

PUBLIC POLICY ANALYSIS

PADMN 6965 Section 020

Spring 2008

Instructor: Janice Houston

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Office Hours: Before class Fridays, after class Saturdays and by appointment

Texts:

1. Bardach, Eugene, *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis*, 2nd ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2006
2. Weimer, David L. & Vining, Aidan R. *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice*, 4th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005

Other Supplementary Readings as Needed

Course Objectives:

The purpose of this course is to provide you a “tool-box” with which you can perform policy analyses in your current or future career. Due to the brevity of this course, I have chosen to focus on the most common “theoretical method” of policy analysis—rational choice and its tool-box consisting of cost-benefit analysis and some other quantitative tools. As we work our way through the texts, we will discuss other things such as political, social, institutional, pluralistic and critical approaches to policy problems. However, most of these approaches, at some point, ask—“how much is it going to cost, who benefits and who pays.” These are the questions that we will attempt to answer quantitatively using the tools presented.

Course Structure, Requirements and Evaluation:

This course is structured in three parts. Friday nights will be spent working with the theoretical issues such as problem defining and solution identification. Saturday mornings will be spent on the “tool-box”—those practical elements needed to answer the theoreticals posed the night before. Saturday afternoons will be spent applying the concepts and tools to real policy problems.

As a class, we will make two decisions prior to the first class period. First, does the class want to examine just one public policy issue area for the entire length of the class **OR** do we want to look at a host of issues? Second, which policy area(s) do we want to look at?

From here, the Saturday afternoon sessions will be designed so that groups can take the topic area(s) and practice the steps that are assigned that week. The end result of these exercises will be one policy paper per group on their chosen topic.

During Saturday afternoon, you will not be confined to the classroom. I anticipate that much of Saturday will be spent on group discussion, group consultation with me, library and Internet research, etc. We will re-group as a class periodically throughout the day so you can have your classmates critique your work, ask questions and generally help you think through your paper in more depth. For this reason, please bring all materials you will need to work on your policy paper. This includes laptops, research materials (books, journals, articles, policy briefing papers, etc) and anything else you think you may need to create a preliminary draft of your group work. Saturday afternoon is basically **YOUR** time to work on your group assignment.

Below is a sample timetable for a Saturday afternoon class:

Defining the Problem & Assembling the Evidence

12:00 noon to 1:00pm (during lunch): Class time including discussion of goals for the day and logistics (including spending time with instructor)

1:00pm to 3:00pm: Group time to work on defining your problem and assembling evidence

3:00pm-4:00pm: Class time where groups will present their findings for critique by class

4:00pm-5:00pm: Group time to evaluate critique and organize assignments for group members

If, for whatever reason, you need to miss a Saturday class period, you are responsible for working out with your group how to deal with that absence. My suggestion would be that you try to provide your group a written summary of how you would incorporate the Bardach steps into your group policy piece.

If you need to miss a Friday class period, you are responsible for getting class notes from someone else. I would recommend getting them from a group/class member or Angie. I don't use extensive notes when lecturing and my shorthand won't make sense to you.

Group Component-Policy Paper

I resort to group work due to the brevity of the class. I'm not a big fan of forced collaborative efforts. In my own experience, one or two group members end up carrying the load. For this reason and to provide opportunities for as many topics and/or viewpoints, group size is limited to no more than three people. We will spend part of the first class period breaking up into groups by topic area.

Paper Requirements

Policy papers will be between 10-15 pages. The policy paper will be addressed to a **REAL** policymaker, i.e. Senator Hatch, Governor Huntsman, who has jurisdiction over the area you are working on.

The paper will also have an executive summary of no more than 3 pages and 1 page of “talking points.” I include these additional pieces because it has been my experience that the only people who will read an entire policy brief are other analysts. Executive summaries are usually read by policy advisors, the press and the general public because they are simple to understand and don’t have a lot of that boring “detail” that can sink a politically easy solution. Finally, the policymaker will read the talking points. We will spend class time reviewing how to format and write each of these pieces. Group papers are due by **5:00PM ON APRIL 18TH**.

Individual Component

In addition to this group work, there is an individual component to your grade. For this component, you have two options: 1) a weekly journal or 2) a mini policy brief. The requirements for each are as follows:

Weekly Journal

For each week within our allotted class time (yes, this includes the weeks we don’t have class) you need to collect and analyze two (2) policy pieces. One of these pieces may be a media piece, i.e. newspaper article, magazine, Internet article, press release, etc. The other must be a more rigorous work, such as a government report, think tank policy briefing paper, journal article, etc. Your critique, to be kept in your journal, will examine the policy piece using Bardach’s framework. Which elements of his eightfold path does the piece include? Which are left out? How well does the author develop the steps? Additionally, critique the article looking for data, analysis and omissions. I urge you to try to read pieces you may not agree with and/or policy topics which you have no familiarity with since these often cause us to think the most analytically. Finally, react to the piece in general. Did you like it, hate it and why? Did the piece provide clarity on the policy issue or raise further questions? This provides you an opportunity to examine your own biases relative to others. Journals will be handed in the last day of class. The journal should be typed and copies of the articles included if short (less than 5 pages). If longer than five pages, please include just the executive summary or the citation. The journal can be simply stapled together or put in some type of binder. Please include your name, student ID number at the top of each entry.

OR

Policy Brief

For this brief, you will essentially go through the same steps individually that are being done in your group work. You will pick a policy issue/topic-one that is **NOT** related to what you're working on in your group and go through the eightfold process to create a policy brief on your topic. This brief should be between 5-10 pages and include an executive summary. Topics should be cleared with me prior to beginning your research.

THE INDIVIDUAL COMPONENT (POLICY BRIEF OR JOURNAL) WILL BE DUE NO LATER THAN 5:00PM APRIL 18, 2008

The grading criteria for all assignments are as follows:

For all three pieces, you will be graded on how well you incorporate Bardach's eightfold approach into your analysis. Additionally, you will be graded on your analytical and critical thinking skills and the incorporation of the Weimer & Vining tools. Finally, I'll be looking for some of finer points of policy analysis-such as political feasibility and accessibility of your writing.

A = Distinguished Work – writes at a graduate level*, work is well (logically, good conceptual flow) organized**, consistently and effectively applies concepts, does original and compelling analysis, integrates literature and concepts in course work, initiates and effectively responds to questions.

B = Average Work – substantial work, including analysis, integration, and application of learned concepts in both written and oral activities (writing is more a review or summary of materials than a critical analysis); regular attendance and participation in class.

C = Below Average Work – satisfies minimum requirements: limited integration, application or analysis.

D = Unsatisfactory Work – satisfies some of the minimum requirements.

F = Failure – does not meet minimum requirements.

* Graduate level writing: error-free with proper punctuation, spelling, grammar, sentence structure, logical organization, proper documentation, and appropriate supporting evidence.

** Logical organization for a research paper.

Grading Factors	Weighting
1. Group project	45%
2. Journal or Policy Brief	45%
3. Class Participation	10%

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC HONESTY

Public service is a calling that requires students, as future administrators, to understand the importance of ethical behavior in all facets of their work, including their academic coursework. The University of Utah and the Program in Public Administration expect students to adhere to generally accepted standards of academic conduct. Academic misconduct is defined in the University's student code as follows:

“Academic dishonesty” includes, but is not limited to cheating, misrepresenting one's work, inappropriately collaborating, plagiarism, and fabrication or falsification of information. These are defined in the University's Student Code and is available on the UofU Web. All admitted MPA students should have reviewed a summary of the policy and signed a form attesting to that. If you have not done so, please go to the MPA office to read and sign the form.

In academic and journalistic writing it is required that all sources from which ideas and words are drawn be fully acknowledged and cited. It is also a basic principle that we should not represent someone else's work as our own. Therefore, make sure that you use quotation marks to indicate use of someone else's writing or words in your work, and provide a full citation that identifies the author(s), title, publisher, location of the publisher, year published, and page(s) at which the quotation may be found. If you use WEB sources, make sure to include a full WEB address for the specific work. When in doubt about a proper citation form, consult a style manual, and be sure to use one style consistently throughout any given paper.

A citation should also be given when using someone else's idea(s) or concept(s), even if you are not quoting directly from their work. A common form for such a citation is to put the author and year of his/her published work in parentheses at an appropriate place in the sentence that employs the concept. Then put the full citation of the work in the references. Consult APA, Turabian or some other style manual for specifics on proper styles of citation.

Academic honesty is so important that severe sanctions exist in all universities and colleges for cases of proven dishonesty. Expectations of honesty are especially high for graduate students. Correspondingly, abuses of academic honesty are not tolerated. If you are in doubt as to a proper standard of honesty in a specific situation, please consult your professor.

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the instructor and the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.

Class Schedule and Readings: Below is the basic outline for the readings, class discussion and practical work. I have also provided a sample timetable for a Saturday class.

Friday February 29 & Saturday March 1--Introduction

What is policy analysis? **Readings: Weimer & Vining Chapters 1 & 2, the Madison taxicab case (pp. 193-204) and Handout (which is discussed in Bardach Appendix A)**

Be prepared to compare and contrast the analysis done in the Salmon Fishery case, the Madison taxicab case and DPRC piece. Strong points of each? What are the weaknesses? What questions do you have about the issues after reading these analyses? Is there anything missing? If you were to assign a letter grade to each, what would it be and why?

Friday March 14 & Saturday March 15—Defining the Problem & Assembling the Evidence

How and where do we start? **Readings: Weimer & Vining Chapters 13 & 14, Bardach pp. 1 – 15 & Part II**

This is a brief overview of where an analyst starts when they begin a project. The goal of these chapters is to get you to see how analysis is dependent on the problem definition and on the available “evidence.”

Friday March 28 & Saturday March 29—Criteria Selection, Projecting Outcomes, Tradeoff Assessment and Cost-Benefit Analysis

How do we measure the world today and into the future? How do we determine the impacts of our policy problem and potential solutions both now and into the future? How do we evaluate the costs of tradeoffs and anticipate consequences? **Readings: Weimer & Vining Chapters 15& 16, Bardach pp. 15-35 & Part III**

Friday April 11 & Saturday April 12—Decision-making

This is our wrap-up class. We’ll look at good and bad examples of decisions made from good and bad analysis. The purpose is to make sure you know how to craft the recommendations you provide in your analysis in such a way that they are implementable. **Readings: TBA**