

Theory and Practice in Public Policy  
PUBP700, Fall 2008  
Mondays, 1:30-4:10 p.m.

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Office: AOB 269; office hours: Mondays 12:15-1:30, Thursdays 6:00-7:15  
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**Course Objectives:** Theory and Practice in Public Policy introduces students to the tools and concepts of the public policy process. We explore theories and assess their strengths, weaknesses and applicability to public policy. We examine different perspectives on the practice of policy analysis. Students will engage in an analytical group policy project. Strong ethical and international components are built into the course.

The objective of this course is to help students become more sophisticated policy professionals with an ability to operate effectively and ethically in a political environment. While many of the applications will be U.S.-based, the theories apply more broadly to policymaking elsewhere. We will examine a variety of ways of looking at political phenomena, conceiving of relationships, and understanding outcomes.

Students will develop skills in recognizing values, seeing multiple sides of issues, casting alternative frames to problems, understanding underlying interests, identifying stakeholders, and devising strategies for action. Finally, the course aims to enhance proficiency in identifying and using appropriate, authoritative source material and in writing and speaking articulately, succinctly, logically, and convincingly.

**Assessment:** You will work individually and in teams in order to demonstrate your facility with the theories and their appropriate use, as well as to hone your research, public presentation and writing skills. Grading is comprised of:

- \* 4-5 page Analytical Paper 20%
- \* First exam 20%
- \* Qualitative Class participation 20%
- \* Group policy analysis project 20%
- \* Second exam 20%

### **Readings**

Eugene Bardach, *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving* (Chatham House Publishers, 2000).

David Braybrooke and Charles Lindblom, *A Strategy of Decision*.

Simon Blackburn, *Being Good: A Short Introduction to Ethics* (Oxford University Press, 2001).

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

Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States* (Harvard University Press, 1970).

Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Cornell University Press, 1998).

John W. Kingdon. *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Choices*. Latest edition.

Charles E. Lindblom, *The Market System: What It Is, How It Works, and What to Make of It* (Yale University Press, 2001).

Mancur Olson, *Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Harvard University Press, Paperback Revised edition, 1971 (orig. pub. 1965)).

Deborah Stone, *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making*, Revised Edition (W. W. Norton, 2002).

## **Class Schedule**

Class 1: August 25

- Introduction: Distribution of the syllabus and class assignments:
- Conceptual Overview of the Course
- The Practice of Policy Analysis
- Possible policy analysis project topics

### Assignments:

1. Read the entire syllabus.
2. Read Parts I-III of *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis* (Bardach).
3. Make sure that you have activated your student ID for library privileges.

### Questions for study and discussion:

1. Why does Bardach suggest that the analyst must revisit the early steps of the analysis, especially the definition of the problem, many times?
2. What is the importance of the advice, First do no harm?
3. Which step does Bardach say is the most difficult? Why?
4. What alternative must you always consider?
5. What does Bardach say about the evaluative criteria? What are some of the evaluative criteria that you personally might choose to focus on?
6. What do you consider to be the most important advice that Bardach gives?
7. Can you think of any real life policy situations in which it might not be feasible to go through all eight steps? If so, give an example. If not, why not?

## Class 2: September 8

1. Read the Appendixes of *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis* (Bardach)
2. Read the front section of Hacker.
3. Be ready to answer the class questions below.
4. Go to the GMU Library website and become familiar with the library resources.
5. Read all of Blackburn.

### Questions for Study and Discussion

1. What is the moral or ethical environment? Using Blackburn, explain how one might empirically identify the quality of such an environment in an organization.
2. What is the source of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights? Does it merely reflect the hegemony of Western culture? Make an argument using Blackburn.
3. What is Grand Unifying Theory and why does Blackburn have disdain for this concept? Why does he claim that such theories are pessimistic?
4. What is the categorical imperative? What is its relevance to public policy analysis? How does it differ from utilitarianism? (Be sure to define these concepts in your answer.)

### Additional questions for study and discussion

1. What do relativism, skepticism and nihilism have to do with policy analysis?
2. How does morality differ from moralism? How does an ethical climate differ from a moralistic one?
3. If “human beings are ethical animals,” why does corruption seem to dominate our lives?
4. Are Blackburn’s concerns primarily normative or empirical?
5. What is subjectivism and what is its relevance to ethics?
6. Is the issue of abortion a deontological one? Might a utilitarian rule be used to resolve this issue? Explain.
7. How can crimes be committed in the name of common happiness?
8. Why is the “politics appropriate for societies of free individuals...above all democratic”?
9. What are “the lies the privileged tell themselves”?
10. What does it mean to say that one should treat others only as ends and not as a means? Is this a realistic precept in the world of politics?

## Class 3: September 15

### Assignments Due Today

1. Read *Activists Beyond Borders*.
2. Teams turn in the name of their proposed client and the definition of their problem for their policy analysis project.
3. Be prepared to answer the class questions below.
4. Read the article “Human Rights: Q&A with Gillian Caldwell” in the Winter 2005 Ford Foundation Report. You should be able to find it at [http://www.fordfound.org/publications/ff\\_Report/view\\_ff\\_report\\_detail.cfm?report\\_index=541](http://www.fordfound.org/publications/ff_Report/view_ff_report_detail.cfm?report_index=541). Then, using the lens of *Activists Beyond Borders*, explicate to a neophyte in an essay no longer than 600 words the ideas discussed in the Report. Be sure to use explicit citations.

Questions for study and discussion:

1. What is Keck and Sikkink’s theory?
2. What is new about Keck and Sikkink’s transnational advocacy networks? Haven’t such formations been in existence since the 19th century?
3. In what ways do Keck and Sikkink use social movement theory?
4. Of what are TANs composed? How are TANs organized? Where is power located within TANs? How do you know?
5. What is the boomerang technique? Is it exclusively applicable to international activities?
6. What does it mean to frame an issue? What is the importance of this concept?
7. Why does the development of advocacy networks and global public policy networks bring state sovereignty into question? Is this a significant matter?
8. What advice would you give someone who wants to change a public policy but who has no particular political connections and is not wealthy?
9. What is inductive theory? How does it differ from deductive theory?
10. What is the distinction between normative and empirical theory? Why make this distinction?
11. What techniques in Keck and Sikkink are used to influence public policy?
12. Are these techniques applicable in domestic politics? Explain.

Class 4: September 22 (REVIEW: WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED SO FAR)

Questions for Study and Discussion

- What is a premise? What is an assumption?
- What is an inductive argument and how does it differ from a deductive argument? Give examples of each.
- Find an article in today’s paper and identify the premise and the assumptions.
- To what degree is a policy analysis descriptive and to what degree is it prescriptive?
- What is the role of evidence in a policy analysis? What is the role of values in a policy analysis? How are the two reconciled?
- Where do policy options come from?
- How does the analyst decide which policy options are viable?

- How does the analyst go about developing criteria against which to assess policy options?
- Why does Bardach emphasize that applying the criteria to the options is a matter of focusing on outcomes, not intentions? Why is this difficult?
- Why are unintended consequences a problem for policy analysts and policy makers? Why do they occur? What can be done to minimize them?
- You want to cite a web site that you have used. What is the appropriate format?
- You have been asked to use a consistent citation style in your papers. How do you find and use an appropriate citation scheme?
- In your opinion, what are the five best electronic sources for public policy research? Provide their web addresses. Indicate the criteria you used to make this selection and the way you applied the criteria to each of your choices.

Class 5: September 29

4-5 page Analytical Paper topic will be distributed – DUE October 14 in class

Read all of *The Market System*. Please read this monograph carefully and completely. Like Blackburn, Lindblom makes very complex ideas accessible to the layperson. This is an extraordinary skill and one that good analysts need to develop. Try to see how Blackburn and Lindblom accomplish this feat.

#### Questions for study and discussion

1. “[I]n our time the market system has become a global coordinator of cooperative performances of at least 2 billion people.” Explain.
2. How does Lindblom’s view of entrepreneurs relate to corporate scandals of 2002? In your answer, define “entrepreneur.”
3. Between 1997 and 2001, U.S. companies spent \$90 billion to lay 39 million miles of fiber optic cable - enough to circle the earth 1,566 times. Only 2.6% of that is currently in use. How might a capitalist explain this result in light of the putative efficiency of the market?
4. At base, how do markets work, according to Lindblom? Why does Lindblom consider the market system to be such a marvelous achievement?
5. What are some alternatives to markets?
6. Is a market system necessary for democracy?
7. Does a market system inflict harm on democracy? So what?
8. What does Lindblom mean when he repeatedly says that the market system pertains to society, not merely the economy?
9. What is a spillover and what is its importance for markets and governments?
10. What is the role of efficiency in markets and governments?
11. You want to encourage saving (using mechanisms like IRA’s, for example). What factors would you want to take into account in devising a sharp, efficient policy proposal?
12. How are normative questions, compared to empirical ones, addressed?

13. What is the difference between a concept and its operationalization or measurement? Why is this distinction important?
14. What is systematically collected, empirical evidence? What is its importance in public policy analysis?
15. Lindblom argues that markets could theoretically exist in a non-democratic political system. Place this comment in the context of Lindblom's text.
16. You have been asked to determine the degree to which the former Communist countries in the Eastern Bloc are governed democratically. How would you go about performing this task? Be sure to reference Lindblom's discussion of the relationship between democracy and markets, as one but only one element of your response.

Class 6: October 6

### Assignments Due Today

Read *The Logic of Collective Action*, pp. 1-97.

### Questions for study and discussion

1. You are a consumer -- and until business spending picks up, the economy is depending on you. Are you up to the job? Explain.
2. What is rational actor theory?
3. What is the theory of collective action?
4. What is a free rider? What is the significance of this concept to the policy analyst?
5. What difference does the size of a group make in predicting the likelihood of collective action?
6. What is a latent group? Why is this concept important to Olson?
7. What is the importance of a closed shop to a labor union?
8. What is the difference between a latent group and an organized group?
9. How does Blackburn's concept of egoism relate to Olson's rational actor?
10. What are the limits of rational actor theory?
11. Public or rational choice theory applied to economic activity seems to produce far more felicitous results than when applied to the social or political realm. Explain.
12. In what ways do Olson's and Keck and Sikkink's theories differ? Compare their usefulness.

Class 7: TUESDAY October 14

### Assignments Due Today

1. Project Team leaders should turn in a tentative bibliography indicating sources that will be used for the policy analysis, a more fully developed description of the problem your team will be addressing in its policy analysis, and the names of your team members.
2. Read *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, pp. 1-61, 76-105, and 120-126.

3. 4-5 page essay due in class

Questions for study and discussion

1. What does a reading of Hirschman suggest to you about the efficacy of privatization? Is he correct? Explain. Be sure to define “privatization.”
2. How does loyalty influence the use of exit or voice? Provide examples.
3. Under what circumstances is voice most effective?
4. Under what circumstances should a policy professional quit a job?
5. Would Hirschman endorse the practice of whistle blowing?
6. Is it possible to retain personal integrity while working in institutions driven by political, economic and other values that may conflict with professional standards? Explain.
7. What's the value of a Consumer Product Safety Commission?
8. Why have a Securities and Exchange Commission?
9. Should democracies have freedom of information acts?
10. Why might agencies tend to err on the side of secrecy when classifying information?
11. Why do people who believe in limited government worry about the use of Orwellian language? (What is Orwellian language?)
12. What difference does accurate auditing of public corporations make?

Class 8: October 20 - FIRST EXAM

Class 9: October 27

Assignments due today

1. Read *Policy Paradox*: Introduction and Part I. Read Parts II, III or IV, as follows: If your surname begins with A-G, read Part II; with H-N, read Part III; with O-Z, read Part IV.
2. Because each of you will be reading different sections, you must come to class prepared to teach each other the answers to all of the class questions below.
3. Everyone reads pages 376-414 of Stone.

Questions for study and discussion

1. “It is important to represent both sides of the issue.” What is defective about this characterization?
2. In what ways does the theory of collective action fail as a theory of political mobilization?
3. Which is prior: policy issues or political contests? Explain.
4. How does language affect policy problems?
5. What might be an example of a conflict of interest that a policy analyst might confront? What are some other examples of conflict?
6. What is just, according to Stone?

7. What is the difference between justice as a concept and its operationalization or measurement?
8. What does it mean to say that conceptual boundaries are contested? Provide an example from Stone.
9. What does Stone mean when she says, “The definition of security, like other policy goals, is an exercise in political claims-making”?
10. What does it mean to say that problem definition is “the strategic representation of situations”?
11. Explain the idea that no fact speaks for itself. What are the hidden stories in numbers?
12. What are the implications behind the following assertion: “Problems, then, are not given, out there in the world waiting for smart analysts to come along and define them correctly”?
13. What is the relationship between counting and political mobilization?
14. “People, unlike rocks, respond to being measured.” So what?
15. What are the differences between the rationality project and the political project?
16. Why does Stone contrast these two projects?
17. What is the role of values in policy making, according to Stone?
18. Using Stone and Schattschneider, devise a strategy to reinvigorate the Democratic party. Identify the obstacles to implementing this strategy and how you would circumvent them. (You will want to think about this question again next week after you have read the remainder of Stone.)

Class 10: November 3

Assignments due today

1. Read all of Braybrooke and Lindblom
2. Read Edward Banfield, “Policy Science as Metaphysical Madness” (distributed to class by email)

Questions for study and discussion

1. According to the authors, what are the limitations of the rationalist model?
2. What is “disjointed-incrementalism”? Why do the authors see it as superior to the rationalist model?
3. How does the authors’ theory aid the practical policy analyst?

Class 11: November 10

Assignments due today

Read all of Kingdon

Questions for study and discussion

1. Describe the differences between administrative rule-making and judicatory procedures.
2. Contrast the roles of Congress and the President in the policy process.
3. What is a policy entrepreneur? What other examples of policy entrepreneurs can you think of from other policy areas?
4. How might bureaucratic policymaking enhance a democracy?
5. What is the role of the public in policy making?
6. Which comes first, the problem or the solution?
7. What are the implications for policy analysis?

Class 12: November 17 - Group Presentations: Week I  
Written policy analyses and editorials are due for all groups.

Class 13: November 24 - Group Presentations: Week II

Class 14: December 1 – Group Presentations: Week III

### **Description of Team Projects**

1. Each team is to develop a policy analysis along the lines of Bardach's A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis. The deliverables include a written policy analysis of approximately 20 double-spaced typed pages (exclusive of appendices). The analysis should include:

- An executive summary of the report (not to exceed one page)
- A succinct discussion of the problem (including history, component parts, reason for the problem, some relevant academic literature and related matters)
- Identification of the client for whom the project is undertaken
- Identification of the stakeholders
- Presentation of any data that you may have collected (primary or secondary) that you want to bring to bear on solving the problem
- Explanation of the criteria against which outcomes are to be assessed and of operationalization of the criteria
- Assessment of possible solutions and possible opposition
- Conclusion and recommendation (Provide reasons)
- Evaluation: How should the policy solution you recommend be evaluated if the solution is implemented?

In a first appendix, append a list of the name of each member of the class and the parts of the team project for which each person was responsible. In a second appendix, provide a one-page assessment of your client's background, interests, financial support, political leanings, and purpose of commissioning your analysis. Then indicate how these factors influenced your policy advice. Third, include footnotes and a complete bibliography in your analysis.

Due date for the written analysis is **XXXX**. You must deliver a paper copy at the beginning of class. In addition, include the name of the intended client and topic of the policy analysis and a proposed bibliography indicating the sources that will be used.

2. Each team is to prepare a strategic analysis of how successfully to implement the policy advice in your policy analysis. The deliverables include: An editorial for a relevant newspaper (500 words maximum, emailed to the professors, teaching assistants, and to all the members of the class prior to the presentation) using the arguments that you have used with your client. A Q&A period of about 15 minutes will follow immediately after the presentation. The presentation, not to exceed 30 minutes, should include:

- A brief summary of the policy problem and the advice you offered your client, and the reasons for your recommendations, including the criteria and the measurement that your group employed
- Relevant elements of strategies and tactics from the class readings
- A persuasive argument concerning the strategy you are proposing
- A step-by-step presentation of the strategy clearly indicating how the strategy (and accompanying tactics) will lead to the desired outcome

### **Writing Assistance**

If you need help in improving your writing skills, be sure to study the front section of Diana Hacker's *A Pocket Manual of Style* (see required reading below). Assistance from the university's Writing Center (<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>) is also available. The Writing Center has an Arlington office specifically for SPP students. You are expected to use it. Another help, "Writing Tips" by Cynthia Harrison, can be found at the end of this syllabus. You should commit it to memory. Also, consult the writing tips quizzes offered on our WebCT web site.

For citations and references, use one of the styles in the Hacker (2000) volume. You will set Endnote's style option to the one you choose from Hacker. Remember that consistency is the key to proper citation: select a style and stick to it.

### **University Honor Code**

No cheating, plagiarizing, or other unprofessional conduct will be tolerated. (Please see SPP statement below.) These are defined in the University Catalog as follows:

A. Cheating encompasses the following:

1. The willful giving or receiving of an unauthorized, unfair, dishonest, or unscrupulous advantage in academic work over other students
2. The above may be accomplished by any means whatsoever, including but not limited to the following: fraud; duress; deception; theft; trick; talking; signs; gestures; copying from another student; and the unauthorized use of study aids, memoranda, books, data, or other information
3. Attempted cheating

B. Plagiarism encompasses the following:

1. Presenting as one's own the words, the work, or the opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgment

2. Borrowing the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought of someone else without proper acknowledgment

C. Lying encompasses the following: The willful and knowledgeable telling of an untruth, as well as any form of deceit, attempted deceit, or fraud in an oral or written statement relating to academic work. This includes but is not limited to the following:

1. Lying to administration and faculty members

2. Falsifying any university document by mutilation, addition, or deletion...

SPP Policy on Plagiarism: One Instance of Cheating and You Are Expelled

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>)

### **Academic Accommodation for a Disability**

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

### **Class Conduct**

\*The use of computers or electronic devices is strictly prohibited during class time. Please turn off all cell phones, pagers and other electronic devices.

### **WRITING TIPS**

**By Cynthia Harrison**

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 unless they are being used as a possessive. E.g. “The Harrisons came to dinner.” But: “This is Professor Harrison’s class.” And: “This is the Harrisons’ car.”

9. Avoid the word “things,” as in “Things changed rapidly.” Use a specific phrase: “The political context changed rapidly.”

10. Avoid contractions in formal writing.