Center for Public Administration and Policy

PUBLIC POLICY DESIGN AND EVALUATION

PAPA 6224 – SPRING 2011

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Course Description

This course provides an introduction to the theory and practice of public policy analysis, a field that embraces a growing variety of methods and shifting disciplinary influences from economics and business analytics to ethnography and narrative inquiry. While any effort to cover this range of material is necessarily selective, I have tried to squeeze in both a variety of topics and opportunities to dig into a more focused project. With these two ends in mind, the course is organized into two roughly equal elements: 1) coursework and 3) a semester-long project.

Coursework consists of class readings, discussions, and a series of eight (8) short policy memos responding to course material. This part of the course is organized around three objectives: to build a shared understanding of basic concepts and techniques in policy analysis; develop as consumers of evidence related to two models of decision at the core of contemporary policy analysis: economic utility and statistical inference; and to consider uncertainty, ambiguity, and social values in decision-making. Course participants will be evaluated based on the quality and timeliness of their policy memos and contribution to class discussion of course materials.

Course participants will also undertake a semester-long project addressing a specific policy problem, issue, or research initiative. Participants may take part in one of two organized class projects or, in consultation me, develop a project of their own. I am hoping that a number of course participants will choose to contribute to one of the two organized projects. They are:

Project Option #1: Community Indicators
Contribute to a developing partnership between Virginia Tech, the City of Alexandria, and community Act for Alexandria (http://www.actionalexandria.org/) and Project for a Healthier Alexandria (http://www.alexhealth.org/partnership) in an effort to develop community indicators measuring community well-being. Help to coordinate two-planned community engagement meetings or contribute research on a similar effort in another locality or assessing the reliability/validity of common indicators.

Project Option #2: Wikipedia Public Policy Initiative

This much is certainly true: You should never cite Wikipedia as a source in an academic paper. That said, Wikipedia has become an indispensible place to start one's research or answer a simple question quickly. It's a free, regularly updated, often unbelievably informative, online encyclopedia. Remarkable. Last year, the foundation that helps to coordinate Wikipedia began the "Public Policy Initiative," a partnership with universities across the U.S. After discussing the initiative with their staff, I agreed to involve members of this class in the project. Here is information about the initiative:

Wikipedia. "Public Policy Initiative project details"
http://outreach.wikimedia.org/wiki/Public_Policy_Initiative_project_details

Wikipedia. "Public Policy Initiative Progress Report, November 2010"
http://outreach.wikimedia.org/wiki/Public_Policy_Initiative_%E2%80%93_Progress_Report_%28November_2010%29

Working with a DC-area "Campus Ambassador" assigned by the Policy Initiative staff, contributors to this project will first learn to edit Wikipedia entries and then work with me and other course participants to identify a feasible project contributing to the quality of policy information available on Wikipedia. I have some thoughts about potential projects – but all ideas are welcome.

Project Option #3: Choose Your Own Adventure…

If you have another project you wish to work on, please feel free to consult with me.

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.

Other required readings will be made available in electronic format. Doctoral students should also acquire two additional books:

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.

Because much of the semester is dedicated to thinking about quantitative analysis, I also **strongly recommend** 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.

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

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 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 Elements and Evaluation

Half of the final course evaluation will be based on coursework, including **eight (8)** course memos and the participants' overall contribution. The other half of the final course evaluation will be based on the participant's semester-long project, including **eight (8)** research update memos and regular in-class briefings.

***Course Memos* –** Participants will complete a total of **eight (8)** short memos (no more than 600-words) responding to questions/assignments posted to the course **Scholar** page. At least **sixteen (16) total** questions/assignments will be posted before May 4th. This means that participants may choose to complete half of all memo assignments. This initial course schedule presented in this syllabus outlines the first 7 of the total 16 questions/assignments with due dates before Spring Break (March 4). Some people procrastinate. To avoid late-semester troubles, all participants should complete **at least 3 course memos prior to March 4**.

Unless otherwise indicated, memos should be posted to Scholar **24 hours before class** on the week we are scheduled to discuss the relevant material. I'll assign each an overall evaluation, 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 memo respond effectively to the question or assignment?
- **Analysis** – Does the memo present clear and credible claims? Are the conclusions supported by the material identified or cited in the memo?
- **Grounding** –Does the memo make effective use of course materials to establish a firm theoretical and conceptual grounding?
- **Readability** – Is the memo efficient and well-organized? Is the language clear? Is the paper generally free of typos, grammatical errors, and other distractions?

Course Contribution – Participants are expected to complete assigned readings, attend class, and contribute to discussion. Course participants are also expected to read, discuss, and offer feedback on each other's work during the course of the semester.

Projects & Project Update Memos – The second half of the overall course evaluation will be based on a semester-long project undertaken by each participant. Participants should indicate on **Scholar** o later than **February 7th**, which of the two organized projects or another project of their own design they will undertake. I will discuss additional details in class and will work with each student to develop their projects. Once a topic has been selected (no later than 2/7), participants are expected to regularly update the class on their research projects by posting a minimum of **eight (8)** research memos to **Scholar by May 4th**. To avoid late-semester trouble, I recommend participants complete at least 3 research update memos prior to March 4th.

I will provide examples of research updates. They may include article summaries, summaries of thoughts and activities, research notes, interview schedules and summaries, and other materials related to the project. They may summarize thoughts and activities, research interviews, observations or anything else related to the research project. Research updates may also respond to questions, like: What articles and other resources do you believe are important for understanding the project? Why? What types of observations does existing research use? What makes you confident (or not confident) that they valid and reliable?

Saturday Meetings

To facilitate communication between participants in the Alexandria and Richmond classes, the two classes will meet together – most likely in Fredericksburg – for two double Saturday sessions on **Saturday February 13th** and **Saturday April 9th** from **10am to 2pm.** Lunch will be provided. I will provide additional details as the dates approach.

Initial Course Schedule

Alexandria	Richmond	Course Section	Course Memo (24 hrs prior)	Student Project
1/19	1/24	1	--	--
1/26	1/31	2	1	--
2/2	2/7	3	2	Topic selected
No Class 2/9	No Class 2/14	--	--	--
Saturday 2/12	Saturday 2/12	4	3, 4	Project Briefings
2/16	2/21	5	5, 6	
2/23	2/28	6	7	At least 3 project updates posted by 3/4

Course Sections

1. **Information and Decision**
   → Leigh Buchanan and Andrew O'Connell, 2006. "A Brief History of Decision-Making," *Harvard Business Review*.
   → Charles Lindblom, 1959. "The Science of 'Muddling Through'"

2. **Evidence, Inference, and Policy Decision**
   → Edward Tufte, 1974. Ch. 1-2. Data Analysis for Politics and Policy. Prentice-Hall. http://www.edwardtufte.com/tufte/dapp/
   → William T. Gormley, 2007. "Early Childhood Care and Education: Lessons and Puzzles," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management.*
   → David P. Farrington. 2003. "Methodological Quality Standards for Evaluation Research." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science.*

Memo #1: You are an analyst working for a policymaker in either early childhood education or the field of criminology. You have been given the task of developing standards for deciding "what works." Write a short (400-600 word) memo explaining the standards Gormley and/or Farrington recommend.

Recommended

→ Ray Pawson and Nick Tilley. 1994. "What Works in Evaluation Research?" *British Journal of Criminology.*

→ Paul F. Steinberg. 2007. "Causal Assessment in Small-N Policy Studies." Policy Studies Journal.

→ 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

3. **Representing Evidence, pt. 1**

→ Tufte, 1974. Ch. 3.

→ Joe Nocera. 2009. "Risk Mismanagement." *New York Times Magazine.* January 4.

→ 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.

Memo #2: You are an analyst for the Urban Institute. Identify a policy issue or question of your choice. The research team you work for has been granted the Gates Foundation's first ever "blank check" policy research grant. Write a memo proposing that your research team undertake a case study evaluation. Be as clear and concrete as possible: What evidence do you propose collecting? What do you think it will tell you?

4. **Representing Evidence, pt. 2**

→ Miller 1-6

→ Tufte. 1974. Ch. 4.

→ Janet Musso, Robert Biller, Robert Myrtle. 2000. "Tradecraft: Professional Writing as Problem Solving," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 19(4), 635-646.

Memo #3: Identify a variable of your choice. Using Miller as your guide, describe the variable: definition, the underlying data, scale, and the distribution over a specific set of observed values. Identify and explain three questions prompted the variable you have described. Questions may anything – they may address the reliability and validity of the variable you have described, propose alternative ways of representing the data, identify potential research projects, or anything else you would like to know in order to better understand the information in the variable you have described.

Memo #4: Indentify a table or chart representing at least two variables. Describe each variable: definition, scale, underlying data, and how the values are distributed (or at least how the distribution is represented in the table you have selected). Are the two variables correlated? How do you know? Is there evidence of a causal relationship between the variables? How do you know?

Recommended

→ Chava Frankfort-Nachmias and David Nachmias, 2000. Ch. 7. "Measurement," *Research Methods in the Social Sciences.*
→ Alan O. Sykes, "An Introduction to Regression Analysis." Chicago Working Paper in Law & Economics, n.d. www.law.uchicago.edu/Lawecon/WkngPprs_01-25/20.Sykes.Regression.pdf

5. What is Policy Analysis?

→ Weimer and Vining, 1999. Ch. 2
→ Miller 7-10, 12-13.
→ Jane E. Fountain. 2001. "Paradoxes of Public Sector Customer Service," *Governance: An International Journal of Policy and Administration,* 14 (1), January. 55-73.
→ Review: American Customer Service Index (Government Satisfaction Scores) http://www.theacsi.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=27&Itemid=62

Memo #5: Describe the American Customer Service Index (ACSI) Government Satisfaction Scores. How is the index measured? Create and describe a chart, table, or graphic using data drawn from the ACSI website linked below. Using Miller (Ch. 7-8, 13) as your guide, include at least one of each of the following three techniques: an example or analogy, quantitative comparison, and a description of a distribution.
http://www.theacsi.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=27&Itemid=62

Memo #6: You are a research analyst who works for the executive of a large public sector organization (you may choose the organization). Your supervisor has asked you to review current research on public sector "customer satisfaction." Explain what Fountain (2001) means when she discusses the "paradoxes" of public sector satisfaction. What, if anything, should your supervisor learn from Fountain's analysis?

6. The Analyst's Dilemma

→ Weimer and Vining, 1999. Ch. 3
→ Miller, Benjamin, and North, 2005. "Terrible Trade-off" p. 10-17.
→ Daniel Carpenter, Michael Chernew, Dean G. Smith, and A. Mark Fendrick. 2003. "Approval Times For New Drugs: Does The Source Of Funding For FDA Staff Matter?" December.

Memo #7: Discuss the trade-off between the problems of Type 1 and Type 2 Error described in "A Terrible Trade-off." Interpret the finding reported in Carpenter et al. How might the results of the analysis inform the shifting balance between the risks of Type 1 and Type 2 Error in drug regulation?

7. Landing on Your Feet

→ Weimer and Vining, 1999. Ch. 10, "Landing on Your Feet"
→ Bardach, Part I, "The Eightfold Path"
→ Wikipedia. "Neutral Point of View." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Npov

8. Goals & Alternatives

→ Weimer and Vining, 1999. Ch. 11, "Goals/Alternatives Matrices"
→ Bardach, Parts 2 & 3

9. Efficiency and the Economic Model

→ Weimer and Vining, 1999. Ch. 4, "Efficiency and the Idealized Competitive Model"
→ Carol Graham, 2005. "The Economics of Happiness" *World Economics*.
→ 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.

Recommended

→ Milton Friedman, 1966. "The Methodology of Positive Economics" http://academic2.american.edu/~dfagel/Class%20Readings/Friedman/Methodology.pdf

10. Market Failure

→ Weimer and Vining, 1999. Ch. 5, "Market Failures"
→ Richard O. Zerbe Jr. and Howard E. McCurdy. 1999. "The Failure of Market Failure." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management.*
→ Randall S. Clemons and Mark K. McBeth, pl 152-174. "Case: Bison, Brucellosis, Business, and Bureaucrats," in *Public Policy Praxis*.

11. 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.
→ Gerd Gigerenzer. 2008. "Why Heuristics Work." Perspectives on Psychological Science. http://www.unil.ch/webdav/site/determinismes/users/cclavien/public/Gigerenzer_WhyHeuristicsWork.pdf

12. Even More Limitations on the Competitive Framework

- → Weimer and Vining, 1999. Ch. 7-8. "Distributional and Other Goals," "Government Failures."
- → Charles T. Goodsell. 2007. "Six Normative Principles for the Contracting-Out Debate." *Administration & Society*.
- → 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

13. Policies as Instruments and Designs

- → Weimer and Vining, 1999. Ch. 9, "Generic Policies"
- → Lester M. Salamon. 2002. "Introduction: The New Governance and the Tools of Public Action," and Kettl, Ch. 16, "Managing Indirect Government." *The Tools of Government: A Guide to the New Governance.* Oxford.
- → Anne Schneider and Mara Sidney. 2009. "What Is Next for Policy Design and Social Construction Theory?" *Policy Studies Journal*.

14. Knowledge and Action

- → Weimer and Vining, 1999. Ch. 13, 15 "Adoption and Implementation" and "When Statistics Count"
- → Fay Lomax Cook, Lawrence R. Jacobs, and Dukhong Kim. 2010. "Trusting What You Know: Information, Knowledge, and Confidence in Social Security." *Journal of Politics*.