Health Policy Analysis
PUBP 770 Fall 2019

Bonnie Stabile, PhD
Research Associate Professor
Schar School of Policy and Government
George Mason University

“When health is absent, wisdom cannot reveal itself, art cannot manifest, strength cannot fight, wealth becomes useless, and intelligence cannot be applied.”
- Herophilus

Course Information
Meets: Tuesdays, 7:20 – 10:00pm, 311 Van Metre Hall, Arlington Campus
Office Hours: Mondays 6-7pm, Room FH 652, or by appointment
Contact: bstabile@gmu.edu, FH office: 703 993-8566 (email is best to set up a time to talk)

Course Description and Objectives
The course examines all facets of health and medical policy analysis, including context, history, and frameworks for understanding. Government alternatives and institutions are considered, as are components of the policy process including problem definition, evaluation, assessment of political and economic feasibility and viability, and issues of implementation. Influence, values and outcomes in the policy process are also taken into consideration. International perspectives, and the experience of the policy process in different country settings will be considered.

Learning Outcomes
Knowledge and Understanding/Skills and Abilities: Students will demonstrate the ability to:
- evaluate evidence and the contextual factors affecting health and medical policy and healthcare alternatives.
- decide a course of action based on compelling arguments and clear analytical reasoning.
- produce an independent and coherent work in health policy analysis.

Professional development and leadership: Students will demonstrate the ability to:
- lead health policy analysis processes in various country settings.
- drive policy debates and take responsibility for specific policy positions.
- practice creativity in influencing decision-making.

Course Requirements/Evaluation*
Policy Analysis Proposal: 10%
Problem Statement: 10%
Annotated Bibliography: 10%
Policy Expert Discussant: 10%
Class Participation: 20%
Policy Brief: 40%

*Explanations of these assignments are included in appendices at the end of this syllabus.*

A grade of **A** or **A-** indicates sustained excellence and outstanding performance on all aspects of the course. The grades of **B** and **B+** denote mastery of the material and very good performance on all aspects of the course. The grade of **B-** is given for marginal quality work that is not quite up to graduate level standards. The grade of **C** denotes work that may be adequate for undergraduate performance, but is not acceptable at the graduate level. The grade of **F** denotes the failure to perform adequately on course assignments.

Assignments must be submitted on time to receive full credit.

Finally, **all students are required to use their GMU email accounts** or have GMU emails forwarded to their regular email accounts, as this will be the primary means of correspondence with students regarding the class.

**Citation Rule of Thumb: See Appendix C for Full Honor Code and Plagiarism Info**

You are responsible for knowing how to properly cite referenced material. To be on the safe side, if you use more than **three consecutive words** of another author or speaker, put them in quotation marks and cite them. If you are citing five lines or more from another’s work, those lines should be single-spaced and indented.

Plagiarism is using another’s words or ideas and representing them as your own. In this age of clicking, cutting and pasting, it is easier than ever to plagiarize (and to detect plagiarism), but it is as important as ever to respect the rights of owners and originators in the marketplace of ideas. The use of quotation marks and meticulous, proper citation will help you to avoid going astray.

The final policy analysis project should have a bibliography, and should make use of either footnotes, endnotes or in text citations (these are preferred).

**Required Readings** available in the GMU Campus bookstore


Weekly Readings and Assignments

Session 1 (August 27): The Power of Policy Analysis

This course offers you the opportunity to apply some of the skills and knowledge you have begun to acquire in the pursuit of a public policy or public administration degree to a public problem of what may be personal interest. Health underpins our “physical, mental and social well-being” according to the World Health Organization’s definition, and so can be considered a prerequisite to human flourishing.

I encourage you to start thinking from day one of what policy area will serve as the basis of your analysis this semester.


Session 2 (September 3): Public Policy Explained and Theorized


Additional Readings for Consideration:


Session 3 (September 10): Targeting Behaviors: Exercise and Alcohol

Policy Proposal Due


Session 4 (September 17) Policy Background: The Case of Obesity

Submit a paragraph identifying the health policy issue on which your brief will focus. Include a preliminary bibliography of at least six sound sources, so we are sure that there is adequate material for you on which to base your analysis. Send as a Word document email attachment (labeled with your last name only, course number and “proposal”) to bstabile@gmu.edu by the start of class


Session 5 (September 24): Public Health Policy Analysis and Evaluation*


*These chapters will be critical tools in helping you to shape your own policy analysis over the course of the semester.

Additional optional readings include:


Session 6 (October 1): Policy Illustrations: Infection and Injury


Session 7 (October 8): Sex, Drugs, and Violence Against Women

Problem Statement Due


October 15: GMU Fall Break – Tuesday Classes Do Not Meet This Week!

Session 8 (October 22): Communicating Research, and Advocacy: What’s the Difference? What’s the Same?


**Session 9 (October 29): Staying on Track and Looking to the Future**

**Annotated Bibliography Due**


**Session 10 (November 5): Social Determinants of Health**


Optional additional reading on Social Determinants of Health for further research, if interested:


Session 11 (November 12): Intersectionality in Health Policy


Session 12 (November 19): Inequality

“Background and Introduction: UK Experiences of Health Inequalities” and “Reflections on the UK’s legacy of Health Inequalities Research and Policy from a North American Perspective,” Chapters 1 and 4 in Health Inequalities: Critical Perspectives.

Appendix: Detailed Descriptions of Course Assignments and Procedures

I. **Policy Analysis Proposal:** In one well-articulated paragraph, describe the policy issue area that will be the basis of your investigation. Include several preliminary sources describing the issue area, including academic journal articles and popular press articles.

II. **Problem Statement:** In 1-2 double-spaced pages, describe the problem your policy brief will address, with more specificity than in the proposal. What seems to be its causes (as cited in the literature). Describe the size and shape of the problem. How big is it? Who is effected, and how? What conditions are associated with the problem that the policy solutions considered will seek to address? Be sure to provide some data and evidence.

III. **Annotated Bibliography:** Provide a reference list, with a brief synopsis of each reference, of at least six solid sources from which your policy analysis will draw. This should include mostly academic journal articles, or sources of commensurate quality and depth, that speak to the problem definition, and the validity and effectiveness of proposed policy solutions.

IV. **Policy Expert Discussant:** Sign up for one session during the course of the semester when you will be a particularly active participant in the evening’s dialogue. Be ready to identify and discuss a few pertinent passages from the night’s readings that particularly grab you, and tie in at least one “current event” that we can consider in light of the readings.

V. **Class Participation:** Regularly participate in discussion of the week’s topics and readings. Contribute meaningfully to the class dialogue by
responding to other students, and raising issues of interest related to the course readings and their application. Prepare by fully and actively reading the literature assigned for each session.

Appendix B. Policy Analysis

This Policy Brief should focus on prescribing and promoting a preferred solution aimed at ameliorating some symptom or condition of concern in the health policy realm. After providing some background on the policy problem at hand, the problem should be described in detail with regard to its costs and impacts, indicating who is effected and how within the designated jurisdiction, with references pointing to data and information sources. In the course of the analysis, students must thoughtfully consider a specific health policy's substance, political influences, institutional processes, and the decision-making structures that are involved in initiating and implementing the health policy change.

The policy briefs submitted should describe contextual factors concisely, and focus on presenting a set of policy alternatives and criteria for consideration, ultimately recommending a course of action from the alternatives presented, following Seavey's framework and tools for crafting a health policy analysis.

A policy matrix outlining several policy alternatives and the criteria by which they will be judged should be submitted as part of the paper (see sample in the Seavey text on page 167).

Students will present summary points to the class on their final policy briefs for about 15 minutes in discussion in sessions 13 and 14. Students should exercise their persuasive skills, while building on compelling arguments and evidence, in presenting policy alternatives for an identified problem in health or medical policy.

Appendix C: Plagiarism Policy and Honor Code Information

University Honor Code

No cheating, plagiarizing, or other unprofessional conduct will be tolerated. (Please see Schar School statement below.) These are defined in the University Catalog as follows: 

A. Cheating encompasses the following:
1. The willful giving or receiving of an unauthorized, unfair, dishonest, or unscrupulous advantage in academic work over other students.

2. The above may be accomplished by any means whatsoever, including but not limited to the following: fraud; duress; deception; theft; trick; talking; signs; gestures; copying from another student; and the unauthorized use of study aids, memoranda, books, data, or other information.

3. Attempted cheating

B. Plagiarism encompasses the following:

1. Presenting as one's own the words, the work, or the opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgment.

2. Borrowing the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought of someone else without proper acknowledgment.

C. Lying encompasses the following:

The willful and knowledgeable telling of an untruth, as well as any form of deceit, attempted deceit, or fraud in an oral or written statement relating to academic work. This includes but is not limited to the following:

1. Lying to administration and faculty members.

2. Falsifying any university document by mutilation, addition, or deletion...

Schar School Policy on Plagiarism: One Instance of Cheating and You Are Expelled

The profession of scholarship and the intellectual life of a university as well as the field of public policy inquiry depend fundamentally on a foundation of trust. Thus any act of plagiarism strikes at the heart of the meaning of the university and the purpose of the School of Public Policy. It constitutes a serious breach of professional ethics and it is unacceptable.

Plagiarism is the use of another’s words or ideas presented as one’s own. It includes, among other things, the use of specific words, ideas, or frameworks that are the product of another’s work. Honesty and thoroughness in citing sources is essential to professional accountability and personal responsibility. Appropriate citation is necessary so that arguments, evidence, and claims can be critically examined.

Plagiarism is wrong because of the injustice it does to the person whose ideas are stolen. But it is also wrong because it constitutes lying to one’s professional colleagues. From a prudential perspective, it is shortsighted and self-defeating, and it can ruin a professional career.

The faculty of the Schar School takes plagiarism seriously and has adopted a zero
tolerance policy. Any plagiarized assignment will receive an automatic grade of “F.” This may lead to failure for the course, resulting in dismissal from the University. This dismissal will be noted on the student’s transcript. For foreign students who are on a university-sponsored visa (e.g. F-1, J-1 or J-2), dismissal also results in the revocation of their visa.

To help enforce the Schar School policy on plagiarism, all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to any commercial services to which the School might subscribe. Faculty may at any time submit student’s work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. The Schar School policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace it or substitute for it. (http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/handbook/aD.html)

The Schar School Statement on Plagiarism, the University Honor Code, and some valuable Resources on Graduate Research and Writing are available at http://schar.gmu.edu/current-students/masters-advising/masters-101/topic-5-graduate-research-and-writing/