Purpose and Scope
The primary purpose of this course is to aid students in the development of tools that will contribute to their efforts to formulate and communicate useful guidance regarding how to respond to problems in educational institutions and systems. The course focuses on the production and use of analysis to understand and/or inform educational decisions and policies. The emphasis is on applied analysis – substantive analysis concerned with the explicit examination of the links between educational knowledge and educational action. It aims to acquaint students with the nature and methods of applied inquiry in education and to help students develop skills for conceptualizing fundamental educational problems, framing problems for analysis, developing tentative (and alternative) recommendations for action, and forecasting the potential consequences of implementing such recommendations.

The course is designed for graduate students in education and related fields who may be interested in one of three types of leadership roles at various levels of educational systems – either as administrators or other leaders within educational organizations, policy analysts, or researchers. This course is intended to complement and round out the other policy, planning, and management courses offered in EAPS, thus its particular emphasis on the fundamental skills of applied critical analysis and communication, rather than administrative functions or the study of the political process in education.

The course will be organized to help students understand and discuss the current literature on analysis for decision-making in educational policy and administration; develop an applied knowledge of methods for analysis for decision-making; analyze an actual educational problem; and to produce and present recommendations based on evidence produced through systematic inquiry. The student should expect to leave the course having developed skills in the areas of:

1. identifying appropriate theories and models to comprehend and explain substantive, administrative and political implications of educational problems;
2. understanding the complementarities between theory and practice in educational inquiry for leadership and policy;
3. understanding the role of analysis in the development of effective solutions to policy and administrative problems;
4. critically assessing analysis reports and judging their relevance to specific policy and administrative problems;
5. conceptualizing and framing educational problems that can be subject to policy or administrative interventions;
6. planning and executing inquiries into educational problems and alternative courses of action;
7. using analytical procedures to forecast the consequences that follow from the pursuit of one course of action over another;
8. composing and assessing effective arguments based on empirical analysis;
9. using effective strategies for presenting the results of analysis in a persuasive, well organized, and concise written form.

Course Description
The course will be conducted as a mixture of lectures and seminar discussions where students and the instructor will examine the pertinent literature and, via these readings, consider the challenges of conducting analysis in current local, state, national and international environments. The course gives students the opportunity to explore the analytical complexities that educational problems pose for decision makers, with the difficulties of finding alternative courses of action to address these problems, and with recognizing the interests of the constituencies who have a stake in the development of sound policy or administrative practice regarding problems identified.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Reading: There will be weekly reading assignments. Students must prepare a written response in the form of a 1-page memorandum, addressing the week’s reading assignment. This must be delivered to the instructor’s departmental mailbox – or sent by E-mail (valverde@uamail.albany.edu) – by the evening of each Friday prior to class. These responses provide students with an opportunity to raise questions, offer interpretations of the readings, and ask for treatment of specific issues or topics in class. They provide the instructor with a weekly mechanism for monitoring student progress and guidance in conducting discussions during the seminar. These memoranda will be distributed in class, and thus the student must ensure that the memorandum is
composed clearly and succinctly, and attends to proper syntax. 20% of the final grade will be based on these memoranda. The assigned books are


A number of articles and textbook chapters will also form part of the reading material for the course. Appendix 3 contains the full list of additional readings. These readings will be available through Electronic Reserve (ERes) at the University Library.

*Two critique assignments:* 20% of the final grade will be based upon the student’s writing of 2 brief critiques (writing assignments 1 and 2 in the syllabus).

*Individual Analysis:* 60% of the final grade will be based upon the student’s preparation of an analysis brief (also variously termed by different authors ‘policy issue paper’, ‘option paper’, ‘briefing paper’ or ‘white paper’) of 25 typed doubled-spaced pages regarding an educational problem of their own choosing. Part of the grade for this analysis will be based upon its oral presentation at the end of the semester. Students will present their work in a 20-minute oral briefing using any audiovisual resources they would like – this is intended to simulate a policy briefing and not an academic paper presentation. These briefings will thus be strictly timed, and should be well practiced in advance. The paper and the presentation of the same will be evaluated in terms of analytical depth, clarity, incisiveness, persuasiveness, and its use of the tools of analysis examined in class. Guidelines for preparation of this analysis are in the Appendix 2 of this syllabus.

*Preparedness and participation:* Regular attendance, preparedness, and contribution to class discussions and activities are necessary (but not sufficient) conditions for a passing grade in this course. Absences, lack of preparation, or failure to contribute will be taken into account in the final course grade.

*Office Hours:*
Regular office hours are Mondays from 2:30 pm to 4:00 pm, and Tuesdays from 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm – students are requested to honor these as much as possible. Outside of these hours, appointments are available by prior arrangement.

University statement regarding accommodations for students with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning and psychiatric disabilities. If you believe that you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please notify the Director of Student Disabled Services (Campus Center 137, 442-5490). That office will provide the course instructor with verification of your disability, and will recommend appropriate accommodations.
### Topics and Assignments (See list of Readings for abbreviations)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Week and Topic</th>
<th>Assigned Readings</th>
<th>Discussion questions and assignment notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>1: (August 29) Introduction</td>
<td>(None)</td>
<td>(None)</td>
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| 2: (September 12) Role of analysis in decision making | - Lindblom – entire  
- Bruner and others [1] | 1. What role can analysis play in educational leadership and policy?  
2. What is the significance of ‘impaired’ inquiry?  
3. What can social science contribute to educational leadership and policy? |
| 3: (September 19) Types of analysis in educational policy and leadership | - Majone – pg. 1-115  
2. How can Majone’s critique of decisionism be applied to educational policy and leadership settings?  
3. What are important constraints in educational leadership and policy making?  
4. Think of the issues raised in readings [2] and [3] – compare and contrast their central theses with Majone’s critique of decisionism and his ideas about analysis as argument. |
| 4: (September 26) Argumentation and usable knowledge | - Selections from “The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis” (Dryzek [4] and Dunn [5 and 5a]);  
Weston: Entire Book | 1. What is argumentation?  
2. What characteristics must knowledge have to serve in the guidance of decision-making?  
3. What rules are of importance in argumentation?  
4. What are the purposes of argumentation in guiding educational decisions? |
| 5: (October 10) | Argumentation – continued | * Weston: entire book. Also, Writing Assignment 1(5 pages): Students must select an editorial on a current issue in educational policy or administration from a good newspaper or magazine (for example: Education Week, The Chronicle of Higher Education, The Economist, Atlantic Monthly, The New York Times, The Washington Post, Le Monde, The New Republic, National Review). They then must prepare a detailed analysis of the arguments put forward in the piece by identifying their structural schema (see Dunn’s “Policy Reforms as Arguments”) specifying the data or evidence, warrants, backing, qualifiers and claims of the argument put forward in the piece, and any rebuttals that the publication accounts for. Also, an analysis of fallacies and errors in reasoning (see Weston) should be provided. After delineating the argumentative schema, the paper must proceed to criticize it, evaluating each one of its elements, and the entire schema as such. Each student must bring copies of schema to be distributed to everyone in class, and be prepared to present their critique in a 5-10-minute oral summary. |
| 6: (October 17) Before problem solving: the importance of identifying educational problems | - Weiss [6]  
- Mitroff and Featheringham [7]  
- Gaynor – 39-133 | 1. What is problem definition?  
2. How is problem definition important in guiding analysis for decision-making?  
3. How do problem definitions highlight some aspects of educational problem situations and obscure others?  
4. What is the significance of the Error of the Third Kind (EIII)? |
| 7: (October 24) Methods for substantive and formal representation of educational problems: Modeling | - Kaplan 258-293 [8]  
- Gaynor – 137-265 | 1. How does modeling systematize analytical thinking?  
2. What are the characteristics of good models in policy and administrative analysis?  
3. How are models related to problem definitions? |
| 8: (October 31) Modeling problems - continued | * No reading assignment for this class. Writing Assignment 2: Students must identify a report from a policy or administrative organization that is intended to influence decision-making in educational systems or organizations, containing no less than 25 pages, and that includes the collection and analysis of data. It is imperative that the report advocates a policy position. There are a number of places where you might secure such types of analysis reports, including libraries, state departments of education, non-governmental policy centers, etc. Some suggested sources are listed in the appendix – however, regardless of the source of the report, it must satisfy the criteria outlined above, and must be authorized by the instructor in order to be used to fulfill the requirements of this assignment. The assignment is to characterize – and critique – in no more than 5 pages, the manner in which the report identifies and represents the administrative or policy problem to be solved. Students must come to class prepared to give a 10 minutes presentation of their critique. |

| 9: (November 07) Identifying alternative courses of action | - Weimer [9] | 1. What is the importance of the generation of alternatives in analysis for decision-making?  
2. What were alternative courses of action identified in the cases read for weeks 7? Which are alternatives that were not considered? |

- Majone – pg. 116-183 | 1. What are the relative advantages of quantitative / qualitative inquiry in analysis?  
2. How are problem definitions and models of problem definitions related to methods of inquiry? |

2. How is political or administrative feasibility related to choosing among alternatives?  
3. How is alternative selection related to implementation? Why is this important? |
| 12: (November 28) Making decisions and recommending courses of action | - Huberman [12]  
- MacRae [13] | 1. How can an analyst guide administrative or political decision-making?  
2. What are the presentation techniques that are appropriate to analysis conducted to aid policy and leadership in education?  
3. Presentations of Assignment 3 begin |
| 13: (December 05) | - Continuation of student presentations of Assignment 3  
- Written Assignment 3 paper due. |

The above schedule and procedures in this course are subject to change at the instructor’s discretion in the event of extenuating circumstances.
Appendix 1: Potential sources for written Assignment 2

Reports to be critiqued must be intended to influence decision making in educational systems or organizations, contain no less than 25 pages, include the collection and analysis of data, and they must advocate a policy position. There are a number of places where you might secure such types of analysis reports, including libraries, state departments of education, non-governmental policy centers, etc. Some suggested sources are listed below – however, regardless of where you secure the report, it must satisfy the criteria outlined above, and must be authorized by the instructor in order to be used to fulfill the requirements of this assignment.

- Center for the Social Organization of Schools, Johns Hopkins University [http://scov.csos.jhu.edu]
- The Civil Rights Project, Harvard University [http://www.law.harvard.edu/groups/civilrights]
- The Learning First Alliance [http://www.learningfirst.org/]
- The Urban Institute [http://www.urban.org/]
- National Commission on the High School Senior Year [http://www.commissiononthesenioryear.org/]
- Arts Education Partnership [http://aep-arts.org/]
- International Bureau of Education [http://www.ibe.unesco.org/]
- The Council of Chief State School Officers [http://www.ccsso.org/]
- Rand Education (The Rand Corporation) [http://www.rand.org/centers/education/]
- Southern Regional Education Board [http://www.sreb.org/]
- Education Commission of the States [http://www.ecs.org/]
- Public Education Network [http://www.PublicEducation.org/]
- Consortium on Chicago School Research [http://www.consortium-chicago.org/]
- The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education [http://www.highereducation.org/]
- The Division on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education of the National Research Council [http://www4.nas.edu/cp.nsf/Projects+_by+_Unit?OpenView&Start=1&Count=30&Expand=1#1]
- European Institute for Education and Social Policy [http://www.eiesp.org]
Appendix 2: Guidelines for the Analysis Brief (Assignment 3)

Purposes
The Analysis Brief you prepare must endeavor to use argumentation and evidence to answer the following questions:

1. What is the nature of the policy problem?
2. What is its scope and severity?
3. What goals and objectives should be pursued to solve the problem?
4. How can success in solving the problem be gauged?
5. What alternatives should be considered?
6. Which alternative or alternatives seem best suited to which goals or objectives?

Thus, the paper should explore the chosen educational problem in sufficient depth to give the reader a good idea of its dimensions and the possible scope of the solution, so that it might be possible for the decision maker to conclude to do nothing further or to commission a definitive study looking toward some action recommendation. Although the brief may contain a policy recommendation (linked of course to evidence and argument), this is not a requirement. You should regard this as the preparatory phase of an in-depth analysis of a policy problem that you (or another) may undertake at a later time. The paper must be no longer than 25 double-spaced pages in length (not counting title page, executive summary, list of references or any appendices) and follow the Chicago Manual of Style (as interpreted by Turabian).

Elements
Your brief must contain the following four elements, each of which will be assessed in terms of the analytical depth achieved, the clarity and quality of argumentation, the use of evidence, and its incisiveness and persuasiveness:

1) Executive summary -- a synopsis of the major elements of the analysis brief that states:
   a) The purpose of the brief
   b) The problem it addresses
   c) Most important findings or conclusions
   d) Approach to analysis or methodology
   e) Conclusions or recommendations

2) Identification of the problem
a) Description of the problem situation

b) Specification of the problem
   i) A model of its key features
   ii) Description of previous / current efforts to solve the problem
   iii) Assessment of scope and severity

c) Identification of major stakeholders
   i) Actors and agencies that are most significantly affected by the problem and its possible solutions

d) Goals and objectives

3) Identification of alternatives
   a) Description of alternatives
   b) Initial assessment of potential consequences of alternatives
   c) Specification of criteria for comparing alternatives in terms of probable costs and consequences
   d) Consideration of limitations and possible unintended consequences

4) Recommendation
   a) Alternative(s) that most merit consideration with a summation of how they are likely to solve the administrative or policy problem.
Appendix 3: Other required readings: articles and chapters on electronic reserve.


