Humphrey School of Public Affairs
University of Minnesota

Spring Semester 2018
PA 5002 – Section 001
Introduction to Policy Analysis

Professor Robert Kudrle

Monday 6:00 – 8:45 pm
Humphrey 30

Robert Kudrle
254 Humphrey Center
Phone: 612-625-3388   kudrle@umn.edu
Office Hours: Mondays, Tuesdays 4:45pm-5:45pm and by appointment

COURSE OVERVIEW

Objectives:

This course provides an introduction to policy analysis. A general definition of policy analysis is "a systematic and organized way to evaluate public policy alternatives or existing government programs."

A key element of policy analysis is problem structuring, and there are many approaches to it. One central approach to problem structuring uses the tools of microeconomics. This approach emphasizes the role of efficiency and choices. There are many other perspectives on the structuring problems that come before public policy makers. These perspectives, with their associated methods, involve the understanding of the policy process, an appreciation for the institutional and cultural environment within which public problems arise, and an intimate familiarity with the political aspects of many problems that involve competing goals and objectives among differing groups in society.

This course will focus most on the efficiency approach with due concern for other issues. It is often the case that policy choices involve both efficiency and equity (distributional) considerations. Thus, the course details the problems associated with the frequent tensions between equity and efficiency. Many of the examples discussed in class relate to instances where market mechanisms and/or government policies fail. Throughout the course we will summarize some of the key approaches to mitigating market and government failures.

The appropriate initial structuring of problems is essential because far too often policy analysts and the decision makers they serve reach the right answer to the wrong question. The problem of "error of the third type"—of asking the wrong questions—is a symptom of the inability to see the bigger picture or of not being able to break large complex problems into smaller solvable problems while still keeping a focus on the whole of which the smaller problems are a part.

The readings, lectures, discussions, and group activities are designed to enhance the following skills:

1. Understanding of basic concepts, terminology, and tools of policy analysis.
2. Understanding of the microeconomic approach to policy analysis and other approaches.
3. Ability to work with quantitative and qualitative data and information to develop persuasive policy recommendations.
4. Ability to overcome evidentiary limitations when crafting policy recommendations.
5. Ability to write clear and succinct policy descriptions, analyses and recommendations designed for busy policy makers or decision makers.
6. Ability to communicate effectively to different and often diverse audiences.
7. Ability to work with others.

Course Requirements:

Class attendance and participation (20% of course grade). You are strongly encouraged to attend each class and participate in class discussions.

Policy Analysis Plan & the Memorandum (10% & 35% of course grade, respectively). The policy memorandum will be the result of a systematic assembly of evidence about a problem, construction of alternative strategies for resolving the problem, selection of criteria for evaluating the alternatives, and recommendation of policy responses. Since policy analysis is most often undertaken as part of a team, students will work in teams to develop a policy analysis plan and then expand that plan into a policy memorandum on a selected topic. They will work together to structure a policy problem, do the research, consider the options and remedies, propose a solution, and write and present the results of their analysis. The policy analysis plan is 2-3 pages, single spaced, followed by a full memorandum that should be approximately 10-12 pages, double-spaced 12–point font, excluding references, endnotes, charts, and figures.

Final Exam (35% of course grade). The final will consist of brief answers to questions based on course lectures and the required reading.

Policy Analysis Plan, the Memorandum and Exam Schedule:

SCHEDULE OF

GRADED ACTIVITY
(Teams TBD)

Policy Analysis Plan (Draft)   April 9 – by 6:00pm
Policy Analysis Plan(Final)   April 16 – by 6:00pm
Team Presentations   April 30
Policy Memorandum   April 30

Final Exam   **Monday, May 7, 6:00pm-**
                                                              8:00pm

The Policy Analysis Plan and the Memorandum:

Define the Policy Problem—The Policy Analysis Plan
Unresolved public problems are often posed as dilemmas or conflict situations.   Often they appear as court cases, legislation, ballot initiatives or executive orders. They also appear as questions and puzzles that emerge in the aftermath of public policy actions.   The underlying policy issue—or the policy problem that the solutions seek to address—is frequently obscured or confused by the debates and discussion about what should be done about the policy problem.

Teams **will prepare a 2-3 page, single-spaced** policy plan that addresses the following questions:

☐ What is the problem? Why is this a problem?   For whom is it a problem?

☐ What are some of the legal, historical, political or economic contours of the problem?

☐ What is the evidence surrounding the nature of the policy problem?

☐ What is the market or government failure – or other consideration – that gives rise to the problem?

☐ What are the apparent policy alternatives and the appropriate criteria for a policy choice?

Please get your topic approved by the instructor before you do a lot of work on the Policy Analysis Plan

Prepare a Set of Detailed Recommendations—The Policy Memorandum (10-12 double-spaced pages).   The policy analysis memorandum offers the opportunity for students to explore in detail the applications of the tools and concepts of problem structuring and policy recommendation. The most important lesson learned in the production of the policy memorandum is that policy recommendations must be closely linked to the initial structuring of the problem and must flow logically from the ranking of alternatives. In short, policy memoranda provide a coherent basis for making recommendations that are offered. Feedback from the instructor should provide the basis for expanding the policy analysis plan into the memorandum including recommendations.   For the purposes of this course, the Policy Memorandum should:

State the policy problem succinctly and provide the historical, legal, economic and/or political context of the problem.

 Describe and compare the policy alternatives.

 Provide simple projections of the possible outcomes and the trade-offs among the alternatives.

 State and defend a policy recommendation, providing the criteria for ranking and choosing among alternatives.

Your team's policy memorandum will be evaluated based on: (a) the specification of the policy problem in a clear and concise manner; (b) the recognition of the choices and constraints faced by decision makers, individuals or groups (or other relevant actors) affected by the policy; and (c) the presentation of the analysis in such a way that the problem statement is logically linked to the potential solutions and how the proposed recommendation would mitigate or solve the policy problem.

The policy memorandum should be written in the style of "Safe Patient Handling Policy" on the Moodle site; in particular, you should address the piece to a certain person or group, number all pages, and put notes and sources together at the end of the paper under "References."

Team Presentations.   Each team will give an 8 minute PowerPoint presentation of its memorandum, with 6 minutes for questions and discussion.   One student should be selected from each team to do the presentation; but the others should be prepared to address questions from the audience.

Incompletes and Late submission.   Humphrey School policy stipulates that incompletes only be given under rare circumstances and only after the instructor and student have mutually agreed upon a timetable (contract) for completion of all coursework. Only in the most compelling instances will the instructor consider a request for an incomplete. Students will lose 10 percent of a grade for late submission, unless prior arrangements are made with the instructor.

Accommodations:
Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with physical, sensory, cognitive, systemic, learning, and psychiatric disabilities.

Plagiarism:
All work included in the plan and memorandum that draws on previous research or writing must be properly documented. Any violation of this rule will be treated as plagiarism.

Required Text:

Eugene Bardach and Eric M. Patashnik (2016), *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*, 5rd ed., Sage/ CQ Press.

Optional Texts and Additional Materials:

William N. Dunn (2008), *Public Policy Analysis: An Introduction*, 4th ed., Pearson Prentice Hall.
David L. Weimer and Aidan R. Vining, *Policy Analysis*, 5th edition, Longman.
Lee S. Friedman (2002), *The Microeconomics of Public Policy Analysis*, McGraw Hill.
Michael Kraft and Scott Furlong (2015), *Public Policy: Politics, Analysis and Alternatives*, 5th ed., Congressional Quarterly Press.
Michael C. Munger (2000), *Analyzing Policy: Choices, Conflicts, and Practices*, W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.
Robert S. Pindyck and Daniel Rubinfeld (2012), *Microeconomics,* 8th edition, Pearson Prentice Hall.
Charles Wheelan (2011), *Introduction to Public Policy*, W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Useful Videos and Tutorials:

University of Minnesota Libraries. Workshops, Tutorials, and Guides. Finding and Evaluating Information (https://www.lib.umn.edu/instruction/tutorials;
- Creating an Effective Search Strategy (Interactive Tutorial)
- Identifying and Using a Library Database (Interactive Tutorial)
- Evaluating Sources (Interactive Tutorial)
- Exploring a Scholarly Research Article (Interactive Tutorial)
- Evidence-Based Practice (Interactive Tutorial)
- Getting the most out of Google Scholar (video: 5 min)

Note: The instructor is grateful to Kaye Husbands Fealing and Samuel L. Myers, Jr. whose wisdom and experience are reflected in this syllabus. Thanks as well to Greg Lindsay for very helpful advice and for the use of some of his course materials

Course Outline

Week 1 (March 19) - Introduction and Doing Policy Analysis: "the Whole Eight Yards"

Agenda:

1. What is policy analysis and what do policy analysts do?
2. Team formation
3. The Bardach approach

REQUIRED READING:

☐ Bardach and Patashnik, Preface and Part I, Appendix A
☐ View Video: Defining the Policy Problem

OPTIONAL READINGS:
☐ Friedman, Chapter 1, Introduction to Microeconomic Policy Analysis
☐ Kraft and Furlong, Chapter 4, Policy Analysis: An Introduction
☐ Kraft and Furlong, Chapter 5, Public Policy Problems and Policy Alternatives

Week 2 (March 26) - The Setting and Challenges of Policy Analysis: The Roles of Government in a Market Economy

Agenda:

1. The Social Framework
2. Markets and their Limitations
3. Categories of Government Policy

REQUIRED READING:

☐ Wheelan, pp. 253-278
☐ Bardach and Patashnik, Appendix B

OPTIONAL READINGS:

☐ Pindyck and Rubinfeld, Chapters 17, 18
☐ Friedman, Chapter 16, The Problem of Public Goods
☐ Friedman, Chapter 17, Externalities and Policies to Internalize Them

Week 3 (April 2) - The Setting and Challenges of Policy Analysis: Government Limitations and Failure

Agenda:

1. Problems of Democratic Choice
2. Problems of Representative Government
3. Problems of Bureaucratic Supply
4. Problems of Decentralization

REQUIRED READING:
☐ Weimer and Vining, Chapter 8
☐ Bardach and Patashnik, Appendix C

OPTIONAL READINGS:
☐ Dunn, Chapter 1, 3, The Process of Policy Analysis; Structuring Policy Problems
☐ Friedman, Chapter 11, Public and Non-Profit Organizations
☐ Friedman, Chapter 15, Allocative Difficulties in Markets and Governments

Week 4 (April 9) - Doing Policy Analysis: Assembling Evidence, and Learning from Others, Recommending, and Communicating

Agenda: Moving beyond Problem Formulation to Doing the Job

REQUIRED READING:
☐ Bardach and Patashnik, pp. 83-139; 173-183.
☐ View Videos: Policy Analysis and Science; Qualitative and Mixed Methods

OPTIONAL READINGS:
☐ Kraft and Furlong, Chapter 5, pages 139-143.
☐ Dunn, Chapter 5 ―Recommending Preferred Policies
☐ Dunn, Chapter 9 ―Communicating Policy Analysis

Week 5 (April 16) - Thinking about the Winners and Losers from Policy Choices: The General Problem

Agenda: All government activity redistributes whether that is its principal objective or not. How can we think about this issue?

REQUIRED READING:

☐ Weimer and Vining, Chapter 7

OPTIONAL READINGS:
☐ Wheelan, Chapter 5.

Week 6 (April 23) - Costs (and Payers) and Benefits (and Beneficiaries) over Time

Agenda: The Rudiments of Cost-Benefit and Cost-Effectiveness Analysis

REQUIRED READING:

☐ Munger, Chapters 10 & 11

OPTIONAL READINGS:

☐ Amy Damon and Paul Glewwe, "Should Governments Subsidize Tuition at Public
    Universities?"
☐ Munger, Chapter 9 ―Discounting I: Expected Values, Probability, and Risk

Week 7 (April 30) - Class Presentations

May 7 -- Final Examination (6:00-8:00 PM)