PIA 2028: Public Policy Analysis (Spring 2019)

Course Information
Class Time: Tuesday, 6:00pm–9:00pm
Classroom: 3431 Wesley W. Posvar Hall

Professor:
Gary E. Hollibaugh, Jr.
Email: gary.hollibaugh@pitt.edu
Office: 3802 Wesley W. Posvar Hall
Office Hours: Wednesday, 10:00am–11:30am
      Thursday, 1:00pm–2:30pm
      By Appointment

Course Description

How can we improve the ability of society to choose between alternative policies? This course provides a framework to assess alternative policies on the dimensions of efficiency, equity, and political feasibility. The comparative institutional framework requires an interdisciplinary perspective which draws on economics, political science, and political economy. Throughout the course, we will consider how insights from these disciplines provide insight into the choices confronting policymakers. The course is organized into three broad parts: an introduction to policy analysis; a framework for comparative markets and governments; and applications of the framework.

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Identify the steps involved in the policy analysis process:

    - Problem definition.

    - Determination of evaluation criteria.

    - Identification of policy alternatives.

    - Evaluation of policy alternatives.

    - Selection of the preferred policy.

- Use empirical evidence to substantiate policy arguments, and understand some of the limitations of data and empirical analysis.

- Select and apply criteria for policy analysis (e.g., efficiency, costs, equity, feasibility), with consideration to the ethical and political issues involved in criteria selection.

- Identify and select policy alternatives.

Books and Course Materials

The following books are required:

A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving by Eugene Bardach and Eric M. Patashnik (Fifth Edition).

Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice by David L. Weimer and Aidan R. Vining (Sixth Edition).

If you choose not to purchase these books, they will be available on course reserve in the library. Online copies of all other readings will be posted on Courseweb as needed.

Policy on Academic Integrity

All students are expected to adhere to the standards of academic honesty. Any student engaged in cheating, plagiarism, or other acts of academic dishonesty would be subject to disciplinary action. Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity at http://provost.pitt.edu/faculty-resources/academic-integrity-freedom/academic-integrity-guidelines. In particular, any assignment found to have plagiarized material will automatically receive a failing grade, and serious cases of plagiarism can result in a failing grade for the class, so take the time to familiarize yourself with the rules of citation and with GSPIA's policy (found in the GSPIA handbook of academic policies and procedures).

Policy on Disabilities

Any student who has a documented disability and is registered with Disability Resources and Services should speak with the instructor as soon as possible regarding accommodations. Students who are not registered should contact Disability Resources and Services.

Policy on Classroom Recording

To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

Policy on Technology

This course relies heavily on access to computers and the Internet. At some point during the semester you WILL have a problem with technology: your laptop will crash, a file will become corrupted, a server will go down, or something else will occur. These are facts of life, not emergencies. Technology problems will not normally be accepted as excuses for unfinished work. Count on "stuff" happening and protect yourself by doing the following:

- Plan ahead — start early, particularly if scarce resources are required.

- Save work often — at least every ten minutes.

- Make regular backups of files in a different location from the originals.

- Save drafts of work at multiple stages.

- When editing an image, set aside the original and work with a copy.

- Practice safe computing when surfing the web and checking email.

- On your personal computer, install and use software to control viruses and malware.

When submitting any assignment electronically in this course, you are responsible for any technological problems (e.g., internet connection difficulties, corrupted files, etc.). To prevent problems along with the associated lateness penalties, you should submit papers well before the deadline and take proactive steps to ensure that the file was not corrupted (e.g., check it after uploading to Sakai or copy yourself on emails and check the attached file). Again, please do not trust your computer to function correctly at the last minute.

Policy on Diversity, Inclusion, and Academic Freedom

Members of our community are encouraged to speak, write, listen, challenge and learn, without fear of censorship. Civility and mutual respect are vital to all of us, and freedom of expression does not mean the freedom to harass or threaten others. You will find that we expect members of our community to be engaged in rigorous debate, discussion, and even disagreement. At times this may challenge you and even cause discomfort. However, fostering the free exchange of ideas helps to build a campus that welcomes people of all backgrounds. Diversity of opinion and background is a fundamental strength of our community, and I consider this classroom to be a place where you will be treated with respect, and I welcome individuals of all ages, backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, genders, gender identities, gender expressions, national origins, religious affiliations, sexual orientations, ability, and other visible and nonvisible differences. All members of this class are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming and inclusive environment for every other member of the class, so everyone can have the freedom to espouse and explore a wide range of ideas. As such, I expect that all students—as well as the instructor—will follow the guidelines set out in the Pitt Promise:

- I will embrace the concept of a civil community, which abhors violence, theft, and exploitation of others.

- I will commit myself to the pursuit of knowledge with personal integrity and academic honesty.

- I will respect the sanctity of the learning environment and avoid disruptive and deceitful behavior toward other members of the campus community.

- I will support a culture of diversity by respecting the rights of those who differ from myself.

- I will contribute to the development of a caring community where compassion for others and freedom of thought and expression are valued.

- I will honor, challenge, and contribute to the scholarly heritage left by those who preceded me and work to leave this a better place for those who follow.

Additionally, please read Vice Provost Kenyon Bonner's statement here.

Assignments

NOTE: Unless otherwise specified, all assignments must be turned in to Courseweb at or before 6:00pm on the listed due date, and all must comport with the following formatting requirements:

- Double-spaced

- Size 11 font

- One-inch margins

- Standard font (e.g., Times New Roman, Arial, Helvetica, or something similar)

Policy Recommendation Memos (15% of grade). This project is largely intended to acquaint you with the language of policy analyses and to prepare you for the group policy report that will comprise the bulk of your grade in this course. You will be assigned one of five different policy reports that were submitted as final projects in previous iterations of this course. Your job is to read it and write a <u>short</u> memorandum (between three and four pages, inclusive) to the report's client. The recommendation must focus on the problem addressed in the report. You may focus on the recommendation in the report or argue for some other alternative. Your recommendation should be stated clearly in the last sentence of the first paragraph. The rest of your memorandum should indicate the advantages and disadvantages of your recommendation. You may, but are not required to, consult relevant sources beyond the report itself. This is due to Courseweb by January 29. *These may be discussed in class, so be prepared.*

Group Policy Report (60% of grade). You are to work together in groups of three or four to write one policy report. Your assignment is to produce a report answering a broad policy question "asked" by a policymaker. Your group must decide on the policy question and have it approved by me. Please see the document entitled "Notes on Preparing Your Policy Report Projects" for more information about the assignment. Be thorough, clear, and organized, and make sure to follow the advice in the "Notes on Preparing Your Policy Report Projects" handout as well as the various handouts on writing memoranda (all of which are on Courseweb). **NOTE**: While I expect you to come up with your own policy question for the purpose of this assignment, I am more than happy to assign you one if requested (and if you ask me before February 1). However, if you ask me to assign you one, I will do so **randomly** and my decision will be **final**.

There will be checkpoints along the way for this assignment, and the 60% of your grade covered by this assignment will be distributed as follows:

- **Groups and Policy Topics** (2.5% of grade). By February 5, students should upload to Courseweb the following

  - A one- or two-sentence description of the policy question they will analyze.
  - The name of the client for whom the policy analysis will be prepared.
  - All the names of their group members.

- **Group Policy Synopsis** (5% of grade). By February 19, each group will submit a one- to two-page written synopsis of their policy (analagous to an "executive summary"). This synopsis must provide a brief description of the policy question at hand, the client for whom the report is being prepared, highlight the governmental actors involved, mention the and illustrate the relevance of the topic to policy analysis at any level of government.

- **Group Policy Report Outline** (5% of grade). By March 19, students must submit a one- to two-page outline of their policy report to Courseweb. **The outline may be single-spaced**. This outline should include information on the following:

  - The policy under analysis.
  - The client for whom the report will be prepared.
  - The theory or concept(s) used to support your analysis.
  - A very brief mention of your conclusion about the significance of your analysis.

- **Group Annotated Bibliography** (7.5% of grade). By March 26, each group will submit an annotated bibliography based upon reviewing at least 10 articles from peer-reviewed publications, governmental reports, and books and book chapters from <u>academic</u> presses, think tanks, nonprofits, and governmental organizations. All sources should be relevant to your project and you should be far enough along in your project that the sources will form part of the basis of your analysis (though this is not strictly necessary). An annotated bibliography is a list of citations to books, articles, and documents. Each citation is followed by an annotation—a brief (approximately 150 words) descriptive and evaluative paragraph. The purpose of the annotation is to inform the reader of the relevance, accuracy, and quality of the sources cited. Please note than an annotation is different from an abstract. An abstract is a descriptive summary while an annotation is a descriptive, critical and evaluative summary. Hence, an annotation summarizes the central theme and scope of the report, book or article and includes one or more sentences that evaluate the authority or background of the author and explains how this reference illuminates or adds value to the research topic.

- **Rough Group Policy Report** (10% of grade). By April 2, each group will submit a rough draft of their policy report to Courseweb.

- **Final Group Policy Report** (20% of grade). By April 16, each group will submit the final drafts of their policy report to Courseweb.

- **Group Presentation** (10% of grade). The last two days of class will be devoted to Power-Point presentations (approximately 20–30 minutes per group, approximately 5–10 of which

will be devoted to audience questioning) based on the Group Policy Reports. The presentation will count for 10% of the course grade. Students will present as groups, and all members of each group must present. The presentations will be graded on clarity of presentation and ability to answer audience questions. Please make sure to submit your PowerPoint slides to Courseweb before presentations commence.

Midterm Exam (15% of grade). There will be one in-class exam, counting for 15% of the course grade. Any known scheduling problems should be brought to my attention as soon as possible. If you miss the exam without a university-approved excuse, you will receive a zero.

Participation (10% of grade). This class leans heavily on the case method, and as such, participation is essential. As such, class participation will constitute 10% of your grade. Much of the in-class discussion will take place in groups, and your participation grade will depend heavily on your contribution to your group's discussion.

Grading

Below is how your final percentage grade will be mapped into a letter grade. To reduce ambiguity, there will be no rounding. So if you get an 89.999999% when the semester is over (for example), your final grade will be a B+. **No exceptions**.

Percentage point range	Letter grade
93+	A
90–92.999...	A-
87–89.999...	B+
83–86.999...	B
80–82.999...	B-
77–79.999...	C+
73–76.999...	C
70–72.999...	C-
60–69.999...	D
0–59.999...	F

Late Assignments

Assignments are due at 6:00pm on the dates indicated on the syllabus. **All assignments must be submitted via Courseweb.** Written material submitted within 24 hours of the deadline will be accepted with a 25% grade reduction, and nothing will be accepted more than 24 hours after the deadline. **There will be no exceptions**.

However, students occasionally request an extension at the end of the semester if they cannot complete their assignments due to serious unforeseen circumstances. A "G" grade will be given only under exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the instructor, and should be discussed with the instructor before the end of the term. According to GSPIA policy, a student must remove the G grade by completing the assigned work for the course as soon as possible in the semester following the course.

Grade Appeals

All appeals must be made in writing to the instructor. No grade appeals will be considered within the first 24 hours of a grade being posted on Courseweb; those that come in within the first 24 hours will be discarded. All grade appeals must be received within seven calendar days of the grade being posted on Courseweb to be considered; those that arrive after this deadline will be discarded. All appeals must contain the following information:

- The name of the assignment in question.

- The reason why you believe your grade should be higher. Be specific and discuss this in the context of the requirements of the assignment.

- Determine whether you believe it is an error of calculation (that is, the instructor incorrectly tabulated points), judgment (the grade received does not reflect the quality of the assignment), or both.

If the instructor determines that an error of calculation is present, then the correct grade will be calculated and the correct grade will be posted. If it is argued by the student that an error of judgment is present, then the student has the option to have the assignment graded *de novo* by the instructor. Because this will be a regrade, there is the possibility that the grade given to the regraded assignment will be lower than that given to the initial submission. Regardless, all decisions by the instructor are final.

Policy on Email

Any requests to the instructor (*e.g.*, meetings outside of office hours) *must* be made in writing via email so everyone has a record of the request and decision. **For emails sent between Monday and Thursday, inclusive, please allow the instructor up to 48 hours to respond. For those sent between Friday and Sunday, inclusive, please allow the instructor up to 96 hours to respond.** The instructor endorses the general principles for email communication (for any professional communication via e-mail, not just those for this class) outlined here.

Course Topics

Note: The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary. We may not cover all of these topics. Conversely, time permitting, other topics might be covered in this course. Moreover, even if we do not cover something in class, you are still responsible for knowing what is in the readings.

January 8: Introduction and Overview

- Bardach and Patashnik, Part I (read within the first few weeks of class)

- Weimer and Vining, Chapters 1, 2, and 3

- **Case**: None

January 15: Competitive Markets

- Weimer and Vining, Chapter 4

- **Case**: None

January 22: Market Failures

- Weimer and Vining, Chapter 5

- **Case**: Electric Vehicles in Cities

January 29: Other Limitations of the Competitive Model

- *Policy Recommendation Memos Due to Courseweb by 6:00pm*

- Weimer and Vining, Chapter 6

- **Case**: Corporate Average Fuel Economy Standards, 2017–2025

February 5: Distributional and Other Goals

- *Group Policy Report Groups and Topics Due to Courseweb by 6:00pm*

- Weimer and Vining, Chapter 7

- **Case**: The Department of Transportation and Airport Landing Slots

February 12: Government Failure

- Weimer and Vining, Chapter 8 and 9

- **Case**: California Water Pricing

February 19: Solutions, Part I

- *Group Policy Report Topic Synopsis Due to Courseweb by 6:00pm*

- Weimer and Vining, Chapters 10 and 11

- **Case**: Shaping the Future of Solar Power: Climate Change, Industrial Policy, and Free Trade

February 26: Solutions, Part II

- Weimer and Vining, Chapters 12 and 13

- **Case**: Hacking Bureaucracy: Reimagining California's Food Stamp Program in the Digital Age

March 5: In-Class Midterm

March 12: NO CLASS — SPRING BREAK

March 19: Cost-Benefit Analysis

- *Group Policy Report Outline Due to Courseweb by 6:00pm*

- Weimer and Vining, Chapter 17

- **Case**: Saving the Tuolumne

March 26: Nuts and Bolts of Policy Analysis; Group Policy Project Workshop

- *Group Annotated Bibliography Due to Courseweb by 6:00pm*

- Bardach, Parts II, III, and IV

- Weimer and Vining, Chapters 14, 15, and 16

- **Case**: None

April 2: The Broader Politics of Public Policy

- *Rough Drafts of Group Policy Reports Due to Courseweb by 6:00pm*

- Rawat, Pragati and John Charles Morris. 2016. "Kingdon's "Streams" Model at Thirty: Still Relevant in the 21st Century?" *Politics & Policy* 44(4):608–638.

- Roberts, Nancy C. and Paula J. King. 1991. "Policy Entrepreneurs: Their Activity Structure and Function in the Policy Process." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 1(2):147–175.

- Shipan, Charles R. and Craig Volden. 2012. "Policy Diffusion: Seven Lessons for Scholars and Practitioners." *Public Administration Review* 72(6):788-796.

- **Case**: Pricing Carbon: The Birth of British Columbia's Carbon Tax

April 9: Group Policy Project Workshop

- **Case**: None

April 16 and 23: In-Class Presentations

- *All Final Group Policy Reports Due to Courseweb by 6:00pm on April 16*

- **Case**: None