

TRACHTENBERG SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

PPPA 6006 Policy Analysis, Section 11 Spring 2019

Meeting Time: Mondays, 6:10-8:45
Location: Thompson 309
Professor: Howard A. Smith
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Office Hours: by appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides an introduction to policy analysis for masters students. Weimer and Vining define policy analysis as “client-oriented advice relevant to public decisions and informed by social values.”

Wildavsky – one of the founders of the modern discipline of public policy studies – says that policy analysis “*can be learned but not taught*” (which makes my job either very easy or very hard).

Bardach suggests that “policy analysis is *more art than science*. It draws on *intuition as much as on method*.” To get the most out of the class, students need to show up every session and actively engage the material, and to learn by doing rather than only by listening to lectures...because there will be no lectures, so that’s not even possible.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will be able to identify and define public problems, identify and evaluate potential policy solutions, and clearly frame tradeoffs among those solutions to inform policymakers.
- Students will be able to critically evaluate policy-relevant information by assessing the accuracy and completeness of such information and identifying the values and perspectives inherent in it.
- Students will understand the strengths and limitations of various approaches to policy analysis.
- Students will improve their ability to bring clarity to complex policy issues in both written work and oral presentations.

BLACKBOARD

All students should gain access to the course website, which will be used to post announcements and course materials. You are automatically be enrolled in Blackboard through enrollment in the course. <http://www.blackboard.gwu.edu>

REQUIRED READINGS

- Pinker, Steven. Enlightenment NOW: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress, 2018, Viking. ISBN 9780525427575
- Bardach, Eugene; Eric M. Patashnik. A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving, 5th Edition, Sage. ISBN 1483359476
- Kahneman, Daniel. Thinking, Fast and Slow, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2011. ISBN 9780374533557

Laptops can also be used to take notes but not for web surfing, checking email during class, or playing World of Warcraft. (It is very distracting to students sitting behind you!)

REQUIRED VIEWINGS

- **Traffic (2000), Dir. Steven Soderburg**
- **American Gun (2005), Dir. Aric Avelino**
- **The People vs Larry Flynt (1996), Dir. Milos Forman**
- **Thank You For Smoking (2005), Dir. Jason Reitman**

Readings and movies are required by the class session in which they are listed in the schedule.

GRADE WEIGHTING

Participation and Attendance (individual)	40%
Cold Calls on the Eightfold Path (individual)	30%
Grand Finale Dialogue (group or individual)	30%

PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE

Forty percent of your grade is “being there”: being prepared and ready to participate meaningfully. I will keep track of attendance and participation. As the end of each session nears, I will elicit participation from those who have not contributed yet.

There are only nine sessions. I can forgive an absence, but not much more. If you contact me before or after an absence I will come up with a way to help you make up for missed participation.

COLD CALLS ON THE EIGHTFOLD PATH

Sessions XXX will focus on a selected element of the Eightfold Path using a popular fictional movie as the shared common experience. A week before each movie, I will post questions on Blackboard. During the session I will ask N/4 randomly selected

students (where N is the number of students) one of the questions.

Your answer must demonstrate both a thoughtful viewing of the movie, and a careful application of the content of the course to the topic of the movie. If you are unprepared to answer a cold call question you may pass, one time, and only sessions 4-6. If you pass, I will go to the next person on the list. Once my N/4 list is exhausted for the session I will make the question available to other students.

Once you've answered a question in this manner you've fulfilled both this assignment and your participation assignment for that session.

GRAND FINALE DIALOGUE

You will play a policy analyst. I will play a policy maker. The situation is that I am about to walk into a committee hearing on the policy topic you have researched. You have 10 minutes to tell me what you need me to know to perform my role in the committee and to encourage other committee members to make an informed decision.

After the session, all students, including the presenters and the role players, will score the presenters on the following criteria:

Behavioral. Your case has to deal with something that people can willfully change and observe.

Economical. Your case has to cost a reasonable amount in comparison to the benefit.

Compelling. Your case has to be described in a manner to inspire those who would typically oppose it to instead consider it seriously.

Accurate. Your case has to be a fair interpretation of the evidence.

Understandable. Your case has to be described in a way that it makes sense without reference to uncommon facts or expertise.

Succinct. Nuff said.

Equitable. Your case has to be a fair burden or benefit in a broad public sense. I will grade each case on the same criteria, factoring the feedback of the class.

So, when you ask me, "Why did I get this grade?" what's the answer?

During the class sessions with movie assignments the movies will serve as the basis for discussion of one of the following parts of the eightfold path:

- Part One: Define the Problem

- Part Three: Construct the Alternatives
- Part Four: Select the Criteria
- Part Five: Project the Outcomes.

CLASS SCHEDULE (subject to change and update)

Session	Date	Topic	Pre Class Prep Required
1	Jan 14	Introductions	None
	<i>Jan 21</i>	<i>No class, MLK Day</i>	<i>None</i>
2	Jan 28	Thinking Fast and Slow about the Enlightenment	Thinking Fast and Slow AND Enlightenment NOW (Both!)
2	Feb 4	Enlightened Thinking, (fast and slow) on the Eightfold Path	Bardach (whole book)
3	Feb 11	Defining Problems	Traffic
	Feb 18	<i>Presidents Day (no classes)</i>	<i>None</i>
4	Feb 25	Alternatives	American Gun
5	Mar 4	Fusion Session 1	Grand Finale Concept
	Mar 11	<i>No class, Spring Break</i>	
6	Mar 18	Criteria (optional)	People v Larry Flynt (optional)
7	Mar 23	Tell your story	Thank You for Smoking
8	Mar 30	Fusion Session 2	Grand Finale Revision
9	Apr 1		
10	Apr 8		
11	Apr 15	Grand Finale Presentations I	
12	Apr 22	Grand Finale Presentations II	
13	Apr 29	Fusion Session 3	
14	May 1	Mayday Session	Location TBD

REFERENCE MATERIALS

Federal Plain Language Guidelines should be used as a reference.

ADDITIONAL POLICIES AND INFORMATION

Civility: Higher education works best when it becomes a vigorous and lively marketplace of ideas in which all points of view are heard. Free expression in the classroom is an integral part of this process. At the same time, higher education demands that all of us approach the enterprise with empathy and respect for others, irrespective of their ideology, political views, or identity.

Class Decorum: Texting, side conversations, or using your laptop for anything other than taking notes is an inappropriate use of class time. Those who do these things may think their actions are unobtrusive, but they are actually quite conspicuous. It's distracting both to me and to your classmates, and will result in a significant decrease in your class participation/engagement grade.

Attendance: Please try not to miss class! Policy analysis is a skill that is learned by doing and we will be practicing these skills in class. If you do miss a class, please let me know in advance; make sure you get notes from a classmate, and download assigned materials from Blackboard.

Blackboard: Blackboard will be used to communicate with students. Please make sure that you can access the course and that you regularly check whatever email account Blackboard uses for you. If you have problems with Blackboard, contact the Helpdesk at 202-994-5530 or helpdesk.gwu.edu.

Late Work: Late work will incur a one-grade-step reduction (e.g. from an A- to a B+) per day.

Academic Honesty: Except for Problem Sets, students may not work together on any assignment. All examinations, papers, and other graded work products and assignments are to be completed in conformance with the George Washington University Code of Academic Integrity. (see studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity). Please note the prohibition on consulting former students or relying on prior answer keys when completing problem sets.

Incompletes: A student must consult with the instructor to obtain an "incomplete" before the last day of class. Consult the TSPPPA Student Handbook for the relevant CCAS policy.

Grades: No grade changes can be made after the conclusion of semester, except for clerical error.

Syllabus: This syllabus is a guide to the course. Sound educational practice requires flexibility and the instructor may revise content and requirements during the semester.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities: If you need additional time or other accommodation due to a disability, let me know in first week of the class. For accommodation on the basis of disability, you need to provide documentation to the Office of Disability Support Services.

Religious Holidays: Please let me know during the first week of the semester if you will miss a class to observe a religious holiday. You will be allowed to make up missed work without penalty.

University Student-Support Resources: Help with academic, social, and personal issues is available 24/7 from the University Counseling Service (202-994-5300 or counselingcenter.gwu.edu)

GRADING

Notes:

Papers and other assignments should be delivered electronically through Blackboard in the appropriate drop box.

Late work will be penalized at a rate of 1 point per week day out of 100 point base for each assignment.

Grading is based on equal parts: style, logic, insight, analysis, documentation.

Style refers to correct grammar, spelling, and paper presentation (i.e. no typos). The goal is for professional-level writing style.

Logic is facilitated by using an introduction (stating the purpose and scope of the paper), section headings and subheadings, and a conclusion. It also involves logical connection of ideas throughout the paper.

Insight conveys your original thoughts and depth of understanding of the subject. This involves articulating the complexity of the issue in an understandable way without over-simplifying.

Analysis involves doing what the assignment asked for and making it clear that you understand the tools involved. This involves using correct terminology, providing a range of types of evidence to support your argument, and reaching a conclusion based on that evidence.

Documentation should include an appropriate number and range of sources. They should be presented in APA style of referencing. Class texts or other course readings should be referenced. Direct quotes should include page numbers.

Course Grades:

Letter grading will be based on:

92.0+ A
90.0 - 91.9 A-
88.0 - 89.9 B+
86.0 - 87.9 B
84.0 - 85.9 B-
82.0 - 83.9 C+
80.0 - 81.9 C
78.0 - 79.9 C-
Less than 78 F

Supplementary Readings

Distributed through Blackboard as appropriate throughout the course.