COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The interplay of culture, organization, and technology underpins virtually all of crucial public policy issues we face today. Consider the amassing of our personal data by the National Security Agency, Google, and Facebook. Or the use of the very latest Web technologies by political campaigns, autocratic governments, and those who organize to defeat them. And consider the 2008 financial crisis, abetted by the adoption of new computer technologies that enabled finance to accelerate trading, a short-term profit culture on Wall Street, and the presence of organizational silos within banks and financial regulatory regimes. With both technologies and the organizational systems in which they are embedded growing ever more complex, unpacking how they interact with each other and with culture is critical not only to averting future crises, but to analyzing and intervening effectively in any number of public policy issues.

Effective policy analysis, making, and implementation depends on understanding the “culture(s)” of the people or entities involved—be they nations, social groups, or communities; professional groups such as lawyers or engineers; agencies such as the World Health Organization or the U.S. Department of Transportation; or the Internet. From marketing to diplomacy, peacekeeping, and foreign aid, effective intervention in another culture also may hinge on a grasp of the workings of social networks or the role of identity. Lack of such knowledge frequently causes failure. This course is designed to provide practical and intellectual skills, not only to help minimize failure, but to maximize success.

The course brings cutting-edge perspectives to bear on real-world policy processes, which hardly follow a linear path and often encounter unforeseen variables that combine in unforeseen ways, and with unforeseen consequences. It goes beyond cost-benefit analysis and simplistic models to incorporate cultural and organizational determinants of effective policy analysis, making, and implementation. Regardless of your particular MA program, you cannot be a sophisticated analyst of policy without a grasp of these determinants and the appropriate tools, methods, and frameworks for analyzing them.
Learning outcomes will be evaluated by assessing your ability to:

- Unpack the organizational and cultural components of political, economic, and social systems;
- Analyze the framing of policy questions and arguments;
- Evaluate the methods that are appropriate for addressing a particular policy issue;
- Examine the role of technologies and their interactions with culture and organization;
- Assess issues of risk;
- Observe and describe culture and organization at micro and macro levels;
- Use the basic tools of social network analysis;
- Conduct open-ended interviewing or participant-observation;
- Perform organizational and cultural audits;
- Identify cultural enablers and barriers to effective policy development, program design, and implementation;
- Understand the dynamics of the organizations you work in or with and how to effectively intervene in them;
- Think through potential unintended consequences of policy actions and strategies to avoid them.

REQUIREMENTS:

**Thinking Points (30%)**: Two written thinking points (up to three single-spaced pages, with paragraph breaks) are expected of each student for Topic 1 and one other topic of your choice for which readings have been assigned. Thinking points are to address a specific question or questions (outlined in the syllabus) or simply to critically review the readings for the topic of the week. Thinking points **in hard copy** are **due under my office door (Founders Hall, Room 638) on the day before class.** You **MUST put the following** information on the top of each assignment: (1) full name; (2) course number; (3) phone number and e-mail address; (4) topic number and due date; and (5) literature covered.

**Exam (20%)**: One multiple choice exam will be given during the semester.

**Assignment 1 – Observational and Analytic Skills (20%)**: See pages 14-15 of syllabus. Written assignment should be 7-10 pages, not including notes and appendices.

**Assignment 2 (10%)**: See pages 16-17 of syllabus.

You **MUST put the following** information on the top of each assignment: (1) full name; (2) course number; (3) phone number and e-mail address; and (4) assignment number.

**Effort and Approach (20%)**: As the professor, I will complete this part of the evaluation after the final class based on observations and interactions relevant to the course over the semester. **Please note**: Because it is impossible to participate in class without being present, **class attendance is REQUIRED**. Also, while speaking in class is important, the amount of speaking time needs to be balanced with the need for other students to have air time, the quality of listening, efforts to build on the contributions of others, and thoughtfulness of comments. I keep weekly notes on students’ participation for grading at the end of the semester.
Schar School Policy on Plagiarism:

Faculty in the Schar School have no tolerance for academic dishonesty and will strictly enforce Mason's honor code.

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 Schar School of Policy and Government. 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 commercial services to which the School subscribes. 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)

Statement on Special Needs of Students: If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the DRC.

Style Manual: Please use the most recent version of the Chicago Manual of Style, Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, or some similar widely accepted standard.

New Voices in Public Policy: I will consider nominating the very best papers in this course for publication in New Voices in Public Policy. New Voices is a student- and faculty-reviewed journal that shares the Schar School’s finest student work with the rest of the world.
READING LIST:

Books: Available in the Arlington bookstore and on hard copy reserve in the Arlington library.

Articles and chapters of books: Available on Blackboard or the Internet, as detailed in the syllabus. Some of these books also are available on hard copy reserve in the Arlington library.

Access: Should the Blackboard technology fail, please contact Course Support at http://coursessupport.gmu.edu/Students/ or the ITS support center at 703-993-8870.
SCHEDULE, TOPICS, AND REQUIRED READINGS:

**Topic 1 (August 28)** Introduction to the Topic and Overview of Course

**Topic 1 – Continued (September 4)** Historical, Empirical, and Theoretical Perspectives on Key Concepts: Culture, Organization, Institutions, Technology (for purposes of this course, technology as embedded in cultural, organizational, and political systems and policy processes)


**Thinking points:**
Critically review and analyze the perspectives on culture, organization, and technology presented in the Schein, Scott, and LaPorte readings. Then make a list of what you see as the most pressing questions in public policy and address this question for each one: Is it a “tame” or “wicked” problem?

*Thinking Point #1 due.*
Topic 1 – Continued Introduction to Analysis of a Wicked Issue, Problem, or Conflict: A Theoretical-Methodological Template (copyright 2004: Janine R. Wedel)

1. What is the larger context/circumstances of power and resources in which the parties and their organizations are embedded (e.g., a consulting firm dependent on government contracts; a government agency subject to internal and external auditors, congressional oversight, public and media scrutiny; a government department or agency that has been merged into a mega agency; a company that has been bought out by another company; declining demand for the product the company manufactures; new regulations imposed on the industry)? How do features of the larger context/circumstances constrain, enable, or otherwise affect the parties and organizations involved in the issue, problem, or conflict?

2. Who are the parties involved (e.g., managers, technical specialists, support staff, unionized employees, contractors or subcontractors, civil servants, employees at headquarters, employees in the “field,” other entities) in an issue, problem, or conflict?

3. What are these parties’ respective interests, agendas, incentives, goals, motivations, operating assumptions, and expectations with regard to the issue, problem, or conflict? What are the contexts that shape them? (Clue: how do people frame what they want or define what is going on?) Who has power or influence, and on what does that depend?

4. What is the “culture(s)” of the organization(s) or venues in which the parties are operating? How does it/they influence the parties’ actions?

5. How do the interests of the various parties, the “culture(s)” of the relevant organization(s) or venues, and other factors combine to produce outcomes?

Topic 1 – Continued (September 11) Guest Speaker: Professor Todd La Porte, Schar School of Policy and Government, "The Interactions of Culture, Organization, and Technology"


Topic 2 (September 18) Culture, Language, and the Framing of Public Policy Questions and Debates

- Culture, thought, and language


Classic text:

- Public policy framing and discourses


Thinking points:
How do the words and metaphors we use to think and communicate shape how we perceive the world and thereby enable or constrain certain types of action? How does the framing of public policy questions/debates affect the actions that are taken?

Topic 3 (September 25) Guest Speaker: Professor Todd La Porte, Schar School of Policy and Government, GMU: "The Interactions of Culture, Organization, and Technology: Dealing with Complexity and Risk"


- Roush, Wade, “Learning from technological disasters,” *Technology Review*, vol. 96, no. 6, 1993, pp. 50-57. (Available under course content on Bb)

Idea for Assignment 1 (Observational and Analytic Skills) due.
Topic 4 (October 2) – Introduction to Method and Observation, Ethnography, and Interviewing

- Film: “Kitchen Stories” to be watched in class

Topic 4 – Continued (October 9) – Introduction to Method and Observation, Ethnography, and Interviewing

- How ethnography can illuminate what is going on in and across organizations and venues:
  
  Spradley, James P., The Ethnographic Interview, pp. 17-21, 25-39, and 58-77. (Available under course content on Bb)


  Further resources:

Last date to turn in idea for Assignment 1 (Observational and Analytic Skills).

Discussion of Assignment 1.

Thinking points:
What knowledge can ethnographic methods contribute that other methods cannot? What are the basic principles of ethnographic method?
Topic 5 (October 16) – Social Network Analysis

- History and basic tools of social network analysis; networks within and across organizations, communities, groups, and nations.

**Classic article:**

Hanneman, Robert A. and Mark Riddle, *Introduction to Social Network Methods*. Riverside, CA: University of California, Riverside, 2005, introduction (or equivalent thereof) to the following chapters: (1) Social network data; (2) Why formal methods?; (3) Using graphs to represent social relations; (7) Connection; (8) Embedding; (9) Ego networks; (10) Centrality and power; (11) Cliques and sub-groups (Available at: [http://faculty.ucr.edu/~hanneman/nettext/](http://faculty.ucr.edu/~hanneman/nettext/))


**Further resources:**

Topic 5 (October 16) – Social Network Analysis - Continued

- Perspectives on and uses of social network analysis


Further resources:


  Domhoff, G. William, “interlocking Directorates in the Corporate Community,” WhoRulesAmerica.net. *(Available at: https://whorulesamerica.ucsc.edu/power/corporate_community.html)*


Thinking points:
What are the basic tools of social network analysis? What kinds of problems are they suited to illuminate? Is network analysis a theory or a method?
Topic 6 (October 23) International Cultural Contact; Local-Global Cultural Interactions

- Attempts by business representatives operating in one cultural context to do business in or with representatives of others
  

- Representatives of nations (for example, diplomats, NGOs, and other organizations) as they deal with each other across cultures
  

- Foreign aid (especially grant and technical assistance) as an inter-cultural challenge (for example, in providing aid to Russia or Argentina)

Thinking points: Political-Business Transactions between Parties or Sides
(copyright 2004: Janine R. Wedel)

1. What is the geopolitical context?

2. What are the interests/agendas, incentives, and goals of each party or side?

3. What are the circumstances and constraints under which each side is operating?

4. What are the assumptions/beliefs/myths that each party or side has of the other?

5. What are the points of disconnect between the parties/sides? In what ways does each party/side misjudge the other?

6. To what extent are the parties/sides internally homogenous? Who are the various players within each party/side and how are they positioned? What are the interests of the players/divergence of interests within each party/side? What difference does the divergence of interests make?

7. Are the two parties/sides equal or unequal? In what ways?

8. What role do brokers (intermediaries between parties/sides) play? What are the characteristics of those who can mediate between parties/sides?

9. How do interactions between parties/sides change over the course of a conflict or a contentious issue and its resolution--or lack thereof?
Topic 7 (October 30) “Audit Culture,” Metrics, and Algorithms as Organizational and Policy Drivers

- Audit culture and Metrics


  McIntyre, Michael E. “Audit, Education, and Goodhart’s Law Or, Taking Rigidity Seriously.” ([Available at](http://www.atm.damtp.cam.ac.uk/mcintyre/papers/LHCE/dilnot-analysis.html); also available under course content on Bb)


  Further reading:


- Algorithms


  Further reading:

Thinking points:

1. How are your lives and workplaces “audited” by you and others?

2. How role does audit culture play in arenas such as finance, media, and education?

3. In the organizations in which you operate or encounter, or the public policies you confront, what questions should you ask about the algorithms in use? What difference do they make. Please explain using examples.
Topic 5 – Continued (November 6) Guest Speaker: Amitaksha Nag
Net-Map Demonstration

Exam (November 13) and Student Workshop

Topic 8 (November 20) “Progress,” Technological Change, Identity, and Democracy;
Discussion of Assignment 2


Miller, Barbara D. “Case of Snowmobiles and Sami Reindeer Herding,” Cultural Anthropology, p. 411. (Available under course content on Bb)


Thinking points:

1. How do new information technologies affect how we get information, conduct relationships, and even think?
2. How does the introduction of new technologies change culture?
3. Is there any link between technology and identity? How might the technology you gave up be an expression of your identity and the values of your community?

Assignment 2 due.

November 27 – NO Class (Thanksgiving break)

Final Discussion (December 4)

How Each Topic Informs Public Policy: What analyses and perspectives have you learned that shift or inform how you analyze public policies? Provide specific examples of how your thinking has changed on specific issues.

Assignment 1 due.
ASSIGNMENT 1: OBSERVATIONAL AND ANALYTIC SKILLS: EXERCISES AND QUESTIONS
Designed by Janine R. Wedel and Ann C. Baker

Exercise: Observation within your workplace or organization.
Explore either your current workplace or an organization where you have considerable experience such as a community group or organization where you regularly volunteer.

Part A: Participant Observation and the “Rules of the Game”

Select at least 4-6 specific extended periods of time that you intentionally focus on your ethnographic observations in the organization. Be sure that at least a few of these times would be considered typical occurrences/interactions, such as weekly staff meetings or monthly reporting sessions. Carry out “participant observation” and record your observations. Include observations related to relevant cultural patterns that we studied during the semester, such as use of language, framing, and metaphor; social networks; and brokers.

What do you notice? How does the organization work? What is happening? How do people behave? Include observations in not only times and places and with people that are a part of your normal routine, but also include some observations in other settings or times in your organization. Do some informal interviewing as one aspect of you observations. Ask questions. Include observations of written and printed materials that are intended for internal or external use, such as annual reports or typical e-mail messages.

Describe the “rules of the game” in your organization. How does the organization differ from other organizational settings in which you have worked or participated? Which activities, contacts, and communications are encouraged? Which ones are discouraged? You might think of this part of the exercise as if you were instructing an outsider on how to behave and perform successfully in your organization.

Continued on next page -
Part B: Uncovering the Structure: How are Influence and Resources Organized in Practice?
Guiding Questions for Observation in and around (an) Organization(s) and for
Analyzing a Wicked Issue, Problem, or Conflict (copyright 2004: Janine R. Wedel)

Reflect on an ongoing issue, problem, or conflict over which there are competing interests in or around your organization. Organizations that are changing their practices (e.g., introducing new management or new management styles) or undergoing reorganization (e.g., mergers, acquisitions, downsizing) lend themselves to such reflection. The following questions should get you started:

1. Who are the parties involved (e.g., managers, technical specialists, support staff, unionized employees, contractors or subcontractors, civil servants, employees at headquarters, employees in the “field,” other entities) in an issue, problem, or conflict?

2. What is the larger context/circumstances of power and resources in which the parties and their organizations are embedded (e.g., a consulting firm dependent on government contracts; a government agency subject to internal and external auditors, congressional oversight, public and media scrutiny; a government department or agency that has been merged into a mega agency; a company that has been bought out by another company; declining demand for the product the company manufactures; new regulations imposed on the industry)? How do features of the larger context/circumstances constrain, enable, or otherwise affect the parties and organizations involved in the issue, problem, or conflict?

3. What are these parties’ respective interests, agendas, incentives, goals, motivations, operating assumptions, and expectations with regard to the issue, problem, or conflict? (Clue: how do people frame what they want or define what is going on?) Who has power and influence, and on what does that depend?

4. What assumptions do each of these parties make about the interests, agendas, goals, motivations, operating assumptions, and expectations of the other parties? (Clue: how do people frame the interests of their own and other parties?)

5. What categories of people can serve as potential brokers/intermediaries among parties (e.g., people who are, or have been associated with more than one party, outsiders, bosses, relatives or friends)? What difference can these mediators make—or not?

6. How do the interests of the various parties and other factors combine to produce outcomes?

Part C (OPTIONAL): Directed Change

CAUTION! PLEASE DO NOT ATTEMPT PART C UNLESS YOU HAVE THOROUGHLY WORKED THROUGH PARTS A AND B

If you wanted to try to change the organization in a proscribed direction (e.g., create more communication or cooperation between departments or among colleagues in the same unit) what adjustments would you make to achieve your goal?
ASSIGNMENT 2: TECHNOLOGIES IN DAILY LIFE
Designed by Todd La Porte

In this exercise, we analyze the social properties of technologies by examining how we rely on them in your daily life, and then, by doing without one important one for one week.

1. Consider all the important technologies you use regularly in daily life. This is likely to be a long list, so stick to those that you use most consciously, whether or not they are obvious to other people. Some examples are:

   bed
   clock
   water faucet
   toilet
   electric light
   refrigerator
   oven
   newspaper
   radio
   your building
   gas furnace
   air condition
   automobile
   metro
   music player
   telephone
   computer
   television
   DVD player
   Tivo
   medication
2. Organize your list by arranging these technologies in whatever way makes sense to you. The above list is roughly chronological during the course of someone’s day, but there are many other groupings that are valid and interesting. All you need do is describe and justify your organizing principle. Some examples of alternative schemes (not mutually exclusive):

- simple, complex
- ancient, old, modern, contemporary, futuristic
- individual user, work group users, mass public users
- physical material, biological material, mechanical, electric, electronic, informational
- small, medium, big
- benign, dangerous
- networked, non-networked
- motorized, non-motorized
- passive, interactive

3. Choose one technology you rely on heavily, and describe what you do with it, how you depend on it in your daily life, and why it is important or meaningful to you. The technology may have practical or symbolic value. It may relate to the way you identify and express yourself (music is often this way), or it may be more instrumental (a tool you use to get something done). It may be a technology to assure your health and safety, or it may be one that is purely for enjoyment. It may be a technology that is associated with political values, such as democracy, or economic ones, such as efficiency. Whatever it is, the point is for you to think hard about an important technology and how it forms a part of your life.

Make sure you have completed step 3 before continuing with step 4.

4. Give up this technology for one week, and record how you manage without it. Take notes daily to capture your experience so you can write it up later. What adjustments do you have to make? What alternatives do you find, if any? If the technology is one that you use in your dealings with others, what reaction do family/friends/colleagues have? Can you imagine doing without forever?

5. At the end of a week, do you think differently about the technology than you did before? If you could change the technology or the way it is organized for use, what changes would you make? What other aspects of your life might change if you continued to not use the technology?

6. Write up your observations/findings in 2 pages.