

**University of Wisconsin-Madison
Robert M. La Follette School of Public Affairs**

**Public Affairs 869
Section 1
Spring 2012**

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Workshop in Public Affairs

The Workshop in Public Affairs is the capstone course for students in the La Follette Masters of Public Affairs (MPA) program. The course will provide you with practical experience applying the tools of political, economic, and statistical analysis, that you acquired over the past few semesters of course work, to actual problems faced by public sector clients. Students will in effect refine their skills as policy analysts by doing policy analysis. Although the term *policy analysis* covers a wide range of activities and perspectives, its essence involves the development, design, and assessment of public policies. A good policy analyst should be able to function as a generalist, thus the objective of the course is to help prepare you to offer useful advice to policy-makers on a wide range of issues.

During the first part of the course we will devote some time to refining some of the skills that provide the foundation for conducting policy analysis. For most of the semester, however, students will spend their time working in teams on policy analysis projects. I will meet separately with each team on a regular basis.

In past years, MPA students have produced reports on a wide range of issues for federal, state, and local government agencies and non-profit organizations. In some cases, the policy recommendations from students reports have been accepted and implemented by government officials.

The regular class meeting time is from 4:00 to 5:55 on Wednesdays. We will either meet in our assigned classroom (Social Science 6116) or in my office for individual team meetings.

Team Projects: This semester the students in section 1 of PA 869 will work on one of two projects for the Budget and Management Division of the City of Milwaukee and a project for the Wisconsin Department of Revenue. During the first class meeting students will complete a questionnaire about their experience and skills and their project preferences. The questionnaires and a description of the six PA869 projects will be distributed via email on Tuesday, January 24th. Both sections of PA869 will meet together on January 25th in Social Science 6116. Professor Holden and I will provide further information about the projects and ask you to complete the questionnaires. We will take into account the responses to the questionnaires in assigning students to a project team. Students assigned to one of the Milwaukee budget office projects or the Department of Revenue project must enroll in section 1 of PA869.

Each student team will work closely with one or more of your client's senior staff members. After writing three drafts of your report and obtaining feedback from me and from your client, a final report will be prepared. The final report will be edited by Karen FASTER, the La Follette School Director of Publications, before being submitted to your client. As a final step, the members of each team will make an oral PowerPoint presentation of the results of their analysis to their clients.

Individual assignments: Students will also be asked to complete several individual assignments. You will be allowed (in fact, you are encouraged) to discuss all assignments with other students, however, your written documents must be entirely by your own hand.

Forty-eight Hour Exercise: A characteristic of most policy analyst and public administration jobs is the frequent need to respond very quickly to a request for advice, often on issues about which you have no prior knowledge. On February 22nd you will receive a short description of a public policy problem that Congress has recently dealt with or that will soon be on their agenda. Each student will write about a different policy issue. You will have 48 hours to analyze the problem and write a short decision memo recommending a course of action to the chair or the ranking minority member of a congressional committee. Memos will be due at 3:30 p.m. on Friday, February 24th.

Course Materials:

Textbooks: Eugene Bardach, *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*, 3rd Edition, CQ Press, 2008. Available from the University Bookstore, 711 State St.

Additional readings: Several additional required readings will be available on electronic reserves or on the course web site accessible through *learn@UW*.

Grading: Approximately 70 percent of the course grade will be based on your team project grade, 20 percent on the 48-hour exercise, and 10 percent on individual written assignments. Each team project will receive a grade depending on the quality of the final report. Each team member will also be asked to submit confidential evaluations of the individual contributions of each of his or her fellow team members. These evaluations will occur midway through the semester and at the end of the semester. Based on these peer reviews, I may adjust individuals' team project grade to reflect either particularly strong or weak contributions to the final team report.

Course Schedule and Assignments

<u>Week</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Topics and Assignments</u>
1	Jan. 25	<p>Introduction and Description of Projects</p> <p>Students fill out and submit background questionnaire and indicate project preferences.</p>
	Jan. 27	<p>Student assignment to project teams posted on <i>Learn@UW</i>.</p>
2	Feb. 3 (Friday)	<p>Meetings with clients. Briefings on the details of your projects.</p> <p>The two teams working on Milwaukee projects will meet with the Budget Director of the City of Milwaukee and members of his staff. (9:30 a.m.)</p> <p>The Department of Revenue team will meet with the Administrator of the DOR Division of Research and Policy and members of his staff (3:00 p.m.)</p> <p>Individual assignment: Read Bardach, Part I. Then, if your last name starts with the letter A through J, read the first report listed below, and if you last name starts with the letter K through Z, read the second report. The two reports, both of which were written by La Follette students enrolled in PA 869 last spring, are:</p> <p>“The Collection of Municipal Fees,” available at http://www.lafollette.wisc.edu/publications/workshops/2011/fees.pdf</p> <p>“Compressed Natural Gas Vehicles,” available at http://www.lafollette.wisc.edu/publications/workshops/2011/vehicles.pdf</p> <p>Write a short (no more than one page) critique of the report you have read. In writing your critique consider how closely the authors have followed Bardach’s policy analysis model.</p>
3	Feb. 8	<p>Team meetings</p> <p>Assignment: Read Dan Bednarz and Donna J. Wood, “Policy Analysis and Teams: People, Tasks, and Trust,” in <i>Research in Teams: A Practical Guide to Group Policy Analysis</i>, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Pentice Hall, 1991), 3-15.</p> <p>Team assignment: Each team should prepare a preliminary problem statement and work plan. These should be sent to me via email by 7 p.m. on February 7th.</p>

<u>Week</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Topics and Assignments</u>
4	Feb. 15	<p>Ethics and Public Policy Analysis. “Human Subjects” research.</p> <p>Assignment: Prior to class, please complete the “Students in Research - SBR” human subject training module, print out quiz results, and bring them to class. Instructions for completing the training module are available on the course web site. You should also read the <i>La Follette School of Public Affairs Policy Memo</i>, “Public Affairs Workshops and Human Subjects Review” available on the course web site.</p> <p>In class we will discuss the “Two Ethical Dilemmas” and the issues raised by the readings on education data. We will also talk about the “48-hour exercise”.</p> <p>Read: Mary Ann Zehr, “Arizona Subpoena Seeks Researchers' ELL Data,” and follow-up stories; Sarah D. Sparks, “Will Data Conflicts Spur a Chill Effect,” and “Two Ethical Dilemmas” (written by Katharine Lyall and available on the course web site).</p>
5	Feb. 22	<p>Team meetings. Individual 48-hour exercise topics posted on class web site at 2:30 p.m.</p> <p>Team assignment: Each team should submit a revised problem statement and detailed project work plan. These should be sent to me via email by 7 p.m. on February 21st.</p> <p>February 24 (Friday) Hand in 48-hour exercise by 3:30 p.m.</p>
6	Feb. 29	<p>Citations and References. Data Analysis and Presentation.</p> <p>Presentation by Karen Faster on citations and references. Introduction to assignment on analyzing fiscal data. Assignment will be distributed.</p> <p>Read Read Bardach, Part II: Assembling Evidence and Part III: “Smart (Best) Practices” Research, and Howard Wainer, "Understanding Graphs and Tables," <i>Educational Researcher</i>, Jan./Feb. 1992.</p>
7	March 7	<p>Team meetings</p> <p>Individual assignments due: Analyzing fiscal data.</p>
8	March 14	<p>Team meetings</p>

Week	Date	Topics and Assignments
9	March 18	(Sunday) First drafts of team project reports due by 4 p.m.
	March 21	Team meetings
10	March 28	Teams meet with Karen Faster to review your references and citations followed by team meetings, if needed.
Spring break		
11	April 8 (Sunday)	Second drafts of team project report due by 3 p.m. (with copies to me, to your client, and to your peer reviewers). Drafts can be submitted prior to Spring Break, if desired. Reviewer assignments will be posted on class web site.
	April 11	Team meetings. Place in the <i>Learn@UW</i> dropbox your first evaluation of team members. Use the evaluation form on the course website.
12	April 16 (Monday)	Peer reviewers submit reviews to authors.
	April 18	Team meetings, if needed.
13	April 22 (Sunday)	Third draft of team project reports due by 4 p.m.
	April 25	Team meetings.
14	May 2	Final project reports due in La Follette Publication Office by 10 a.m.
15	May 9	In-class PowerPoint presentations of final reports to faculty and staff. Read “Presenting Like a Pro,” adapted by Alice Honeywell from Lani Arredondo, <i>How To Present Like a Pro: Getting People To See Things Your Way</i> (New York: McGraw Hill, 1991). Place in the <i>Learn@UW</i> dropbox your final evaluation of team members. Use the evaluation form on the course website.
16	May 14-18 (specific time and date to be arranged)	Presentation of the final reports to clients. All team members are required to participate in the final presentation of their reports.