

POLS236: Public Policy Analysis

Section 001: TR 11:00-12:15 PM in
Jorgensen 151
Office Hours: Thurs. 12:20 - 1:20 (or
by appointment)

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Semester: Spring 2015

Course Objectives

1. Briefly review the major theoretical models of how policy actors and institutions interact to yield public policies.
2. Develop skills in evaluating strengths and weaknesses of various policy alternatives.
3. Understand cost-benefit analysis as it pertains to public policy.
4. Recognize and critically evaluate the assumptions of policy alternatives and how these assumptions influence political arguments.
5. Apply public policy analysis skills to *specific* current issues in today's society.

Required Texts

- Bardach, E. 2011. A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving (4th Ed). Sage.
- Kraft, M.E., and Furlong, S. 2014. Public Policy: Politics, Analysis, and Alternatives (5th Ed). Sage.

Grading and Assignments

- Participation and Attendance - 10% each for a total of 20%: This class relies heavily on the participation of students. As such, attendance is required. Students are allowed **1** unexcused absence, but are penalized for each additional absence. Additionally, this class is designed to be interactive, and so students are expected to be active in class discussions and exercises. You will receive one point toward your participation grade for each class period in which you actively participate at least once. It may often be difficult or uncomfortable for some to engage in public forms of debate or discussion, especially as some of the topics we will cover in class may be sensitive. However, active engagement, discussion, negotiation, and even debate are fundamental aspects of policymaking. Thus, it is vital that students be active in class. Those who are usually uncomfortable with such engagement should be reassured in knowing that all comments and questions are welcome (*except* those that are insensitive or offensive) and that the course is designed to provide for as conducive a setting as possible for students to express their views. Questions during class are always welcome and are a good means of participation.

Also, at the end of each class, one student will be chosen at random to briefly summarize what we have gone over in class (in 1-2 minutes). One point will be deducted from the student's participation grade for failure to do so.

- In-Class Exercises - 3 @ 5% each for a total of 15%: In-class exercises will be assigned throughout the semester for students to have the opportunity to interact with issues related to policy analysis. These exercises may include but are not limited to: presentation of information, debating alternative sides of an argument, writing assignments, or group decision-making exercises.
- Midterm Paper - 20%: Students will write a midterm paper that is worth 20% of their final grade. The precise details of this paper will be announced later in the semester, but it should be noted that it will be vital for students to acknowledge criticisms of this paper to take into account for the final paper. The paper will be 6-8 pages in length (not including title page or bibliography) and will require students to develop some aspect of a policy proposal that involves evaluating policy alternatives.
- Group Project - 15%: Group-based projects never go away, and are especially fundamental to policymaking. Policies do not succeed or fail on the basis of a single person's work. In this class, neither will you. At some point during the semester you will be split into small groups to work on projects aimed at analyzing specific policies. The precise details of this project will be announced later in the semester. It should be noted that each group member is responsible for contributing to the final product. Grades will be a function of **both** the individual student's contributions to the project *as well as* the overall group's performance as a whole. Thus, grades may vary depending on the amount of work that each student contributed toward his or her group's project, but the overall quality of the project will influence all group members' grades. For each project, presentations of the finished products will be given to the class.
- Final Paper - 30%: Rather than taking a final exam, students will write a final paper that is worth 30% of their final grade. The precise details of this paper will be announced later in the semester, but it should be noted that this paper will be graded more strictly than the Midterm Paper, because the instructor's comments from the Midterm Paper should be used to improve writing of the Final Paper. The paper will be 8-10 pages in length (not including title page or bibliography) and will require students to fully evaluate a set of policy alternatives regarding a specific community issue.

Grade Scale

Letter Grade	%
A+	97-100
A	93-96.9
A-	90-92.9
B+	87-89.9
B	83-86.9
B-	80-82.9
C+	77-79.9
C	73-76.9
C-	70-72.9
D+	67-69.9
D	63-66.9
D-	60-62.9
F	59.9 and below

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty is taken *extremely* seriously in this course. **Anyone found guilty of fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism will, at a minimum, receive an F for this course, and will be referred to university authorities.** Fabrication means altering information dishonestly, falsification means inventing information dishonestly, and plagiarism means presenting someone else's work as your own, either by not giving proper acknowledgment of the source or by presenting in whole or in part any work that has been prepared by or copied from another person.

Incompletes and Late Papers

Course incompletes will not be given except in extreme situations where all of the appropriate documentation is provided. Late assignments will be docked one letter grade if not handed in at the beginning of class on the due date (i.e., assignments handed in during the middle or at the end of class will already be docked one letter grade). Grades on the assignment will be lowered one additional letter grade for each additional day late.

Class Conduct

This course will consist of a substantial amount of discussion and debate, and I look forward to class discussions that are energized and thought-provoking, but this is not an excuse for incivility in the classroom. Your fellow classmates will undoubtedly often hold different opinions than your own, and I expect you to handle this disagreement with civility and respect for differing viewpoints. Failure to show such respect will reflect in your final grade (specifically, points will be deducted from your participation grade).

It is also worth noting that laptops are acceptable in the classroom - this is not the Stone Age. However, they should be used strictly for note-taking. It is not difficult to tell when someone is using their laptop for other purposes such as social networking, checking email, or writing angry blog posts rather than engaging in the class discussion. If I observe this behavior, it will be reflected in your final grade (specifically, points will be deducted from your participation grade).

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

Course Schedule and Readings

All readings should be done *prior* to the date for which the readings are assigned.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topics and Readings</u>
Introduction and Review	
Jan. 13	Class Introduction no readings
Jan. 15	What is Public Policy Analysis? Today, there is no shame in using Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Policy_analysis
Jan. 20 - 22	Public Policy Basics Kraft & Furlong Ch. 1
Jan. 27 - 29	Public Policy Basics - cont. Kraft & Furlong Ch. 2-3
Defining Policy Problems	
Feb. 3 - 5	Evaluating Public Policy Kraft & Furlong Ch. 4 Bardach <u>Introduction</u>
Feb. 10 - 12	Picking a Problem Kraft & Furlong p. 140-156 Bardach p. 1-9
Feb. 17	An Example - Foreign Policy and Homeland Security Kraft & Furlong Ch. 12 <i>In-Class Exercise #1 - TBA</i>
Generating Policy Alternatives	
Feb. 19	Constructing Alternatives Kraft & Furlong p. 157-169 Bardach <u>Appendix B</u>
Feb. 24 - 26	Constructing Alternatives - cont. Bardach p. 10-26 <i>Midterm Paper assigned</i>
Choosing the "Right" Alternative	
Mar. 3 - 5	Evaluating Alternatives Kraft & Furlong Ch. 6 Bardach p. 26-55
Mar. 10 - 12	Cost-Benefit Analysis for Public Policy Bickers and Williams (on Blackboard) Sunstein (on Blackboard)
Mar. 17 - 19	An Example - Health Care Kraft & Furlong Ch. 8 <i>In-Class Exercise #2 - TBA</i>
Mar. 24 - 26	No Class - Spring Break! <i>no readings</i>
Where the Rubber Meets the Road: Politics and Public Policy Analysis	
Mar. 31	Group Project <i>Group Project assigned</i>
Apr. 2	Politics Meets Policy Analysis Kraft & Furlong Ch. 13

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topics and Readings</u>
Apr. 7 - 9	Politics Meets Policy Analysis - cont. Bardach <u>Part II</u> and <u>Part III</u>
Apr. 14 - 16	TBA TBA <i>In-Class Exercise #3 - TBA</i>
Apr. 21 - 23	TBA TBA
Apr. 28 - 30	Last Week of Classes - Group Presentations Group Presentations and Course Evaluations <i>no assignments this week</i>
May 5	Final Papers Due at 12:15 PM