

Draft Draft Draft

Policy and Organizational Analysis

(PUBP 501:001)

The School of Public Policy
George Mason University

Spring 2007

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Class Location: Old Building Room 269, Arlington Campus

Course Description

Policy analysis is the application of social and physical sciences to either public/private policy issues or problems¹. It is carried out to either explain all policy decisions or to improve the understanding of the policy process.

Policy analysts have four different roles in the policy process². They help define problems that are not fully understood by participants in the decision making process. They identify or design new policies. They determine the potential and actual consequences of policy proposals and established policies. Finally, they evaluate these potential or actual policy consequences in terms of broad social goals and values.

Policy analysis consists of a series of intellectual embedded in a social process³. Policy problems and issues are often extremely complex as they almost always have interrelated economic, organizational, institutional, and cultural components. Failure to take these interdependent components can result in the implementation of policies that yield significant unintended consequences. Therefore, the course will provide you with an overview of some of the basic concepts from the disciplines of Economics, Operations Research, and Sociology that help take into account the different elements of policy problem into account. The course also will introduce some basic numeric and statistical techniques as almost all policy analysis require some type of quantitative analysis.

¹ Friedman, L.S. (2002). The Microeconomics of Public Policy Analysis. Princeton N.J. Princeton University Press

² Ibid

³ Dunn, W.N. (2004). Public Policy Analysis An Introduction Third Edition. Upper Saddle N.J. Prentice Hall

It is anticipated that the course provide you with some of the basic knowledge and skills required to be both a successful student and a policy analyst in your academic discipline. Therefore, the course will emphasize basic concepts, information acquisition, and application of data analysis techniques, and presentation (oral and written) to professional and lay audiences. The course is a precursor to, not a substitute for, advanced statistics, and advanced research course(s)

Keys to Course Success

1. Keeping up with the readings
2. Classroom participation
3. Completing homework
4. Being a good group project team member
5. Having a positive attitude

Course Materials

The required textbooks for the course are:

Best, Joel. 2001. More Dammed Lies and Statistics: Untangling Numbers from the Media, Politicians and Activists How Numbers Confuse Public Issues. University of California Press

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

Mintrom, Michael. 2003. People Skills for Policy Analysts. Georgetown University Press

Recommended Texts

The following texts may not only help with this course but may also contribute to your other course work:

Bardach, Eugene 2000. A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving. Seven Bridges Press, LLC

[Jaisingh, Lloyd R.](#) 2000. Statistics for the Utterly Confused. Mcgraw Hill

Quade, E.S. and G.M. Grace. 1989. Analysis for Public Decisions. North Holland

Grades

The grade that you earn in this course will be based on the following formula:

Midterm:	25%
Final:	25%
Homework:	25%
Group Project:	25%

Student collaboration on homework assignments is allowed and encouraged. However, students must turn in their own work and must note on their assignments any assistance they received from their peers or others.

Student collaboration on the mid-term (take home) and final examination is not allowed.

Deadlines:

Assignments that are turned in late will be marked down a letter grade. However, no late homework assignment will receive a zero.

Group Policy Analysis

Students in the course will have to work on a group policy analysis project that examines a policy issue. The policy analysis should make use of quantitative data. Each group will consist of 5 to 6 members. Group members will serve in one of three roles: researcher, writer, or presenter. Each group member will receive an individual grade for their individual group role as well as a grade that is an average of all of the individual group member grades.

Topic Selection: Each group is responsible for turning into the instructor by the end of the third week three proposed topics for their policy analysis project. Each proposed topic should be briefly described in a short paragraph. In addition, the data that will be used for each project should be described. The instructor will select each group's policy analysis topic from one of their three proposed ideas.

Each team will be responsible for producing a 20 page policy position paper. The paper should make an argument that is supported by evidence. Further, each team will make a twenty minute presentation on the paper. The class presentation must demonstrate an understanding of the policy issues related to the analysis. Every team member should understand every aspect of the policy analysis.

Each team member will turn in a one page report on their own activities as well as any praise or concern.

Role Responsibilities:

Researchers (1-2 group members): The researchers are responsible for providing the materials that the writers need to produce the final report. They shall develop an annotated bibliography that has between 10- 25 sources. The annotated bibliography should include books, academic journals, newspapers, magazine articles, and web pages. The research should in a paragraph summarize each annotation. The summary should highlight the potential contributions of the source as well any shortcomings.

The researchers are responsible for providing the data that will be utilized for the analysis.

Writers (2 group members): The writers are responsible for the group's policy position paper. The final policy paper should make a policy recommendation and should not ignore arguments against the final policy recommendation. Writers are responsible for completing a rough draft of the paper before the project deadline. The writers shall keep their team members apprised of the paper's status.

Writers are also responsible for the analysis of the data. The data utilized for the policy analysis project must be turned in with the final paper.

Presenters (1-2 group members) The presenters are responsible for developing a presentation that does not exceed twenty minutes. The presentation must be succinct, persuasive, and must not be deceptive.

Final Group Project Paper Structure

The final group project paper should follow this general format (variations from the format are permitted):

I. Executive Summary

- A. Statement of issue or problem
- 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) that shape the issue

III. Proposed Policy Alternatives

- A. Narrative of description of each alternative (at least three)
- B. Method of assessing options
- C. Assessment of each alternative in terms of trade-offs, goals, cost, etc
- D. How to implement and evaluate

IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

V. References

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 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 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 (eg. 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>)

Course Topics

Each course topic is expected to take up one week's worth of lecture. The length of the lesson will vary depending on the class and the subject. The instructor will make clear at the end of each week's class what reading will be expected for the next time. Students who miss class should either contact the instructor or their peers to determine the next week's readings.

There may be guest speakers for the course. The syllabus will be adjusted if guest speakers are obtained.

1. The Process of Policy Analysis

Readings

- Classroom Introductions
- Course Overview
- Dunn Chapter 1- The Process of Policy Analysis
- Minitrom Chapter 1- Policy Analysis and People Skills
- Minitrom Chapter 2 – Managing Your Resources

Methodology

- Percentages,
- Percentage Change
- Index Numbers
- Ratios
- Measures of Central Tendency
 - Averages (Mean & Weighted)
 - Median
 - Mode

Activities & Assignments

N/A

2. Policy Arguments & Policy Communications

Readings

Dunn Chapters 8 – Developing Policy Communications
Dunn Chapter 9 – Communicating Policy Analysis
Minitrom Chapters 6 – Working in Teams
Minitrom Chapter 7 – Facilitating Meetings
Minitrom Chapter 9 – Conflict Management

Methodology

Project Management Overview
Measures of Variability
 Range
 Variance
 Standard Deviation
Confidence Intervals
Central Limit Theorem

Assignment

Group Meetings
Group Paper (2 Pages) on implementation of Project Management Techniques
Group Proposals
Homework One assigned

3. Policy Analysis in the Policy Making Process

Readings

Dunn Chapter 2 – Policy Analysis in the Policy Making Process
Minitrom Chapters 3 – Building Expert Knowledge
Minitrom Chapter 4 – Interviewing Informants
Minitrom Chapter 9 – Conflict Management

Methodology

Normal and Student T Distributions
 Z and T probabilities
 Hypothesis Testing
 Difference in Means

Activities & Assignments

Homework One due
Group Project Proposals
Group Paper on implementation of Project Management Techniques

4. Structuring Policy Problems

Readings

Dunn Chapter 3 – Structuring Policy Problems
Best Chapter 1 – Missing Numbers
Homework Two Assigned

Methodology

Probability Review One
One-Way Chi-Square

Activities & Assignments

Homework Two Assigned

5. Market & Government Failures

Readings

Best Chapter 2 – Confusing Numbers

Wolf, C. (1979). "A Theory of Non-Market Failure" Journal of Law and Economics, Vol. 22, No 1. (Apr., 1979), pp. 107-139 (JSTOR Data Base)

Coase, R.H (1974). "The Lighthouse in Economics" Journal of Law and Economics, Vol. 17, No. 2. (Oct., 1974), pp. 357-376. (JSTOR Data Base)

R.H. Coase (1964). "The Problem of Social Cost". Journal of Law and Economics, Vol. 3. (Oct., 1960), pp. 1-44 (JSTOR Data Base)

Methodology

Probability Review Two
Two-Way Chi-Square

Activities & Assignment

Homework Two Due

6. Culture, Organizations, Institutions

Readings

Best Chapter 3 Scary Numbers

North D (1991). "Institutions". The Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 5, No. 1. (Winter, 1991), pp. 97-112 (JSTOR database)

Fukuyama. F (1995) "The Primacy of Culture," Journal of Democracy, Vol. 6, no. 1 (Jan. 1995) (Project Muse database)

W. R. Scott, "Organization: Overview". In: Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes, Editor(s)-in-Chief, International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences, Elsevier Science Ltd, Oxford, 2001, Pages 10910-10917 (Science Direct database)

Methodology

Review as Necessary

Activities & Assignments

Mid-Term Review
Mid-Term Assigned
Group Proposals Due

Spring Break March 11 -March 18

7. Forecasting Expected Policy Outcomes

Readings

Dunn Chapter 4 – Forecasting Expected Policy Outcomes
Best Chapter 4 – Authoritative Numbers

Methodology

Classical Time-Series
Linear Trend Estimation

Activities & Assignments

Mid-Term Due

Homework Three Assigned

8. Recommending Preferred Policies

Reading

Dunn Chapter 5 – Recommending Preferred Policies
Best Chapter 5- Magical Numbers
Homework Three Due

Methodology

Benefit-Cost Analysis
Discounting
Time Value of Money

Activities & Assignments

Homework Three Due

9. Monitoring Observed Policy Outcomes

Readings

Dunn Chapter 6 – Monitoring Observed Policy Outcomes
Best Chapter 6 – Contentious Numbers

Methodology

Correlation
Simple Regression

Activities & Assignments

Homework Four Assigned
Group Paper Draft Due

10. Evaluating Policy Performance

Readings

Dunn Chapter 7 – Evaluating Policy Performance
Best Chapter 7 – Toward Statistical Literacy
Minitrom Chapter 5 – Giving Presentations
Homework Four Due

Methodology

Multiple Regression

Activities & Assignments

11. Group Meetings

Readings

Minitrom Chapters 10 – Professional Networking
Minitrom Chapter 11 – Pursuing Excellence

Methodology

Review as Needed

Activities & Assignments

Group Meeting

12. Group Presentations to Policy Official

13. Final Review

Review for Final

Activities & Assignments

Final Group Project Paper Due

14. In-Class Final