

University of Oregon
Department of Planning, Public Policy and Management

PPPM 636 – Public Policy Analysis – Winter 2019
(CRN 25826)

Professor Laura Leete
Office: 156 Hendricks Hall
Email: leete@uoregon.edu
Phone: 541.346.0834

Class Meetings: Tues/Thurs 2-3:20 p.m.
Class Location: 248 Gerlinger
Office Hours: Mon 1:15-3:15 p.m.

This course is aimed at increasing your understanding of public policy interventions in the U.S. and of the methods that public sector professionals use to analyze the feasibility and desirability of such policies. We will examine the rationale for policy interventions themselves, developing systematic methods of thinking about policy design, development and assessment. In this course you will develop the skills required to define and critically analyze policy issues and problems, articulate relevant decision-making criteria for policy analysis, and evaluate alternative policy solutions. Throughout this course we will discuss current U.S. policy debates and controversies, particularly drawing on recent examples from environmental, health, social and education policy. This course is a core course in the Masters of Public Administration curriculum. **PPPM 628 – ‘Public Sector Economy’ – is a prerequisite for this course.**

Public policy analysis may be considered to be one component of the policy making process, beginning with the identification and definition of a problem in the public realm, the generation of policy options or choices for addressing the problem, the selection of a particular policy option through political institutions, and the development of a plan for implementation and evaluation of that policy. An important goal of policy analysis is to help policy makers arrive at informed policy choices with an understanding of what the expected outcomes of those policy choices will be. In a world of complex political and socioeconomic processes, predicting the effectiveness of a particular policy while identifying any potential unintended consequences is difficult. Policy analysis aims to bring systematic, evidenced-based reasoning to that task.

Course Prerequisites

This is a required course for students in the graduate masters of public administration (MPA) program. Other well-prepared graduate students are permitted to enroll on a space available basis with instructor permission. Economics of the Public Sector (PPPM 628) is a prerequisite for Public Policy Analysis (PPPM 636) and should ideally be taken in the fall quarter immediately prior to enrolling in PPPM 636. PPPM 636 serves as preparation for and is a partial requirement for enrolling in the MPA 48-Hour Policy Analysis Project (PPPM 637). Ideally, students should complete PPPM 636 during winter quarter followed by enrolling in PPPM 637 during the subsequent fall quarter. No student will be admitted to PPPM 637 without successfully completing PPPM 636.

Readings

All required readings are drawn from either the required textbooks (listed below) or from book chapters or published articles made available on the class Canvas website. The Bardach/Patashnik book will be available at the UO Duckstore. Most of you already own the Gruber, and the Krugman and Wells textbooks. All of these books can also be purchased from online retailers.

- Bardach, Eugene and Eric Patashnik, *A Practical Guide to Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*, 5th edition, Sage/CQ Press, 2015. (ISBN-13: 978-1483359465)
- Gruber, Jonathan. *Public Finance and Public Policy*, 4th Edition, Worth Publishing, New York, NY, 2012. ISBN: 978-1429278454.

- Krugman, Paul and Robin Wells, *Microeconomics*, 3rd Edition, Worth Publishers, New York, NY, 2012. ISBN: 978-1429283427.
- Other readings or materials of interest may be brought in for discussion or added to the reading list over the course of the semester.

Course Website

The course website is located on the University of Oregon's Canvas system (<https://canvas.uoregon.edu/>). The class syllabus, announcements and other materials will be posted on the Canvas site. Please check this site frequently for updates. In addition, make sure that you receive email sent to your @uoregon.edu email address, as I will use this email address to communicate with you.

Class Format and Participation

This class will be a combination of lecture and discussion/seminar format. Students will be expected to come to class having completed the assigned reading for that class and be fully prepared to participate in discussion and learn from one another.

Assignments and Grading

Final grades will be constructed on the basis of work completed according to the percentages specified below.

- (1) **Exams:** There will be an in-class Midterm Exam (35 percent of grade) during **Week 5: Thursday, February 7th** and a 2-hour Final Exam (35 percent of grade) during the regularly-scheduled final exam period on **Monday, March 18th (12:30-2:30 p.m.)**. Exams will focus on the more technical aspects of the applied economics of policy issues, cost-benefit analysis and policy analysis.
 - Adjustment to exam dates or assignment due dates. If you or a member of your immediate family have a serious and acute medical problem or other emergency, I may be able to adjust exam dates or assignment due dates to accommodate your situation. In such cases, I may ask for documentation. Failure to take the final exam at the scheduled time for an unavoidable reason (e.g. illness, or family emergency) will result in a grade of 'Incomplete'. Missing the final exam for any other reason will result in a grade of 'F'. University policy prohibits early final exams. Travel plans do not qualify as a serious and acute medical condition.
- (2) **Policy Analysis Assignment:** A group policy analysis assignment will be completed in two parts. Group and project assignments will be made early in the term.
 - Part #1 (10 percent of grade). This will involve researching and writing about the basic policy background and economic analysis of an assigned policy topic (similar to your group project assignment in PPPM 628). This assignment will be due during **Week 6: Thursday, February 14th**.
 - Part #2 (20 percent of grade). In this assignment, you will incorporate the information from Part #1 and complete a full policy analysis on your assigned topic. The assignment will be very similar in structure to the 48-Hour Policy Project and will require a PowerPoint presentation to the class and a written memo. Class presentations will take place during the last week of class (**March 12th and 14th**) and memos and final PowerPoint files will be **due at the end Week 10: Friday, March 15th**.

Grading

The midterm and final exams scores will be standardized so the class mean is 80 and the standard deviation is 10. The standardized midterm and final exams scores will each count toward 35% of your course grade respectively. The calculation of standardized exam scores from raw scores is a four step procedure:

1. Calculate the deviation from the class mean by subtracting the class mean from each individual "raw" score.
2. Divide the result by the standard deviation of all individual raw scores in the class.
3. Multiply the result by 10.
4. Add 80 to obtain the standardized exam score.

The letter grade for the course will be based on the weighted average of the standardized exam scores and the policy memo scores and will be assigned as follows:

| | |
|-----------------|----|
| ≥ 95% | A |
| ≥ 90% and < 95% | A- |
| ≥ 85% and < 90% | B+ |
| ≥ 80% and < 85% | B |
| ≥ 75% and < 80% | B- |
| ≥ 70% and < 75% | C+ |
| ≥ 65% and < 70% | C |
| ≥ 60% and < 65% | C- |
| ≥ 50% and < 60% | D |
| ≥ 40% and < 50% | F |
| < 40% | |

I may adjust grades upward from this distribution, depending on the distribution of scores in a particular class. In the past when I have taught this class, grades have been approximately distributed as follows: A's 35%, B's 50%, and C's 15%. I provide this information to give you some indication of my historical grading practices. This distribution may or not apply to this course.

Appeals of graded assignments. If you feel the need to appeal a graded assignment, you can do so by sending me an email with a description of the portion of the assignment you are appealing, the grade you received and most importantly the reason you think you deserve more credit. You may send this email following a 24-hour waiting period. This will give you time to consider your answer and to write a careful appeal indicating why you might deserve more credit. Do not send an email appeal until at least 24 hours have passed following the return of the graded assignment. I'll review your submission and reply with my decision within a one week. After my review, I may decide not to change your grade or I might adjust grade either upward or downward. For privacy reasons, I can only discuss your graded assignment in my office or via email. Please do not try to initiate a discussion about your assignment before or after class.

Academic Misconduct

The University Student Conduct Code (available at conduct.uoregon.edu) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. By way of example, students should not give or receive (or attempt to give or receive) unauthorized help on assignments or examinations without express permission from the instructor. Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the students' obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before committing or attempting to commit the act. Additional information about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available at www.libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students. **In this course, the penalty for cheating on an examination or plagiarizing and assignment ranges from a score of zero on the exam or assignment to an assigned grade of 'F' in the class, depending on the severity of the offense. All acts of academic misconduct will be reported to UO administration.**

Accessibility

Students who have a documented accessibility/disability issue and anticipate needing accommodations in this course should make arrangements to see the instructor as soon as possible. They should also request that their Access Advisor or the Accessible Education Center verify their request.

Professional Practice

This course is a core course in the MPA professional degree program. As such, students are expected to behave in a professional manner at all times and to treat each other and the instructor with the professional courtesy and respect expected in a workplace. Similarly, all communications relating to this course and all work turned in for this course should reflect professional standards with attention to presentation, formatting, spelling and so on.

The Tools of Policy Analysis versus Policy Advocacy – Classroom Discussion

In this course, we will discuss a variety of public policy issues. Such issues are controversial and policy advocates frequently have a deeply-held belief in the virtue of their position. Often these beliefs are deeply rooted in a passionate approach to public policy. It is important to recognize and respect these values. Indeed, it is this type of commitment that draws many people to public service. However, it is equally important to understand that our approach in this course will be to take an evidence-based approach to the analysis of public policy. How individuals feel about the virtue of particular policies is not part of that framework. Additionally, citing anecdotal experiences is not helpful in developing an understanding of how public policy will affect the typical person. We will apply analytical tools to assess various public policy issues from the perspective of economic efficiency and distributional outcomes. In doing so, we will focus firstly on the theoretical and empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of public policy. I welcome discussion in this class that is respectful and focused on the analysis of public policy. Students may naturally find themselves thinking about and evaluating public policy issues based on what seems right or virtuous to them. However, I will try my best to keep the classroom discussion focused on the analytical framework and available evidence-base.

Letters of Reference

I receive many requests from students for letters of reference for scholarships, internships, graduate school admission or employment. I'm happy to consider writing such letters for students who are strong academic performers in one of my classes. If you receive a grade of "A", feel free to ask me for a letter. If you receive a grade of "B", perhaps another instructor would be better choice. If that's not possible, I will consider your request.

To request a letter write me an email, indicating which class(es) you took from me and your course grade(s). In your email, include the following materials: an unofficial transcript, your statement of purpose for the particular application you are making (if applicable), your resume, and a link to the opportunity you are applying for (if available). Your email should also include the date when the letter is required, and plan on giving me at least one month (more if possible) to complete the letter. I will let you know within two days if I am able to write a letter for you.

Course Schedule and Readings

Week #1

Tuesday: Introduction to Policy Analysis

- Kraft and Furlong, *Public Policy: Politics, Analysis and Alternatives* (5th edition, 2015), Chapter 4 'Policy Analysis: An Introduction' and Chapter 5 'Public Problems and Policy Alternatives'.
- Gruber, Chapter 1 'Why Study Public Finance?'.
- Bardach, Appendix B 'Things Governments Do'.

Thursday: Public Goods

- Krugman and Wells, Chapter 17 'Public Goods and Common Resources'.
- Gruber, Chapter 7 'Public Goods'.

Week #2

Tuesday: Public Goods (cont'd from above)

Thursday: Tax Incidence, Equity and Efficiency

- Gruber, Chapter 18 'Taxation in the U.S. and Around the World'.
- Gruber, Chapter 19 'Equity Implications of Taxation'.

Week #3

Tuesday: Tax Incidence, Equity and Efficiency (cont'd from above)

Thursday: Asymmetric Information

- Weimer, D and A. Vining, Chapter 5 'Rationales for Public Policy: Market Failures' (pp. 104-112).

Week #4

Tuesday and Thursday: Risk, Uncertainty, and Insurance

- Weimer, D and A. Vining, Chapter 6 'Rationales for Public Policy: Other Limitations to the Competitive Framework' (pp. 119-124).
- Krugman and Wells, Chapter 20 'Uncertainty, Risk and Private Information'.
- Camerer, C. and H. Kunreuther, 'Decision Processes for Low Probability Events: Policy Implications', *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, Vol. 8, No. 4, Fall 1989.
- Gruber, Chapter 12 'Social Insurance: The New Function of Government'.

Week #5

Tuesday: Health Insurance Policy

- Krugman and Wells, Chapter 18, 'The Economics of the Welfare State', pp. 513-end.
- Gruber, Chapter 15 'Health Insurance I' and Chapter 16 'Health Insurance II'.
- Kaiser Family Foundation, *Focus on Health Reform: Summary of the Affordable Care Act*, (April 25, 2013, Publication #8061-02) (<http://kff.org/health-reform/fact-sheet/summary-of-the-affordable-care-act/>).
- Glied, S., Ma, S. and A. Borja, *Effect of the Affordable Care Act on Health Care Access*, The Commonwealth Fund, May 2017 (<https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-to-briefs/2017/may/effect-to-affordable-to-care-to-act-to-health-to-care-to-access>).

Thursday: Midterm Exam (February 7th)

Week #6

Political Economy and Government Failure

- Gruber, Chapter 9 'Political Economy'.
 - Weimer, D and A. Vining, *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice*, Chapter 8 'Limits to Public Intervention: Government Failure'.
- ❖ **Policy Analysis Part #1 Due: Thursday, February 14th.**

Week #7

Tuesday: Doing Policy Analysis

- Kraft and Furlong, Chapter 6 'Assessing Policy Alternatives'.
- Bardach and Patashnik, 'Introduction' and 'Parts I, II and III'.
- Gruber, Chapter 3 'Empirical Tools of Public Finance'.

Thursday: Workshop Day [Note: class attendance is required.]

Each group will meet individually with me during a class time meeting to review progress on their policy analysis.

Week #8

Cost Benefit Analysis

- Gruber, Chapter 8 'Cost-Benefit Analysis'.
- Rosen, H. and T. Gayer, *Public Finance*, 8th edition, Chapter 8 'Cost-Benefit Analysis'.
- Belfield, Clive R. et al. "The High/Scope Perry Preschool Program: Cost-Benefit Analysis Using Data from the Age-40 Follow Up", *Journal of Human Resources*, Vol. 41, No. 1, Winter 2006.
- Varian, Hal, "Recalculating the Costs of Global Climate Change", *The New York Times*, December 14, 2006.

Week #9

Equity and Poverty

- Weimer, D. and A. Vining, Chapter 7 'Rationales for Public Policy: Distributional and Other Goals'.
- Krugman and Wells, Chapter 18, 'The Economics of the Welfare State', pp. 499-513.
- Gruber, Chapter 17 'Income Distribution and Welfare Programs'.
- Peck, D. (2011). 'Can the Middle Class be Saved?', *The Atlantic*, 308(2), 60-78.
- Wilkinson, R. and K. Pickett (2011). *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger*, Bloomsbury Press, Forward, and Chapters 1 and 2.

Week #10

Tuesday: Equity and Poverty (cont'd from above)

Thursday: Group Project Presentations [Note: class attendance is required.]

- ❖ **Policy Analysis Part #2 due on Friday, March 15th.**
- ❖ **FINAL EXAM – 12:30-2:30 p.m. Monday, March 18th.**