

PLS 505
Policy Analysis

Fall 2009

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& by appointment

Classroom: LH 138 (Mon) or LH 110 (Tues)
Class times: M 3:30 – 6:15 or T 6:30 – 9:15
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Course Objectives

Public policy analysis is an important subject and all MPA students should be well versed in the basic concepts and techniques of the discipline. The product of policy analysis is usable knowledge that informs decision makers and this advice can come in a variety of forms and is performed by a wide range of practitioners in the public, private, and nonprofit sector. This course is designed to expose students to the art and science of policy analysis from both a philosophical and technical perspective. Students will also be exposed to the basic concepts, tools, and techniques used by analysts in today's public and nonprofit organizations. Students will also learn how to perform a policy analysis. Specifically, the course objectives are to:

- Develop your appreciation of the complexity of issues, problems and challenges associated with policy analysis;
- Enhance your ability to analyze policy problems, find creative solutions, and implement policies and programs effectively;
- Learn how to communicate the results of your analysis to managers, decisionmakers, and the general public; and,
- Ultimately, help you become a more effective policy analyst.

These objectives will be met by exposing you to a variety of theories and concepts as well as practical analytical tools and techniques derived from these theories. The course will develop your critical thinking abilities by analyzing case studies. Your oral communication skills will be enhanced through class presentations. Writing assignments will be used to improve your ability to communicate your ideas and arguments in written form.

Readings

The following books are required for this course and can be purchased at local bookstores or through vendors on the Internet:

- Patton, Carl and David Sawicki. 1993. *Basic Methods of Policy Analysis and Planning*. Second Edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. ISBN 0-13-060948-X. (Required)
- Mintrom, Michael. 2003. *People Skills for Policy Analysts*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press. ISBN 0-87840-900-9 (Required)
- Levitt, Steven D. and Stephen J. Dubner. 2006. *Freakonomics [Revised and Expanded]: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything* ISBN 0-06-073132-X. Harper Collins: New York, NY. (Required)
- Dipak K. Gupta, 2001. *Analyzing Public Policy: Concepts, Tools, and Techniques*. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press. (Recommended)
- Bardach, Eugene. 2009. *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*. Third Edition. (New York, NY: Chatham House Publishers). (Recommended)

Additional required and recommended readings have been placed on reserve in the library or have links on the class web site. Copies of the lecture notes and overheads used in class can also be found on the class web site.

Expectations & Approach

This is not a lecture-dominated class where the instructor speaks and the students passively listen. This is a seminar class where students take an active part in their learning through class discussions, group work, and case analysis. Course readings are supplemented with videos, occasional guest speakers, and other information available on the class web site. Part of your learning will be cognitive or factual in nature. However, much of what you learn in this course will involve developing your analytical skills, enhancing your self-awareness of the organizations in which you work, and sharing your professional experiences with others in the class. I encourage you to prepare yourself for, and be open to, the variety of ways that you can learn from this course.

Another important part of your learning involves the analysis of case studies. Case studies are compilations of problem situations actually faced by public managers. A case places you into a real world situation and forces you to sort through and analyze various issues or courses of action. I encourage you to discuss the cases with others prior to class.

Course Requirements

The topics, course schedule, topics, readings, and assignments are posted on the course website. Updates and changes to the schedule are possible and will be posted on the website. Students should check the website frequently for changes and postings of supplemental materials. Your grade in this class will be based on your ability to understand and apply the theories discussed in the course readings. More specifically, your grade will depend on your performance on the following course requirements:

Class Participation

Students are expected to complete the assigned readings and come to class prepared to discuss all readings, handouts, and assignments that are due. To ensure that students are prepared to discuss the readings, I will randomly ask students to summarize a reading, describe a theory, or discuss a case. Each student should also be prepared to share with the class questions that the readings raised and be able to identify the most significant point or contribution that the author makes to the practice of public administration.

While attendance will not be taken on a regular basis, poor classroom attendance may result in a failing participation grade since you cannot participate if you are not in class. Therefore, you should notify the instructor when you are unable to attend class. If you should miss a session when a video is shown, it may be possible to make arrangements to view the film privately at the library or to borrow the video. In certain circumstances it may also be possible to make-up other in-class activities with a written assignment if frequent absences have become a problem. Your participation grade will also be lowered due to the frequent inability to respond to the instructor's questions, poor class preparation, lack of enthusiastic participation in class exercises, or the failure to treat others in the classroom with respect (e.g., talking while others are talking, ridiculing other students, etc.). Simply put, in order to receive an "A" in this class you must be a civil, active contributor to class and not merely score well on exams and assignments.

Case Memos

One of the ways we will examine and apply the concepts discussed in the readings is by analyzing four cases contained in Part II (Chapters 12 – 15) of Patton and Sawicki's *Basic Methods of Policy Analysis and Planning*. Since case analysis is essentially self-learning through simulated experience, its success depends on the lively exchange of information, ideas, and opinions during case discussions. Students must come prepared to discuss all aspects of the case, apply the concepts in the readings to the case, and be able to answer the questions at the end of each case study or those posed on the class web site or it will adversely affect your class participation grade.

At the beginning of the semester, you will be assigned to a team. A separate set of directions will be provided on the website for preparing your analysis of the cases and your writing assignment so disregard the directions provided in the text. Each team must prepare 4 case memos analyzing the cases listed on the website. Your memos are limited to 3 single-spaced pages plus any necessary attachments. A sample memo can be downloaded from the course web site and most word processing programs have templates that can be used. Students enrolled in this class should

understand that case analysis executed as a team is a key element of your course responsibility and you should be available outside of classroom time to meet with your group members. Each team will also be responsible for presenting their analysis of 2 cases to the class. You will have 10 minutes to present your analysis.

Your individual grade on these assignments will be the group grade. Groups are free to allocate responsibilities in any way you want; however, groups are not expected to carry free riders. A peer evaluation form will be used when you complete your second group case memo and an individual grade may be adjusted lower if the team reports that one of its members did not contribute to the group memos. Additional instructions and guidance for preparing the individual and group case memos and leading the case discussions is posted on the course web site.

Policy Analysis Paper/Project

Each student will be required to complete a thorough, competent, well-written policy analysis with “real world” implications and grounding such as a briefing paper, white paper, or a cost-benefit analysis. Students will be expected to find a client for their analysis (real or hypothetical) and employ the appropriate analytical technique(s) to address a policy problem. You may select your subject from your professional environmental or workplace, a voluntary organization you belong to, or pick a topic that is consistent with your concentration provided that it covers a real policy decision affecting the public or nonprofit sector. To get the most out of this class, students are encouraged to contact state and local politicians, managers, and political organizations to find a reasonable public problem or issue that needs analysis. A list of potential topics is also posted on the class website. Students should waste no time in identifying the subject for their analysis and a primary criterion should be that it can be completed within the timeframe of the course. You will soon discover that these analyses require research and information to support your analysis. Accordingly, do not invest your time in a large-scale analysis from which you cannot obtain the required social, political, and economic data.

You will also be required to periodically discuss the progress of your analysis with your classmates and any lessons you have learned to date. These short presentations will allow you to practice how to communicate your findings to decisionmakers. This can and should include asking your fellow classmates for ideas and opinions about how to overcome the obstacles you confront during your analysis. Thus, you should use your instructor and classmates as resources to help you complete your analysis. Conversely, these discussions will provide others in the class with a broad overview of the problems that practitioners confront when performing various types of analysis.

The assignment will be completed in several stages. Students will be required to develop a two-page memo that specifies the problem to be addressed, the client (real or hypothetical), and the question(s) that the policy analysis will address. Students will later prepare a 2 – 3 page memo that defines the problem and the main factors affecting the problem, specifies alternatives, and summarizes the criteria that will be used to evaluate the alternatives. It should also include as an attachment a list of bibliographic references and your data sources used in the analysis and any necessary tables (e.g., summary of the alternatives or criteria) or figures (e.g., map of the causes of the problem). The first two assignments are ungraded but represent a chance to get feedback on your reports. Your final report should include a cover, table of contents, executive summary, the main body of the report (i.e., discussion of problem, discussion of evaluative criteria, discussion of each alternative, the systematic comparison of each alternative using the evaluative criteria and data gathered from your research, a recommended course of action supported by the data you’re your analysis, and an implementation strategy for that alternative), supporting tables and figures, a bibliography, and any necessary appendices or supporting materials. The report is expected to be clear, concise, and professional. It should communicate your findings effectively to your client. Final reports will probably be around 25 double-spaced pages in length but will vary based on the problem and the type of analysis.

Exams

There will be one take home exam at the end of the course. The exam will be posted on the class web site approximately one week before the exam. The exam format will include both short answer and essay questions.

Grading

All written work will be evaluated based on your analysis of the readings and cases, the organization of your ideas, the strength and substance of your arguments, your ability to properly apply the concepts discussed in class, and the quality of your writing (e.g., spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc.). Failure to complete an assignment or failing to follow directions will result in a 0 for the assignment. The final course grade will be calculated based upon the following weights:

Class Participation (20%)	20% (200 Points)
Case Memos (20%)	
Memo #1 (Group)	5% (50 Points)
Memo #2 (Group)	5% (50 Points)
Memo #3 (Group)	5% (50 Points)
Memo #4 (Group)	5% (50 Points)
Policy Paper/Project (35%)	35% (350 points)
Exam (25%)	25% (250 points)

Course grades will be calculated based on the following: A (920 – 1000), A- (900 – 919), B+ (880 – 899), B (820 – 879), B- (800 – 819), C+ (780 – 799), C (720 – 779), C- (700 – 719), D+ (680 – 699), D (620 – 679), D- (600 – 619), and F (0 – 599). There is no rounding up or down. In the event that an assignment is given a letter grade, points are allocated by using the midpoint of the grade range and multiplying it the number of possible points. For example, an A for a 5% memo would equal 95% of 50 points or 47.5 while a B+ would equal 89% of 50 points or 44.5. There is no rounding up or down.

All members of UNCW’s community are expected to follow the academic Honor Code. Please read the UNCW Honor Code carefully (as covered in the UNCW Student Handbook). Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated in this class. Be advised that I have a zero tolerance policy for cheating or plagiarism. Anyone caught cheating or plagiarizing an assignment will receive a failing grade for the course.

Late Assignments/Incompletes

Tentative due dates for course assignments are listed on the attached course schedule and are subject to change based on class progress and student preferences. You should check the course schedule and announcements pages on the course web site periodically for changes in due dates. Students may bring forward requests for changing the dates of major assignments for class approval with a minimum of one-week advance notice to the class.

Unless I have agreed in advance, all assignments are due at the end of the class period they are due. Informing the instructor of your intention to be absent does not waive your obligation to submit the work that is due. Late assignments lose one full letter grade per class they are late. An incomplete will only be granted when there are serious extenuating circumstances that occur after the withdrawal period.

Disabilities, Respect, and Harassment

Students with diagnosed disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services (962-7555). Please give me a copy of the letter you receive from Office of Disability Services detailing class accommodations you may need. If you require accommodation for test-taking please make sure I have the referral letter no less than three days before the test.

UNCW has recently instituted a Respect Compact to affirm our commitment to a civil community, characterized by mutual respect. That Compact will soon be affixed to the wall of each classroom and can be accessed at: <http://www.uncw.edu/stuaff/pdc/documents/SeahawkRespectCompact.pdf>. Students are expected to treat others in this class in accordance with this campus policy.

UNCW practices a zero tolerance policy for any kind of violent or harassing behavior. If you are experiencing an emergency of this type contact the police at 911 or UNCW CARE at 962-2273. Resources for individuals concerned with a violent or harassing situation can be located at <http://www.uncw.edu/wsrc/crisis.html>.

Other Class Policies

Cell phone use will not be tolerated in this class. Turn off your cell phones prior to class. If your phone rings, the Professor reserves the right to answer the call and/or to confiscate the phone.

Laptops may be used in this class. Laptop users should sit in the back row to avoid distracting others. Laptops will be banned from the classroom for the rest of the semester the first time any laptop user is seen engaging in non-classroom related activity.