RPAD 540: PUBLIC POLICY ANALYSIS  
Fall 2013 • Mondays 5:45-8:45 pm • Husted 304

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Office: Milne 300E
Contact: 518.442.5243; emartin@albany.edu
The best way to contact me is via email. To ensure that I see your email, write “PAD 540” in the subject line, and sign your full name.
Office Hours: Weds. 10:00-11:30 am (Milne 300E), or by appointment

PREREQUISITES

RPAD 503 (Principles of Public Economics), RPAD 504 (Data, Models, and Decisions I), and RPAD 505 (Data, Models, and Decisions II); or equivalent courses that cover introductory microeconomics, introductory statistics, and basic quantitative analysis; or by permission.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course aims to strengthen analytic and professional writing skills in order to enhance your understanding of the policy process and increase your ability to identify problems, enumerate solutions, evaluate alternative policies, and communicate results.

Knowledge of Policy Analysis: Students will learn how policy issues get on the agenda, rationales underlying policy interventions, different types of policy interventions, real-world political and bureaucratic influences on decision-making and implementation, and various disciplines and analytic tools used in policy analysis.

Skills of Policy Analysis: Assignments and in-class discussions will help students improve the effectiveness of their professional writing, including conveying complex ideas to general policy audiences; identify how to “measure” policy problems, including the strengths and limitations of different approaches; critically evaluate other policy analyses; evaluate the strengths and limitations of various technical tools; and develop a research design plan, which includes defining a problem succinctly, choosing appropriate analytic methods, and identifying data.

Thinking Like A Policy Analyst: Students will be encouraged to approach problems with the mindset of a policy analyst, which includes anticipating how actors may define problems differently; appreciating how problem definition influences data analysis; taking a holistic approach to analysis, such as considering political obstacles and actors’ divergent goals and perspectives; foreseeing challenges with technical tools; and critically evaluating numbers and claims reported in the media and political debates.
REQUIRED TEXTS

The following texts are required for this course. Bring all relevant readings to class!
- Miscellaneous articles and chapters, posted to Blackboard.

SYLLABUS CONTRACT

I will be prepared for class, return graded assignments in a timely fashion (typically in the following week), provide written comments to improve the quality of your work, and make myself available for office hours. You are responsible for meeting all course requirements set forth in this document. I will notify you immediately of any syllabus modifications.

CLASSROOM PROCEDURE

This is not a lecture-dominated class in which students listen passively. Students should engage me and each other in active discussion and debate about the material.

LECTURE SLIDES

PowerPoint slides will be posted to Blackboard 24 hours before class. Print them before class so that you can write notes on them. (See the electronics ban below.)

READING ASSIGNMENTS

All readings should be completed prior to class. Expect that I will call on you in class to discuss them. Focus on major concepts (not minutia) and how they are applied to public policy analysis. Bring all relevant readings to class. Some readings may not be covered in detail during lectures. However, you are expected to integrate them in your written assignments. Weekly response papers (described below) are designed to help you focus on main points and prepare you for class discussions.
### SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

Note that there is no class on Sept. 2 (Labor Day) and Oct. 14 (Columbus Day), following the university’s academic calendar.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>What's Due (Individual)</th>
<th>What's Due (Group)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Introduction to the course and the discipline of policy analysis</td>
<td>In-class survey (complete during class)</td>
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<td>Aug. 26</td>
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<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Problem analysis</td>
<td>Agenda setting; rationales for public policy intervention</td>
<td>Response paper 1</td>
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<td>Sept. 9</td>
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<td>Week 3</td>
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<td>Defining and measuring problems I; policy writing tips</td>
<td>Response paper 2</td>
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<td>Sept. 16</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
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<td>Defining and measuring problems II; identifying alternatives and policy goals</td>
<td>Response paper 3</td>
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<td>Sept. 23</td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Solution analysis</td>
<td>Introduction to technical tools of policy analysis; conducting surveys and polls I</td>
<td>Short policy paper 1; response paper 4</td>
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<td>Sept. 30</td>
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<td>Week 6</td>
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<td>Conducting surveys and polls II; sampling design</td>
<td>Response paper 5</td>
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<td>Oct. 7</td>
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<td>Week 7</td>
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<td>Descriptive and inferential statistics; reading statistics in professional journals</td>
<td>Short policy paper 2; response paper 6</td>
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<td>Oct. 21</td>
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<td>Week 8</td>
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<td>Finish statistics lecture; Presentation of case for group project; overview of proposal writing</td>
<td>Response paper 7</td>
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<td>Oct. 28</td>
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<td>Week 9</td>
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<td>Forecasting techniques</td>
<td>Response paper 8</td>
<td>Group membership form; letter of intent; draft of specific aims</td>
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<td>Nov. 4</td>
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<td>Week 10</td>
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<td>Qualitative data analysis</td>
<td>Response paper 9</td>
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<td>Nov. 11</td>
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<td>Week 11</td>
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<td>Simulation modeling</td>
<td>Short policy paper 3; response paper 10</td>
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<td>Nov. 18</td>
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<td>Week 12</td>
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<td>Cost benefit and cost effectiveness analyses</td>
<td>Response paper 11</td>
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<td>Nov. 25</td>
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<td>Week 13</td>
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<td>Political feasibility analysis</td>
<td>Response paper 12</td>
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<td>Dec. 2</td>
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<td>Week 14</td>
<td>Wrap-up</td>
<td>Becoming a policy analyst; presentation and critique of group project proposals</td>
<td>Peer evaluation sheets; response paper 13</td>
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<td>Dec. 9</td>
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Dec. 6, 5:00 pm: Group project proposal due

Final draft of written group project proposal

PowerPoint presentation, including any class handouts
ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Grading
- 10% Participation
- 25% Weekly response papers
- 35% Short policy papers
- 30% Group analysis plan project

Your grade will be determined by a weighted average of the points earned, using the weights described above. There is no extra credit. A grade of “A” reflects mastery of the material, with a strong and successful effort to think creatively about and go beyond the assigned material. A grade of “B” reflects a good, comprehensive awareness of the assigned material. A grade of “C” reflects knowledge of much of the material, but relatively weak preparation of a substantial share of it, and/or deficient preparation of written work. A grade of less than “C” reflects major gaps in knowledge or persistent lack of performance in the various aspects of the course. The conversion from percentages to letter grades is below:

A  93-100%  A- 90-92%  B+ 87-89%  B 83-86%  B- 80-82%
C+ 77-79%  C 73-76%  C- 70-72%  D 60-69%  E <60%

Participation
Participation is based on consistent, high-quality contributions to class discussions. You are graded on whether you are a civil and active contributor. You are not expected to always provide the “right” answer, but should be able to discuss and synthesize the course material and readings. Be prepared and generally enthusiastic about engaging in discussions and activities. Respond to other students’ points and challenge your classmates by offering suggestions that may be counter to the majority opinion. I value quality over content – students who provide occasional insightful comments will receive higher participation scores than vocal students whose comments have little substance.

The response papers are designed to facilitate class discussion, so taking the time to carefully prepare your response papers will make it easy to contribute to discussions.

Attendance is required. If you attend class 80% of the time, your maximum participation score is 80%. Being consistently late will reduce your participation score. However, if you attend all class sessions but have minimal participation, do not expect a high grade.

Weekly response papers
In lieu of in-class exams and quizzes, there will be a weekly response paper (one to two pages, double spaced), except for the first week. The purpose of the response papers is to help you understand the key points of the reading, prepare for class, and think critically about how the concepts apply to substantive policy areas that interest you. There will be a total of 13 assignments, although only the highest 11 scores will be counted. They will be graded on a “check plus, check, check minus” basis. Additional instructions are in the separate handout with guidelines for weekly response papers. Specific topics will be posted to Blackboard at the end of each class. Response papers
are due at the start of the class – late papers will not be accepted. Be prepared to discuss your assignment in class.

Short policy papers
You will write three short policy papers (three to four pages, double-spaced) that correspond to the course material. Each paper will be weighted equally. Specific instructions and grading rubrics will be distributed later.

Group project proposal
Your team will draft a project proposal (10-12 pages, double-spaced) to analyze a specific policy issue, which will be presented in class. The proposal will include the following components: executive summary, background, specific aims, a detailed description of the analytic methods you will use to address the research questions, limitations, and a technical appendix. You will present your proposal to the rest of the class during the last session. You will receive a group grade (based on the written proposal and the presentation) and an individual grade (based on your teammates’ evaluation of your contribution and your participation in the Q&A session of the class presentations). Specific instructions and grading rubrics will be distributed later.

OTHER CLASS POLICIES

Attendance
Attendance is factored into the participation grade. If you will be absent, you are still responsible for submitting your assignments. Email them to me before the start of class. An absence will not be considered “excused” without supporting written documentation.

Saving trees
If you are environmentally conscious, you may print assignments on the back of used paper (such as rough drafts or printed articles you no longer need). If you made a minor mistake, you may neatly correct it with pencil or pen rather than reprinting. However, do not print double-sided, as that makes it harder for me to grade and photocopy.

Late assignments
All late assignments (short policy papers and the group project) will be docked 10 percentage points, or one full letter grade, for every 24 hours they are late (e.g. B+ will be reduced to C+). As described above, late weekly response papers will not be accepted except in the case of truly extenuating circumstances. Papers emailed to me after class are late. If you are late to class, your paper will be considered late. If you are absent, you are responsible for ensuring that your assignments are submitted prior to the start of class (before 5:45 pm). Computer crashes, printer failures, rush-hour traffic, work conflicts, heavy workloads in other courses, sleep deprivation, and planned travel are not acceptable excuses for late assignments. Plan ahead!

Excused absences
I will not grant extensions. However, I do appreciate that you may experience truly extenuating circumstances which would prevent attending class or preparing an assignment by the deadline. In these cases, speak with me as soon as possible, provide written documentation, and we will make alternate arrangements. Out of fairness to other students, I cannot adjust deadlines without supporting documentation.
Tardiness
Class starts at 5:45 pm, not at 5:50 pm or 6:00 pm. I like to start on time so that we can end on time. I understand that occasionally it is difficult to arrive on time due to work. However, if you are consistently late, it will be reflected in your participation score. Speak with me at the beginning of the semester if you anticipate that you will be late to class due to professional obligations.

Electronics ban
Please turn off all cell phones, iPads, Android tablets, email, laptops, and anything else that beeps, jingles, rings, types, plays music, or starts with an “i-.” The only exception is if you bring electronic copies of the reading materials on Blackboard. You can print a hard copy of the PowerPoint slides before class.

Creature comforts
You are welcome to bring your dinner to class, as long as it is not odiferous or noisy. We will take a 10-15 minute stretch break halfway through class.

Citations and academic honesty
I take academic honesty very seriously. Cheating in any form will not be tolerated. You are required to be familiar with the university’s academic honesty policies; ignorance is not an excuse. In all cases of cheating, a Violation of Academic Integrity Report will be submitted to the Dean of Graduate Studies to be placed in your university file, with copies provided to you, the department head, and the Dean. Additional penalties may include some combination of the following: revision and re-submission of the assignment, reduction of the grade or failure of the assignment, reduction of the course grade or failure of the course, filing of a case with the Office of Conflict Resolution and Civic Responsibility, or expulsion.

The standards are at the website below:
http://www.albany.edu/graduatebulletin/requirements_degree.htm#standards_integrity

Avoid plagiarism by properly acknowledging material and ideas taken from other sources. The University of Albany Library offers a useful tutorial on plagiarism and how to avoid it: http://library.albany.edu/usered/plagiarism/index.html

If you cite a source (such as a class reading, lecture note, or outside sources), you must document it. Restate ideas in your own words or else use quotation marks around the relevant passages. In all instances, insert a footnote or endnote with the reference. I have no preference for how you format your references (e.g. APA style versus Chicago style), but select one standard style and be consistent. If you cite something from the PowerPoint slides, include the date and slide number. If you cite something from class discussion, include the date. See me in office hours for a tutorial on how to add references in Word.

Grading and appeals for grade change
If you are dissatisfied with your grade or think I made an error, you may make a written appeal describing why you think your grade should be changed. This appeal should be typed and be delivered to me (in person or by email) within 48 hours of receiving your
assignment. Your grade may be lowered, increased, or remain the same. I will not
consider a grade appeal that is delivered orally or after this deadline; you must submit
your typed appeal within 48 hours.

Disability statement
Please see me if you have a disability documented by the Office of Disabled Student
Services (in the Department of Student Life) to request accommodations.

Course feedback
I genuinely want to make this the best educational experience it can be for you and
future students. I am receptive to and grateful for all suggestions about the course. If
you are not comfortable providing me feedback in person, then you can put anonymous
suggestions in my faculty mailbox on the first floor of Milne. At the start of the semester
we will appoint a student ombudsman who you can also contact confidentially with any
course concerns.

READINGS
All readings should be completed prior to class, and should be used to prepare your
weekly response papers. Bring all relevant readings to class.

Session 1. Introduction to the course and the discipline of policy analysis
3) Gupta. Chapter 2, The Analysts: Their Role and Their Tools, pp. 27-45.

Session 2. Agenda setting; rationales for public policy intervention
Agenda setting:
1) Gupta. Chapter 4, The Policy Process, pp. 75-100.
   Mifflin Company. Section of Chapter 3, Policy Formation: Problems, Agendas,
   and Formulation, pp. 87-95.
   Public Interest 28: 38-50.

Rationales for public policy intervention:
   71-112.

There is a lot of assigned reading from the textbooks. **SKIM** these chapters to review
market failures. You should have covered these topics in an introductory
microeconomics class such as PAD 503. We will not do any textbook problems and
you do not need to worry about technical details. However, you should re-familiarize
yourself with these concepts and be prepared to discuss and apply them to new
cases.
Session 3. Defining and measuring problems

Session 4: Defining and measuring problems; identifying alternatives and policy goals
Defining and measuring problems:
Identifying alternatives and policy goals:
2) Gupta. Section of Chapter 1, Government’s Goals and Their Impact on Public Policy, pp. 15-23.
3) Gupta. Section of Chapter 5, Setting Goals, pp. 104-109.

Session 5: Introduction to technical tools of policy analysis; conducting surveys and polls
1) Gupta. Section of Chapter 8, Primary Data: Conducting a Survey, pp. 179-190.

Session 6. Conducting surveys and polls; sampling design

**Session 7. Descriptive and inferential statistics; reading statistics in professional journals**
1) Gupta. Chapter 9, Making Sense of Numbers, pp. 203-224.
2) Hogan, C. How to Read a Scientific Paper (3-part series).

**Session 8. Finish statistics in professional journals; presentation of case for group project**

*Additional examples of reading statistics in professional journals:*

*Introduction to group project:*

**Session 9. Forecasting techniques**

**Session 10. Qualitative data analysis**


**Session 11. Simulation modeling**


**Session 12. Cost benefit and cost effectiveness analysis**


**Session 13. Political feasibility analysis**


Session 14. Becoming a policy analyst; presentation and critique of group project proposals

2) Weimer and Vining. Chapter 18, Doing Well and Doing Good, pp. 448-449.
3) Gupta. Chapter 15, So You Want To Be an Analyst? Some Practical Suggestions, pp. 373-388.