



Robert M. La Follette
School of Public Affairs
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Public Affairs (PA) 873
Introduction to Policy Analysis
La Follette School of Public Affairs
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Spring 2024

Instructor: Christine Piette Durrance, PhD
Associate Professor of Public Affairs

Email: durrance@wisc.edu

Time: Mondays 1:20-3:15 PM

Room: Social Science, Room #6116

Office Location: Observatory Hill Office Building #202

Office Hours: Mondays 3:30-4:30 PM or by appointment

Office Hours Location: LFS House #202

Instructional mode: classroom (face-to-face)

Course Credit Information

Credits: 3

The course carries three credits. The credit standard for this course is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course's learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit), including class meetings of 115 minutes per week and, as projects are essential vehicles for learning the craft of policy analysis, engagement related to projects will occur during the Monday afternoon office hour, which is set aside for individual and group consultations on projects.

Course Description

This course introduces the study of public policy and the professional practice of policy analysis. We consider several fundamental questions:

- What are the rationales for collective interference in private affairs?
- What are the limitations to collective action?
- What are the generic instruments of public policy?
- How can we measure social costs and benefits?

We also seek to improve our basic skills in analytical thinking, information gathering, and writing as we attempt to answer these questions.

The course contributes to several Student Learning Goals set out for MPA students. Most fundamentally, it requires demonstration of the following two goals:

- "Students will communicate in clear written language: a real-world problem, relevant scholarly studies and practical applications, a policy-analytic method to investigate the problem, and client-oriented advice to mitigate the problem" (Goal III A).

- “Students will demonstrate the ability to maintain fidelity to objective social science-based research methods” (Goal IV D).

Required Readings

- David L. Weimer and Aidan R. Vining, *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice*, 6th ed. (New York, Routledge, 2017).
- All other required readings for the class will be posted on the PA873 Canvas page and assigned in the course schedule by day and topic.

Course Requirements

- *Complete all reading assignments.* Come to class with questions or comments on the reading material. Class sessions will not summarize the reading but rather will integrate, contextualize, and explore the implications of the readings.
- *Actively participate in class discussion.* This means actively engaging in discussions of the required readings. To participate, you need to be in class, so please let me know in advance if you cannot attend. Please come to class prepared to discuss assigned readings and class assignments.
- *Complete graded assignments on time.*

Evaluation

Your course grade is based on the following graded activities:

Class Component	% of Course Grade
Attendance/Participation	5%
Four Memo Assignments	20%
Pop Briefing	15%
Midterm Examination	20%
Individual Policy Analysis Project	40%
TOTAL	100%

Attendance and Participation (5%)

My expectation is that you attend class regularly. If you anticipate having to miss class for a compelling (i.e., excused) reason, please contact me *in advance* of missing class. Class participation is not accomplished by attendance alone, but rather by coming to class prepared (i.e., having completed the required readings and assignments) and actively participating (i.e., sharing your thoughts and listening to the thoughts of others). Be prepared to participate in class discussions and ask questions. You should ask questions during lectures, as this will get you actively involved, generate discussion, and indicate which ideas and information you find interesting, important, or confusing. I also encourage you to attend my office hours.

Four Memorandum Assignments (20%)

The memorandum exercises provide an opportunity to practice analytical writing: the first exercise provides a general introduction; the remaining three relate to your individual policy analysis project.

Pop Briefing (15%)

The pop-briefing simulates the sort of oral report you are likely to be called upon to make while you are working on a major project within an organization. You will have a total of ten minutes to introduce the issue you are addressing in your policy analysis project, pose an analytical question you are trying to address or on which you would like feedback from the class, and lead discussion of it. Work hard to keep the general introduction of your issue to about one minute. Use up to four minutes to set out your analytical approach and suggest a question/topic for discussion. You should allow at least five minutes for class discussion. The discussion may be extended at my discretion. I will randomly select 3-4 *presenters per class* beginning on *Monday, February 12*.

Midterm Exam (20%)

You will complete a midterm exam on the basic rationales for, and limits to, public policy. The midterm exam will be held on *Monday, March 11th* during class.

Policy Analysis Project (40%)

Each student will complete a semester-long project on a randomly-assigned topic. This assignment gives you an opportunity to apply the concepts and craft skills introduced in the course. I will base my assessment primarily on your first policy analysis project submission – which should be complete in all areas (90%), which is due no later than the end of the day *Friday, April 19th*, and secondarily on your revisions (10%), which are due *Monday, May 6th* with an accompanying memorandum explaining any revisions you made to the first draft. My goal is to provide you with feedback from me by April 29th. Note that your project report may be assigned as a future reading to a subsequent class.

Class Policies**Communication with Instructor**

In addition to office hours, I will typically be available before or after class lectures. This would be a good time to discuss material or ask questions about class logistics. E-mail communication is usually better reserved for timely or highly person-specific matters. Please include "PA 873" in the subject line of your message. If you have not heard back from me within two business days, please follow up as I may have missed your message.

Academic Integrity

By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UW-Madison's community of scholars in which everyone's academic work and behavior are held to the highest academic integrity standards. Academic misconduct compromises the integrity of the university. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these acts are examples of academic misconduct, which can result in disciplinary action. This includes but is not limited to failure on the assignment/course, disciplinary probation, or suspension. Substantial or repeated cases of misconduct will be forwarded to the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards for additional review. For more information, refer to <https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/misconduct/academic-integrity/>

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

McBurney Disability Resource Center syllabus statement: “The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty [me] of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty [I], will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.” <http://mcburney.wisc.edu/facstaffother/faculty/syllabus.php>.

Diversity & Inclusion

Institutional statement on diversity: “Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.” <https://diversity.wisc.edu/>.

Late Assignments

It is important to complete the assignments in order to understand the materials. Assignments should be uploaded to Canvas by the start of the class period and/or submitted to me in paper form (pay attention to the instructions for each assignment). Late assignments will typically not be accepted.* Under the very rare circumstances that a late assignment is permitted, grades on those assignments will be penalized at 10 percentage points for every 24 hours the assignment is late.

Make-Up Policies

Ordinarily, no make-up exams will be offered.* If you have an excused absence, exams can be made up, under my discretion and only in extremely compelling circumstances. The exam dates and all other important deadlines have been scheduled in advance. It is your responsibility to modify your schedule to attend these exams.

**Life is complicated and sometimes exceptions to this rule are necessary, especially in these current challenging times. If an extension is requested on an assignment, it is important that you make such a request before an assignment is due rather than after a missed deadline.*

Copyright and Faculty Lecture Content

Students do not have the right to post or sell materials from a class without permission of the

original instructor who created the material. For example, students do not have the right to upload content that faculty have created to online learning platforms, such as Course Hero.

Students' Rules, Rights, and Responsibilities

<https://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/#rulesrightsandresponsibilitiestext>

Privacy of Student Records & the Use of Audio Recorded Lectures Statement

View [more information about FERPA](#).

Lecture materials and recordings for this course are protected intellectual property at UW-Madison. Students in this course may use the materials and recordings for their personal use related to participation in this class. Students may also take notes solely for their personal use. If a lecture is not already recorded, you are not authorized to record my lectures without my permission unless you are considered by the university to be a qualified student with a disability requiring accommodation. [Regent Policy Document 4-1] Students may not copy or have lecture materials and recordings outside of class, including posting on internet sites or selling to commercial entities. Students are also prohibited from providing or selling their personal notes to anyone else or being paid for taking notes by any person or commercial firm without the instructor's express written permission. Unauthorized use of these copyrighted lecture materials and recordings constitutes copyright infringement and may be addressed under the university's policies, UWS Chapters 14 and 17, governing student academic and non-academic misconduct.



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Tentative Course Schedule (subject to change).

Any non-textbook readings are available on Canvas.

1	Monday, Jan. 29	Introduction to the Course Course Syllabus, Project Assignments (Random Assignment), Brief Overview of Policy Analysis, Guidelines for Productive and Respectful Discussion
2	Monday, Feb. 5	What Does a Policy Analysis Report Look Like? Readings: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Prior Policy Analysis Papers (read <u>four</u> examples) for reading and discussion on Canvas)2. Weimer & Vining, 13. Musso, J., R. Biller, R. Myrtle (2000). "Tradecraft: Professional writing as problem solving." <i>Journal of Policy Analysis & Management</i> 19(4): 635-646.
		Assignment #1: See guidelines for assignment on Canvas. Due Feb 5 th (& please come to class prepared to discuss four prior policy papers)
3	Monday, Feb. 12	Policy Analysis: Overview; Problem Definition. We consider two important questions that we will revisit throughout the course. What roles does policy analysis play in democratic societies? What roles should it play? How do we define and frame public problems? Readings: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Weimer & Vining, 2 & 3; start reading 4.
		Note: Pop Briefings (random student selection) weekly to begin 2/12
4	Monday, Feb. 19	Market Failure as a Rationale for Public Policy: Welfare economics specifies the assumptions for the Pareto efficiency of market allocations. Certain violations of these assumptions underlie the common market failures (public goods, externalities, natural monopolies, and information asymmetries), which provide important rationales for collective interference with individual choices. Our goal is to understand market failures, and other limitations of the competitive framework, for purposes of framing and modeling policy problems.

		Readings: 1. Weimer & Vining, 4, 5, & 6
5	Monday, Feb. 26	<p>Government Failure as a Limitation and a Rationale for Public Policy: Just as markets fail in systematic ways, so too does collective action. Such generic government failures interfere with the effective correction of market failures and produce public policies that themselves are policy problems.</p> <p>Readings: 1. Weimer & Vining, 7, 8, & 9</p>
		<u>Assignment #2:</u> See guidelines for assignment on Canvas. Due Mar 4 th .
6	Monday, Mar. 4	<p>Structuring of a Policy Analysis: Define a Problem, Set Criteria, Specify Policy Alternatives, Predict Outcomes; Identify Tradeoffs, and Communicate Recommendations: An overview of the steps in the rationalist mode of policy analysis. We consider how to frame and model policy problems, select appropriate goals and criteria, specify policy alternatives, predict and value consequences, identify tradeoffs among alternatives, and effectively communicate recommendations.</p> <p>Readings: 1. Weimer & Vining, 14, 15, & 16</p>
7	Monday, Mar. 11	Midterm Exam
8	Monday, Mar. 18	<p>Important Note: Today's class will be held in the Discovery Building in the Orchard View Room (3280) for Admitted Student Visit Day for the MPA/MIPA program.</p> <p>Policy Design: A discussion of how to design policies. We will consider generic policies as starting points for design, as well as borrowing and adapting designs used in other contexts.</p> <p>Readings: 1. Weimer & Vining, 10</p>
		<u>Assignment #3:</u> See guidelines for assignment on Canvas. Due April 1.
--	Monday, Mar. 25	<i>No Class – UW Spring Break</i>

9	Monday, Apr. 1	Using Criteria Alternative Matrices
		<u>Assignment</u> : Submit your draft criteria alternatives matrix (CAM). Due April 1.
10	Monday, Apr. 8	<p>Thinking Strategically: Policy Adoption and Implementation: A realistic assessment of policy alternatives almost always requires consideration of the feasibility of their adoption and implementation. How can we make predictions about feasibility? How can we alter policy alternatives to improve their feasibility?</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Weimer & Vining, 11 & 12 <p>Recommended Readings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Breedlove, B (2001). "The Continuing Education of a Policy Salesman." <i>Journal of Policy Analysis & Management</i> 21(1): 131-136. 3. Leman, CK & RH Nelson (1981). "Ten Commandments for Policy Economists." <i>Journal of Policy Analysis & Management</i> 1(1): 97-117. 4. Robert, C & R Zeckhauser. "The methodology of normative policy analysis." <i>Journal of Policy Analysis and Management</i> 30(3): 613-643. 5. Verdier, JM (1984). "Advising congressional decision-makers: Guidelines for economists." <i>Journal of Policy Analysis and Management</i> 3(3): 421-438.
11	Monday, Apr. 15	<p>Cost-Benefit Analysis</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Weimer & Vining, 17 <p>Recommended Readings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Moore, Mark A., Anthony E. Boardman, Aidan R. Vining, David L. Weimer, and David H. Greenberg (2004). "'Just give me a number!' Practical values for the social discount rate." <i>Journal of Policy Analysis and Management</i> 23(4): 789-812.
12	Monday, Apr. 22	Class Cancelled Today – Extra <u>office hours</u> for projects Tuesday April 16th from 12PM-3PM.
		<u>Assignment</u> : Submission Policy Paper Due - First Submission, no later than April 19th
13	Monday, Apr. 29	Last Class of Spring Semester: Project Wrap Up; Peer Review Discussion
		<u>Assignment #4</u> : See guidelines for assignment on Canvas. Due April 29th
		<u>Assignment</u> : Revised Policy Paper Due – Final Submission + Memo of Revisions, Due May 6th

