Course Information

Sections:

PUAD-688-001   M 5:30PM-8:00PM   Room: TBA

Other information:

- 3 credits
- Required of all MPP students
- Usually taken in the final semester before graduation
- Centered around a group project with an external client
- Reviews, integrates, extends and applies content from across the MPP curriculum

Instructor Contact Information (email preferred)

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Hours: M 4:15-5:15 pm, 8:00-9:00 pm, or by appointment

Course Description and Goals

The Policy Practicum is a seminar style capstone course that offers MPP students a *summative* exit experience. It is an opportunity to review and enhance material from the MPP curriculum, and to evaluate each student's preparedness to work professionally in the policy analysis field. It serves both a review and an evaluative purpose and affords students the opportunity to accomplish a significant project on behalf of an external client. Through the accomplishment of assignments, students will be assessed on their ability to integrate and apply the knowledge and skills acquired throughout the MPP program at American University. *The Policy Practicum fulfills American University's requirement for a form of comprehensive examination or similar assessment as a component of a Master's degree program.*

The course transitions from classroom discussions of core MPP curriculum content during the first half of the semester into the group client projects during the second half of the semester. Students are expected to *independently* refer back to the methods and foundations acquired during their MPP studies, especially in the following courses:

- PUAD 601: Quantitative Methods for Policy Analysis I
- PAUD 602: Quantitative Methods for Policy Analysis II
- PUAD 603: Policy Process
- PUAD 606: Foundations of Policy Analysis
- PUAD 670: Economics for Policy Analysis
- PUAD 684: Organizational Analysis

The Department of Public Administration & Policy has established the following goals and performance criteria for the Policy Practicum:

1. Your individual as well as joint deliverables are to provide evidence of your ability to navigate and master a wide variety of analytic skills and substantive knowledge.

2. You are expected to deliver work that meets professional standards in substance, originality, documentation, and format, while connecting theory to practice in a meaningful way.

3. You are expected to work and manage deadlines effectively in teams while distributing work fairly and efficiently. If difficulties arise, you are expected to seek assistance.

4. Your participation inside and outside the classroom and your deliverables should evidence your ability to contemplate various careers in the public policy field and to critically reflect on your role as a policy analyst, advisor, or decision maker.

Student Learning Outcomes

The following table identifies the student learning outcomes sought by the Practicum. All course requirements are intended to achieve these learning outcomes.

Learning Outcomes
Assess personal *mastery of MPP curriculum content* in application to examples of professional policy analysis, and identify opportunities for improvement
Organize a broad, flexible "toolkit" of conceptual approaches for conducting applied policy analysis, and practice the art of selecting specific tools that are appropriate to the problem at hand
Enhance *applied quantitative analysis skills* and especially those related to descriptive statistics, measurement, and concise presentation of information
Develop the ability to *generate useful, cogent policy analysis quickly* and professionally, including for topics with which there is no prior personal experience
Practice *creating several categories of policy analysis products*, including short memos, long memos, presentations, and full reports
Improve *project management skills* both individually and in a group setting
Gain experience *working with external clients on a policy analysis project*, including development of the scope of work, communication with the client during the project, and producing deliverables at the end of the project that meet client expectations
Improve personal understanding of how policy analysis fits into immediate and longer term *career objectives*

Course Organization and Schedule

The Policy Practicum takes place in a workshop-like manner. Students are encouraged and expected to share insights and experiences and to develop a joint learning environment inside and outside the classroom. The instructor's role is that of a coach, mentor, and facilitator. Because of uncertainty regarding the timing and availability of project clients, the need to flexibly adapt to students and project objectives, and the weather, the schedule for the Policy Practicum is updated on an ongoing basis as the semester progresses. The Blackboard entry for each course session will list the discussion topics, background readings, and homework if applicable for the 14 sessions.

The Policy Practicum meets in regular weekly intervals with some sessions providing (optional) joint planning time. At the outset, the sessions will be designed to gather, exchange, and discuss information,

practices, and experiences while reviewing knowledge acquired throughout your MPP studies. The sessions will then progressively turn into group workshops providing joint planning time for the client projects, which are an integral part of this course. Likely much more so than other courses, the Policy Practicum needs and expects you to stay in touch on an ongoing basis. Therefore, if your AU email account is not your preferred email address, be sure to forward messages (my.american.edu > Technology >Forward my AU email account).

In keeping with AU policy, when campus is closed unexpectedly (for example due to weather) class will be "held" in online format whenever possible. In such instances, any updates regarding this course will come to you via email and/or Blackboard announcements. In "teaching online" the instructor usually will rely on PPT slides and the Discussion Board, allowing you to "attend" and follow at your own leisure. Hence, you do not need to have a camera and microphone, nor do you need to be at your desk at a particular time.

Note that client project groups will be asked to rely on virtual file exchange and collaboration tools such as Google Docs, Google Sites, Dropbox, or Blackboard Groups. They often meet virtually using Skype or Blackboard Collaborate. The instructor highly encourages you to have (mobile) communication devices such as laptops or tablets ready for that, which you are encouraged to bring to class. Portable laptops can be borrowed from the library's Reserve Desk. However, unless specifically asked for, you should turn your communication tools off while class is in session to minimize distraction.

Course Requirements and Grading

The following four grading elements are required to complete this course and count towards the final grade as indicated:

Group client project (10% of which is based on self & peer evaluation)	50%
48 hour project	25%
Critique of a professional policy analysis	15%
Attendance and overall participation	10%

The final grade will be established on the basis of a weighted average of all grading elements as outlined above and then translated into a letter grade as follows: **95-100 A, 90-94.9 A-, 85-89.9 B+, 80-84.9 B, 75-79.9 B-, 70-74.9 C+, 65-69.9 C**. The final grade will also be informed by student performance on the general criteria outlined above. Also, the instructor reserves the right to factor in self and peer-evaluation as well as a substantive assessment of non-graded deliverables for this course.

What follows is an outline of these course requirements. Detailed instructions will be provided via Blackboard. *Always refer to those instructions for guidance!*

Critique of a professional policy analysis

You are asked to critique a recent professional policy analysis produced either by the U.S. Government Accountability Office or the Congressional Budget Office as posted on Blackboard. The critique will be referenced to the specific policy positions of a client. *Memos should be 2 pages long (750-1000 words) not including any tables, figures, explanatory exhibits, references or appendices).*

48 hour project

You will be asked to develop a policy memo for a client about a policy topic, picked at random, which may not be familiar to you. In mimicking the sort of time pressure that is normal in professional policy work, you have 48 hours to complete the assigned task. *Memos should be approximately 5 pages long (about 2500 words), not including appendices and references.* A key component of the grade will be an assessment of whether the memo is of sufficient quality to offer tangible value to the prospective client.

Group client project

The main deliverable in this course will be a client project, which will be accomplished over the course of the semester in groups of about four to six students on behalf of a non-profit, government, or private client recruited by the instructor. Clients will be assigned to one or the other course sections based on student interest and availability. Team assignments will be made based on preferences (1st, 2nd, or 3rd preference). Unless otherwise discussed with the instructor in the course of its accomplishment, performance on the client project will be *assessed jointly*. To assess client projects, the instructor will rely on pre-defined grading criteria but reserve the right to factor in client satisfaction. Of the 50%, 10% will be based on *peer and self-assessment* using a standardized assessment tool.

Attendance and overall participation

The assessment of attendance and overall participation will be informed by criteria such as attendance of class sessions, in-class contributions, general course and homework preparation, journal keeping, and contributions inside and outside the classroom (e.g. to our Course Blog). In regard to blogs and journals, while they may be used to provide a quick account of your tasks and state of mind, credit is granted for ongoing critical reflections that are explicitly connected to knowledge and skills acquired in this or other MPP courses.

Submission of and Expectations for Assignments

The instructor will rely on Turnitin.com to receive graded assignments electronically (in Word .doc or .docx format). All assignments are graded by attributing numerical grades from 0 to 100 pts. You may turn individual assignments in past the deadline in return for a 5 pts deduction per day (partial or whole) past the deadline. If you have a significant reason that you believe would justify rescheduling an assignment, please contact the instructor in time *before* the particular due date. For reasons of fairness, the instructor will request supporting documentation to reschedule an assignment. With the exception of the critique of a professional policy analysis (if redone, the maximum grade is capped at 95 points), the instructor will not allow students to redo assignments or complete extra credit work as this is not fair to other students who are not given the same opportunity. However, the instructor is prepared to assist every student or group of students in delivering excellent work.

Professional and writing standards

In order to excel on each of the assignments, students are expected to deliver well-argued original contributions to an assigned topic while applying and documenting concepts discussed in this and other courses. Students must draw on relevant sources, including academic sources such as books and journal articles while documenting those adequately.

All submitted work must comply with professional formatting standards. For example, all documents must feature a title or subject line, must be dated, list the author(s), and place of publication (AU-DPAP, PUAD 688), and must provide page numbers.

All documents and sources must be treated in accordance with AU's Academic Integrity Code *https://my.american.edu/external.cfm?linkID=78*. Specifically, when referencing others' work and ideas, you must properly cite them. This includes information received orally, for example during a field interview, and web resources, including public domain sources. While you are encouraged to use sources, you may not copy any information from a book, article, newspaper, website, another student's paper, your own work delivered in another context, or any other source without clearly citing this source using an appropriate referencing system: footnotes, endnote, and/or in-text citations in conjunction with a list of references. Consult the AU Library's resources to learn about proper citation methods (*http://subjectguides.library.american.edu/citation*). If quoting directly, use quotation marks. If paraphrasing information in your work, you do not have to use quotation marks, but you must clearly cite the source. The

reader must understand without ambiguity what comes from other sources and what your original contributions are. Never hesitate to come see the instructor for guidance in locating and documenting relevant sources.

Keep in mind: In working for agencies and other organizations, sloppy or deceptive documentation of evidence and sources can land you or your employer in court.

Readings

Optional Texts for Purchase:

The following textbooks (earlier versions and online editions are fine) are available in the bookstore and offer excellent summations of most of the MPP program's content:

Patton, Carl; Sawicki, David; and Clark, Jennifer (2013). *Basic Methods of Policy Analysis and Planning*. 3rd edition. Boston: Pearson. ISBN 9780131495092.

Bardach, Eugene (2012). *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*. 4th edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press. ISBN 9781608718429.

On reserve at the library:

In line with the nature of this course, you are encouraged and expected to draw on a number of suggested readings and revisit crucial texts and books you have encountered throughout your studies. The following books should all be consulted and revisited at your own pace throughout the semester. They are also available at the AU Library's reserve desk for limited time check-out:

Bryson, John M. (2004). *Strategic planning for public and nonprofit organizations: a guide to strengthening and sustaining organizational achievement*. 3rd edition. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. ISBN 0787967556.

Gupta, Dipak K. (2011). *Analyzing Public Policy: Concepts, Tools, and Techniques*. Washington DC: CQ Press. 2nd edition. ISBN 9781604265705.

Langbein, Laura (2006). *Public Program Evaluation: A Statistical Guide*. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe. ISBN 0765613670.

Radin, Beryl A. (2000). *Beyond Machiavelli: Policy Analysis Comes of Age*. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press. ISBN 0878407731

Stone, Deborah (2002). *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making*. New York: Norton. ISBN 0393976254.

Weimer, David and Vining, Aidan (2010) *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice*. Boston: Pearson. 5th edition. ISBN 9780205781300.

Supplemental articles and documents:

Supplemental readings or case material will be provided through Blackboard as needed.

Course Etiquette

- Attendance is expected. By the same token, attendance of agreed upon group or office hour meetings is expected.

- Should you have significant reasons to stay away from class or other meetings, please let the instructor (or your colleagues) know in advance when and why you will be absent. If absences accumulate, the instructor reserves the right to discuss them with you and/or the academic counselor.

- Students are expected to prepare for class, including being prepared to spontaneously report on readings of your choice, study topics, cases, and your client project.

- You are expected to check into Blackboard regularly in communication with and preparation for this course.

- You are encouraged to use your computer in class. However, in accordance with professional meeting etiquette, I request that you turn off/log off communication environments (email, Facebook, blogs, listserves, groups, chats etc.).

- Confidentiality: In working with clients and in sharing professional experience with peers, it is important to clarify how information may be used and whether information may be confidential. Students must seek approval before disseminating or publishing work for clients. This includes the use of deliverables in your job portfolios.

- Privacy: "Public" information created and shared in the process of this course is "public" only for users of the PUAD 688 spring 2013 session.

- Absent the instructor's explicit authorization or accommodations requested by American University's Academic Support Center or its Disability Support Services, course lectures and discussions may not be recorded.