Course overview

This course provides the concepts, framework, experiences, and support to equip students to rigorously assess policy responses to public problems through the traditional method of policy analysis. Over the quarter, this course develops a framework you can apply throughout your careers to be both better consumers and creators of policy advice. It also provides you with the structure and guidance to apply this framework to the analysis of a real-world public policy problem or decision of your choosing. It builds on and integrates many of the skills from the first-year MPA core, including economics, politics, budgeting, organizational management, and methods of program evaluation, quantitative analysis, and qualitative analysis. Traditional policy analysis involves applying these skills and others systematically to identify and adjudicate among the various options that policymakers might select in addressing a public problem, with the goal of arriving at the policy response that is most likely to succeed.

While the bulk of your coursework will prepare you to succeed in traditional policy analysis, this course also exposes students to various critical perspectives on traditional policy analysis. We will explore these perspectives primarily through readings and class discussions, with some options for students to incorporate aspects of less traditional policy analysis methods to the course assignments. This aspect of the course also builds on and integrates concepts from the first-year MPA core, such as ethics, values, and leadership.
Course outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3/29</td>
<td>Getting acquainted with policy analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>Overview of policy analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4/12</td>
<td>Defining the problem</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4/19</td>
<td>Policy goals and options</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4/26</td>
<td>Criteria for evaluating options</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>5/3</td>
<td>Refining goals, options, and criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>5/10</td>
<td>Evaluating difficult to measure criteria</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>5/17</td>
<td>Communicating findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>5/24</td>
<td>Oral briefings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>5/31</td>
<td>Oral briefings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Required readings

- There are two required books, which are available for purchase at the University Book Store:

- Students will be required to read seven (7) cases.
- Other required readings are available through the Canvas site.

Course design and objectives

I have designed this course with three objectives in mind:

1. Train students in the art and craft of traditional policy analysis, including the applied skills of:
   - Defining, assessing, and describing public problems;
   - Developing policy goals and a set of policy options to address public problems;
   - Identifying criteria for evaluating policy options;
   - Analyzing and predicting the effects of various policy options; and,
   - Communicating policy advice in written and oral presentations.

2. Familiarize students with the limitations and critiques of traditional policy analysis through exposure to various critical perspectives.

3. Support students as they pursue and gain expertise in a particular policy issue area of their choosing.
Course expectations and evaluation

Students are expected to be full participants in the class. This includes active engagement during class sessions and the timely completion of readings and course assignments. Grades will be assigned as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual case analysis</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class engagement</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memo #1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memo #2</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memo #3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral briefing</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total possible points*</td>
<td>400*</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Final grade = Total points/100 rounded to the nearest .1. (.5 is rounded up)

Examples:  
Total points: 383; final grade = 3.8  
Total points: 355; final grade = 3.6  
Total points: 329; final grade = 3.3

*There may be limited opportunities for extra credit, at my discretion.

Assignments

As outlined above, several components constitute your course grade. Details of each assignment and grading guidelines will be discussed in class and posted on Canvas. All page requirements refer to double-spaced pages* with 12-point font and 1 inch margins. In addition, all graded written assignments are due Sunday at midnight. (Ungraded peer review assignments are due Sunday at 5pm.) A brief summary of each assignment follows:

- **Individual case analysis:** The individual case analysis is a short (3-4 pages) but complete policy analysis memo based on the week’s case. This memo summarizes the policy problem, identifies policy goals, evaluates possible strategies to deal with the problem, and makes a policy recommendation. An essential aspect of the memo is a matrix showing the policy options, evaluation criteria, and predictions. Students will sign up for a particular case to analyze during the first week of the quarter. Approximately 10 students per week will complete their individual case analysis during Weeks 3-8.

- **Class engagement:** Class engagement is comprised of attendance, participation in ad hoc surveys, in-class exercises, and the peer review process. Participation in class and quiz section includes thoughtful involvement in class discussion and exercises as well as adherence to class policies and norms.

- The remaining assignments constitute a Team Policy Analysis Project, which is the heart of this course. In teams of 3**, you will focus on a policy problem of your choosing and create a complete policy analysis paper based on your policy problem. This project has four graded
components, briefly described below. You are also required to submit drafts of each memo for peer review one week before the deadline for the graded memo. See the Team Policy Analysis Project schedule for due dates.

- **Memo #1:** This memo defines the policy problem, providing background information about the problem’s history, stakeholders, trends, and political context. (3-4 pages)

- **Memo #2:** This memo begins with an improved and refined (shortened) version of Memo #1. The memo then describes the policy goals for addressing the problem, describes a set of policy options for consideration, and introduces a set of criteria for evaluating the policy options. This memo includes a matrix “shell” showing the policy options and evaluation criteria, but it does NOT include the evaluations of or predictions for the policy options. (6-8 pages)

- **Memo #3:** This memo incorporates an improved and refined version of Memo #2. The memo also includes the evaluation of and prediction for the policy options, plus a definitive policy recommendation. This memo will be a stand-alone product. The heart of the memo is an assessment of which strategy (or strategies) would be most effective in light of a) how the policy options performed against the criteria, and b) the trade-offs inherent to choosing one option over another. This final memo will include a 1-page executive summary. (12-15 pages*, plus appendices)

- **Oral briefing:** The oral briefing is a presentation during which you communicate the information from Memo #3 to the class. The exact time limit for each oral briefing is to be determined, but each briefing will likely be 10 minutes long followed by a few minutes for questions.

*Students have the option to submit Memo #3 as single-spaced (10-12 pages).
**Teams of 3 are preferred, though there may be a limited number of teams of 2 to accommodate topic preferences and schedule limitations. All team members must be able to attend the same section meeting.

**Professionalism**

The Evans School is a professional school, and this class is an opportunity to practice the skills that will help you succeed in the workplace. I expect all written communication (including email) to follow professional norms, including appropriate capitalization and punctuation. In general, you can expect me to respond to email within two business days.

**In-class expectations**

I prefer that you do NOT use your laptop or tablet to take notes during class, since using these devices for note-taking is more likely to distract you and your classmates than it is to add to the learning experience. However, I recognize that many of you complete your readings electronically and may occasionally refer to them. I will also try to give you advance notice if a laptop will be useful for a particular class session. I will post all PowerPoint presentations to Canvas following class.
Three hours is a long time to sit in the same classroom. I will provide at least one break per class session, occurring no later than 6pm (1.5 hours after class begins). You are welcome to bring drinks and food to class, but please refrain from noisy packaging, noisy foods, and fragrant foods. I will ask you to put away your food if it is negatively affecting the classroom experience.

I expect phones and other personal communications (email, text, etc.) to be put away during class sessions. You may check them during breaks. Please let me know in advance if you have a situation for which you cannot wait 1.5 hours to access your phone or email.

**Attendance policy**

As reflected in the grading, class engagement (including but not limited to class and section attendance) contributes substantially to your final grade. I promise to work hard to make the in-class experience valuable, since I believe that face-to-face interaction enhances learning. Like the workplace, I expect you to attend every class period, arriving on time and staying until the end.

That said, I also understand that we are all professionals with lives outside of PB AF 513, and sometimes life circumstances take precedence over work/class. If you are unable to attend class and would like the opportunity to “make up” for your absence, I will provide one (1) alternate assignment per student for a missed lecture section. For an anticipated absence, please email Kelly (khusted@uw.edu) as soon as possible with the date of the anticipated absence. For an unanticipated absence, please email Kelly as soon as you realize you will not be in class. To be eligible for an alternate assignment, you must contact Kelly within 24 hours of the missed class. Please remember that the content and due dates of any alternate assignments are at our discretion.

**Evans School Community Conversation Norms**

Please note that everyone in our course is expected to behave ethically and professionally at all times. By registering for this course, you agree to abide by the ethical and civil discourse norms of the Evans School and the University of Washington. Specifically, you agree to: 1) not claim the work of others as your own; and 2) respect members of our Evans School learning community.

For guidance on how to behave respectfully with other members of the Evans School community, please refer to the Evans School’s Community Conversation Norms, reproduced below:

At the Evans School, we value the richness of our differences and how they can greatly enhance our conversations and learning. As a professional school, we also have a responsibility to communicate with each other—inside and outside of the classroom—in a manner consistent with conduct in today’s increasingly diverse places of work. We hold ourselves individually and collectively responsible for our communication by:
• **Listening** carefully and respectfully
• **Sharing** and teaching each other generously
• **Clarifying** the intent and impact of our comments
• **Giving and receiving** feedback in a “relationship-building” manner
• **Working** together to expand our knowledge by using high standards for evidence and analysis

**Academic integrity**

I expect each student to act honestly and sincerely with respect to this course and its related activities. Any student suspected of academic misconduct will have the option of receiving a zero on the assignment in question or appealing the decision to the Dean’s Representative. In the case of repeated or large-scale suspected academic misconduct, the matter will be referred to the Dean’s Representative for resolution. This policy aligns with UW’s recommended policies for addressing academic misconduct.

Academic misconduct includes plagiarism, cheating, and fabricating information. Plagiarism is using another person’s words, ideas, artistic creations, or other intellectual property without giving proper credit. The 2014-2015 MPA Student Handbook includes additional information about what constitutes plagiarism or other academic misconduct.

**Policy regarding students with disabilities**

In partnership with UW’s Disability Resources for Students (DRS), I am committed to providing reasonable accommodations to qualified students with disabilities. Any student requesting academic accommodation based on a disability is required to register with Disability Resources for Students (DRS). If you are anticipating accommodation, please let me know by email within the first week of the quarter.

**Syllabus disclaimer**

This syllabus is a guide for this course that is subject to change. I will notify students of any changes to the syllabus as early as possible during class and/or via email and Canvas.
Team Policy Analysis Project schedule

The following are key dates, milestones, and deadlines* for the Team Policy Analysis Project. Consistent with this schedule, all written assignments are due on Sundays (at either 5pm or midnight) and will be submitted via Canvas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekly topic</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Tuesday lecture</th>
<th>Section</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Getting acquainted with policy analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dissect past policy analysis projects (4/5)</td>
<td>Policy interest mingle (3/29-3/20)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Overview of policy analysis</td>
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<td>Brainstorm to help identify topic and team (4/5-4/6)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 3</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Defining the problem</td>
<td>Declare topic and team members (4/10 at midnight)</td>
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<td>Problem definition workshop (4/12-4/13)</td>
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<td><strong>Week 4</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy goals and options</td>
<td>Memo #1 Draft due (4/17 at 5pm)</td>
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<td>Peer review (feedback due by section) (4/19-4/20)</td>
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<td><strong>Week 5</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Criteria for evaluating options</td>
<td>Memo #1 Final due (4/24 at midnight)</td>
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<td>Matrix workshop—Part I (4/26-4/27)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 6</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Refining goals, options, and criteria</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Matrix workshop—Part II (5/3-5/4)</td>
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<td><strong>Week 7</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluating difficult to measure criteria</td>
<td>Memo #2 Draft due (5/8 at 5pm)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Peer review (feedback due by section) (5/10-5/11)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 8</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Communicating findings</td>
<td>Memo #2 Final due (5/15 at midnight)</td>
<td>Discussion on effective oral briefings (5/17)</td>
<td>Oral briefings practice (5/17-5/18)</td>
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<td><strong>Week 9</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Week 10</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral briefings</td>
<td>Memo #3 Draft due (5/29 at 5pm)</td>
<td>Oral briefings (5/31)</td>
<td>Peer review (feedback due by section) (5/31-6/1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Finals week</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Memo #3 Final due (6/5 at midnight)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*While this is our operating plan, key dates, milestones, and deadlines are subject to change.
Reading assignments

Week 1 (3/29): Getting Acquainted with Policy Analysis

- Weimer and Vining. 2011.
  - The Role of Public Policy Analysts, pp. 182-185.
  - Power to the People--or to the Professionals?, pp. 185-189.

Week 2 (4/5): Overview of Policy Analysis

- Previous final papers from PB AF 513. See Week 2 page for assignments.

Week 3 (4/12): Defining the Problem

- Bardach and Patashnik. 2016.
- Weimer and Vining. 2011.

• Stone. 2012.


**Week 4 (4/19): Policy Goals and Options**

• Bardach and Patashnik. 2016.
  o Step Three: Construct the Alternatives selection from “Part I: The Eightfold Path.” pp. 18-27. (REVIEW)

• Weimer and Vining. 2011.


**Week 5 (4/26): Criteria for Evaluating Options**

• Bardach and Patashnik. 2016. Step Four: Select the Criteria selection from “Part I: The Eightfold Path.” pp. 27-46. (REVIEW)

• Weimer and Vining. 2011.
  o “Chapter 5: Rationales for Public Policy: Market Failures.”
  o “Chapter 6: Rationales for Public Policy: Other Limitations of the Competitive Framework.”
  o “Chapter 7: Rationales for Public Policy: Distributional and Other Goals.”
• *Case:* South Park Bridge Case. 2015. Evans School Electronic Hallway.

**Week 6 (5/3): Refining Goals, Options, and Criteria**

- Weimer and Vining. 2011.
  - “Chapter 8: Limits to Public Intervention: Government Failures.” pp. 156-190.
  - Implications. pp. 43-46.
• *Case:* Regulation of the Madison Taxi Market. From Chapter 9 in Weimer and Vining (2011), pp. 192-204. (Included in above reading assignment.)

**Week 7 (5/10): Evaluating Difficult to Measure Criteria**

- Bardach and Patashnik. 2016.
  - Step Five: Project the Outcomes selection from “Part I: The Eightfold Path.” pp. 46-65. (REVIEW)
  - “Chapter 8: Numbers.” pp. 183-205.
  - “Chapter 11: Decisions.” pp. 248-268
• *Case:* California’s Adoption Assistance Program. 2000. Evans School Electronic Hallway.

*Optional:*
- Weimer and Vining. 2011.
- The World Bank, section on Poverty and Social Impact Analysis.:
  o “Integrating Gender into Poverty and Social Impact Analysis.” 2013.

**Week 8 (5/17): Communicating Findings**

- Bardach and Patashnik. 2016.
  o Step Seven: Stop, Focus, Narrow, Deepen, Decide! selection from “Part I: The Eightfold Path.” pp. 71-72. (REVIEW)
  o Step Eight: Tell Your Story selection from “Part I: The Eightfold Path.” pp. 72-82. (REVIEW)
- Weimer and Vining. 2011.
  o “Chapter 18: Doing Well and Doing Good.” pp. 448-449.

**Week 9 (5/24): Oral Briefings**

**Week 10 (5/31): Oral Briefings**

**Optional Readings**

In a 10-week course, there is necessarily a lot of picking and choosing about which texts and readings to prioritize by making them “required.” In reality, the scholarship of the field of policy analysis could fill at least three separate master’s level courses. A few of the optional readings are highlighted within each week’s reading assignments. However, there are other readings that do not fit neatly into a particular week’s topic given the organization of this course, but would be very valuable and informative for aspiring policy analysts and policy analysis scholars. Some of these articles and texts are commonly used in policy analysis and similar courses in other MPA programs, whereas others are less mainstream. A list of “Optional readings for the aspiring policy analyst” is available on Canvas.