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317 Public Affairs Center

Spring 2007
MWF 9-9:50

Government 204

Policy Analysis: A Quantitative Treatment

Public policy is best described as a pattern of purposive public action. It describes the intentional actions taken by public sector actors. Unfortunately, good intentions are not enough. We must be concerned with the results of public policy. Policy analysis entails thinking systematically about public policy and the ways in which officials make decisions and tradeoffs in an environment of information scarcity, uncertainty, conflicting interests, and scarce resources.

This course has three related goals. First, the course is designed to develop the capacity to think critically and systematically about public policy. Students will be exposed to the policy process and key issues that must be confronted in policy design and implementation. Second, the course strives to develop a competency in core tools of data analysis. Students will be introduced to a number of important quantitative methods, including regression analysis and cost-benefit analysis (two of the workhorses of policy analysis). A third goal is to gain experience in organizing and presenting policy arguments and analyses. This goal will be pursued through a final group project in which students will conduct data analyses and make recommendations through written briefs and oral presentations.

A word of warning: this is not a course for passive consumers of knowledge. Participation will weigh heavily in the course grade. It is expected that you will arrive at class on time, with assigned materials read, and prepared to master the materials being presented in the session. There will be problem sets and in-class quizzes to reinforce the material covered in lectures. There will be several mandatory SPSS training sessions during the semester. Much of the material is cumulative in nature. If you miss sessions or problem sets, it will necessarily detract from your ability to master subsequent material and succeed in this course.

Course Readings

There is a single text for this course:

Dipak K. Gupta, *Analyzing Public Policy: Concepts, Tools, and Techniques*. (CQ Press, 2001).

Additional readings will be available on reserve and/or online. Data sets and notes on all lectures will be posted on blackboard.

Course Grade

The grade in Government 204 will be determined as follows:

Midterm exam	30 percent
Problem sets and quizzes	30 percent
Group analysis	10 percent
Final exam	30 percent

Key Components of the Grade

Exams

The midterm exam will occur on March 9th. It will take the form of short answer identifications and problems. The final exam will be cumulative and will occur at the time and place announced by the registrar.

Problem Sets and Quizzes

Quizzes and problem sets are designed to reinforce core concepts and methodological tools developed in the class. Quizzes will be unannounced and will occur most commonly at the start of class using individual touchpads. Problem sets will be due as announced in the syllabus. Problem sets and quizzes will be weighted equally.

Group Analysis

Midway through the semester, we will form small groups that will be responsible for developing an analysis of a set of related policies and making recommendations for funding. Groups will present their analyses and recommendations to the class in early December, accompanied by a brief written report. Details on this component will be made available following the midterm.

Course Policies

It is an expectation of the course that students will attend class regularly and arrive before the beginning of the period. If you anticipate that you will not be able to arrive at class as scheduled, you should reconsider your decision to take this course. Likewise, if you anticipate that you will not be able to meet the due dates (e.g., you have commitments to be absent during key periods of the semester) you are urged to reconsider your decision to take this course.

All written work must be submitted as a Microsoft Word attachment by midnight on the date due. Late work will be penalized one full grade per day, beginning at 12:01 on the day following the due date.

Incompletes and extensions will be allowed only in cases of serious and verifiable emergencies communicated to the professor your dean.

It is assumed that all students will familiarize themselves with what constitutes plagiarism under University policy and will abide by the provisions of the Honor Code.

Contacts

I am pleased to meet with you during office hours and other mutually agreed upon times. My office hours for Spring 2007 are as follows:

Monday 1-2

Friday 11-1

In addition, you may contact me via AOL Instant Messenger during normal business hours (screen name: ProfEisner). Instant messages may prove more efficient than emails or office visits for quick questions.

Date	Topic
24 January	Course Introduction: What is Public Policy
26-29 January	<p>Market failure and non-market failure</p> <p>Julian le Grand, "The Theory of Government Failure." <i>British Journal of Political Science</i>, Vol. 21, No. 4. (Oct., 1991), pp. 423-442. Download</p> <p>Gupta, <i>Analyzing Public Policy</i>, chapters 1-2</p>
31 January- 5 February	<p>The Policy Process</p> <p>Gupta, <i>Analyzing Public Policy</i>, chapter 3</p> <p>Paul A. Sabatier, "Toward Better Theories of the Policy Process." <i>PS: Political Science and Politics</i>, Vol. 24, No. 2. (Jun., 1991), pp. 147-156. Download</p> <p>John W. Kingdon, "A Model of Agenda-Setting with Applications." 2001 L. REV. M.S.U.-D.C.L. 331 Download</p> <p>Frank R. Baumgartner; Bryan D. Jones, "Agenda Dynamics and Policy Subsystems." <i>The Journal of Politics</i>, Vol. 53, No. 4. (Nov., 1991), pp. 1044-1074. Download</p> <p>Anne Schneider; Helen Ingram, "Behavioral Assumptions of Policy Tools." <i>The Journal of Politics</i>, 52, 2. (1990):510-529. Download</p> <p>Terry M. Moe, "The New Economics of Organization." <i>American Journal of Political Science</i>, 28, 4. (1984):739-777. Download</p>
7-9 February	<p>Policy Analysis, Social Science, and the Art of Skepticism</p> <p>F.A. Hayek, "The Use of Knowledge in Society." <i>American Economic Review</i>, XXXV, No. 4 (September, 1945): 519-30. Download</p> <p>Michael C. Munger, <i>Analyzing Policy</i>, chapter 1 (reserve)</p> <p>Gupta, <i>Analyzing Public Policy</i>, chapter 4</p>

- 12-14 February **Descriptive Statistics: Some Fundamentals**
Gupta, *Analyzing Public Policy*, chapter 5
- 16 February **Problem Set 1 Due**
- 16 February **Introductory SPSS Training 8:30-9:50 a.m.**
- 19-21 February **Hypothesis Testing**
Gupta, *Analyzing Public Policy*, chapter 6

Earl Wyson, Richard Aniskiewicz, and David Wright, "Truth and DARE: Tracking Drug Education to Graduation and as Symbolic Politics." *Social Problems*, 41, 3. (1994): 448-472. [Download](#)
- 26 February - 2 March **Making Sense of Numbers**
Gupta, *Analyzing Public Policy*, chapter 7, 8

"Alternative Poverty Estimates in the United States: 2003" U.S. Census Bureau (2005). [Download](#)

Nicholas Eberstadt, "The Mismeasure of Poverty." *Policy Review* (August/September 2006). [Download](#)
- 5 March **Problem Set 2 Due**
- 7 March **SPSS Training, 8:30-9:50 a.m.**
- 9 March **Midterm Exam**
- 26-30 March **Simple Projection Techniques**
Gupta, *Analyzing Public Policy*, chapter 9

Center for Strategic and International Studies, *The Global Retirement Crisis* (2002), Introduction and Chapter 1. [Download](#)
- 2 April **Problem Set 3 Due**
- 2- 4 April **Analyzing Historical Data**
Gupta, *Analyzing Public Policy*, chapter 10

- 6 April **SPSS Training. 8:30 – 9:50 a.m.**
Problem Set 4 Due
- 6-13 April **Simple and Multiple Least Squares Regression**
Gupta, *Analyzing Public Policy*, chapter 11, 12
Kenneth J. Meier, “Teachers, Students, and Discrimination: The Policy Impact of Black Representation.” *The Journal of Politics*, 46, 1. (1984): 252-263. [Download](#)
- 16 April **Problem Set 5 Due**
16-25 April **Cost-Benefit Analysis**
Gupta, *Analyzing Public Policy*, chapter 14
Steven Kelman, “Cost Benefit Analysis: An Ethical Critique.” *AEI Journal on Government and Society Regulation*, (1981). [Download](#)
Lisa Heinzerling and Frank Ackerman, “Pricing the Priceless: Cost-Benefit Analysis of Environmental Protection.” Georgetown Environmental Law and Policy Institute, Georgetown University Law Center (2002). [Download](#)
W. Kip Viscusi, “Monetizing the Benefits of Risk and Environmental Regulation.” AEI-Brookings Joint Center for Regulatory Studies, Working Paper 06-09 (April 2006). [Download](#)
- 20 April **Group Meetings**
27 April
- 27 April **Problem Set 6 Due**
- 30 April **No Class (Conference on Nanotechnology and the Social Sciences)**
- 2-4 May **Group Presentations**
- 7 May **Course Conclusion**
Gupta, *Analyzing Public Policy*, chapter 15