Public Affairs 802: Public Affairs Seminar Series

Spring 2015

Instructor: Donald P. Moynihan
Phone: (608) 263 6633
E-mail: dmoynihan@lafollette.wisc.edu
Office Hours: Thursday 11 am-1 pm or by appointment

Course Description:
As a professional program, La Follette seeks to mix policy-relevant academic research with current policy 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provide theory and research on management and policy issues, the seminar series we focus on provide new and usually unpublished research on these issues.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.

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/seminar usually held on Tuesdays noon to 1pm, at the LaFollette School conference room; plus a few other co-sponsored lectures

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), and policy overview of a particular
area, 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, 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.

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. Note that this seminar usually clashes with the La Follette seminar series, and students usually favor the La Follette seminar, but are welcome to attend this seminar instead if it a presentation closely fits with your interests. A number of La Follette faculty are 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 Department of Urban and Regional Planning seminar, the Wisconsin Transportation Center, or the Neuroscience and Public Policy degree are examples of suitable alternatives.

**What is involved:**

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 or all of their work in the fall, banking that work for credit in the spring.

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

For one credit, you must attend a minimum of 12 seminars, not including the two discussion meetings per semester (in the fall, these meetings will be on September 16th, and November 4th, at noon at La Follette).

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, discussion of a policy area, or the practitioner
presentations. Talk to your instructor about the topic you are thinking of.

For two credits, it will take 24 seminars, plus a longer (8-10) page writing assignment at the end of the semester.

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.

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