THEORY AND PRACTICE IN PUBLIC POLICY

George Mason University Schar School of Policy and Government
Fall 2017 DRAFT

GENERAL INFORMATION

Listing: PUBP 500-004
Time/Location: Thursdays, 07.20 – 10.00 pm, FH
Instructor: Dr. Christine Pommerening
Email: cpommere@gmu.edu
Office Hours: Thursdays, 06.00 – 07.00 pm, or by appointment (preferred)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Theory and Practice in Public Policy, the gateway course for the Master’s Program in Public Policy, introduces you to tools and concepts that will help you navigate in the world of public policy in two ways. First, we explore several types of theories and assess their strengths, weaknesses and applicability to public policy in order to understand different varieties of theory, their uses and application. Second, you will be introduced to several perspectives on the practice of policy analysis and be given an opportunity to engage in an analytical policy project that allows you to practice working in a team. Strong ethical and global components are built into the course.

COURSE OBJECTIVE

The objective of this course is to help you become a more sophisticated policy professional with an ability to operate effectively and ethically in a political environment. While many of the applications will be U.S.-based, the theories apply more broadly to policymaking elsewhere. You will be presented with a variety of ways of looking at political phenomena, conceiving of relationships, and understanding outcomes. The course seeks to heighten your sensitivity to economic and political context and your appreciation of theoretical rigor, disinterested analysis, and empirical evidence for assertions.

You will hone your skills in recognizing values, seeing multiple sides of issues, casting alternative frames to problems, understanding underlying interests, identifying stakeholders, and devising strategies for action. Finally, the course aims to enhance your proficiency in identifying and using appropriate, authoritative source material and in writing and speaking articulately, succinctly, logically, and convincingly. Upon completion of this course, you should be well underway toward becoming a policy analyst and well prepared for the remainder of your Master’s program.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Knowledge and understanding
   Discerning the origins of public policy
   Understanding the policy formulation process
   Evaluating the market economy’s interaction with public policy
   Appreciating how social problems and normative questions can be addressed in an analytical fashion

2. Professional development and leadership skills
   Working together in small groups, with shifting leadership
   Presenting competently and effectively and
   Writing clearly and persuasively at the professional level
REQUIREMENTS

You will be asked to work individually and in teams in order to demonstrate your facility with the theories and their appropriate use, as well as to hone your research, presentation, and writing skills. Assignments are intended as pedagogical exercises to augment your learning in the course.

Grades will be apportioned in the following manner:

Team Policy Paper and Presentation (30%)
The class will be divided into teams of 3-4 students. Each team is to develop a policy paper using Bardach’s A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis on the topic of infrastructure security for a specific client (e.g., Congress, DHS, state governors, insurance industry, utilities). The deliverables include:

1. A written policy analysis of approx. 15 pages double-spaced, not including notes or exhibits
2. A bibliography
3. A one-page executive summary
4. A half-page description of your client and key stakeholders
5. A half-page statement on team member roles and responsibilities

The presentations will be held in a panel format, i.e., each student will have a role in presenting the paper (20 minutes max.), and responding to questions from the audience. Each grade will be a combination of joint deliverable (paper) and individual effort (presentation), and may take into account evaluation of team interaction.

The paper is due on the day indicated on the schedule by noon. The presentation (slides or notes) are due on the day of the class it is scheduled for by noon.

Midterm Exam (25%)
A midterm exam will be given during the semester. It consists of three short-answer questions (one page each, double-spaced). It is take-home, open-book.

The midterm is due the day indicated on the schedule by 10.00 pm. No late submissions accepted.

Final Exam (25%)
A final exam will be given at the end of the semester. It consists of one essay questions (four pages; double-spaced). It is take-home, open-book.

The final is due the day indicated on the schedule by 10.00 pm. No late submissions accepted.

Participation (20%)
This evaluation is based on observations and interactions relevant to the course over the semester. The criteria include: class attendance, quality and quantity of contributions in class and online, and participation in the creation and maintenance of a mutual learning space. If you need to miss a class, please send me a short email in advance. Missing more than three classes will result in a grade reduction.
# SCHEDULE AND OUTLINE

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<td>Policy Goals, Choices, and Trade-Offs</td>
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<td>Policymaking and Non-Governmental Actors</td>
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READING LIST

Required Readings:


Further Readings:


More TBD

Other Sources:

*The Washington Post*

*The Economist*
GENERAL GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

Papers
Writing research and policy papers is a fundamental part of graduate study. The quality of a paper is determined by a number of factors, including presentation of facts, development of argumentation, clarity of analysis, acknowledgment of sources, and accuracy of format and style. A good guideline for elements and format of a research paper and bibliography, including online sources, is *A Pocket Style Manual*, Seventh Edition (2015), by Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers.

Note that your written assignments in this class will be used to evaluate whether you might need to take a writing class as part of your course of study.

Presentation
Being able to prepare and conduct a presentation of current or proposed work is essential in any professional environment. The quality of a presentation depends on what is discussed and how it is communicated to the audience. A good paper or outline is the basis, but it is equally important to develop a script specifically for the presentation. It should lay out how to introduce the topic to the audience, which parts to emphasize and which to skip, how to close the presentation and start the discussion. It is highly recommended to stage a dry-run ahead of time to test the format (stand-alone, with slides, power-point supported, etc.) and to properly manage the time allotted.

Grading
All written and oral assignments will be judged using the GMU system for grading graduate courses as laid out in the university catalog. Grades earned for each assignment will be added numerically, and the weighted average will be used to determine the final grade, which allows for the grades of A, A-, B+, B, B-, as well as C, F, and IN. Assignments that are submitted late will lead to a grade reduction, up to being marked as missed entirely. Unacceptably frequent periods of absence (missing more than three classes) will result in grade reduction as well. No extra credit will be given.

Electronic Communication and Blackboard
The GMU email accounts are the primary and authoritative means of electronic communication; announcements regarding classes will be sent to those accounts only. Students are free to use other accounts, but are solely responsible for any failed communication, missed deadline, etc. Blackboard will also be used to post announcements, presentations, and other items, so be sure to check regularly. I generally respond to emails within 24 hours during the week.

Special Needs
If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me AND contact the Office of Disability Services at [http://ods.gmu.edu/](http://ods.gmu.edu/). All academic accommodations must be arranged through ODS before classes start.
**Policy on Plagiarism**

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. 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 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 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 policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace it or substitute for it.

**Honor Code**

George Mason University shares in the tradition of an honor system that has existed in Virginia since 1842. The Honor Code is an integral part of university life. In the spirit of the code, a student's word is a declaration of good faith acceptable as truth in all academic matters. Cheating and attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing of academic work and related materials constitute Honor Code violations.

This course is subject to all policies of the George Mason University Honor Code as laid out in the university catalog. As stated above, the provisions regarding plagiarism are particularly relevant. The best way of avoiding plagiarism charges is rigorous and meticulous documentation and, to the extent possible, retention, of all sources that are used for preparing papers and presentations. While it is not necessary to cite a source for every single statement, it is expected that students reference major sources in a way that allows fellow students and other readers to identify them. This means e.g. when citing an author in the text, the cited work needs to be referenced in full in the bibliography, and the bibliographic citations need to be complete and verifiable.