University of Wisconsin-Madison, La Follette School of Public Affairs
PA 974: Evidence-Based Policymaking, Fall 2017

Meeting time and location:
Thursday, 2:30-4:25 pm; Room 483 Van Hise

Instructor:
Hilary Shager, PhD
E-mail: hshager@lafollette.wisc.edu (best way to contact me)
Office phone: (608) 263-2409
Office location: La Follette (Observatory Hill Office Building), Room 103
Office hours: by appointment

Course Description
This is an experiential learning course that explores the following questions and facilitates the building of skills to answer them:

- How do policymakers use research and "evidence" in their jobs?
- How can researchers make their work useful to policymakers?
- How can legislative support staff and other stakeholders use research and evidence to help shape policy?

The course will also support two outreach programs recently relocated to the La Follette School:

- The **Wisconsin Family Impact Seminar** (http://wisfamilyimpact.org/) is an award-winning program that encourages evidence-based policymaking by providing opportunities for state legislators to learn from top researchers. Seminars focus on identified legislative interests and support the following program goals: building greater respect for and use of research in policy decisions; encouraging policymakers to examine policies and programs through the lens of family impacts; and providing neutral, nonpartisan opportunities for legislators to engage in open dialogue for fostering relationships and finding common ground.
- **Committee Connect**, which grew out of the work of the Seminars, strives to insert research earlier in the policy-making process, when ideas are being debated and bills are being developed. Committee Connect staff meet with committee chairs and ranking minority members to identify questions of interest and rapidly respond with UW-Madison experts familiar with research relevant to their request. These experts are briefed on how to respond to legislative requests using an accessible, confidential, and nonpartisan approach to facilitate productive meetings between the two parties.

The course will involve students in both programs, and, more broadly, will cover topics including:

- What does "evidence-based" mean? What are different kinds of evidence, and how are they useful? How does one judge the rigor of research evidence?
- What is the difference between an education-based approach to working with policymakers and an advocacy-based approach?

- What are good strategies for communicating research to policymakers (including written and oral presentations, data visualization)?
- What are examples of successful evidence-based policymaking efforts?
- What are the limits of using research in policymaking?

The course also addresses the following La Follette School learning goals:

- Students will demonstrate understanding of major current and past policy debates, research findings, and analytical methodologies.
- Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills. They will retrieve and examine the policy literature and evaluate evidence for and against hypotheses, identify knowledge gaps, strengths and weaknesses in existing literature, synthesize knowledge, and develop conclusions.
- Students will read, comprehend, and effectively summarize policy research and policy-relevant academic research.
- Students will effectively summarize data for a general (non-academic) or policy audience.
- Students will communicate in clear written language: a real-world policy problem, relevant scholarly studies and practical applications, a policy-analytic method to investigate the problem, and client-oriented advice to mitigate the problem.
- Students will communicate above substance highly concisely and in language understandable to a non-specialist, as well as orally.

Texts/Materials
Readings will be available online or will be made available on the Canvas course site or directly from me. Required readings should be completed *before* we meet each week.

Course Assignments and Grading:
I encourage you to use this course and the course assignments to deepen your expertise in a policy area of interest and to complement your other course work. All assignments are designed to hone analysis and communication skills, and to provide experience that will be useful on the job market. Additional details and grading criteria will be provided prior to each due date.

Course grades will be based on the following:

- Class participation (general participation + some structured activities): 10%
- Group case study (~3 per group): 20%
- Family Impact Seminar and Committee Connect deliverables: 20%
- Individual final project portfolio (multiple elements): 50%

The maximum score in the course is 100 points:
100-93 = A 87-83 = B 77-70 = C <60 = F
92-88 = AB 82-78 = BC 69-60 = D

Class participation (10%) is an essential component of the course and is critical to your learning and that of your peers. You will be expected to read assigned materials prior to our class meetings and come prepared to discuss them. Participation in structured, in-class activities such

as case studies, role plays, debates, and conversations with guest speakers will also be considered. Instructions and expectations for these activities will be provided in class. Regular class attendance is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for class participation.

John Bryson offers four "hallmarks of good participation" that I recommend to you: 1) risk-taking (i.e., presenting an opposing view or a different interpretation of readings/information); 2) listening (i.e., trying to understand what others are saying and why they are saying it); 3) bringing in your own work-related and other experiences when relevant to the discussions; and 4) monitoring your own participation in terms of both "airtime" and quality.

Case Study (20%, groups of 3-ish). In groups of three (structured by Hilary based on backgrounds/interests) you will present to the class a case study in which evidence was used effectively to make a policy change. Hilary will provide some introductory materials and resources, and then your presentation must include:

- A one-page (single spaced) write up that summarizes the situation
- An annotated bibliography on the topic with at least three citations
- At least one assigned reading for the class to help provide context (write up, bibliography, reading provided to the class via email by noon Tues. before presentation)
- One discussion activity that engages the class in learning about the case and discussing course themes (could be discussion questions, role play, debate—be creative); you will have approximately 20 minutes for your activity.

*Family Impact Seminar and Committee Connect deliverables (*20%, groups and deadlines TBD*).* You will work in small groups to complete research and deliverables for this year's Wisconsin Family Impact Seminar (to be held in late January or early February) and/or Committee Connect programs. Deliverables may include background research on the year's topic for seminar speakers and policymakers, issue briefs, summaries of speakers' research, feedback on presentations, interviews with participants, or evaluation development and analysis. High quality writing may be published.

Final Project (50%, individual*).* You will choose a policy topic/question for which research could be useful to a policymaker. (Note that you should start with a topic/question/problem/desired outcome, NOT a policy alternative or answer to a problem.) Using the education (vs. advocacy) model, you will create a portfolio of materials that can be used to effectively present policy research and policy alternatives to an audience of policymakers. Elements will be due throughout the semester; you can revise one of the earlier elements for a better grade. Elements include:

- "Setting the table" memo (10%)
- Press release (10%)
- Research summary (20%)
- A few minutes with a legislator role play (10%)
- Power Point presentation to policy audience, including research summary, example of data visualization, and policy options (30%)
- Issue brief with policy alternatives (20%)

Late work is generally not accepted, except under extenuating circumstances, and will be docked accordingly.

Disabilities
People with disabilities will be fully included in this course. Please inform me if you need any accommodations regarding the curriculum, instruction, or assessments of this course to enable you to participate fully. Confidentiality of the shared information will be strictly maintained. Certain accommodations may require the assistance of the UW's McBurney Disability Resource Center: http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/.

Academic Integrity
I expect full adherence to the UW's Academic Integrity policies, and any academic misconduct will be dealt with accordingly: https://www.students.wisc.edu/doso/academic-integrity/.

Course Communication
The best way to contact me is via email. I will make every effort to return emails from students within two business days. Please do not email shortly before a class, presentation, or assignment deadline with the expectation that I will be able to respond immediately to your concern. I am happy to meet with or speak by phone to students outside of class as needed. Please email me to make an appointment. You are also welcome to stop by my La Follette office (room 103). I will use the class list serve (pubaffr974-3-f17@lists.wisc.edu) to communicate additional course information as needed.

Course Schedule
Please note that the following outline and listed readings will be adjusted and updated be to accommodate new materials, class needs, student interests and experience, and available guest speakers. I will also weave in articles and videos reflecting current events and issues related to program evaluation. Because this is a fairly new course on a dynamic topic, there may be requests for interim feedback, which may require further adjustment. Changes will be communicated in class and/or by e-mail in advance, and an updated syllabus will be posted on the Canvas course site.

Week 1: September 7, "What is 'evidence-based policymaking' and why are we here?"

- In-class case study
- What is "evidence-based policymaking" and why this course?
- Course overview, including discussion of assignments

Required Readings

- "Exploring the Disconnect between Research and Policy," Ch. 1 from *Evidence-Based Policymaking,* Karen Bogenschneider & Thomas J. Corbett, p. 1-24, (2010).
- In-class Handout: "Evidence Based, Evidence Informed, Promising Practice and Emerging Program and Practices," Ohio Children's Trust Fund, *https://jfs.ohio.gov/OCTF/Evidence_Based_Evidence_Informed_Promising_Practice_and_Emer.pdf*

DUE: PA 974 Background Information Sheet (end of class)

Week 2: September 14, "Efforts to increase the use of evidence in policymaking and associated challenges"

- Efforts to increase the use of evidence in policymaking
- Can evidence be wrong? What are the limits of evidence-based approaches?

Required Readings:

- Tseng, V. (2012). The uses of research in policy and practice. *Social Policy Report, 26*(2), 1-16.
- "Evidence-based Policymaking: A Guide for Effective Government," The Pew Charitable Trusts & MacArthur Foundation, (2014). http://www.pewtrusts.org/~/media/assets/2014/11/evidencebasedpolicymakingaguideforeffectivegovernment.pdf?la=en
- Haskins, Ron and Greg Margolis. 2015. "The Obama Strategy for Attacking Social Problems," Ch. 1 & Ch. 8 from *Show Me the Evidence: Obama's Fight for Rigor and Results in Social Policy*, p. 1-30 and p. 213-239.
- Gordon, R., & Haskins, R. "Trump Team Doesn't Understand Evidence-Based Policies Regarding Social Problems." *The Hill*, July 26, 2017.
- Poke around here: https://cep.gov/ (Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking)
- Klingele, C. (2016). "The Promises and Perils of Evidence-Based Corrections," *Notre Dame Law Review*, 91:2.
- "Math is racist: How data is driving inequality," CNNMoney (New York) First published September 6, 2016: 12:15 PM ET

Recommended reading:

- Manski, Charles. 2013. "Policy Analysis with Incredible Certitude," Ch. 1 in *Public Policy in an Uncertain World*: *Analysis and Decisions*, p. 11-46.

DUE: Topics finalized for individual final project; case studies assigned; hand out case study assignment & "setting the table" memo assignment

Week 3: September 21, "What kind of evidence can policymakers use?"

- Barriers to using evidence in policymaking
- What kind of information is useful for policymakers?
- Communicating about evidence with policymakers: the education vs. advocacy approach
- The Family Impact Seminar model

Required Readings:

- Pielke Jr, R. A. (2007). The honest broker: making sense of science in policy and politics, Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1-3 (pp. 1-38).
- Excerpts from Davies, Nutley, & Smith (2000). What Works? Evidence-Based Policy and Practice in Public Services. The University of Chicago Press.
- Excerpts from *Evidence-Based Policymaking*, Karen Bogenschneider & Thomas J. Corbett, (2010):
    - Ch. 2: "Do Policymakers Want Evidence? Insights from Research-Minded Policymakers" (p. 25-54)

  - Ch. 5: "Why Research Is Underutilized in Policymaking" (p. 99-128)
  - Ch. 10: "Approaching Policymakers: Moving Beyond "What" to "How" (p. 227-252)
  - Ch. 11: "Generating Evidence on Disseminating Evidence to Policymakers" (p. 253-290)
- Poke around here: http://wisfamilyimpact.org/. Listen to a presentation and skim through written materials from a seminar of interest to you.

Recommended Readings:

- (Skim--focus on main conclusions) Langer, Tripney, & Gough. (2016). *The Science of Using Science: Researching the Use of Research Evidence in Decision-Making*, EPPI Centre.
- Maciolek, Susan. 2015. *The Use of Research Evidence: Social Services Portfolio*. A William T. Grant Foundation White Paper.
- Bogenschneider, K., O. M. Little, K. Johnson, K. 2013. "Policymakers' Use of Social Science Research: Looking Within and Across Policy Actors." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 75: 263-275.
- Bogenschneider, K., Little, O., Ooms, T., Benning, S., Cadigan, K., & T. Corbett. (2012). The Family Impact Lens: A Family-Focused, Evidence-Informed Approach to Policy and Practice. *Family Relations*, 61: 514-531.

DUE: You will be assigned work for the Family Impact Seminar (info scavenger hunt)

Week 4: September 28, "Sifting and winnowing through research"

- When is research rigorous? (RCTs, Quasi-experimental, qualitative)
- When is research "usable" in new situations?
- Sources of research and information: Academia, Legislative Service Agencies, Policy Research Organizations, Membership Organizations, Lobbyists, Think Tanks

Required Readings:

- Breckon, J. (Alliance for Useful Evidence). Using Research Evidence: A Practice Guide (Don't freak out—pdf has both the Welsh and English version. Jump to p. 64)
- National Forum on Early Childhood Program Evaluation. 2007. *Early Childhood Program Evaluations: A Decision-Maker's Guide.* http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu
- Wasserstein, R. L., & Lazar, N. A. (2016). "The ASA's Statement on p-Values: Context, Process, and Purpose." *The American Statistician,* 70:2, 129-133.
- *Practical Evaluation Strategies for Building a Body of Proven-Effective Social Programs*, Coalition for Evidence-based Policy (2013).
- Checklist For Reviewing a Randomized Controlled Trial of a Social Program or Project, To Assess Whether It Produced Valid Evidence, Coalition for Evidence-based Policy (2010).
- *Which Comparison-Group ("Quasi-Experimental") Study Designs Are Most Likely to Produce Valid Estimates of a Program's Impact?* Coalition for Evidence-based Policy (2014).

DUE: "Setting the Table" memo, FIS assignment #1 (info scavenger hunt); hand out FIS assignment #2: background memo for speaker

Week 5: October 5, "Media influences and being a good media consumer"

- Media influences on the evidence-based policymaking process
- Being a good consumer of media reports of research
- Helping the media get it right
- Guest speaker: Gwyn Guenther, Wheeler Report

Required Readings:

- "How to Write a Press Release," pp. 507-510, from *How to Write Anything: A Complete Guide*, by Laura Brown (2014).
- Badgett, M. V. Lee. (2015). *The Public Professor*: *How to Use Your Research to Change the World*, Chapter 6, "Using Traditional Media Outlets to Connect with the World" and Ch. 7, "Using Social Media to Connect with the World," (pp. 113-165).
- "Science, New Media, and the Public**,"** Dominique Brossard and Dietram A. Scheufele (January 3, 2013) *Science* 339 (6115), 40-41.
- Poke around here: Wheeler Report: http://www.thewheelerreport.com/
- Reading for Case Study #1

DUE: Case Study #1, FIS Assignment #2 (background memo for speaker); hand out press release assn.

Week 6: October 12, "Politics and evidence based policymaking"

- Polarization and its impact on evidence-based policymaking
- Why can't we all agree on the facts?
- A return to the education vs. advocacy approach

Required Readings

- Sharot, T., & Sunstein, C. (Sept. 2, 2016). "Why Facts Don't Unify Us," *NY Times*
- Ch. 3, "The Contours of Rural Consciousness" (p. 45-89); Ch. 4 "The Context of Rural Consciousness" (p. 90-110); and Ch. 8, "We Teach These Things to Each Other" (p. 208-226) from *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness and the Rise of Scott Walker*, by Katherine J. Cramer, (2016).
- Excerpts from Vance, J.D. (2016). *Hillbilly elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis.*
- Craig Gilbert (2014), "Dividing Lines," a *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* Special Report: http://www.jsonline.com/news/statepolitics/democratic-republican-voters-worlds-apart-in-divided-wisconsin-b99249564z1-255883361.html (note: this is a multi-media piece with some video snippets, interactive maps, etc.)
- Ezra Klein, "How Politics Makes Us Stupid," http://www.vox.com/2014/4/6/5556462/brain-dead-how-politics-makes-us-stupid
- Jonathan Haidt, TED Talk (20 mins.): "How Common Threats Can Make Common (Political) Ground," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3o-F94S4FI
- Updated readings TBD
- Reading for Case Study #2

DUE: Case Study #2, Press release; hand out research summary assn.

Week 7: October 19: "Committee Connect: Connecting academics and policymakers"

- Making academic research useful to policymakers
- Crossing cultural divides
- How can working with policymakers influence research and teaching?
- Knowledge brokers guest panel

Required Readings:

- Ch. 5, "Communicating Outside of the Academy," from *The Public Professor: How to Use Your Research to Change the World*, by M.V. Lee Badgett, (2015).
- Ch. 8, "Barriers to and Rewards of Cross-Cultural Communication" & Ch. 9, "Communicating with Policymakers," from *Evidence-Based Policymaking*, Karen Bogenschneider & Thomas J. Corbett, (2010).
- Fanlund, Paul, "For Embattled UW, Is Blasting Back Smart?" *Capitol Times*, May 27, 2016: http://host.madison.com/ct/opinion/column/paul_fanlund/paul-fanlund-for-embattled-uw-is-blasting-back-smart/article_7875fcbb-6e17-520f-8c00-e28851611843.html#utm_source=host.madison.com&utm_campaign=%2Femail-updates%2Fweekly-best-of%2F&utm_medium=email&utm_content=headline
- Committee Connect handout for researchers
- Reading for Case Study #3

DUE: Case Study #3

Week 8: October 26, "Writing for Policymakers"

- What are effective strategies for writing for policymakers?

Required Readings:

- Conaway, C. (2013). "The Problem with Briefs, in Brief," Education Finance & Policy, 287-299.
- 1 FIS briefing report and 2 issue briefs of your choice (be prepared to discuss): http://wisfamilyimpact.org/publications/
- Feldman, P.H., Nadash, P., BPhil, & Gursen, M. (2001). "Improving Communication Between Researchers and policy Makers in Long-Term Care: Or, Researchers Are From Mars; Policy Makers Are From Venus," *The Gerontologist*, 41(3), 312-321.
- Reading for Case Study #4

DUE: Case study #4; hand out role play assignment + issue brief and final presentation assn's

Week 9: November 2—no class; LFS in Chicago and APPAM

DUE: Research summary (upload via Canvas by end of class time)

Week 10: November 9, "Data Visualization & Presentations"

- Effective presentations & conversations with policymakers
- What are effective ways of telling visual stories with data?

Required Readings:

- Excerpts from Jonathan Schwabish, *Better Presentations* (2017)
- Poke around here: http://policyviz.com/
- Excerpt from Edward Tufte, *Beautiful Evidence* (2006)
- Check out a TED Talk: http://dasil.grinnell.edu/2016/09/5-must-see-ted-talks-on-data-visualization/
- Duncan, G. J., and K. Magnuson. 2007. "Penny Wise and Effect Size Foolish." *Child Development Perspectives,* 1: 46-51.
- Reading for Case Study #5

DUE: Case Study #5; role play exercise; hand out FIS data visualization assn.

Week 11: November 16, "Building Relationships and Talking with Policymakers"

- Note: We may hold class at the Capitol today
- Questions about final portfolio pieces; data viz critiques
- Policymaker panel

Required Readings:

- TBD

DUE: FIS data visualization assn

Week 12: November 23—No class; Thanksgiving

Week 13: November 30,

- Student presentations to policy audience

DUE: Some presentations

Week 14: December 7, "Final Presentations"

- Student presentations to policy audience

DUE: Rest of presentations**,** issue brief, course evaluations