Public Affairs 802: Public Affairs Seminar Series

Spring 2016

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Office Hours:  Fall, Monday12:30-2pm,  or by appointment; Spring, tba

A. Course Description:

As a professional program, La Follette seeks to mix policy-relevant academic research with current policy and program analysis. This course provides a way for students to hear from a variety of La Follette and UW-Madison faculty, visiting scholars from other campuses, and distinguished practitioners.

The range of topics will be highly varied, though will center on issues related to policy and management. While it is natural for students to focus on presentations closely related to their policy interests, one of the benefits of this course is to allow you to sample topics that depart from your interests, and to learn about aspects of policy you were otherwise not aware of.

This course provides an opportunity to cross disciplinary boundaries to bring the latest research by top public policy, public management, and social policy scholars on and off campus. While existing courses provide theory and research on management and policy issues, the seminar series we focus on provide new and usually unpublished research on these issues. The sources of good policy analysis and good public policy are a strong evidence base. People will often cite scholarship, without really understanding how rigorous the analysis is, its limitations, or how it relates to prior work. As your coursework gives you some of the skills to make these assessments, the seminars offer an up-close look at how research is developed by scholars, and evaluated by their peers. The sessions with practitioners also provide insights into how different aspects of working in the public service actually happens.

B. Seminar series that we draw from:

Students participate in this class by attending a required number of lectures chosen from one or a mixture of three seminar series.

1. The LaFollette School of Public Affairs Seminar Series

http://www.lafollette.wisc.edu/research-public-service/seminar-series  usually held on Wednesdays 12:30-1:30 at the Lafollette School conference room; plus a few other co-sponsored lectures in other venues at other times
This is the most diverse of the seminar series, featuring a mix of visiting, UW and La Follette faculty presenting work related to policy and management, as well as sessions led by students or practitioners. The presentations are either a traditional academic presentation (similar to the other seminar series); policy overviews or policy debates on a particular issue; or a professional development session led by a practitioner or student. Terry Shelton will send out emails advertising these meetings.

2. The Institute for Research on Poverty Seminar Series

[http://www.irp.wisc.edu/newsevents/seminars.htm](http://www.irp.wisc.edu/newsevents/seminars.htm), held on Thursdays at 12:15-1:30, 8417 Social Science; plus a few other co-sponsored lectures.

As the name would suggest, this seminar series focuses largely on issues related to poverty, inequality, and social policy. A large number of La Follette faculty are research affiliates at IRP and often attend these seminars.

3. The Center for Demography and Ecology Seminar Series


The research presented here features researchers with interests in sociology and demography, presenting research on health, aging, and many other areas. A number of La Follette faculty are also research affiliates with CDE.

4. Other seminars:

Students may petition to count attendance at other seminar series on a case-by-case basis. Series seminars run by the School of Education, Department of Urban and Regional Planning, the Wisconsin Transportation Center, or the Neuroscience and Public Policy series are examples of suitable alternatives.

One final option: Students could attend up to two of the Spring 2016 capstone presentations from second year students as a part of their seminar count for the course.

C. What is involved?-- course requirements:

It is important to note that while, for teaching purposes, the course is scheduled for the spring; students may participate in the seminars in the fall, and complete some of their work in the fall, banking that work for credit in the spring.

*There will be a meeting on the first seminar day, September 2 at 12:30 pm, in the LaFollette seminar room, where I will go over the schedule of seminars and this syllabus. Please do your best to attend if you want to take 802 for credit in the spring.*

Students may of course, attend the seminars without registering for credit. But if they
take the course for credit, certain expectations must be met to receive credit.

1. **For one credit**, you must attend a minimum of 10 seminars, not including the two discussion meetings per semester which are focused on two particular mandatory seminars per semester (summarized below and counting as part of the 10), plus other remarks.

   You will also send me a one page report on each seminar you attended. This is just two paragraphs, one summarizing the topic and presentation and what you thought were its strengths and weaknesses. It may be the easiest thing to do this during or right after the seminar.

   To add cohesion, there will be two mandatory seminars each semester where we will meet and discuss a given seminar and your reactions after the fact. In the fall, these meetings will be on October 8\textsuperscript{th} or 12\textsuperscript{th} following the mandatory Kathy Edin seminar on Tuesday October 6\textsuperscript{th}, and on December 11\textsuperscript{th} or 14\textsuperscript{th} following the mandatory Pam Herd seminar on Wednesday December 9\textsuperscript{th}. These will be one hour meetings, held at LaFollette, and the one page summaries of each of these talks must be submitted within 24 hours of the mandatory seminar. (The mandatory spring seminars and dates will be announced later in the fall semester).

   There will be a semester-end short writing assignment of 4-5 pages, focusing on one or multiple seminars/topics you found most interesting during the year’s seminars. This can be on any topic, whether research, panel discussion of a policy area, or the practitioner presentations. Talk to your instructor about the topic you are thinking of and we will make a plan early in the spring semester.

   **OR**

   You will be allowed to write three one page policy briefs summarizing a seminar paper or coupling of papers on the same topic. *(A policy brief summarizes the key findings of one or more presentations. This would require that you really read and understand the paper/presentation, and write about how to translate the findings into policy and or practice implications.)* Examples from the spring 2015 capstone will be on the course homepage at Learn@UW.

2. **For two credits**, it will take 20 seminars including the one page summaries of each seminar, including the 4 mandatory seminars and meetings, plus a longer (8-10) page writing assignment at the end of the semester.

   **OR**

   You can have a shorter writing assignment (4-5 pages) plus three one page policy briefs summarizing two or more seminars on the same topic.

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**D. Credits:**
Students may take this class for elective credit for the purposes of counting toward their Lafollette School graduation requirements no more than twice, with maximum total credits allowed being three.

Most will enroll for one credit; some will enroll for two credits. Students may take higher numbers of graded credit in a single semester only with prior permission of the course instructor.

**E. Grading:**

Grading will be according to graduate school standards, with grades being Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory (S/U).