



**PUBLIC AFFAIRS 873
INTRODUCTION TO POLICY ANALYSIS**

CREDITS: 3

CANVAS COURSE URL: <https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/140623/modules>

COURSE DESIGNATIONS AND ATTRIBUTES: General

MEETING TIME AND LOCATION: T: 2:30 – 4:25pm, Social Science 6116

INSTRUCTIONAL MODE: all face-to-face

This class meets for one 115-minute class period each week over the spring semester and carries the expectation that students will work on course learning activities (reading, writing, problem sets, studying, etc) for about 6 hours out of classroom for every class period.

INSTRUCTOR: Professor Yang Wang

OFFICE HOURS: W: 2:30 – 4:30pm at Office 212, 1225 Observatory Drive, and by appointment

INSTRUCTOR EMAIL: ywang26@wisc.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides an introduction to the study of public policy and the professional practice of policy analysis. We consider the following fundamental questions:

- What are the rationales for collective interference in private affairs?
- What are the limitations to collective action?
- What are the generic instruments of public policy?
- How can we assess the effects of programs in meeting their goals?
- What are the appropriate roles for policy analysts in democratic societies?

We also seek to improve our basic skills in analytical thinking, information gathering, and writing as we attempt to answer these questions.

COURSE LEARNING GOALS

The course contributes to a number of the Student Learning Goals set out for MPA students. Most fundamentally, it requires demonstration of the following two goals:

“Students will communicate in clear written language: a real-world problem, relevant scholarly studies and practical applications, a policy-analytic method to investigate the problem, and client-oriented advice to mitigate the problem.” (Goal III A)

“Students will demonstrate the ability to maintain fidelity to objective social science-based research methods.” (Goal IV D)

GRADING

Midterm exam (March 12th)	30%
Attendance and participation	15%
Four memorandum exercises	20% (4*5%)
Pop-briefing	5%
Policy analysis project	30%

Grade Criteria: A \geq 93%, AB \geq 89%, B \geq 80%, BC \geq 75%, C \geq 65%, D \geq 55%, F $<$ 55%

TEXTBOOK AND OTHER RESOURCES

We will use the following textbook, which is available on reserve:

David L. Weimer and Aidan R. Vining, *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice*, 6th ed. (New York, Routledge, 2017).

A few additional readings and other relevant course materials are available through Canvas. Please identify and draw from scholarly research relevant to your particular policy analysis project.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

No.	Course Content	Readings for that class	Notes
1	Introduction: Course overview. Projects randomly assigned and briefly discussed.		
2	Discussion of Prior Policy Analysis Reports	Prior projects listed under Memo 1. Weimer and Vining, Chapter 1	Memo 1 due.
3	Policy Analysis: Overview We consider two important questions that we will revisit throughout the course: What roles does policy analysis play in democratic societies? What roles should it play?	Weimer and Vining, Chapters 2 and 3	

4	<p>Market Failures as Rationales for Public Policy</p> <p>Welfare economics specifies the assumptions for the Pareto efficiency of market allocations. Certain violations of these assumptions underlie the common market failures (public goods, externalities, natural monopolies, and information asymmetries), which provide important rationales for collective interference with individual choices. Our goal is to understand market failures, and other limitations of the competitive framework, for purposes of framing and modeling policy problems.</p>	Weimer and Vining, Chapters 4, 5, and 6	
5	<p>Goals Other Than Efficiency as Rationales for Public Policy</p> <p>Though efficiency is almost always one of the relevant goals in policy analysis, it is rarely the only one. It is useful to develop conceptual foundations for thinking about distributional and other goals that commonly arise in policy analysis.</p>	Weimer and Vining, Chapter 7	
6	<p>Government Failure as Limitation and Rationale</p> <p>Just as markets fail in systematic ways, so too does collective action. Such generic government failures interfere with the effective correction of market failures and produce public policies that themselves are policy problems.</p>	Weimer and Vining, Chapters 8 and 9	Memo 2 due.
7	<p>Midterm Examination</p> <p>Test covers the concepts developed in the first half of the course. Note: Following the midterm, we will adjust topics as necessary to help you bring your projects to successful conclusions.</p>		Midterm.
8	<p>Structuring Analysis</p> <p>An overview of the steps in the rationalist mode of policy analysis. We consider how to frame and model policy problems, select appropriate goals and criteria, specify policy alternatives, predict and value consequences, identify tradeoffs among alternatives, and</p>	Weimer and Vining, Chapters 14, 15 and 16	

	effectively communicate recommendations.		
9, 10	Policy Design A discussion of how to design policies. We will consider generic policies as starting points for design, as well as borrowing and adapting designs used in other contexts.	Weimer and Vining, Chapters 10 and 13	Memo 3 due by class 9 (April 2 nd). Bring your goals/alternative matrix for your project to class on April 9 th as either a PowerPoint slide or pdf page on a flash drive. Be prepared to present it to the class.
11	Thinking Strategically: Adoption and Implementation A realistic assessment of policy alternatives almost always requires consideration of the feasibility of their adoption and implementation. How can we make predictions about feasibility? How can we alter policy alternatives to improve their feasibility?	Weimer and Vining, Chapters 11 and 12.	
12	Cost-Benefit Analysis Although cost-benefit analysis (CBA) is rarely appropriate as a decision rule, it provides useful protocols for valuing the efficiency impacts of policy alternatives. We review basic concepts underlying CBA such as willingness-to-pay, opportunity cost, discounting for time, and the treatment of risk. We also consider the conceptual and practical limitations to its application.	Weimer and Vining, Chapters 16 and 17	<i>Two</i> copies of your project report are due at the beginning of the class.
13	Project Wrap-Up This session is set aside for revisiting topics of interest and discussing successful completion of projects.		Memo 4 due.

This schedule is subject to changes.

LECTURES

Ideally, you will read/view the assigned material before coming to class. In this way, lecture provides a second exposure to the material. I will not go over all of the details in lecture but will highlight the important parts.

COURSE WEBPAGE

We have a CANVAS webpage for this course. You can find most course materials there, including the syllabus, links to other important webpages, and so forth. You will also submit your assignments onto CANVAS course webpage, so please make effort to get familiar with how it works. Please access the course webpage on a regular basis. Please focus on the “Modules”.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Attendance is required for this class. Please email me if you cannot make it to the class (on time) for any reason. To have an inspired class requires effort on the part of the instructor and the student. Please actively participate in class, and let me know if you have question or concern about the class.

ASSIGNMENTS

The four **memorandum** exercises provide an opportunity to practice analytical writing: the first exercise provides a general introduction; the remaining three are related to your policy analysis project and those of others.

The **pop-briefing** simulates the sort of oral report you are likely to be called upon to make while you are working on a major project. You will have a total of ten minutes to provide an introduction to the issue you are addressing in your policy analysis project, pose an analytical question you are trying to address, and lead discussion of it. Work hard to keep the introduction of your issue to about one minute. You should allow *at least* five minutes for discussion. The discussion may be extended at my discretion. I will randomly select two or three presenters each class beginning on **February 19th**.

A semester-long **project** on a randomly assigned topic gives you an opportunity to apply the concepts and craft skills introduced in the course. I will base my assessment primarily on your first draft, which is due on **April 23rd**, and secondarily on your revisions, which are due **May 4th** in PDF format with an accompanying memorandum explaining any revisions you made to the first draft. The title of the file should be (your last name)_(word conveying subject)_2019.pdf. Please have a separate page at the end of the report on how you have responded to comments on your initial report draft.)

ILLNESS POLICY

If you are sick and you think it could be contagious, please stay at home and rest. Email me or check with your classmates to get the materials you have missed. If you believe that your illness or anything else might give you a long absence from class, please contact me immediately so that we can work out a plan to make sure that you do not fall too far behind.

CLASS MANNERS

- Please come to class on time. If you know that you will be late, please let me know in advance.
- Please do not leave class early. If you have to leave early, please let me know in advance.
- Please mute your phone prior to class.
- Please do not use your phone or computer for personal matter in class.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UW-Madison's community of scholars in which everyone's academic work and behavior are held to the highest academic integrity standards. Academic misconduct compromises the integrity of the university. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these acts are examples of academic misconduct, which can result in disciplinary action. This includes but is not limited to failure on the assignment/course, disciplinary probation, or suspension. Substantial or repeated cases of misconduct will be forwarded to the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards for additional review. For more information, refer to studentconduct.wiscweb.wisc.edu/academic-integrity/.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

McBurney Disability Resource Center syllabus statement: “The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty [me] of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty [I], will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.” <http://mcburney.wisc.edu/facstaffother/faculty/syllabus.php>

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Institutional statement on diversity: “Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.” <https://diversity.wisc.edu/>