

PUBP 501: POLICY AND ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS
Fall 2006

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Office Hours: Wednesday 3:00 – 4:00 pm or by appointment
Course Day/Time: Wednesday at 4:30 pm
Course Location: Arlington Campus, Room 251

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses on the analytical tools required for making good policy decisions. Emphasis is placed on collecting and manipulating quantitative data, analyzing data objectively, drawing conclusions from complex and contradictory information, measuring costs and benefits, and using data appropriately and persuasively to influence and/or support policy. This course will also stress the importance of clear writing and effective presentation skills. This course is not intended as a rigorous statistics course—rather, the course is designed to prepare students to assess critically statistical and other information and to use data to support policy recommendations.

Specific course objectives include:

- Developing a conceptual understanding and operational capability regarding common analytical methods employed in public policy analysis;
- Writing purposeful policy memoranda and reports that require collection and analysis of data and formulation and presentation of research findings; and
- Mastering presentation skills required for effective communication of analytical findings to public officials, their professional staff, and the general public.

COURSE MATERIALS

Best, Joel. 2001. *Damned Lies and Statistics: Untangling Numbers from the Media, Politics, and Activists*. Berkeley, VA: University of California Press. (ISBN: 0-520-21978-3)

Economist staff. 2003. *Guide to Economic Indicators: Making Sense of Economics* (5th Edition). (ISBN: 1-57660-145-5)

Dye, Thomas R. 2002. *Understanding Public Policy* (10th Edition). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. (ISBN: 0-13-026008-8)

Hacker, Diana. 2004. *A Pocket Style Manual* (4th Edition). Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's. (ISBN: 0-312-40684-3)

Koosis, Donald J. 1997. *Statistics: A Self-Teaching Guide* (4th Edition). New York: John Wiley & Sons. (ISBN: 0-471-14688-9)

Additional readings will be provided by the instructor during the course.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

- **One-page memo summarizing policy issue (5% of grade): DUE 9/6**

This brief memo is designed to start you thinking about how to identify a policy issue, summarize that issue concisely, and analyze the data that would be needed to come to a policy decision. This memo must be no longer than one page (approx. 3 to 4 paragraphs, 11 pt. font, single-spaced). The objective is not to recommend a policy action or to provide a lengthy discourse on the topic, but rather to identify briefly what information would be needed to inform the policy decision-maker.

- **Two two-page policy memos (25% of grade – 10% for first one, 15% for second one): DUE 9/27, 10/25**

Being able to write a concise policy memo is essential for policy analysts. Each memo will address a randomly-assigned policy issue. The memo will include a summary of the issue, presentation of appropriate data (i.e. in the form of tables, charts, etc.), and a policy recommendation. In addition to the content of the memos, attention should be paid to the organization and presentation of the memo, as well as to citing sources. (11 pt. font, single-spaced)

- **Policy research paper (25% of grade): DUE 12/6**

This longer, empirical policy paper should be no more than 2,500 words (roughly 10 pages, double spaced, 11 pt. font) and can be on a topic of your choice. (Please discuss your topic with me first either in person or by email.) This paper will be evaluated based on how well you frame the policy question, how well you use and cite literature and data sources, the logic of your argument, the clarity and quality of your writing, the rigor of your analysis, and your overall creativity and thoughtfulness.

- **Presentation on policy research paper (15% of grade): DUE 11/15, 11/29 or 12/6**

You will present the findings from your policy research paper during a 15-minute in-class presentation (10 minutes for your presentation, 5 minutes for questions). You must prepare a Power Point show and bring it with you on disk or memory stick. A laptop and LCD projector will be available.

- **Final Exam (30% of grade): HANDED OUT 12/6; DUE 12/13**

The final exam will be a take-home exam. It will cover the material discussed over the entire course and will consist of short answer and essay type questions.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR A DISABILITY

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the DRC.

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 works 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 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 or substitute for it. (<http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/handbook/aD.html>)

COURSE OUTLINE

8/30 Introduction to Policy Analysis

Dye, Ch. 1-3

9/6 Role of Statistics in Framing Policy Issues

Best, Intro, Ch. 1-3

Koosis, Ch. 1-2

Johnson, Benjamin. 2006. "Managing Immigration as a Resource," Immigration Policy Center.

Vaughan, Jessica. 2006. "Attrition Through Enforcement: A Cost-Effective Strategy to Shrink the Illegal Population," Center for Immigration Studies.

One-page memo DUE

9/13 Limitations of Quantitative Analysis

Best, Ch. 4-6

Economist, Ch 3

9/20 Characteristics of Quantitative Data

Deming, David. 2003. "Are We Running Out of Oil?" National Center for Policy Analysis.

U.S. PIRG. 2005. *Solutions to America's Oil Crisis: A Federal Agenda for Reducing Oil Demand and Protecting Consumers.*

9/27 Inference and Interpretation

Koosis, Ch. 3

The Brookings Institution. 2004. "Offshoring, Import Competition, and the Jobless Recovery," Policy Brief #136.

The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers. 2004. "Offshore Outsourcing."

Leonard, Jeremy. 2006. *Offshoring of Information-Technology Jobs: Myths and Realities*, American Sentinel University.

10/4 Hypothesis Testing and Statistical Significance

Koosis, Ch. 4-5

Kwon, Ik-Whan G. and Daniel W. Baack. 2005. "The Effectiveness of Legislation Controlling Gun Usage," *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 64: 533-547.

Dahlberg, Linda L., Robin M. Ikeda, and Marcie-jo Kresnow. 2004. "Guns in the Home and Risk of a Violent Death in the Home: Findings from a National Study," *American Journal of Epidemiology* 160: 929-936.

Webster, Daniel W., Jon S. Vernick, and Lisa M. Hepburn. 2002. "Effects of Maryland's Law Banning 'Saturday Night Special' Handguns on Homicides," *American Journal of Epidemiology* 155: 406-412.

Two-page memo DUE

10/11 Economic Indicators and Forecasting

Economist, Ch. 4-5

Koosis, Ch. 7

Baker, Dean. 2006. "Is the Housing Bubble Collapsing? 10 Economic Indicators to Watch," Center for Economic and Policy Research.

Deane, Daneila. 2005. "In Real Estate Fever, More Signs of Sickness," *The Washington Post*, 17 April 2005.

Downey, Kirstin. 2006. "NVR Home Orders Down, Indicating Slower Market," *The Washington Post*, 21 July 2006.

10/18 Survey Methodology

Schwartz, Norbert. 1997. "Questionnaire Design: The Rocky Road from Concept to Answers," in *Survey Measurement and process Quality*, Lyberg, Lars and others (eds.), New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Examples of survey instruments

10/25 Program Evaluation and Cost-Benefit Analysis

Dye, Ch. 14

Kuhns, Carole Logan. 2002. *Fairfax Welfare Reform Evaluation Study: Client Characteristics, Experiences, and Employment Outcomes*, Center for Public Administration and Policy at Virginia Tech.

Sunstein, Cass R. 2005. "Cost-Benefit Analysis and the Environment," *Ethics* January: 351-385.

U.S. Government Accountability Office. 2005. *Clean Air Act: Observations on EPA's Cost-Benefit Analysis of Its Mercury Control Options*. GAO-05-252.

Two-page memo DUE

11/1 Qualitative Analysis

Readings TBD

11/8 Presentation Techniques

11/15 Presentations

11/22 No class

11/29 Presentations

12/6 Presentations

Final Exam Handed Out (due 12/13)

Research Paper DUE