch. 1-7 & Appendix 2 (Pages 19-74, 77-86) “Happiness, Economics and Public Policy” Institute for Economic Affairs.
- Jacob S. Hacker, 2006. Ch. 1-2, “The New Economic Insecurity,” “Risking it All” in *The Great Risk Shift*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Charles E. Lindblom. 1979. “Still Muddling, Not Yet Through.” *Public Administration Review*.

8. Market Failure (3/16)

- Weimer and Vining, 1999. Ch. 5, “Market Failures”

Discussion

- Mitchell L. Seligson. 2006. “The Measurement and Impact of Corruption Victimization: Survey Evidence from Latin America.” *World Development*.
<http://sitemason.vanderbilt.edu/files/gTPvBm/Seligson%20The%20Measurement%20and%20Impact%20of%20Corruption%20World%20Development%202005.pdf>
- *Unseen Wealth: Report of the Brookings Task Force on Intangibles* (p. 1-70).
- Richard O. Zerby Jr. and Howard E. McCurdy. 1999. “The Failure of Market Failure.” *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*.

9. Other Limitations on the Competitive Framework

- Weimer and Vining, 1999. Ch. 6, “Other Limitations of the Competitive Framework”
- Henry J. Aaron. 2000. “Presidential address: Seeing Through the Fog: Policymaking with Uncertain Forecasts.” *Journal of Policy Analysis & Management* 19(2): 193-206.
- Joe Nocera, 2009. “Risk Management” *New York Times Magazine*. January 4.

10. Enter Politics...

- James Madison, *Federalist #10*.
- Weimer and Vining, 1999. Ch. 7-8. “Distributional and Other Goals,” “Government Failures.”

11. Policies as Instruments

- Weimer and Vining, 1999. Ch. 9, “Generic Policies”
- Lester M. Salamon. 2002. “Introduction: The New Governance and the Tools of Public Action.” *The Tools of Government: A Guide to the New Governance*. Oxford.

Discussion

- Gormley and Weimer, 1999. Ch. 1-3. “Introduction,” “Report Cards As Policy Instruments,” “The Politics of Report Cards,” in *Organizational Report Cards*.
- Charles T. Goodsell. 2007. “Six Normative Principles for the Contracting-Out Debate.” *Administration & Society*.
- Evan J. Ringquist. 2005. “Assessing Evidence of Environmental Inequities: A Meta-Analysis.” *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*.

12. Case Studies

- Weimer and Vining, 1999. Ch. 13, “Adoption and Implementation”
- U.S. General Accounting Office, *Case Study Evaluations* (Washington, D.C.: GAO/PEMD-91-10.1.9, November 1990), pp. 32-62, 74-86, Glossary 130-132.

Discussion

- James J. Willis, Stephen D. Mastrofski, David Weisburd. 2003. Pages. 1-64. “Compstat in Practice: An In-Depth Analysis of Three Cities” The Police Foundation. <http://www.policefoundation.org/pdf/compstatinpractice.pdf>
- David Huizinga ; Terence Thornberry ; Kelly Knight ; Peter Lovegrove. 2007. “Disproportionate Minority Contact in the Juvenile Justice System: A Study of Differential Minority Arrest/Referral to Court in Three Cities.” Report to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. September. <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/grants/219743.pdf>
- Paul F. Steinberg, 2007. “Causal Assessment in Small-N Policy Studies.” *Policy Studies Journal*.

13. Quantitative Analysis: Developing an Index

- Chava Frankfort-Nachmias and David Nachmias, 2000. Ch. 7. “Measurement,” *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*.
- Miller Ch. 9-10
- Review: American Customer Service Index (Government Satisfaction Scores) (http://www.theacsi.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=27&Itemid=62)

Discussion

- Jane E. Fountain. 2001. “Paradoxes of Public Sector Customer Service,” *Governance: An International Journal of Policy and Administration*, vol. 14, no. 1, January 2001, pp. 55-73.

- Shingler, Van Loon, Alter, Bridger, “The Importance of Subjective Data for Public Agency Performance Evaluation.” *Public Administration Review* 68 (November-December 2008): 1101-1111 Miller Ch. 12-13.

14. Quantitative Analysis: Regression

- Weimer and Vining, 1999. Ch. 15, “When Statistics Count”
- Alan O. Sykes, “An Introduction to Regression Analysis.” Chicago Working Paper in Law & Economics, n.d. Accessible at www.law.uchicago.edu/Lawecon/WkngPprs_01-25/20.Sykes.Reggression.pdf

Discussion

- Harry J. Holzer, et al. 2003. “Public transit and the spatial distribution of minority employment: Evidence from a natural experiment.” *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 22: 415-441.
- Joe Soss. 1999. “Lessons of Welfare: Policy Design, Political Learning, and Political Action.” *American Political Science Review*. 93(2): 363-80.