

PUBP 501-004: Policy and Organizational Analysis  
Spring 2005 - Course Syllabus

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**Office Hours:** Thursday 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM  
**Course Credit:** 3  
**Location:** Arlington Original, Room 245  
**Meeting Time:** Thursday 7:20 PM - 10:00 PM  
**First Day of Class:** January 27, 2005  
**Last Day to Drop Class:** February 25, 2005

**Course Description**

This course examines the tools of basic policy analysis, including basic statistics, institutional analysis, and cost-benefit analysis. By the end of this course, you should be able 1) to face any policy decision with an armament of tools that you can use to determine whether a particular policy should be adopted or not and 2) defend your analysis given certain assumptions you make. These tools will help you in other courses, particularly future courses in statistics and economics.

**Course Guidelines**

If you wish to speak with me concerning the class, please call 202-606-9289 and leave a phone number at which I can call you between 8am and 4pm. *After 4pm, no phone calls will be returned until the next day.*

When submitting both problem sets and exams, you may do so electronically. Please put your name on any materials submitted for a grade. Please put page numbers on every page. If submitting material by email, please use a descriptive file name that includes your surname. An example might be "Lipscomb\_hw1.doc".

**Course Materials**

The texts for the course are Dunn's *Public Policy Analysis*, Levinson's *Guide to Financial Markets*, and Best's *Damned Lies and Statistics*. Supplementary readings and cases will be distributed by me to you *or* will be available in the library. If you have not done so already, please familiarize yourself with the library's online resources, and make sure that you have access to Adobe Acrobat Reader.

## **Grading**

This course has four graded components: two (2) exams (an in-class midterm and a take-home final exam) and a group policy analysis paper. The percentages of each assignment as it relates to your final grade are:

<i>Midterm</i>	=	30%
<i>Comprehensive Final Exam</i>	=	30%
<i>Group Policy Analysis Paper</i>	=	40%
<i>TOTAL</i>	=	100%

## **Description of Group Policy Analysis**

Students in this course will be required to work together in small groups on a policy analysis project. This project comprises an two-page executive summary, problem definition, proposed alternative policy solutions, policy option selection, policy option implementation, policy option evaluation, conclusions and recommendations, and reference sections. The project must make use of quantitative data (or qualitative data that can be analyzed using quantitative methods). Each group will consist of 4-5 group members. Instead of each person having an assigned role, each member will contribute to the project as he/she desires. At the end, each group member will evaluate his/her contribution and the contributions of all other group members. This “group evaluation”, plus the quality of the final policy analysis, will be used to determine a final grade for the group policy project. The idea is that the harder you work as an individual (contributing to the group’s success), the better your individual grade.

Topic selection: By February 10, each group is responsible for turning in to the instructor three ideas for the topic. Each topic, as well as the data to be used for each project, should be described in one paragraph. The instructor will select each group’s policy analysis topic from one of the three proposed ideas. (*This is done to prevent the overlap of topics.*)

Each team will be responsible for the production of a policy position paper (minimum of 20 pages, maximum of 30). The paper should make an argument that is supported by empirical or anecdotal evidence. Further, each team will be required to make a 20-25 minute presentation on the findings of the paper. The presentation must demonstrate an understanding of the policy issues related to the analysis. Each team member should understand every aspect of the policy analysis, including the theoretical and empirical portions. *In fact, any team member may be asked to make the presentation at the discretion of the instructor. Also, note that any paper not completed to my satisfaction will be revised until it does satisfy me. This includes grammar, punctuation, and spelling considerations.*

The policy paper should follow generally this format (slight variations may arise depending on the issue presented):

- I. Executive Summary
  - A. Statement of the issue
  - B. Review of procedures
  - C. Summary of major conclusions
- II. Problem Definition
  - A. Methods used to structure the problem for analysis
  - B. Formal statement of the problem and its current status
  - C. Forces at work (institutions and actors involved) that shape the issue
- III. Proposed Alternative Policy Solutions
  - A. Narrative description of each alternative proposal (at least two)
  - B. Assessment of relevant stakeholder positions
  - C. Estimation of alternative viability
- IV. Policy Option Selection
  - A. Selection process and results
  - B. Evidence that supports this option
- V. Policy Option Implementation
  - A. Implementation process
  - B. Identification and analysis of major institutions and actors involved
  - C. Current success or failure of the implementation process
- VI. Policy Option Evaluation
  - A. Current evaluation procedures
  - B. Assessment of evaluation procedures in use
  - C. Proposed alternative evaluation procedures
- VII. Conclusions and Recommendations
- VIII. References

### **SPP Policy on Plagiarism**

The profession of scholarship and the intellectual life of a university as well as the field of public policy inquiry depend fundamentally on a foundation of trust. Thus any act of plagiarism strikes at the heart of the meaning of the university and the purpose of the School of Public Policy. It constitutes a serious breach of professional ethics and it is unacceptable. Plagiarism is the use of another's words or ideas presented as one's own. It includes, among other things, the use of specific words, ideas, or frameworks that are the product of another's work. Honesty and thoroughness in citing sources is essential to professional accountability and personal responsibility. Appropriate citation is necessary so that arguments, evidence, and claims can be critically examined.

Plagiarism is wrong because of the injustice it does to the person whose ideas are stolen. But it is also wrong because it constitutes lying to one's professional colleagues. From a prudential perspective, it is shortsighted and self-defeating, and it can ruin a professional career. The faculty of the School of Public Policy takes plagiarism seriously and has adopted a zero tolerance policy. Any plagiarized assignment will receive an automatic

grade of “F.” This may lead to failure for the course, resulting in dismissal from the University. This dismissal will be noted on the student’s transcript. For foreign students who are on a university-sponsored visa (e.g. F-1, J-1 or J-2), dismissal also results in the revocation of their visa.

To help enforce the SPP policy on plagiarism, all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit student’s work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. The SPP policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace it or substitute for it. (<http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/handbook/aD.html>)

### **Class Schedule**

1. January 27: Overview of the Policy Analysis Process (Formulation to Evaluation); Various Data Sources  
*Readings:*  
*Downs, A. “Policy process as a cycle”*  
*Lindblom, C. “The science of muddling through”*  
*Dunn – Chapters 1 and 2*
2. February 3: Basics of Survey Research (Data Collection and Analysis); Problem Conceptualization; Sampling  
*Readings:*  
*Dunn – Chapter 3*
3. February 10: Quantitative Analysis I: Measures of Central Tendency, Variance  
*Readings:*  
*Handout on basic statistics compiled by the instructor*
4. February 17: Quantitative Analysis II: Probability and Pivot Tables; Forecasting  
*Readings:*  
*Dunn – Chapter 4*
5. February 24: Limits of Quantitative Analysis: Confidence Intervals, Data Biases, Graphics  
*Readings:*  
*Dunn – Chapter 6*
6. March 3: Qualitative Analysis: Case Study, Participant Observation, Anecdotal Evidence  
*Readings:*
7. March 10: Midterm Exam

8. March 17: Spring Break
9. March 24: The Policy Players I: Institutions, Issue Networks, and the Power Elite  
*Readings:*  
*Notes on Chapters 10 and 12 from Lane, J-E. The Public Sector*
10. March 31: The Policy Players II: Government (including Congress) and Market Failure  
*Readings:*
11. April 7: Cost-Benefit Analysis and “Rational” Analysis  
*Readings:*  
*Dunn – Chapter 5*  
*Hanley and Spash – Chapter 1*
12. April 14: Welfare, Ethics, and Policy Analysis  
*Readings:*  
*Okun – Equality and Efficiency*  
*Sen – The Possibility of Social Choice*
13. April 21: Policy Evaluation and Argument Development  
*Readings:*  
*Dunn – Chapters 7, 8, and 9*
14. April 28: Case Studies  
*Readings:*  
*Levinson – Guide to Financial Markets*  
*Love Canal and the Challenger Space Shuttle Crash*
15. May 5: Group Project Presentations and Class Evaluations
16. May 12: NO CLASS! Take-home Exams Due at 5pm

### **Data and Policy Sources**

RAND	<a href="http://www.rand.org">www.rand.org</a>
North Amer. PUBP News	<a href="http://www.public-policy.org">www.public-policy.org</a>
Assoc. for PUBP Analysis and Mgt.	<a href="http://www.appam.org">www.appam.org</a>
Brookings Institution	<a href="http://www.brookings.edu">www.brookings.edu</a>
Institute of Governmental Studies	<a href="http://www.igs.berkeley.edu">www.igs.berkeley.edu</a>
Policy analysis tutorial	<a href="http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/plegal/ppae/ppae1">www.maxwell.syr.edu/plegal/ppae/ppae1</a>
Health care – cost effectiveness	<a href="http://www.prevent.org/publications">www.prevent.org/publications</a>
Navy economic analysis handbook	<a href="http://www.nps.navy.mil/drmi/chapter1.htm">www.nps.navy.mil/drmi/chapter1.htm</a>
Amer. Political Science Assoc.	<a href="http://www.apsapolicysection.org/links.html">www.apsapolicysection.org/links.html</a>
American Enterprise Institute	<a href="http://www.aei.org">www.aei.org</a>
Careers in PUBP	<a href="http://www.pubpol.duke.edu/career/links.html">www.pubpol.duke.edu/career/links.html</a>

## **References**

Best, Joel. 2001. *Damned Lies and Statistics: Untangling Numbers from the Media, Politicians, and Activists*. University of California Press.

Downs, Anthony. 1972. "Up and Down With Ecology: The "Issue-Attention Cycle." *The Public Interest* 28: 38-50. Available from [www.anthonydowns.com](http://www.anthonydowns.com)

Dunn, William N. 2004. *Public Policy Analysis: An Introduction (Third Edition)*. Prentice Hall.

Hanley, N. and Spash, C.L. 1993. *Cost-Benefit Analysis and the Environment*. Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar. (Chapter 1)

Levinson, Marc. 2002. *The Economist's Guide to Economic Indicators, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition*. Bloomberg Press.

Lindblom, Charles E. 1995. "The 'Science' of Muddling Through." *Public Policy: The Essential Readings*. Stella Theodoulou and Matthew Cahn, Editors. Prentice Hall. p. 113-127.

Lindblom, Charles E. 1979. "Still Muddling, Not Yet Through" *Public Administration Review* p. 222-233.

Okun, Arthur. *Equality and Efficiency*. Brookings Institution Press.

Sen, A. 1999. "The Possibility of Social Choice." *American Economic Review* 89(3): 349-378.

Sen, A. 2000. "The Discipline of Cost-Benefit Analysis." *Journal of Legal Studies* 29(2): 931-952.