

## UPA 306: Urban Policy Analysis Spring 2009

Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:30-4:45 p.m.  
Location: 2236 Art and Design Hall  
Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 1:30-2:30 pm  
and by appointment

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### Course Syllabus

#### *Course Description and Objectives*

This course provides an introduction to public policy analysis. The primary goal is to familiarize students with basic approaches used in policy analysis, important issues associated with the conduct of policy analysis, and the appropriate and effective use of common analytical methods and techniques to address policy questions. Policy analysis is a field constructed from multiple different backgrounds: the study of different policy areas has evolved in varying political and institutional contexts, drawing upon distinct theoretical roots. Yet there are similarities across substantive areas in terms of research design and in deciding which approaches are most appropriate for certain types of situations. This course focuses on learning from these similarities, while also remembering that the particular policy subject affects the methodologies and logic of policy analysis.

The course emphasizes theory, but also includes applications and examples drawn from a range of policy topics (not restricted to urban issues). The assignments are designed to ensure that students gain a broad background in policy analysis and research design, obtain knowledge of commonly used analytical techniques and their theoretical underpinnings, and develop the ability to think critically about assumptions and approaches used in analyzing public policies.

#### *Prerequisites and Co-Requisites*

Basic experience with using word processing (e.g., Microsoft Word) and presentation software (e.g., Microsoft Powerpoint) is assumed. Upon entering this course, students are expected to understand the fundamental concepts of microeconomics (at the level of an introductory college course) and to have background or experience in quantitative reasoning more generally. Any student lacking these prerequisites should talk to the instructor concerning additional assistance and/or background materials that may help.

UPA 306 is part of the core curriculum for the major in urban and public affairs and is designed primarily for upper-level undergraduates. Students should have completed UPA 300 (Introduction to Urban Policy Processes) prior to enrolling in UPA 306.

#### *Course Materials*

There are two required texts:

- Weimer, D. L., and A. R. Vining. 2005. *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice*. 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

- Bardach, E. 2005. *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Both of these texts are available for purchase at the UIC bookstore. (There is a 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the Bardach text published in 2008 that is not very different from the second edition—the main change is the addition of a couple of appendices. Using the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition would also be acceptable, though be aware that the page numbers and small portions of the text may not correspond precisely.)

There will also be readings drawn from journals, research reports, or excerpted from other texts. These will be made available by handout or by posting on the class Blackboard site. Readings for a given date may be substituted or adjusted according to class progress or to accommodate scheduling issues, with suitable notice given by the instructor. Students may be required to purchase one or more case examples online for a nominal download charge.

### *Requirements and Grading*

Your course grade will be based on class preparation and participation (15%), two written critiques of policy analyses (8% for the first, 12% for the second), a homework assignment focused on analytical techniques (15%), and a course project (50%). Late assignments will not be allowed or accepted unless (1) you have obtained approval and made alternative arrangements with the instructor *well in advance of the due date*, or (2) you provide evidence of a valid medical emergency. The written critiques and the homework assignment are to be completed individually; the course project will involve working in small groups of 3-4 students.

All readings listed for a topic should be completed prior to the first session on that topic unless the instructor indicates otherwise.

### Class Preparation and Participation

The preparation and participation portion of your grade will be assessed in part by regular attendance and in part by your contributions of informed comments, probing questions, or examples in class. Both attendance and participation are essential for you to learn the most possible. Please plan to attend all class sessions for their full length. Excessive unexcused absences will reduce your grade, and more importantly, will affect your ability to master the material in the course.

*Absences and Tardiness:* Each unexcused absence beginning with the second occurrence will reduce the maximum mark you may receive for class preparation and participation by a half scale point (the maximum preparation and participation grade with two unexcused absences is 3.5 out of 4.0, with three unexcused absences is a 3.0, etc.). As with assignments and presentations, an absence will be considered unexcused unless (1) you have discussed your situation with the instructor and obtained approval *in advance*, or (2) you provide evidence of a valid medical circumstance. Please arrive on time—starting class on time will allow us to end on time as well. Unexcused tardiness will be treated as half an unexcused absence, and unexcused tardiness of more than a half hour will be considered a full unexcused absence.

### Written Critiques and Homework Assignment

The written critiques are intended to give students exposure to real policy analysis and practice in assessing them in a critical fashion. The first critique is due **February 3** and the second critique is due **February 19**. The homework assignment will provide practice in some of the quantitative techniques commonly used in policy analysis. The assignment will be distributed **February 26** and is due **March 5**. More details on these assignments will be provided later in the semester.

### Course Project

The course project is designed to give students experience in researching and constructing a framework for a real-world policy analysis. Students will be assigned to groups of 3 or 4 to work on the project together. The project is divided into stages to allow the instructor to provide feedback on the early stages and to allow student groups to adjust their approaches as appropriate.

- Project Memo #1: Defining the Policy Problem. In 3-4 double-spaced pages, define the subject and the policy problem that your group will be addressing. (10%) Due **March 17**.
- Project Memo #2: Policy Objectives and Options. In 5-6 double-spaced pages, present the objectives of the policy and lay out the possible alternatives under consideration. (10%) Due **April 7**.
- Group Presentation: Student groups present their projects to the class, and receive feedback from other students as well as the instructor. (15%) Groups will present on **April 21** and **April 23**.
- Final Paper: The final written paper, 12-18 double-spaced pages in length, should combine the contents from Project Memos #1 and #2 (with appropriate revisions) with:
  - (1) a proposed research design for assessing and evaluating the outcomes resulting from the alternatives identified in Project Memo #2, including identifying sources of data, and
  - (2) a clear decision framework for guiding the selection of policy recommendations. (15%)The final paper is due **April 30**.

Further details on these stages will be forthcoming later in the course.

Here are some suggestions for choosing a topic and working with your group:

- Select a policy issue that has several potential solutions that you can compare.
- Select a topic (or a portion of a topic) that is narrow enough to investigate sufficiently in the time available during the semester.
- Select a subject about which you will be able to identify adequate sources of information and data. (You will not be required to collect and analyze these data for this course, but you will be required to identify and assess available information sources.)
- Consider choosing a topic that one or more members of the group have some familiarity with from previous research, a job, volunteer work, family involvement, etc. This is not necessary, but may give you a head start in figuring out the data sources and possible solutions.
- Craft a work plan that lays out how your group will divide and share the responsibilities and workload of the course project. You will need to work closely throughout the semester with your group members and this will help clarify each person's expectations.
- Create a tentative work timeline to guide the flow of work on the project. Avoid forcing the majority of the work into the last couple of days before the due date—last minute work is much more difficult for groups than for individuals.

*Grading:* Each member of the group will share the group's initial grade on each stage of the project. The instructor, however, reserves the right to adjust individual grades to reflect individual contributions. At the end of the course, each group member will assess the contributions and participation of each individual in the group (including herself or himself). These assessments will be shared only with the course instructor and may be taken into account in adjusting individual grades.

### *Student Conduct and Intellectual Property*

The University of Illinois at Chicago Guidelines Regarding Academic Integrity state that: "All members of the campus community—students, staff, faculty, administrators—share the responsibility of

insuring that these standards are upheld...Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to: cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty / plagiarism, ... , nonoriginal works.” (The full guidelines are available online at <http://www.uic.edu/ucatalog/GR.shtml#qa>.)

For this course: (1) The written critiques and take-home homework assignment are to be completed individually. (2) In all written and presented work, you must cite or otherwise fully attribute all ideas, data, and other information that you (or your group) did not create. This includes information presented in tables, graphs, appendices, powerpoint slides, etc.

### *Preliminary Course Schedule and Required Readings*

This schedule is subject to change based on class progress and scheduling. The dates for guest speakers are preliminary.

The listed readings are required and should be completed prior to the first session on that topic. Additional readings not on this schedule may be assigned, and assigned readings listed here may be substituted or adjusted according to class progress or to accommodate scheduling issues. The instructor will provide suitable notice of such changes.

#### WEEK ONE

- Tuesday, Jan. 13
  - *Subject:* Course Introduction and Objectives
  - *Readings:* no required readings
  
- Thursday, Jan. 15
  - *Subject:* Examples of Policy Analysis
  - *Readings:*
    - Weimer & Vining – Ch. 1, pp. 1-22
    - Bardach – Appendix A, pp. 107-121

#### WEEK TWO

- Tuesday, Jan. 20
  - *Subject:* Overview of Public Policy Analysis
  - *Readings:*
    - Bardach – Introduction, pp. xiii-xviii
    - Weimer & Vining – Ch. 2, pp. 23-38
  
- Thursday, Jan. 22
  - *Subject:* How to Do Policy Analysis
  - *Reading:* Bardach – Part 1, pp. 1-59

#### WEEK THREE

- Tuesday, Jan. 27
  - *Subjects:*
    - How to Do Policy Analysis, cont.
    - Gathering Data
  - *Reading:* Bardach – Parts 2-3, pp. 61-105, and Appendix B, pp. 123-131
  
- Thursday, Jan. 29
  - *Subject:* Gathering Data
  - *Reading:* Weimer & Vining – Ch. 13, pp. 309-323

WEEK FOUR

- Tuesday, Feb. 3
  - *Subject:* Rationales for Public Policy – Efficiency
  - *Reading:* Weimer & Vining – Ch. 4, pp. 54-70
  - *Assignment:* **Critique #1 due at start of class**
  
- Thursday, Feb. 5
  - *Subject:* Rationales for Public Policy – Efficiency, cont.; Market Failures
  - *Reading:* Weimer & Vining – Ch. 5, up to “Natural Monopoly”, pp. 71-97

WEEK FIVE

- Tuesday, Feb. 10
  - *Subject:* Rationales for Public Policy – Market Failures, cont.
  - *Readings:*
    - Weimer & Vining – Ch. 5, remainder, pp. 97-112
    - Weimer & Vining – Ch. 9, up to end of shaded box, pp. 192-204
  
- Thursday, Feb. 12
  - *Subject:* guest speaker, to be announced (TBA)
  - *Readings:* TBA

WEEK SIX

- Tuesday, Feb. 17
  - *Subject:* Rationales for Public Policy – Distribution and Other Goals
  - *Reading:* Weimer & Vining – Ch. 7, pp. 132-155
  
- Thursday, Feb. 19
  - *Subject:* Methods: Monetization; Present Valuation
  - *Readings:*
    - Weimer & Vining, Ch. 16, from “Monetizing Impacts” up to “Choosing among Policies”, pp. 384-409
    - additional readings TBA
  - *Assignment:* **Critique #2 due at start of class**

WEEK SEVEN

- Tuesday, Feb. 24
  - *Subject:* Methods: Cost-Benefit
  - *Readings:*
    - Weimer & Vining, Ch. 14, section “Choosing a Solution Method”, pp. 338-343
    - Weimer & Vining, Ch. 16, remainder, pp. 380-384 and 409-425
    - additional readings TBA
  
- Thursday, Feb. 26
  - *Subject:* Methods: Cost-Benefit, cont.
  - *Readings:* TBA

WEEK EIGHT

- Tuesday, Mar. 3
  - *Subject:* Methods: Cost-Benefit, cont., and Cost-Effectiveness
  - *Readings:* TBA
  
- Thursday, Mar. 5
  - *Subject:* Methods: Forecasting
  - *Readings:*
    - Guess and Farnham, *Cases in Public Policy Analysis*, 2000, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press) – Ch. 4 “Forecasting Policy Options”, up to “MARTA Forecast”, pp. 135-170
    - additional readings TBA
  - *Assignment:* **Homework due at start of class**

WEEK NINE

- Tuesday, Mar. 10
  - *Subject:* Methods: Forecasting, cont.
  - *Readings:*
    - Guess and Farnham – Ch. 4 “Forecasting Policy Options”, section “MARTA Forecast”, pp. 170-207
    - additional readings TBA
  
- Thursday, Mar. 12
  - *Subject:* Goals/Alternatives Matrices
  - *Readings:*
    - Weimer & Vining – Ch. 14, section “Solution Analysis”, pp. 343-357
    - Weimer & Vining – Ch. 15, pp. 363-379

WEEK TEN

- Tuesday, Mar. 17
  - *Subject:* Government Approaches
  - *Readings:*
    - Bardach – Appendix B, pp. 123-131 (review from Week Three)
    - Weimer & Vining – Ch. 10, pp. 209-260
  - *Assignment:* **Memo 1 due at start of class**
  
- Thursday, Mar. 19
  - *Subject:* guest speaker TBA
  - *Readings:* TBA

No Class March 24 and March 26 – SPRING BREAK !!!

WEEK ELEVEN

- Tuesday, Mar. 31
  - *Subject:* Government Failures
  - *Readings:*
    - Weimer & Vining – Ch. 8, pp. 156-191
    - Weimer & Vining – Ch. 9, section “The Relationship Between Market and Government Failures”, pp. 204-208

- Thursday, Apr. 2
  - *Subject:* Implementation
  - *Reading:* Weimer & Vining, Ch. 11, pp. 261-294

#### WEEK TWELVE

- Tuesday, Apr. 7
  - *Subject:* Ethics
  - *Readings:*
    - Weimer & Vining, Ch. 3, pp. 39-53
    - Bok, *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life*, 1978 (New York, New York: Pantheon) – Ch. 13 “Deceptive Social Science Research”, pp. 182-202
  - *Assignment:* **Memo #2 due at start of class**
- Thursday, Apr. 9
  - *Subject:* Ethics, cont.
  - *Readings:* TBA

#### WEEK THIRTEEN

- Tuesday, Apr. 16
  - *Subject:* Examples of Policy Analysis
  - *Readings:* TBA
- Thursday, Apr. 18
  - *Subject:* guest speaker, TBA
  - *Readings:* TBA

#### WEEK FOURTEEN

- Tuesday, Apr. 21
  - *Subject:* Group Presentations
  - *Readings:* no required readings
  - *Assignment:* **Group presentations**
- Thursday, Apr. 23
  - *Subject:* Group Presentations
  - *Readings:* no required readings
  - *Assignment:* **Group presentations**

#### WEEK FIFTEEN

- Tuesday, Apr. 28
  - *Subject:* Course Recap
  - *Readings:* no required readings
- Thursday, Apr. 30
  - *Subject:* Course Evaluation
  - *Readings:* no required readings
  - *Assignment:* **Final paper due at start of class**