Instructor: Jeremy D. Mayer, jmayer4@gmu.edu

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 6-7pm Room #654. If you cannot make this time because of work or other obligations, we can schedule an appointment. Email is the best way to reach me.

Course Objectives

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 international components are built into the course.

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 the MPP program.

Assessment

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, public presentation and writing skills. Papers and examinations are treated as pedagogical exercises to augment your learning in the course. Grades will be apportioned in the following manner:

* Midterm exam 20%
* Individual Policy Analysis 15%
* Class participation, attendance and (possibly) pop quizzes 10%
* Group policy analysis project 25%
If you are working a schedule that requires you to miss more than 3 classes, you should consider taking this course in a different semester. Class participation is an important part of your grade; participation does not mean talking a lot. It means preparing carefully by completing the assigned reading before each day’s class. Good participation can mean one deft comment that moves the discussion forward.

**Writing Emphasis**

One of the key goals of this course is to make sure that every MPP student is able to write for a policy audience at a minimal level of competency. The course, usually taken in the first or second semester at GMU, is used to identify students who need assistance in achieving that level. The instructor may advise you to take other courses that will further build your writing skills.

For this reason, the first assignment is graded quite harshly on the quality of your writing. Anyone who receives a B- or below may resubmit a new version of the paper, responding to the criticisms, and the two grades will be averaged. This is the best way to improve your writing—studying and correcting your mistakes. This is NOT available for any other assignment.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

1. Knowledge and understanding
   - Acquire a basic knowledge of the origins of public policy
   - Acquire a basic understanding of the policy formulation process
   - Acquire a basic understanding of the market economy’s interaction with public policy
   - Acquire a basic understanding of how complex social questions can be addressed in an analytical fashion.

2. Develop quantitative and qualitative skills
   - Be able to conduct graduate level research
   - Be able to read economic analyses with policy relevance

3. Professional development and leadership
   - Work together in small groups, with shifting leadership
   - Professional presentation skills
   - Be able to write clearly and persuasively at the professional level

**University Honor Code**

**No cheating, plagiarizing, or other unprofessional conduct will be tolerated.** (Please see SPP 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...

**SPP 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 School of Public Policy 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 SPP 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 SPP 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](http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/handbook/aD.html))

**Academic Accommodation for a Disability**
If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please email and then make an appointment to see Dr. Mayer, and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the DRC.

**Required Texts and Readings**
(PAY ATTENTION TO EDITION OF BOOKS. The instructor is well aware of the rigged system of textbooks. I encourage you to rent, buy used, buy kindle versions, buy together with another student—but don’t buy 10 year old versions of the books)


Miller, Benjamin, and North. *The Economics of Public Issues*, (Pearson, 2013) 19th Ed


**Class Schedule, Topics, and Assignments**

**August 29: Class 1. The Fundamentals of Policy Analysis**

Read *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis, including appendices (Bardach)*

**Lecture Topics**

- Introduction: Distribution of the syllabus and class assignments:
- Public Policy around us
- The 8 Stages in the Policy Analysis Process
• Conceptual Overview of the Course
  Possible GROUP and INDIVIDUAL policy analysis project topics

September 5: Class 2: *The Policy Process: Theories*
Read: Birkland Ch 1-3, 11
Lecture Topics
• Kingdon’s Theory
• Rational Choice Approach
• Punctuated Equilibrium
  GROUP PROJECT TOPICS DUE

September 12: Class 3: *Ethics and Policy Analysis*
READINGS: Sandel
Lecture Topics:
  • Normative Theory as a Guide to Ethical Behavior
  • Markets and Ethics
  • Professional Ethics

September 19: Class 4: *Activists Beyond Borders: Global Policy*
Read: Keck and Sikkink
Lecture Topics
• The Challenge of Global Policymaking
• American Exceptionalism
• International Networks
  Individual Policy Analysis due.

September 26: Class 5: Economics in Policy Analysis
Read: Miller, Benjamin, North
Lecture Topics
• The Power and Versatility of Markets
• Market Limits and Failures
• Economic Analysis in Public Policy

Read: Hirschman
Lecture Topics
• Slack in Private and Public Enterprises
• Exit Vs. Voice
• Political and Economic Circularities

Oct 10: Class 7. *Goals in the Policy Process*
Read: Stone, p 1-103
Lecture Topics
• Polity vs. Market
• Justice, Security, Efficiency
  ANNOTATED BIBLIOS DUE
Oct 17: Class 8. *Problems and Solutions in the Policy Process*
Read: Stone, p 104-end
**Lecture Topics**
- Symbols…and Transparency
- Numbers…and Their Discontents
- Incentives and Rules

Oct 24: Class 9. *Nudge: Between Right and Left Solutions*
Read: Thaler and Sunstein
**Lecture Topics**
- Policy Shaped by Cognitive Science
- Behavioral Economics and Policy
- Nudges…or Manipulation?

Oct 31: Class 10. *Actors in the Policy Process*
Read: Birkland Ch 4-6
**Lecture Topics**
- Bureaucracy and Its Uses/Limits
- Policy Entrepreneurs
- Tobacco as Template for Other Policy Debates

Nov 7: Class 11. *Policy Types and Implementation*
Read: Birkland Ch 7-11
**Lecture Topics**
- How do policies differ?
- How do agencies learn? (Do they?)

Nov 14: Class 12. *Community Based Participatory Research*
Read: Report on CBPR (distributed over email)

THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

Nov 28: Class 13. TBA
All Group Project Written Material Due Today

Dec 5: Class 14 Group Presentations
TAKE HOME FINAL EXAM DISTRIBUTED AT END OF CLASS, electronically, due on date of Final Exam.