

George Mason University

School of Public Policy

Preliminary Syllabus for PUBP 501.008 as of December 15th 2006

Policy and Organizational Analysis (Class CDROM 1 has more details plus audio and video materials and can be requested at any time from instructor—will be distributed at first class or sooner if you wish)

This version of PUBP 501 uses special, team-oriented approaches, for which some of the regular class time is replaced by technology interventions in the form of online audio-video lectures, CD-based presentations and tutorials, web-based analysis/research and others. The class meets six times over the semester.

Class meeting times: Five Saturdays 9:30-5 PM --January 20, February 3, February 24th, April 7, May 5

Class Location: Original Arlington Campus room 251

Instructor: Stephen Ruth, Professor of Public Policy and Technology Management (ruth@gmu.edu)

Instructor's Office: Room 203B Finley; Phone: 703 993 1789; Office hours: by appointment; URL for instructor: <http://www.icasit.org/ruth/index.htm> In case of emergency, you may call Professor Ruth at his home before 9 p.m. at 703-536 5343

Course description

Professionals are routinely confronted by the need to assess the credibility, accuracy, balance, and completeness of studies, research reports and policy advocacy documents. The professional world is also inundated with data and information through the Worldwide Web and other electronic and print media. This course prepares students to collect and analyze information systematically from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives. It emphasizes information acquisition, practical application of data analysis approaches, and

tools and techniques for presentation of results to professional and lay audiences. Its primary assignment activity is careful, accurate, well-reasoned writing by individuals and teams.

Topics include methods of collecting data and ways of assessing its reliability and validity, formulation and testing of hypotheses, qualitative and quantitative approaches to data analysis, visualizing and presenting information, and developing logical, clear arguments based on the analysis of information. Economic concepts like supply/demand relationships, marginal utility, consumer surplus, cost and benefit analysis and the like are also included. The ability to write intelligently and interestingly about these methodologies is a crucial requirement of the course, and there will be considerable stress on behavioral approaches like interviewing, opinion sampling, blogging, etc. that facilitate access to information sources.

Individually and as team members, students discuss and practice electronic retrieval of information, complete a series of written assignments requiring research and synthesis of public policy applications, make presentations, assess research, and provide written analyses of policy materials pertaining to the Washington Capital Region and beyond. The course emphasizes writing reports for professional and lay audiences and the importance of intellectual honesty in analytic work. It aims to provide basic competencies that enable students to master advanced courses in methodology and to be intelligent users and presenters of research.

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

Using a high speed Internet connection every day Students in this course will be required to make extensive use of Internet-based resources. If you are not a “techie” or “geek” this does not put you at a disadvantage; nevertheless, it will be crucial that you get in the habit of using the Internet daily from a high speed connection. GMU offers literally hundreds of terminals with this capability at the various campuses including several dozen at the Arlington Campus Original Building’s 3rd floor. Daily use of Internet from a high speed connection is not just a convenience—it is part of the behavior of today’s researchers and analysts and a requirement for this course. If you are experiencing difficulty with broadband service please contact the instructor.

Learning goals

By the end of the course students should have an understanding of:

- **First and foremost how careful, analytical approaches can be useful in research, if combined with disciplined writing and diligent research techniques**
- the writing requirements that inhere in the discipline of policy analysis
- why people want research done - what motivates research
- how and why research is created, compiled, and published
- ways in which research is used in policy and organizational work
- the varieties of research that are done in policy and organizational work
- the importance of assessing the reliability and usefulness of research information
- ways of assessing the reliability and usefulness of research
- how people's interests, expectations, and beliefs influence the way research is done
- how research methods influence the things that people research and the conclusions they reach
- ethical issues surrounding public policy research

The course approach will be heavily weighted toward active, frequent use of the tools, techniques and habits of researchers. **We will aim not so much to discuss research, but to *do research*, with special emphasis on the power of knowledge-based, learning organizations to leverage the work of groups and teams.**

A reminder: research is a discipline, a set of norms and habits just as demanding as those of athletes, ascetics and others who force themselves into a rigorous routine. Excellent research habits need to be practiced so frequently that they become routine. When excellent research habits are linked to superior practice of knowledge management and organizational learning approaches, everyone benefits.

Importance of Good Writing Skills Team-oriented research is of little value unless it can be presented interestingly and correctly. Students in this course will be expected to write extensively, a normal requirement in graduate courses in public policy. From the outset, the highest standard of writing will be expected. Here are some of the requirements:

- **Quality of Content:** Addresses assignment; analytical clarity/persuasiveness; objectivity; quality of source material; use of evidence/methodology.
- **Tone, Structure and Organization:** Clear introduction, thesis, conclusion; use of transitions, headings and other cohering strategies; logical and coherent paragraphing in support of main points.
- **Mechanics:** Correct citation and documentation; required elements (title page, works cited [if more than those in footnotes]), length (word count), page #; grammar, spelling, punctuation, article use format: all work will be submitted in MS Word Times New Roman 14 pt. format single or double spaced, depending on the student's choice of style guide (see below).
- **Structure:** The normal breaks between paragraphs will be observed, using any style guide you choose. A popular choice in SPP is Diana Hacker, *A Pocket Manual of Style*, (New York, St. Martin's Press, latest edition). Work should be neatly arranged with clear demarcation of sub- units. (The four criteria above were developed by Dr. Jonathan Gifford.)
- **Grammar:** Impeccable word usage and grammar will be expected in all submitted work. Students may wish to show early work to someone else--a friend or colleague--for a review of style, grammar and other details. Papers with more than a very small number of errors in grammar and word usage will be returned. Also please review carefully *Writing Tips*, by Cynthia Harrison, included at the end of this syllabus package and borrowed with permission from the PUBP 700 syllabus developed by Professors Fritschler and Rudder.
- **Method of submission:** All papers will be submitted to the instructor by email as attachments using a clear description in the subject line of the message. For example: Julia Jones, Assignment 1-Segment 3.
- **Samples of excellent work provided:** For many assigned exercises students will be provided with samples of excellent work from previous classes. These samples are not meant to limit creativity or innovation, but simply to point out to appropriate techniques

Assignment 1—two segments (Partly autodidact) Collecting, Interpreting and Presenting Knowledge: Practical applications and discovery (30 % of grade, 15-20 hours outside class) This assignment consists of two segments, each constituting a group of questions and activities designed to test and extend research skills and integrate those skills with the course materials The first segment Assignment 1 segment 1, included at the end of this syllabus starting on page 13, is the more lengthy and difficult of the two. Students are urged to stay ahead of these assignments and to use them as part of a continuous process of sharpening research competence. See the section “Importance of Good Writing Skills” above for guidelines on submitting Assignment 1 segments. Assignment 1 exercises require discovering and documenting many information sources. A crucial element in each Assignment 1 segment is a clear, replicable path to data.

Note: Assignment 1 Segment 1 questions are at the end of this syllabus, pages 13-19. Please read the questions carefully, including the hints provided by the instructor. Two class lectures on class CDROM 1 are also required for this assignment

Assignment 2 - Collecting and Presenting Knowledge--Team Project: (15 % of grade; about 6-10 hours outside class) Student teams plan and present these projects. Teams will be formed at the first class meeting. Results take the form of team discussions, research, scheduling of tasks, class presentations and other activities. Individual grades for teamwork exercises will be assigned based on instructor's evaluation of team performance plus scores on team peer evaluations. Samples of Assignment 2 case deliverables will be distributed during the first class.

Team-selected Topics: Samples of possible team case focus areas are described below. Students choose their case early in the course from examples and resources like the following:

- **International:** *World Development Report 2007* (World Bank to be released September 2006) or *Human Development Report 2006* (UNDP—to be released September 2006)

Please note: Topics shown here are examples only — teams can choose something focused, current and interesting to them based on their own discussions. Selection of assignment 2 teams and topics will take place at the first class meeting--so informally you may want to be considering ideas and partnerships beforehand.

- **Sectoral:** *Arab Human Development Report 2003* provides a good example of a focused review of policy issues in a region with a population of close to 300 million.
- **Domestic:** Universal health coverage, Social Security reform, immigration policy, tariff legislation, etc.
- **Local:** Several state and county cases will be suggested with special emphasis on Virginia's continuing tax debate or transportation planning
- **Millennium Challenge Account:** Ongoing legislation in the U.S. Congress.
- **Technology focus:** For students who are interested in this issue, a group of questions and hypotheses will be offered
- **Solutions to the Darfur crisis**
- **Solutions to Social Security Problems**

- **Other topics selected by student teams:** This category could include, air/rail/truck deregulation, education reform legislation, health care options, sugar quotas, etc.

Purpose of the cases:

- Developing innovative research and presentation approaches through teamwork
- Serving as common threads through the course that link the different sections and topics
- Providing examples of policy and organizational research from which the students can draw
- Setting a context for asking and answering questions about policy and organizational research
- Offering an active experience in using teamwork techniques in research
- Developing a clear summary presentation of team findings

*****This assignment is no longer required—it will be included in class presentations and the assigned reading must still be done*****Assignment 3-two segments (Partly Autodidact: includes several Audio/Powerpoint tutorials) **Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis (15% of the grade; 5-10 hours outside class)** This assignment has two segments. First, it addresses the reading and interpretation of quantitative data and the representation of the results using Microsoft Excel. The exercises presuppose an average ability in use of Excel, so students should attain this level on their own. Normally about three-fourths of the PUBP 501 students have this capability as the course begins. If you do not, use some self-help tutorial to achieve the required level. At most this self-tutoring will require a few hours of your time, at most. This segment of Assignment 3 will be based on the ICASIT World Data Base, which is included in your class CDROM 1, along with a Word file (also included on CDROM 1) which explains the derivation of each of the variables. The second segment requires the use of qualitative and quantitative techniques discussed in the instructor-provided tutorials in a group of realistic case settings.

Note: In Assignment 3 several PP/audio resources are needed: Critical Thinking (Quantitative) (40 MB/45 minutes) and Critical Thinking (Qualitative) (20 MB 35 minutes) by Professor Ruth and Introduction to Statistics (15 MB/20 minutes) and Introduction to Probability Theory (25 MB/20 minutes) by Professor Mayer. All are on Class CDROM 1.

Assignment 4-two segments (Completely autodidact) Working with Qualitative Information: Obtaining and Evaluating “Squishy” Data (20% of grade; 5-7 hours outside class) The class offers hands-on experience in the use of a number of methodologies for determining qualitative information. The assignment has two segments of relatively equal weight: segment 1--careful, focused evaluation of Dr. Marsh’s ongoing data-gathering process based on the guidelines in lectures by Marsh and Dr. Jerry Mayer; segment 2--the student’s own questionnaire design for some relatively simple, but not trivial, data gathering process.

Note: In Assignment 4 several CD resources are required. First, there are three audio/PP lectures to assist in the task, specifically: **Tutorial on Questionnaire-based Research (30 MB, 25 minutes)--Dr. Kara Marsh (CDROM 1); Survey Basics—Part 1 (260 MB, 20-25 minutes)--Dr. Jerry Mayer CDROM 2); Survey Basics—Part 2 (250 MB, 20-25 minutes)--Dr. Jerry Mayer (CDROM 2).** Second, there is a MS Word document on CDROM 1 with Marsh’s actual proposed questionnaire—the one you are asked to evaluate. Take your time on this project since it is a combination of statistics, qualitative analysis and decision theory. It will also be very helpful in preparing for Assignment 5

Assignment 5. Synthesis: Putting it all together (25% of grade; 8-10 hours outside class)

The culminating activity of the course will be a highly focused “proof of concept” paper. Each student produces a relatively short, but meticulously researched, examination of a public policy or other area of interest agreed upon with the instructor. A detailed outline of the report with all expected references, diagrams and charts clearly described, is very useful, but optional. The assignment should exemplify the highest standards possible. The instructor will give more details in the first class. There are several samples of Assignment 5 deliverables (sample papers and sample outlines) on CDROM 1.

Class participation: (10% of the grade) To get the full 10%, quality counts more than quantity, so participate frequently but not incessantly. There will be about a half dozen class projects plus occasional “informal “buzz groups”.

Grading: The instructor aims to give grades on individual assignments within three working days of receipt. A grade of A or A minus is reserved for a very high level of achievement. B and B plus grades indicate good mastery of the material and excellence in assigned writing. Grades of B minus and below indicate incomplete achievement of the assignment’s requirements. On a 100% scale, A is equal to 95%, B 85%, C 75%, etc.

Recommended Work Sequence for PUBP 501.008 Spring Term 2007

	1/20	2/3	2/24	4/7	5/5
Assignment 1	X X X X	X X	X		
Segment 1	X X X X				
Segment 2		X X	X		

Assignment 2	X	X	X	X	X		
Assignment 3	X	X	X	X			
Assignment 4		X	X	X			
Assignment 5			X	X	X	X	X

Autodidact Approaches in this Course--Exchanging some class time for technology and other interventions This course takes advantage of new findings about university teaching, particularly the technique called “blended learning”. Many students, especially those who have full-time jobs, appear to be quite willing to exchange some class hours on campus for assignments that can be completed in other locations through the use of technology available to them. Studies indicate that it is possible for a student to learn as much or more in many courses if the traditional 40 hours per semester of "face time" in class with a teacher (contact hours) are partially replaced with specially designed assignments that do not require face-to-face meeting. This work can be more independent, discovery-oriented and difficult, but, if planned properly, can replace contact hours. By experimenting with this concept in close to a dozen courses, we have found that students enthusiastically support the approach--as long as close contact with the instructor and class colleagues is maintained throughout and the content is challenging and in the mainstream of the subject involved. In this course there will be a more extensive technology intervention, since the class meets only six times, on Fridays and Saturdays.

FAQ 1 Is the class more difficult than traditional 4 credit graduate courses? No. About the same hours of preparation are required for this course as for others in the SPP program. The class only meets six times, far less than the normal number, so students will be able to accomplish the required work by doing a lot on their own, as well as in teams and groups.

FAQ 2 Do you need any technical preparation to succeed in this course? No. A person with deep technology skills will be able to spend a few hours less on the course overall, but in general there is no indication among the hundreds of grad students who have been through this type of experience that being powerful technically gives any edge whatever.

FAQ 3 If you already do extensive, focused research in your job, will you have an edge in this course? Yes, a slight edge. The course is as much about developing the research habit and disciplines as about acquiring new knowledge, so someone who already is in that sort of job may need to spend less time in developing good results in this course.

FAQ 4 Predicting success There are several factors that predict success in this course:

- Keeping up with the assignments, especially finishing Assignment 1 segment 1 early . It is difficult to succeed in this course if you get seriously behind. The material is presented through books, lectures, television lectures, Internet, CDROM's, etc., and

the sequence is definitely time-dependent. Students who finish this type of course get good grades in general, but their experience indicates that it is crucial to stay on top of the assignments.

- Attending and participating in classes A major segment of the course grade involves integrating the lectures, in class, on audiocassette and on television, into assigned projects--so it is vital that you plan to attend the classes and to participate actively in the email-based dialog. When you cannot attend please have a friend or colleague take notes for you. Class participation, in formal settings and through on line discussion is a 10% component of the final grade. See "Class Participation" above.

FAQ 5 How Much of Your Time is Required for This Course? Depending on your previous background and research/writing approaches, the course will require between 40 and 50 hours outside of class, somewhat below the average for a 4 credit graduate course, especially since the number of class lectures is reduced in exchange for various technology interventions. Surprisingly, the students who are already proficient in information technology or analysis are not more successful in this type of course as those who are approaching it with less technical background. The key is mastering all facets of the course and studying each in its appropriate context.

Ethical Conduct--GMU Honor Code GMU shares in the tradition of an honor system that has existed in Virginia colleges since 1842. The Honor Code is an integral part of university life. Students are responsible for understanding the provisions of the code. In the spirit of the code, a student's word is a declaration of good faith acceptable as truth in all academic matters. Therefore, attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing of academic work and related work constitute Honor Code violations. All work must be your own. Inappropriate use of the work of others without attribution is plagiarism and a George Mason University Honor Code violation punishable by expulsion from the University. All students should familiarize themselves with this honor code provision (<http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/handbook/aD.html>). To guard against plagiarism and to treat students equitably, written work may be checked against existing published materials or digital data bases available through various plagiarism detection services. Accordingly materials submitted to all courses must be available in electronic format.

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>)

Required texts:

(2005) Dye, Thomas R., *Understanding Public Policy, Eleventh Edition* Upper Saddle River NJ , (from GMU bookstore or Amazon or other sources)

(2005) Gladwell, Malcolm, *blink The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*, Little, Brown (from GMU bookstore or Amazon or other sources)

(2005) Levitt, Steven D. and Debner, Stephen J., *Freakonomics*, Morrow (from GMU bookstore or Amazon or other sources)

(2005) James Surowiecki, *The Wisdom of Crowds*, Anchor Books 2005 (from GMU bookstore or Amazon or other sources)

Highly recommended texts:

(2002) Ammons, David, *Tools for Decision Making—A Practical Guide for Local Government*, Washington, D.C., CQ Press, 2002 (from GMU bookstore or Amazon or other sources)

Note—the Ammons text is not required but will be helpful in discussing quantitative analysis so please consider using in the course. It's in the book store and is inexpensive

(2006) *World Development Report 2007* World Bank and Oxford University Press, Washington (available on line or can be purchased from Amazon or other sources)

(2006) *Human Development Report 2006* (available on line or can be purchased from Amazon or other sources)

Diana Hacker, *A Pocket Manual of Style*, (4th) ed. or later (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000 or later).

(1994) Gilmour, Robert and Halley, Alexis, *Who Makes Public Policy? The Struggle for Control between Congress and the Executive*, Chatham House Publishers

(2003) Norris, Pippa, *Digital Divide and E-Government? Civic Engagement, Information Poverty and the Internet in Democratic Societies*; Oxford University Press.

Brief Syllabus 501.008

Date	Study Assignments	Qualitative Topics Discussed in Class or on Assigned CD lectures (Policy, analytical approaches, presenting data, etc.)	Quantitative Topics Discussed in Class or on Assigned CD Lectures (Statistics, probability, inference, tools, tests, etc.)	Activities, Due Dates for Assignments, etc.
11/ 25		Assignment 1 segment 1 distributed (part of syllabus available on line and from instructor)		
1/20	Read Dye: 1-2 Freakonomics: 1,5 Blink : Intro, 3			Assignment 2 team selection process completed

	Wisdom:1, 6 View lectures “SPQR” and “Learning About Policy Analysis” — needed for first assignment			
1/27 no class	Dye: 3-4 Freakonomics:2 Blink: 2,3 Wisdom: 2,3	Models of public policy; extracting wisdom from groups and teams; ethnographic studies; leveraging knowledge resources; <i>blink</i> -like issues in public policy; human capital; structural capital; customer capital; virtual knowledge workers; “5 th Discipline” ; examples of “perfect” presentations	Data classification and types (inferential vs. descriptive); moving averages; performance norms; ICASIT data base and its documentation; time series data; determining “drivers”; sensitivity analysis; single and multivariate analysis	Assignment 1 segment 1 due by 2/3 Assignment 1 segment 2 distributed Assignment 2 team topics selected and summarized; preliminary work plan developed; stat “quiz” administered (no preparation required)
2/3	For 2/3 Dye: 5-8 Freakonomics: 4 Blink : 4 Review <i>WDR 2007</i> Study four tutorials: Critical Thinking (Quantitative); Critical Thinking (Qualitative); Introduction to Statistics; Introduction to Probability Theory (Total CD time: 2 hours)	Crowd wisdom examples (Surowiecki); <i>Blink</i> examples (Gladwell); examples of extraordinarily successful research teams; tacit versus explicit knowledge-- a research perspective; the Hawthorne effect; appreciative inquiry; action learning; brainstorming; force field analysis; groupthink	Measures of central tendency (means, modes, etc.); measures of dispersion; evaluating “significance” (normal, chi-square, etc) ; depreciation, discounting; constant dollar analysis; demand analysis; benchmarking	Assignment 1 segment 1 due 2/3; Assignment 4 distributed; Assignment 2 detailed team work plan due 2/10—samples given in class and on email
	For 2/24 Dye: 9-13 Freakonomics:3	Value propositions; Decision trees: cause and effect diagram:	Investment analysis; performance standards and measurement: opportunity	Assignment 1 – segment 2 due

	Blink:5 Review <i>HDR 2006</i> Study three tutorials: Assignment 4 Tutorial on Questionnaire -based Research; Survey Basics—Part 1; Survey Basics—Part 2 (Total CD time: about 90 minutes)	weighted decision analysis (Virginia example); SWOT analysis; five why's; mind mapping	costs; future and present value; “go- away” costs; job travel mapping; identifying full program costs; lease-buy analysis	2/24(one week extension possible)
2/24	Dye: 14 Freakonomics:6 Blink: 6 Wisdom: 4,5 By 4/7 : Two lectures: Habits and Methods of Policy Research; Presenting Data-- Problems and Pitfalls (Total CD time: 2 hours)	Designing questionnaires: decision trees; sampling public opinion: hypotheses, sample size, bias, randomness;	PERT/CPM charts; sensitivity analysis present value; process flow charts rating systems; regression; revenue loss analysis; sampling, randomization staffing factor calculation; work distribution analysis	Assignment 1 – segment 2 due (one week extension possible)
4/7	Dye: 15 Freakonomics: Review Blink :Conclusion	Measuring knowledge infrastructure; challenges of “best practice” approaches; teamwork in cyberspace;		Assignment 4 due
5/5				Assignment 5 due (1 week extension possible) Assignment 2 Team Presentations

New Voices in Public Policy: The instructor may nominate the very best papers produced in this course for publication in *New Voices in Public Policy*. *New Voices* is a student-and faculty-reviewed journal that shares SPP's finest student work with the rest of the world.

Assignment 1 Segment 1-- Primary Focus: Using a Wide Variety of Resources for Research and Analysis (What's expected? There is a sample of an Assignment 1 Segment 1 student paper on course CDROM 1) Total of 8 questions must be answered including 1,4,5,6,,9,10 and 11 (all required) plus either 3 or 7 or 8 (your choice). Question 2 will be done by a class team during the semester

For all these questions please take sufficient time to be comprehensive; that is, be sure you can trace your steps and in all cases show your sources so that the instructor can use them just as you did. This exercise will require considerable time outside of class to do a really good job. Rough estimates of level of difficulty are provided, lower numbers indicating lower difficulty and weight. Please note that for some of the questions, teamwork is recommended.

1. (Difficulty: 2 Individual only) How are “gini” coefficients used in public policy research? Select examples of financial divide or digital divide in the United States and compare US data with at least one other nation. What insights can you draw from this brief investigation?

Instructor’s comment -- This coefficient is a premier indicator of unequal distribution and can be used in multiple settings, beyond the ones that are mentioned here. You will see the connection to measuring imbalances in organizational settings, although that is not required here. This is to be done by an individual, not a team. Be sure to answer the question, including a comparison with at least one other nation, and also be sure you explain clearly how the gini coefficient can be used in public policy research. You don’t have to be an expert on foreign policy to answer this. Most students are surprised at what they learn about wealth differences and about the potential for measuring other inequities with a simple index. How many words? 200-300, more if you wish, plus references and a diagram or two—see sample.

2. (Difficulty: 6) Examine each of the web sites provided in the list *Recommended Websites* (part of this syllabus package below) and write a brief summary for each one based on your review. Include in your description a specific insight or fact from a source in each site that you found interesting or useful. See the attached sample.

Instructor’s comment -- This question is crucial throughout your research career in developing a repertoire of research sites. Several blogs are also included, since they are now the choice of many researchers. Students have found this to be a very useful exercise but it takes a lot of work to do well. Please take a look at the sample, which includes several good

features, including format, interesting insights, etc. Yours does not need to look like the sample, of course, but should reflect excellence in formatting, research, and clear writing. The deliverable needs to look seamless and uniform, so if you want to break to work up in some way and have the team organized so that everybody contributes appropriately, I'll give a team grade on this question. Per capita investment in this one can be as little as 2-3 hours—if you get maximum value from a team. How many words? Result of this one is about 10 pages—see the sample--and remember the task is much easier with a team as long as the result doesn't look like it was produced by a lot of different people; that is, somebody needs to homogenize the content.

3. (Difficulty: 2) Explain about a half dozen crucial statistics used for measuring the US government's financial health. Examples would be GDP, annual deficit, total deficit, balance of trade, etc. Discuss the interplay among these numbers and explain and comment on the Laffer Curve and the Phillips Curve. Be sure to include a diagram of each of these curves. After doing this give a brief assessment of the government's financial health. Dye Chapters 7-9 will be useful here.

Instructor's comment: Be sure to include diagrams in a question like this. Words alone are not enough. Using the sources from question 1 you will find many appropriate and helpful sources and diagrams. At a minimum, include a diagram of the Laffer curve at the Phillips curve. About 400 words plus at least 2 appropriate diagrams, plus references.

4. (Difficulty: 2) In the SPQR lecture on CDROM 1, there is a discussion of a paper by Astrom about digital democracy. Attend the lecture and take notes as necessary. Comment briefly on the lecture's content—then find the reference and, using the GMU library resources, print yourself a copy of the article at your home or office. (Article is in the *Communications of the ACM*). First, briefly describe the process you followed to find and use the article. Second, briefly assess the article's main points in the context of public policy. Please note that this online search capability is available to many analysts and allows access to vast hard copy resources. Finally, briefly assess the article's main points in the context of public policy.

Instructor's comment: This question has two purposes; first, it's a reminder that you seldom need to go the library when you take full advantage of a powerful university-based reference system, like GMU's. You have probably used it a lot already, so this may be pretty easy. Second, the exercise gives you a speculative view of an interesting public policy issue. You need to describe the author's perspective and also at the end don't hesitate to put in your own two cents. After all, analysts analyze, they don't simply report. Use whatever approach is most useful to you. How many words? 300 or so, more if you want, but be sure to cover the key points—see sample.

5. (Difficulty: 2 Individual only) A good source of information on foreign policy is the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, which also publishes *Foreign Policy* magazine. Go to the site at <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/events/> and select

any of the 2006/2007 lecture topics that interest you. First, read or listen to listen to the lecture and any subsequent discussion. Second, assume that you are on the staff of a US senator. What advice would you have for the senator after listening to the debate and examining some of the resources available to you on the topics discussed? The deliverable for this question is a clear, reasonably comprehensive digest of the pros and cons of the issue and a recommended position that the legislator should take.

Instructor's comment: this site is constantly changing but there is a very interesting audio and video available as of November 26th at

<http://www.carnegieendowment.org/events/index.cfm?fa=eventDetail&id=926&&prog=zgp&proj=zusr> You may want to select it.

The purpose of this question is to broaden the research agenda to include many useful audio as well as video presentations. Please note that you are asked to put together information for a U.S. Senator. Many graduates of this program get jobs on legislative staffs and they have frequently commented on the importance of being able to write short, comprehensive, and above all, readable policy summaries. 300-400 words , more if you wish—see sample. Nearly all of these options have to do with organizational problems and resolution of conflicts.

6. (Difficulty:1 Individual only) *Freakonomics* has been a longtime bestseller, partly because it is entertaining, and most importantly because it presents a relatively counterintuitive approaches to economic analysis. Read the introduction to *Freakonomics* and one other chapter. I think the best chapter would be chapter 5, but it's strictly your choice. What insights for analysis and research do you get from reading these parts of the book? Are these frivolous ideas or do they have weight and significance?

Instructor's comment: For this question let your mind wander across the notes you taken and then ask yourself where the book might lead you. It's perfectly okay to criticize it, but be sure to be clear and focused in your positive and negative comments. Simple comments like "I liked it", or "I hated it", are not admissible here -- describe the what's and the why's from your own perspective. How many words? 300-400, more if you wish. The example I have suggested is one of the most famous and controversial social policy analyses that has been done in many years.

7. (Difficulty: 1 Individual only) What is the extent of hunger in the world? Obviously, this is a major question in the context of public policy. You will find extensive resources to answer the question but as an analyst you will want to focus on only the most significant ones. (Use at least a half dozen) Try to answer this in the form a one page think piece for a legislative decision maker. Use a lot of bullets or other techniques to condense the issues into a readable 1 page document. (footnotes can be on second page). Include domestic hunger in this description, too, since USDA has recently reported that over 30 million Americans are “food-insecure”.

Instructor's comment: there is extensive information on this subject at places like bread.org, the United Nations and the World Bank. The only difficulty in this question is determining how to arrange the bullets on one page so that the information is appropriate, relevant, timely, and contains authentic terms, e.g. malnutrition, food insecurity, etc. A researcher frequently needs to become an expert in a field she or he knew nothing about previously. So it's important to get a good vocabulary, and a sense of the importance of the key issues first. The rest is relatively easy. 250 words whatever fits on one page, with bullets plus an additional page for references. Since this is a very current subject, be sure to use current sources.

8. (Difficulty 1 Individual only) Evaluate the "Big Mac Index" briefly. Is it a quirky number or can it explain some things missed in foreign exchange indices?

Instructor's comment: This question is a very good exercise in research and analysis. The Big Mac Index is described at the *Economist Magazine* web site, and has a lot of very interesting attributes. We will discuss it in class briefly, too. 200-300 words, more if you wish.

9. (Difficulty 2 Individual only) Read over chapters 1 and 6 (more if you have time) of *The Wisdom of Crowds* taking notes as you proceed. What practical insights for the process of government are suggested by your reading?

Instructor comment: This is a popular book and it suggests several unusual variants to the popular wisdom about teamwork and consensus. If you read it carefully, you may find some counterintuitive ideas. The easy way to do this question is to write a summary of some of the key ideas that you found most interesting, including any comments pro or con. Then see if you can relate them to the process of government. Are there better ways to use experts and consultants? Is individual, face-to-face consensus the best way to solve a problem? Questions like this are part of the book's appeal to many. You don't have to agree with it, of course, but you are requested to synthesize some of the author's key ideas and if possible relate them to the process of government. How many words? 300-400, or more if you wish.

10. (Difficulty 2-Individual Only) Malcolm Gladwell's book *blink* is entertaining and was on the best-seller list for months. But it also has a very serious message for decision-makers. Comment on the significance of the "theory of thin slices" and the "Warren Harding error" in the context of practical decision-making.

Instructor's comment: a suggestion -- read the introduction first, about the statue that didn't look right. That will get you warmed up for the Gladwell approach in this book. The easiest way to answer this question is to read over the assigned

segments, take some notes and then ask yourself some questions like, "does this idea have application in government or an organizational life?", or "are their insights here that can enhance the productivity of organizations?". You get the idea. The deliverable on this question is your perspective on how *blink* might, or might not, have ideas that are helpful in organizations, How many words? 300-400, more if you wish

11. (Difficulty 3-Individual Only) Watch the lecture by the instructor called “Learning about Policy Analysis” and have the Dye text opened to Chapter 2 as you listen to the lecture. Comment briefly on the relationship between the eight different policy models and the typical government applications they have.

Instructor’s Comment: I think you will see the OD applications of this one immediately. The author tries to view policy approaches in the context of various models, and fills the bulk with examples of the human dynamics behind the political process. And also, as a dividend, the book gives frequent examples of the way aggregate human behavior is measured in the context of legislative initiatives. There is a very easy way to answer this question. Each chapter of the book from 3 on, keys a policy model to a government activity. For example Chapter 4 links criminal justice systems to the rationality/irrationality model, Chapter 7 to the incrementalism model; etc until all eight models are covered. So all you need to do is mention each model in its chapter 2 setting and briefly relate it to the policy chapter later in the book. About 300 words, more if you wish.

Recommended Websites (Rudder/S. Ruth) for use in Question 2

http://www.gao.gov	Government Accounting Office	Legislative Branch Agency
http://www.cbo.gov	Congressional Budget Office	Legislative Branch Agency
http://www.cato.org	CATO Institute	Libertarian Think Tank
http://www.cia.gov/	Central Intelligence Agency	Executive Branch Agency
http://www.cbpp.org	Center on Budget and Policy Priorities	Progressive/Liberal Think Tank
http://www.brookings.edu/default.htm	Brookings Institution	Middle of Road Think Tank (formerly Liberal)

http://www.heritage.org	Heritage Foundation	Conservative Think Tank
http://www.aei.org/research/research.htm	American Enterprise Institute	Conservative Think Tank
http://www.ctj.org	Citizens for Tax Justice	Labor-funded, Liberal
http://www.concordcoalition.org	Concord Coalition	For Balanced Budgets
http://www.ombwatch.org/execreport	OMB Watch	Liberal Advocacy
http://epinet.org	Economic Policy Institute	Economic Policy Group Focusing on Impact on Low and Middle Incomes
http://www.urbaninstitute.org	Urban Institute	Liberal Think Tank
http://www.nas.edu	National Academy of Sciences	Scientific Society
http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/	Plain English	Advocacy Organization Based in U.K.
http://www.oecd.org/home	Organization for Economic and Community Development	Intergovernmental/International Think Tank: Good Source of Comparative Data
http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/	Office of Management and Budget	Official Governmental Website
http://europa.eu.int/index_en.htm	European Union	Official Website
http://www.firstgov.gov/Topics/Reference_Shelf.shtml	FirstGov	Official U.S. Gov. Website Featuring Reference Materials/ Data/ more
http://www.fedstats.gov/	Federal Statistics	U.S. Gov. Statistics Gateway from 100+ agencies
http://thomas.loc.gov/	Thomas	Legislative Information from Library of Congress
http://www.Economist.org	<i>The Economist</i>	Broad-based international journal, published in UK
http://www.Ceip.org	<i>Foreign Policy Magazine</i>	Broad-based international journal, published in US
http://www.icasit.org/ecommerce/index.html	IT topics (ICASIT)	Popular site for many new IT topics

http://www.icasit.org/ecommerce/resources.html	ICASIT miscellaneous site	International links to newspapers, magazines, etc.
http://www.opensecrets.org	Center for Responsible Politics	Keeps track of personal expenditures of lawmakers
http://www.Wonkette.com	Popular Blog	
http://www.drudgereport.com/	Popular Blog	Also has links to most US editorials
http://www.dailykos.com/	Popular Blog	
http://www.google.com/ig/usgov	Popular government site by Google	Replaces google.unclesam
http://www.politicalresources.net/	Excellent new sources	Updated frequently

Video Lectures

1. **SPQR to “Power to the People”—20 Centuries of Analysis (50 MB/57 minutes)—Dr. Stephen Ruth.** Reviews some of the recurring public policy issues from the time of the Roman Empire until today, including taxation, voting, agricultural allocation, distribution of wealth, etc. (CDROM 1)
2. **Learning About Policy Analysis (155 MB/55 minutes) Dr Ruth** A rapid review of public policy basics including major themes and models. Also gives review of the major policy topics like taxation, health, civil rights, defense, etc. (CDROM 1)
3. **Habits and Methods of Policy Research (50 MB/56 minutes)—** Dr Stephen Ruth discusses the characteristics of successful policy analysts. (CDROM 1)
4. **Research and Analysis-Cases, Themes and Examples (28 MB/56 minutes)--**Dr. Stephen Ruth. Gives specific examples of policy analysis in the context of developing and testing some hypotheses from Harvard professor Pippa Norris’ book, The Digital Divide. (Subsequent CDROM--optional)

5. **Presenting Data--Problems and Pitfalls (107 MB/55 minutes)--Dr. Stephen Ruth.** Reviews and challenges some ideas concerning the processing and presentation of research results. Data overload, spurious correlation, Tufte's Powerpoint criticisms, and many other themes are covered. (CDROM 1)
6. **Government by the Numbers and the Policy Cycle (134 MB/60 minutes)—Dr. Stephen Ruth** Discusses the various segments of the public policy cycle and relates them to the crucial statistics that are used to measure the effectiveness of government. (CDROM 1)

Powerpoint Presentations With Imbedded Audio Lectures

1. **Critical Thinking (Quantitative) (40 MB/45 minutes) Dr Stephen Ruth** Discusses a wide array of quantitative techniques—over two dozen—in the context of policy analysis. Needed in Assignment 3 (CDROM 1)
2. **Critical Thinking (Qualitative) (20 MB/35 minutes) Dr Stephen Ruth** Presents a sampling of about 15 qualitative techniques that are being employed more frequently in policy analysis and gives links to dozens more. Needed in Assignment 3 (CDROM 1)
3. **Introduction to Statistics (15 MB/20 minutes)--Dr. Jerry Mayer.** Measures of central tendency—mean, Median, mode. Measures of dispersion—standard deviation, coefficients of correlation and determination. Normal distribution. Needed in Assignment 3 (CDROM 1)
4. **Introduction to Probability Theory (25 MB/20 minutes)--Dr. Jerry Mayer.** Introduces basic concepts of Probability Theory. Helpful for learning concepts of Cost Benefit Analysis. Needed in Assignment 3 (CDROM 1)
5. **Tutorial on Questionnaire-based Research (30 MB, 25 minutes)--Dr. Kara Marsh** Very practical guide, aimed at PUBP 501 students, to development of a research questionnaire from a student's perspective. Dr Marsh gives several sample assignments, which are not required, but may be useful as a student self-test. Needed in Assignment 4 (CDROM 1)
6. **Survey Basics—Part 1 (260 MB, 25 minutes)--Dr. Jerry Mayer.** Parallels the Marsh tutorial and gives added emphasis on the importance of sampling methods and other key survey approaches. Needed in Assignment 4 (CDROM 2—may take over a minute to load.)

7. **Survey Basics—Part 2 (250 MB, 25 minutes)**--Dr. Jerry Mayer. Continuation of 6 above. Needed in Assignment 4 (CDROM 2—may take over a minute to load.)
8. **Endnote Introduction (10 MB, 9 minutes) Lindsey Poulin** For students who have not learned to use this highly valuable capability, this brief lecture give you what you need to know to get started (CDROM 1)

Other Materials (In Word, Excel or Acrobat Format)

1. **World Development Report 2007 (34.3MB. Acrobat)** Students should obtain own copy on line
2. **Arab Human Development Report 2003 (4.35 MB, Acrobat)** Included with permission of UNDP. An interesting review of a very controversial topic. This report sold over a million copies when it came out. Students should obtain own copy on line—this is a backup (CDROM 1)
3. **Human Development Report 2006 (6.1 MB. Acrobat)** A new report from United Nations -- 1 of the most significant public policy reports of the year. Students should obtain own copy on line
4. **ICASIT's World Data Base (334 KB Excel)**--Excel File required for Assignment 3 (CDROM 1)
5. **Description of individual variables in ICASIT World Data Base 239 KB—Word File)** required for Assignment 3. (CDROM 1)
6. **Survey Questionnaire for use in Assignment 4 and Dr. Marsh Lecture (MS Word File)** Required for Assignment 4 (CDROM 1)
7. **Sample of Assignment 2 work plan -1 MS Word File** (CDROM 1)
8. **Sample of Assignment 2 work plan – 2 MS Word File** (CDROM 1)
9. **Sample of Assignment 2 work plan – 3 MS Word File** (CDROM 1)
10. **Sample answers of Assignment 1 segment 1 MS Word File** (CDROM 1)

11. Sample 1 of Assignment 5

12. Sample 2 of Assignment 5

13. Description of Assignment 2 MS Word File (CDROM 1)

WRITING TIPS
By
Cynthia Harrison¹

1. Use active verbs – have the subject of the sentence perform the action. Use "to be" in all its forms sparingly.

Passive voice: “Class time was devoted principally to discussion of the readings. All students were expected to read thoughtfully and to share their insights and observations with the class.”

Active voice: “This class devoted meeting time principally to discussion of the readings. Students shared insights and observations with the class.”

Note that “passive voice” and “past tense” are different.

“He threw the ball” uses an active verb in the past tense.

“The ball is thrown” uses a passive verb in the present tense.

In the first sentence you know who is performing the action; you don’t know who is throwing the ball in the second sentence.

2. Avoid using "this" as pronoun; follow it with a noun to eliminate confusion about what you mean.

Vague: “Despite data to the contrary, the American public believes that women receiving welfare have a higher birth rate than non-recipients. This is because the media focus on women who do not represent the average welfare mother accurately.”

Clearer: “Despite data to the contrary, the American public believes that women receiving welfare have a higher birth rate than non-recipients. This misperception comes from a media focus on women who do not represent the average welfare mother accurately.”

NEVER use the phrase “This is because” It is both vague and syntactically irregular. (“This is so because” fixes the syntactical problem but it remains vague.)

3. Avoid labels, jargon, slang, colloquialisms. Use the word “incredible” only when you mean the person genuinely can’t be believed.

4. Quotations: Whenever you use someone else’s words, you must enclose them in double quotation marks. (If the selection is longer than five lines, indent *instead of* using quotation marks. Don't use italics to indicate a quote. Italics denote foreign phrases, court cases, and titles; they are also used for emphasis.) You must also include a citation to the source, including a page number. You should use direct quotations from sources rarely – only when the precise wording is essential to your point. Otherwise, synthesize and paraphrase. However, when you do quote from either a secondary or a primary source, you must introduce the quoted material in the text explaining who the speaker is, not just drop it in without warning.

Examples of introductions:

As historian Alice Kessler-Harris noted: ". . . ." or

In the words of political scientist Cynthia Burack, ". . . ."

In addition, quotations must fit syntactically in the sentence. Add words in brackets or delete words and use ellipses, if necessary. **NOTE: A quotation within a quotation requires single quotation marks; quoted material within the body of an indented quotation requires double quotation marks.**

5. Ellipses: Omit ellipses at the beginning and end of quotations. Use three periods, each separated by a space [. . .], for omissions within sentences and four periods [. . .] for omissions that include the end of a sentence. (Do not include the brackets.)
6. Don’t repeat yourself. Vary your choice of words. (See examples of introductions to quotations, above.)
7. Spell out numbers of one or two words; use numerals for others, except at the beginning of a sentence. If you must use a number as the first word in a sentence, spell it out. Use numerals with “percent” and spell “percent” rather than using the percent sign.
8. Use apostrophes to denote possession EXCEPT for “its.” “It’s” means ONLY “It is.” The possessive form of “its” has no apostrophe. Plurals do not use apostrophes. E.g. “The Harrisons came to dinner.” But: “This is Professor Harrison’s class.”
9. Avoid the word “things,” as in “Things changed rapidly.” Use a specific phrase: “The political context changed rapidly.”
10. Avoid the first person in formal writing (“I think the evidence fails to support the thesis”). The statement “The evidence fails to support the thesis” suffices. If you must include your own response, use the third person: “This reader finds that the evidence fails to support the thesis.”
11. Avoid contractions in formal writing.

1. From PUBP 700 syllabus of Drs. Rudder and Fritschler—used with permission

EndNote: Bibliographic Software²

To ease the time-consuming, but essential, process of formatting footnotes and constructing bibliographies, GMU has purchased a site license for EndNote for all members of the GMU community. This bibliographic software is a blessing for busy policy professionals who must produce first-quality reports and analyses. EndNote permits you to search online bibliographic databases and will let you automatically insert references into your personal bibliography directly from an online library catalogue, for example. No longer will you have to spend hours typing bibliographies. The cite-while-you-write feature allows you to insert footnotes with one click while you write your paper. EndNote also permits you to choose among any of hundreds of citation styles and with one click to move from one style to another.

Endnote can help you save a lot of time and even to write a better paper.

Most of you may have experienced frustration when you organize and format references in a bibliographic style for your term or research paper. You have probably typed and formatted references on your own after completing your paper. By doing so, you should have ended up spending a lot of time to make sure the format is correct by going back and forth between your paper and a bibliographic style manual such as APA, MLA, or Chicago manual style.

If you use Endnote, you do not have to go through this frustration. Instead, you can devote more time for improving the content of your paper. Incorporated into word processing software, Endnote helps you to organize and format references in any bibliographic style in an easier and faster way. What you need to do is to create your personal reference database, in Endnote, with basic reference information for articles or books. Many of journals allow you to download reference information from their websites. Endnote also enables you to download reference information for books from major private or public libraries such as the Library of Congress and George Mason University library. You do not have to worry about a specific bibliography style when you build a database. Endnote will take care of it for you. You can also switch between different bibliographic styles with just several mouse clicks.

Endnote not only saves your time but also helps you write a better paper. If you use some functions in Endnote properly, it helps you organize your ideas and helps you locate relevant references easily. For instance, you can insert keywords and key points into each reference data of your database. When you conduct other research later on, you can search your database with using keywords. You can see key points of references and incorporate citations from references into your paper. If an article is available online, you can insert the link into a database and go back to the article whenever you need to.

You can download the Endnote software at <http://cas.gmu.edu/tac/endnote/endnote.html>. Download it today and start saving your valuable time. You can also get technical support from <http://library.gmu.edu/endnote/>

2. Adapted, with permission, from PUBP 700 syllabus of Drs. Rudder and Fritschler