

Foundations of Policy Analysis

Spring 2020 Course Syllabus

Department of Public Policy and Administration
Course # 56:834:501

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Office hours: Monday 3:30pm-5:30pm; and by appointment.
Class meetings: Monday 6:00pm-8:50pm
Location: Armitage Hall 225

COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

What are the social problems that governments should address? What should be done about them? What are the best courses of action? What should government spend its resources on? What should be its priorities? Can we do better with less? If budget cuts are needed, where will they do the least damage? These are the kinds of questions policy analysts are called to answer based on well researched and well-crafted analyses. Good policy analysis means better policy.

Students become familiar with the theoretical foundations and the analytical techniques to examine *policy problems* and design *policy solutions*. The course provides opportunities to put these foundations and techniques into practice by completing a policy memo on a topic of their choice. It also conveys an appreciation for the ethical issues, values, and political context of government policy.

The course proceeds in four parts:

- Part I: Introduction will set the stage by defining public policies, the purpose of policy analysis at various stages of the policy process. Primarily we will spend the first two to three class sessions learning supply and demand. Economics is a critical tool used by the policy analysis profession.
- Part II: Problem Analysis will provide conceptual foundations to identify and understand policy problems, which students will learn to characterize in terms of “market failures” and “government failures”. Problems may require the government to step in because society and markets are unable to address them. Problems may also arise because of the government’s inability to govern adequately. Particular attention will be paid to the social goals that governments pursue when identifying and addressing problems. We will jointly discuss a number of typical policy problems and examine their scope and nature.
- Part III: Solution Analysis is designed to convey, in general terms, the “tools” (also called “instruments” or “generic policies”) the government can draw on to address policy problems and pursue social goals. We will discuss tools ranging from the stimulation of markets to direct government provision. An emphasis will be placed on the development of solutions and on the comparative assessment of different policy solutions.

- Part IV: Conclusion introduces students to common analyses performed by policy analyst, including cost-benefit analysis.

REQUIRED READINGS

One required textbook:

Wheelan, Charles (2011). Introduction to Public Policy. 1st Edition. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company. ISBN 9780393926651

Additional required readings will be assigned and available on Sakai.

ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE

Achievement of course objectives will be measured through the instructor’s evaluation of student participation in class discussion, homework assignments, in-class exam, and a policy memo. I am always willing to discuss your grade on any assignments. Please do not hesitate to see me if you think that my evaluation of your work is unfair or just plain wrong. Specific requirements and evaluation procedures are detailed below:

Class Attendance and Participation:	10%
Homework:	20%
In-class exams (midterm)	35%
Policy Memo	35%
Total:	100%

Below provides more detail on the course requirements:

Class Attendance and Participation – 10%

Your attendance is critical for success in this course. While attendance is not mandatory, it is strongly recommended for three reasons. First, class participation accounts for 10% of your final grade. If you do not attend class, it is impossible to gain class participation points. Second, we have a *large amount* of material to cover in the course, and we will be moving quickly. Missing class will put you behind and it will be very difficult to catch up. Lastly, I hold the right to administer two pop quizzes after the midterm. Each pop quiz counts for 10% of your final participation grade. Credit for each completed pop quiz will be assigned on a check (10%) or check-minus scale (5%).

It is expected that all students will read the assigned readings prior to class and be prepared to be called on to answer questions and engage in class discussions. The assigned readings are indicated in the course schedule.

Homework – 20%

Students will complete four homework assignments designed to test the comprehension of material covered in class. All homework assignments are due on Sundays before 11:55pm. See Appendix B for all due dates. All assignments must be sent on Sakai via the “Assignments” tab. Credit will

be assigned on a check or check-minus scale. Please see the course outline for due dates. **Late assignments will not be accepted.**

Mid-term exam – 35%

This will be an in-class, close book exam. Students will be advised of the nature of the exam in advance of the examination. Please see the course outline for exam dates. **Make-up exams will not be given.**

Policy Memo– 35%

Students will also be responsible for preparing a policy memo on a public policy (or problem) of their choice. The policy memo is expected to be between eight to ten double-spaced pages. The page length does not include references or tables/figures. The policy memo is worth 35% of the final course grade and will be **due on May 4, 2020**. Details about the memo can be found in Appendix A.

Grade will be assigned as follows: Letter grades will be determined based on the overall course average, rounded to the nearest whole number. Only certain letter grades are available for graduate course work at Rutgers-Camden. The translation of a numeric grade to a letter grade will be done as follows:

A	92-100
B+	87-91
B	80-86
C+	75-79
C	70-74
F	0-69

COURSE FORMAT & POLICIES

Each class will involve a combination of lecture and class discussion. For each class, please bring a copy of that week's study questions, which are designed to assist you in thinking about the key takeaways from the lecture and in preparing for the exams. They can be found on Sakai.

The class time is divided into two halves. First, we will have a lecture/class discussion for approximately an hour. Second, we will take a 10-15 minute break. Lastly, we will have a final lecture/class discussion for approximately an hour.

Students are strongly encouraged to participate in class discussion and to ask questions. Everyone in class brings a unique perspective, and I believe that perspective is a valuable addition to the course. Please come to class prepared and ready to participate.

Use of Electronics

Please remember to put your cellphones on silence mode to avoid any distractions to class lectures. Laptop computers may be used during class sessions for note taking and to calculate problems.

Make-up Work & Exams

I *do not typically* allow students to make-up exams or earn a grade of incomplete. Please attend class on days when exams are administered. If you are unable to do so, you may petition to take a make-up test, but this is granted only in exceptional circumstances. I reserve the right to require documentation before giving a make-up test, and I may also choose to impose a grade penalty. Please let me know as soon as you see a problem developing so that we can consider the best means of addressing it. *I am unlikely to allow a make-up test if you do not get in touch with me prior to the date of the test.*

Communication

I use Sakai and email to communicate with you. Check your Rutgers e-mail for announcements, assignments, and solutions. It is your responsibility to check your Rutgers e-mail. I acknowledge every email that I receive. If you do not get my reply within 24 hours, please resend your email.

Student Writing Assistance

The graduate writing assistant is Gaylene Gordon (gmg143@camden.rutgers.edu), who will be available to help graduate students in enhancing their composition and research-citation skills. Please set-up an appointment for writing assistance. For more information, see <https://graduateschool.camden.rutgers.edu/writing/>.

Students with Disabilities

If you have or believe you have a disability that may impede your learning, please contact the Disability Services Office. I will make every effort to accommodate you in accordance with Rutgers University's policy, procedures and College Coordinator recommendations. Additional information can be found at <http://studentaffairs.camden.rutgers.edu/disability.html>.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Violations of academic integrity include cheating on tests or handing in assignments that do not reflect your own work and/or the work of a study group in which you *actively* participated. *I have a policy of zero tolerance for cheating.* Violations will be referred to the appropriate university authorities.

Principles of academic integrity require that every Rutgers University student:

- properly acknowledge and cite all use of the ideas, results, or words of others.
- properly acknowledge all contributors to a given piece of work.
- make sure that all work submitted as his or her own in a course or other academic activity is produced without the aid of unsanctioned materials or unsanctioned collaboration.

- obtain all data or results by ethical means and report them accurately without suppressing any results inconsistent with his or her interpretation or conclusions.
- treat all other students in an ethical manner, respecting their integrity and right to pursue their educational goals without interference. This requires that a student neither facilitate academic dishonesty by others nor obstruct their academic progress.
- uphold the canons of the ethical or professional code of the profession for which he or she is preparing.

Adherence to these principles is necessary in order to insure that:

- everyone is given proper credit for his or her ideas, words, results, and other scholarly accomplishments.
- all student work is fairly evaluated and no student has an inappropriate advantage over others.
- the academic and ethical development of all students is fostered.
- the reputation of the University for integrity in its teaching, research, and scholarship is maintained and enhanced.

Failure to uphold these principles of academic integrity threatens both the reputation of the University and the value of the degrees awarded to its students. Every member of the University community therefore bears a responsibility for ensuring that the highest standards of academic integrity are upheld.

More information on the Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy can be found at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>

Course Schedule:

The course outline below is designed to guide us through the semester to meet objectives of the class.

Week	Date	Topic	Assignment/Readings
1	Jan 20	No Class – MLK Day	
2	Jan 27	Intro to Class	Wheelan – Chapter 1 and 2 (Skim)
3	Feb 3	Tools of Policy Analysis: Supply and Demand	Wheelan – Chapter 3 (3.1 and 3.2 only) Wheelan – Chapter 7 (7.1 and 7.2 only) Mankiw – Chapter 4
4	Feb 10	No Class	
5	Feb 17	Tools of Policy Analysis: Market Equilibrium	Mankiw – Chapter 7
6	Feb 24	Market Failures I	Wheelan – 4.1 and 4.4 only Mankiw – Chapter 10 (pp.203-209) Mankiw – Chapter 11 (pp.225-237)
7	Mar 2	Market Failures II	Wheelan – 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, and 3.6
8	Mar 9	Midterm Exam	
9	Mar 16	No Class – Spring Break	
10	Mar 23	Conducting a Literature Review	
11	Mar 30	Market and Government Solutions I	Wheelan – 3.5, 4.1, 8.1.1-8.1.4
12	Apr 6	Market and Government Solutions II	Sharp et al. (Economics of Education) Miller et al. (Part I) Skim Wheelan - 4.4, 4.5, 8.1.5, 8.2, 8.3
13	Apr 13	Political Process	Miller et al. (Part II) Wheelan – Chapter 6
14	Apr 20	Other Criteria for Evaluating Policy Intervention (Equity, Political, Legal)	Miller et al. (Part III) Wheelan – Chapter 5
15	Apr 27	Cost-benefit analysis	Wheelan – Chapter 12
16	May 4	No Class	Policy Memo Due

Please note: This schedule may be adjusted

Appendix A: Policy Memo Assignment and Guidelines

Purpose

The policy memo assignment provides an opportunity for you to apply course concepts to a real-world public policy issue or topic. Some examples include: vouchers in education; financial sector reform; poverty; carbon tax; No Child Left Behind Act; pay-for-performance for teachers; etc. Please feel free to email me about possible ideas prior to submitting your proposal.

Due Dates

There are two components to the policy memo assignment. First, you will submit a ½ to one-page double-spaced proposal for the policy memo via Sakai on **Sunday, February 23rd** before 11:55pm. It should include a short description of the policy, list of your main research questions, and a list of 5 possible sources. *Failing to turn in a complete proposal on the due date will be penalized one letter grade on the policy memo.*

The policy memo itself should be submitted via Sakai on **Monday, May 4th** before 11:55pm. Late policy memos are deducted a full letter grade each additional day after the due date.

Formatting

The policy memo should be typed, double-spaced, using Times New Roman font. Borders should be approximately 1” and typeface should be no smaller than 10 point and no larger than 12 pt. Student are encouraged to use headings and bullets where appropriate in order to improve the readability of their memo. **Page length should be no more than ten pages, excluding reference page.**

Figures and Tables

Figures and tables are optional. Students should label all figures and tables. Figures include any charts, graphs, or other visual representations of data. Figures and tables should be numbered sequentially according to where they are referenced in the text of the memo. Numbering for figures should be independent of numbering for tables (i.e. there will be both a Figure 1 and Table 1). All figures and tables should appear in the appendix of the memo. *Figures and Tables are optional and should only be used when appropriate.*

References

Students should reference materials in their paper with footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical citation. **Please use APA citation guidelines.**

Organization

The policy memo should include the following components, labeled as individual sections. The total length will likely range from eight to ten pages, not including reference page, figures/tables. If you are substantially above or below this range, let me know so that we can be sure that you are on the right track.

(continued on next page)

1. Executive summary (1-2 paragraphs)

This section provides a quick summary of the policy question, hypotheses, and major findings/policy recommendations. It will likely be a long paragraph of approximately 6-8 sentences. *This should be the last part that you write.*

2. Introduction to the policy problem (approximately 1 ½ to 2 pages)

This section introduces the reader to your policy problem and motivates him or her to continuing reading your memo. This paragraph should answer the “so what?” question. Explain why your policy question is important. *Tell the reader how your memo is organized and which sections will follow.*

3. Literature Review and Analysis (four to six pages)

This section reviews current research on your policy problem. This should expand upon your introduction by explaining to the reader what we know about the policy problem. In addition, you should include a theoretical framework or concepts to help answer your policy question. For example, if you were interested the summer learning loss, you could explain the concept of positive externalities to demonstrate that the use motivation to use government subsidies to promote summer programs for the low socioeconomic status (SES) students.

This section should include at least 12 sources drawn from academic or rigorous practitioner journals. These twelve sources cannot be from course readings. The main goal of this section is answer your policy question via analyzing the findings of previous studies; empirical evidence gathered by yourself; and theoretical frameworks. Be sure to use proper citation format. If you need assistance with research and citation style guides, please refer to the Rutgers Library’s resources such as the reference librarians.

4. Conclusion (approximately 1 ½ to 2 pages)

This section draws conclusions from the analysis. You should make sure to address the following questions briefly:

- a. What are the policy implications?
- b. What are caveats or limitations of your analysis? This should include any limitations in the previous research that you cited in your policy memo.
- c. How can future research improve upon the current research?

Evaluation of Policy Memo

I will use the following rubric to evaluate the policy memo:

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Percent of Grade</i>
<p><u>Executive Summary</u></p> <p>Does the executive summary appropriately encapsulate all of the key findings in the paper?</p> <p>Is the executive summary concise (minimize the number of words, while maximizing the amount of information presented)?</p> <p>Does the student include policy recommendations?</p>	10
<p><u>Introduction</u></p> <p>Does the introduction to the policy problem motivate the reader to keep reading?</p> <p>Does the student concisely present the key information about the particular education policy of interest?</p> <p>Is this section written for an individual that has little experience or knowledge of the particular education policy of interest?</p>	15
<p><u>Literature Review and Analysis</u></p> <p>Did this section include <u>at least 12 sources</u> drawn from academic or rigorous practitioner journals?</p> <p>How relevant are the sources to the policy of interest?</p> <p>How well does the student summarize the sources and critique the previous research?</p> <p>Does the student explain the concepts and theory correctly?</p> <p>How well does the student connect and organize the previous research?</p> <p>How well does the student use the previous literatures, empirical evidence, or theoretical frameworks to answer their policy question?</p>	45
<p><u>Conclusion</u></p> <p>Does the student draw appropriate policy recommendations in the conclusion?</p> <p>Does the student recognize important methodological caveats in the conclusion?</p> <p>Does the student discuss next steps for research in the conclusion?</p>	15
<p><u>Formatting, Grammar, and Writing</u></p> <p>Are figures and tables labeled properly and easy to understand?</p> <p>Are figures and tables formatted in a way that assists the reader in understanding the results?</p> <p>Is the memo formatted in a way that is easy to read?</p> <p>Is the memo free of grammar/spelling/typographical errors?</p> <p>Does the student make use of signposting, transition, and paragraphing?</p> <p>Is the tone of the memo objective?</p> <p><i>Failure to adhere to the directions explained on page 7 under the Formatting header will result in a loss of 10 points automatically.</i></p>	15

Appendix B: Important Dates

Assignment	Due Date
Problem Set #1	Sunday, February 9 th before 11:55pm
Policy Memo Proposal	Sunday, February 23 rd before 11:55pm
Problem Set #2	Sunday, March 1 st before 11:55pm
Midterm Exam	In-class exam on Monday, March 9 th
Problem Set #3	Sunday, April 12 th before 11:55pm
Problem Set #4	Sunday, April 26 th before 11:55pm
Policy Memo	Monday, May 4 th before 11:55pm