

# Public Policy Analysis

PUP 6009 - Section 212H

Department of Political Science, University of Florida

## **INSTRUCTOR**

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## **CLASS MEETS:**

MONDAYS, 3-6 PM

Via Zoom/Canvas

## **OFFICE HOURS:**

WEDNESDAYS/FRIDAYS 11:45-2:15 (ZOOM)

## **1 COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES**

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This course introduces the professional practice of policy analysis, which has strong roots in public administration, economics and political science. Our primary approach will be from the political economy perspective; thus, we will focus heavily on microeconomics. The approaches we discuss in this class will help you better understand why government action – policy – is often necessary, and how politics can sometimes make it more challenging to make policy.

Policy analysis is applied research, more commonly used by consultants, bureaucrats, and administrators than academic researchers. Policy analysts are responsible for defining and framing public problems, identifying and evaluating possible strategies for addressing problems, and recommending solutions that make the most sense. Related to policy analysis are program evaluation (the past), program monitoring (the present), and forecasting (the future). We will not cover these elements of policy analysis, but these courses are highly recommended to budding policy analysts.

The goals of this course are to provide students with an understanding of the role that analysis plays in the policymaking process, to make students critical consumers of policy analysis, and to equip students with the basic skills necessary to write and present a professional policy analysis paper. We will consider some fundamental questions: What are the rationales for collective action in private affairs? What are the limitations to collective action? What are the generic instruments of public policy? What are the appropriate roles for policy analysts in democratic societies? Answering these questions builds the conceptual foundations for doing policy analysis.

The required skills for doing policy analysis are best learned through practice. Therefore, the primary vehicle for your learning will be completion of a policy analysis project and policy memos. We will follow a process for policy analysis to enable you to: identify data sources and evaluate their utility, establish criteria to analyze the policy, assess alternative policies, and select among policy alternatives. We will also read and evaluate examples of published policy analysis throughout the semester.

After taking this course, you will be able to:

- Conduct basic policy analysis for real-world problems;
- Prepare well-organized, clear, and understandable policy documents;
- Plan and present policy arguments and briefings;
- Understand the political context of policy analysis—remember that politics govern the exercise of authority, power, and privilege to determine who gets what, when, and how;
- Read and understand policy research.

## 2 TEXTS & OTHER READINGS

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### 2.1 REQUIRED

- Stone, Deborah. 2012. *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. New York: WW Norton.
- Weimer, David L. and Aidan R. Vining. 2017. *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition. New York: Routledge.
- Additional Readings in the course outline (available on Canvas).

### 2.2 RECOMMENDED

Bardach, Eugene. 2012. *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Washington, DC: Sage. (An earlier edition e-book is available from the library.)

## 3 COURSE ASSESSMENT

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Your grade will be based on the following (elaborated below):

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|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Class Facilitator                                         | 10% |
| 2. Class participation, weekly outlines, and “pop briefings” | 10% |
| 3. Policy Memos (4 @ 5% each)                                | 20% |
| 4. Policy Analysis Project (written report)                  | 40% |
| 5. Policy Analysis Presentation                              | 10% |

### 3.1 CLASS FACILITATOR & WEEKLY READINGS

Beginning with week three, each of you will have a turn at facilitating debate, often in tandem with the instructor. As facilitator, you should briefly introduce the main questions from the assigned reading (not recap). **This does not absolve the rest of the class from reading the week’s material carefully.** Try to generate discussion, use creativity, and make connections. Ask people questions – even cold calling if need be. Most of the time, you will be juxtaposing the Stone book with the economics from Weimer and Vining.

### 3.2 CLASS PARTICIPATION, WEEKLY OUTLINES, & POP BRIEFINGS

First, please be punctual; class begins at 3 p.m. Please allow for parking issues.

Second, given the nature of this seminar, your participation in class discussions and group exercises should demonstrate a command of the assigned material and the ability to relate the concepts to cases and current policy issues. Your active class participation will make the course more valuable for all of us.

Third, the “pop-briefings” simulate the sort of oral report you are likely to be called upon to make while you are working on a major project as a policy analyst. You will have a total of ten minutes to introduce the issue you are addressing in your policy analysis project, pose an analytical question you are trying to address, and lead discussion of it. Keep the intro of your issue to about one minute and allow at least

five minutes for discussion. Discussion may be extended at my discretion. I will randomly select two or three presenters each class starting our fourth week.

Fourth, to encourage participation, each of you will turn in a typed one page outline every week that outlines the key points/takeaways from the week's reading. Included in the outline should be two discussion items you would like to raise. These will be quickly checked at the beginning of class and returned to you in class that day. You may email these prior to class as well.

Some questions to consider for all the readings include, but are not limited to, include:

1. The main concepts/terms – what are they, how would you explain them to your colleagues?
2. Understanding the context of the terms/concepts. Why would policy analysts be interested in such topics? Who gains? Loses? Are there always winners or losers?
3. Coming up with real world examples of the concepts in action
4. An assessment of whether the claims made in the reading are valid, dubious or debatable? All policy analysis rests on certain assumptions. Are the assumptions open to question?
5. How do the readings connect/debate one another? What controversies do they raise with respect to real world politics?
6. How do certain concepts or readings relate to or fit into your field of interest?
7. How do they reflect, contradict, or enlighten reading/theories you have come across in this and other classes?

### **3.3 POLICY MEMOS**

Policy memos address real situations in which a public or private decision-maker must make a decision. Usually, a decision maker will have a variety of information at her/his disposal and, while the amount of information may be voluminous, it may be contradictory, incomplete, or simply confusing. Your job is to make an intelligent decision maker into a "smart consumer" by culling information and facts, applying your expertise, and presenting alternatives. The memo exercises provide an opportunity to practice analytical writing, and each is related to the policy analysis project. Please come prepared to discuss the policy memo in class. Instructions for the memos are on Canvas.

### **3.4 POLICY ANALYSIS WRITTEN PROJECT**

A semester-long project on a policy issue gives you an opportunity to apply the concepts and craft skills introduced in the course: identification of data sources and evaluation of their utility; establishment of criteria to analyze the policy; assessment of alternative policies; and selection among policy alternatives. The policy analysis project is an individual effort, and each of you will represent a client (sector) and develop a comprehensive, structured policy analysis for this client. As such, it reflects a culmination of the concepts and materials presented over the semester.

**Often, policy analysts aren't experts in the question, but must come quickly up to speed on a policy issue. This semester's policy area relates to COVID. We will work together to identify a different area of how COVID intersects with a policy of your academic interest. At the end of the semester, we will hold a symposium on the disparate aspects of COVID we have studied.**

Your task is to provide a policy analysis of the issue you have identified. Your goal is to prepare a final report to your "client" of no more than 20 double-spaced pages exclusive of an executive summary (required), references or endnotes (required), and appendices (optional). During the semester there will

be several exercises (memos/pop briefings) to help you move toward an effective final report. More explicit information regarding the paper is available on Canvas.

### **3.5 POLICY ANALYSIS ORAL PRESENTATION/CLASS SYMPOSIUM**

You will present your project to the entire class during the last two weeks of the semester. The presentation should total 20 minutes, including 5-10 minutes for general discussion. This may not seem like much time, but it is more time than at academic conferences. Prepare your presentation with your audience in mind – your colleagues are your client and should be treated with respect and professionalism. A complete presentation should include prepared talking notes, visual aids such as PowerPoints, and/or handouts. Again, the presentation is to your client, and you should act as if your contract was on the line.

### **3.6 GRADING**

Please note that the UF's graduate grading system allows passing grades of A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+ and C. With that in mind, work that does not merit at least a B is not considered acceptable graduate work. The following is offered as a guideline:

**A:** Exceptional work for a graduate student. Work at this level is unusually thorough, well-reasoned, creative, methodologically sophisticated, and well written. Work is of exceptional, professional quality. An excellent grasp of the facts. Evidence of considerable organizing intelligence and powers of argument.

**A-:** Very Good: Very strong work for a graduate student. Shows signs of creativity and a strong understanding of appropriate analytical approaches, is thorough and well-reasoned, and meets professional standards.

**B+:** Good. Sound work for a graduate student; well-reasoned and thorough, without serious analytical shortcomings. This grade indicates the student has fully accomplished the basic objectives of the assignment. Sound factual knowledge. Evidence of sound expository power, i.e. a clear line of argument throughout the essay.

**B:** Adequate: Competent work for a graduate student with some evident weaknesses. Demonstrates competency in the key objectives but the understanding or application of some important issues is less than complete.

**B-:** Borderline: Weak work for a graduate student but meets minimal expectations. Understanding of key issues incomplete.

**C+/C/C-:** Deficient: Inadequate work for a graduate student; does not or only barely meets minimal expectations. Work is poorly developed or flawed by numerous errors and misunderstandings of important issues.

**F:** Unacceptable. Weaknesses and limitations pervasive.

## **4 OTHER POLICIES**

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Requirements for class attendance are consistent with the attendance policy stated in the Graduate Catalog Regulations found here: <http://gradcatalog.ufl.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=1219>. Attendance is required.

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor

when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Information on current UF grading policies for assigning grade points and acceptable graduate-level grades may be found here: <http://gradcatalog.ufl.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=1219>.

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

All work in this class is to be your own. Please take note of the student Honor Code, Student Conduct Code and Standards of Ethical Conduct, which may be found in the Graduate Catalog: <http://gradcatalog.ufl.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=1219>.

*Please visit Canvas for a full listing of University Policies related to this course, along with resources that may be useful to you, from the DRC to counseling services.*

## 5 COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Date	Topic	Reading/Assignment
1	31-Aug	Introduction to Policy Analysis; course requirements	Weimer/Vining, 1, Preview: Reducing the US Kidney Transplant Shortage. Weimer/Vining, 2, What is Policy Analysis Gladwell, M. 2006. "Million Dollar Murray". <i>The New Yorker</i> . (Feb. 13, p. 96) memo writing
2	14-Sep	Policy Analysis Overview: What role does policy analysis play in democratic societies? What roles should it play? What is a policy analyst? What about ethics? Brief Introduction to Problem Definition	Weimer/Vining, 3, Toward Professional Ethics Weimer/Vining, 14, Gathering Information for Policy Analysis (Skim) Musso, J., Biller, R., and R. Myrtle. 2000. "Tradecraft: Professional Writing as Problem-Solving," <i>JPAM</i> 19(4): 635-646.
3	21-Sep	Collective Action	Stone, "Introduction" Hayek, F.A. 1945. The Use of Knowledge in Society. <i>American Economic Review</i> 35: 519-530. Harding, G. 1968. Tragedy of the Commons <b>MEMO ONE DUE</b>
4	28-Sep	Conceptual Foundations of Policy Analysis: Efficiency;	Weimer/Vining, 4, Efficiency and the Idealized Competitive Model Stone, 1, The Market and the Polis Stone, 3, Efficiency
5	5-Oct	Rationales for Public Policy: Market Failures	Weimer/Vining, 5. Rationales for Public Policy: Market Failures Weimer/Vining, 6 Rationales for Public Policy: Other Limitations of the Competitive Model Akerlof, George. 1970. The Market for 'Lemons:' Quality Uncertainty and the Market Mechanisms. <i>Quarterly Journal of Economics</i> , 84:488-500.
6	12-Oct	Goals other than Efficiency as Rationales for Public Policy	Weimer/Vining, 7, Rationales for Public Policy; Distributional and Other Goals Stone, 2, Equity Stone, 4, Welfare Stone, 6, Security
7	19-Oct	Government Failure as Limitation and Rationale	Weimer/Vining, 8, Limits to Public Intervention: Government Failures Weimer/Vining, 9, Policy Problems as Market and Government Failures Stone, 5, Liberty <b>MEMO TWO DUE</b>
8	26-Oct	Correcting Market and Government Failures	Weimer & Vining, 10, Correcting Market and Government Failures

			Stone, 7, Symbols Tiebout, Charles. 1956. A Pure Theory of Local Expenditure. <i>Journal of Political Economy</i> , 64: 416-424. Guess/Farnham: Forecasting Policy Options (Transit Options for Metro's Purple Line)
<b>9</b>	2-Nov	Policy Instruments	Weimer/Vining, 11, Adoption Weimer/Vining, 12, Implementation Guess/Farnham: Pricing and Public Policy (Cigarette Tax Clouds Boosts Among States) <b>MIDTERM EXAM DUE</b>
<b>10</b>	9-Nov	The Politics of Policy Analysis	Stone, 8, Numbers Stone, 9, Causes Shulock, Nancy. 1999. The Paradox of Policy Analysis: If It is Not Used, Why Do We Produce So Much of It? <i>Journal of Policy Analysis and Management</i> , 19(4): 226-244. Lynn, Laurance E. Jr. 1999. A Place at the Table: Policy Analysis, Its Postpositive Critics, and the Future of the Practice. <i>Journal of Policy Analysis and Management</i> , 18(3):411-424.
<b>11</b>	16-Nov	Methods & Techniques for Analyzing Policies	Weimer/Vining, 13, Government Provision: Drawing Organizational Boundaries Stone, 10, Interests Stone, 11, Decisions Weimer/Vining, 15, Landing on Your Feet: Organizing Your Policy Analysis (Skim) Guess/Farnham: Cost-Effectiveness Analysis (Fighting HIV, A Community at a Time)
<b>12</b>	23-Nov	Methods & Techniques for Analyzing Policies	Weimer/Vining, 16, Case Studies: The Canadian Pacific Salmon Industry Weimer/Vining, 17, Cost-Benefit Analysis: Assessing Efficiency Weimer/Vining, 18, Public Agency Strategic Analysis Stone, 12, Incentives Stone, 13, Rules
<b>13</b>	30-Nov	In Class Presentations	<b>SYMPOSIUM ON COVID-Related POLICY MEMO THREE DUE</b>
<b>14</b>	7-Dec	Wrap Up: Can we have evidence-based policy analysis?	Wonkblog April 16, 2013 (on Canvas) Weimer/Vining, 19, Doing Well and Doing Good  <b>FINAL PAPERS DUE on December 15</b>