THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
School of Public Affairs

FOUNDATIONS OF POLICY ANALYSIS
PUAD 606.001
Fall 2013

Syllabus

Instructor	*Office Hours*	*Class Time and Venue*
Prof. Karen Baehler Ward 339 baehler@american.edu (202) 885-6072 (office)	Mondays 8:15 – 9:15 pm Thursdays 3:30 – 5:30 pm First come, first served; no appointment needed. (Or other times by appointment)	Mondays 5:30 – 8 pm Venue TBA

Course Description and Learning Objectives

"…speaking truth to power remains the ideal of analysts who hope they have truth, but realize they have not (and, in a democracy, should not have) power."

Aaron Wildavsky, *Speaking Truth to Power* (1987), p 13

Three fundamental questions face the student and practitioner of policy analysis: (1) What is good policy analysis and advice? (2) How is it produced? (3) If the quotation above is correct and policy analysts have no power, then why bother?

This course addresses all three questions through critical study of the eightfold path to problem-solving (according to Bardach 2005) and the methods associated with each step on the path (as elaborated by Weimer and Vining 2011) and by applying these methods to contemporary policy issues. In addition, students will examine flaws in these conventional approaches, which include insufficient interest in crafting new ideas, lack of specific tools for anticipating how recommended interventions would work in practice, neglect of cumulative learning about complex problems, and, occasionally, disdain for politics. Tools for filling these gaps will be presented. By the end of the course, the goal is to have shifted our paradigm of policy analysis from *choice* to *design*, from an *issues* focus to a *systems* focus, and from the task of *informing* to the vocation of *advising*.

Highly effective policy analysts and policy advisers combine sharp, incisive thinking with creative problem-solving and breathtakingly concise, crystal-clear communication. They know how to gather intelligence from the field as well as the internet and library. They display ingenuity, imagination, openness to competing perspectives, respect for evidence (but not blind acceptance of every statistic), healthy skepticism regarding commonly held assumptions, curiosity about how policies work in practice, care for the people directly affected by policies, capacity to learn from mistakes, high tolerance for delayed gratification, political dexterity, and willingness to make themselves unpopular when necessary. The best policy analysts recognize their own ideological biases and try not to be blinded by them. Most importantly, they never lose their common sense. Cultivating these dispositions and habits is a core goal of PUAD 606.

Learning Methods

Student-led learning is the basic method employed in this course, with the instructor playing a facilitating role. Class sessions will incorporate a blend of lectures, on-the-spot analysis of policy issues, informal student presentations, discussion of readings, formal team presentations, and summarization of lessons learned. Students will develop expertise in particular policy areas and share their insights through ongoing contributions to class discussion.

Books and Readings

Required texts:
> *Bardach, Eugene (2011). *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving,* 4th Edition*. Washington, DC: CQ Press. (But any edition will do.)

Additional readings are posted on Blackboard or instructions are given there for finding them on the internet.

Expectations

Overall

Serious learning only happens when you push yourself beyond your comfort zone. Therefore, expectations for performance in this course are high for both graded and ungraded tasks and roles.

Reading

It is essential to keep up with the readings, and students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the week's assigned readings. The trick to a successful graduate school career is learning to read fast and selectively. It is strongly recommended that you prepare a brief synopsis of each reading prior to attending the class. These will come in handy later when you prepare for the final exam.

Written Work

The AU Writing Lab is an excellent resource. If you go, please be sure to ask for the tutor who works with graduate students. The undergraduate tutors will not be adequate.

Most of the written assignments in this course are relatively short, which places a premium on succinctness and clarity. Every word should contribute directly to making a point. Do not bother reeling off facts or demonstrating random bits of knowledge if they do not contribute to the overall story being told. Avoid the temptation to spice things up with exaggerated language or excessive emotion. Keep your transitions short and sharp: They should tie your arguments together and ensure a coherent flow through the paper without wasting space. Be forthright and direct, but acknowledge uncertainty where necessary. Be aware of your own biases, and guard against the tendency to lapse into unsupported statements of opinion.

Most of you will probably find that your first drafts are at least twice the word limit; the challenge then is to cut words without cutting valuable content. This takes time and practice. Write the first draft as early as possible.

All of your assignments should be typo-free, written in full sentences, with proper grammar and correct punctuation. Points will be deducted for poor grammar and/or punctuation. Assignments with very poor grammar and/or punctuation will not be accepted.

The writing style of a policy memo should be closer to a high-quality news analysis than an academic article, but with full academic referencing. (It is better to over-reference than under-reference.) State the purpose of the

memo at the start, and develop your narrative using logical arguments, evidence where available, and illustrative details. The structure of your memo should fit the nature of the material being presented and make it easy for the reader to follow your train of thought. Headings and subheadings are encouraged, but bullet points should be used only when listing things, never to make substantive points. A memo's conclusion should identify tensions, unresolved matters, and areas in need of further work.

Excellent policy memos acknowledge conflicting facts and disagreements over interpretation, and address these intelligently. A high-quality memo is lively and thought-provoking. The best ways to improve your writing are to write a lot, seek feedback from others, and read the work of excellent writers.

Class Discussion
The purpose of class time is not to hash over readings, but to clarify ambiguities, make new connections among ideas and issues, and connect those ideas with "live" policy issues and students' experiences. Class participation hones the skills involved in thinking on your feet and articulating complex ideas clearly, as well as the important skill of active, engaged listening.

Students are expected to attend all sessions, keep up with each week's readings, and be prepared to discuss the readings. The professor will call on students randomly to comment on the readings. In addition, students are expected to become resident experts on their selected policy issue (associated with the policy memos) and contribute insights to class discussions based on what they are learning about that issue.

Assessment of Performance

- Submit all assignments through Turnitin (see more below) AND Blackboard.
- At top of paper, indicate total number of words minus footnotes, references, and appendices.
- Do not put your name on the paper; id numbers only.
- Feel free to submit assignments early. Late assignments will incur penalties.
- All written assignments are due by 11:59 p.m. on the day specified.

Assignment	Learning Outcomes	Due Date	Word/Time Limit (max)	Graded?	% Total Grade
Class participation	Build habits of engagement; hone communication skills & listening	Every week	None	No	Pass/Fail
Memo 1 – *Draft to professor*	Apply policy analysis steps 1, 2 & 4; practice policy writing	Sunday, Oct. 6	2000 words	No	Pass/Fail
Memo 1 – *Final*	Sharpen analytical thinking; polish writing; use track changes	Sunday, Oct. 20	2000 words	Yes	30
Memo 2 – *Final*	Apply policy analysis steps 3 & 5-7; demonstrate creative and critical thinking; practice policy writing	Sunday, Nov. 24	3000 words	Yes	40
Contribution to bright-ideas file	Stimulate creative policy thinking	Variable	Strict 5-min limit, plus 5 for Q&A	No	Pass/Fail
Take-home final exam	Demonstrate integrated understanding of course themes	Dec. 9	TBA	Yes	30

All assignments must be completed for credit, but only the shaded items will be graded. Detailed descriptions of each assignment follow.

<u>*Set Up a Turnitin Account*</u>
Assignments will be submitted to Blackboard and to a website called Turnitin. If you do not have a Turnitin account, please register ASAP. It's all free, of course. Here are the instructions:

- Go to www.turnitin.com
- Click on "Create an Account" on right at top of screen
- Choose "Student" from drop-down menu
- Input class ID and enrollment password as follows:

Class ID	6786495
Password	FPA2013

- Input your email address and create a password for your individual account
- Choose a secret security question and answer
- Enter your name and agree to the user agreement
- View the "Completed" screen and log in
- On the student welcome screen, click on the course to see the assignments
- To submit an assignment, just click on the assignment's "Submit" button and follow instructions

<u>*Class Attentiveness and Participation*</u>
See "Class Discussion" above.

<u>*Policy Memos*</u>
Each student will write two policy memos on a selected contemporary policy topic.

Memo 1 – Problem Analysis
This memo should analyze the policy problem from two perspectives:
1. Using the market, government, and/or distributive failure frameworks: Explain which of the frameworks best apply to your issue and why. Are other frameworks also needed to understand your issue?
2. Using system thinking categories: Sketch a map of the system that holds the policy problem in place, discuss the factors included in the map, and discuss whether any of the system archetypes applies.
3. Establish criteria for assessing outcomes, based on the problem framing. Explain your choice of criteria.

Because this is the first graded assignment for this course, students are invited to submit a draft of their memos for feedback from the professor before submitting the final version. See deadlines above.

Memo 2 – Solution Analysis
This memo should:
1. Present 4-6 promising policy options (including the status quo) for addressing the problem described in memo 1. Describe each option in as much detail as possible and explain why it fits your policy issue.
2. Project the outcomes for at least two options against each criterion, using techniques from the "menu" of outcomes projection methods presented in class and discussed in various readings.

3. Summarize the results of the matrix exercise, including trade-offs among criteria and relative attractiveness of selected options. Some matrices will produce clear recommendations. Some will not have enough solid projections to yield a conclusion. Some will look like a "tie."

In this memo especially, please beware of lapsing into raw opinion. All evaluative comments need to be supported by strong logic and as much evidence as possible.

Contribution to the Bright-Ideas File
A goal of this course is to stimulate policy design creativity. Toward that end, we will collect examples of creative policy solutions being developed around the world. Each student will identify at least one creative policy solution from sources outside of this course and present it informally to the whole class at a specified time (schedule TBA), including an explanation of why you think it qualifies as a bright idea. For an example, see the article filed under "Biofuel from poppies" in the "Readings" section of Blackboard. Students are asked to upload a summary of their bright idea (could be an article written by someone else or your own summary) to a forum thread within the "Discussion Board" section of Blackboard.

Take-Home Final Exam
This will consist of two essay questions that provide students with an opportunity to integrate main themes from the course and demonstrate both depth and breadth of understanding of the semester's material.

Grading Scale

93 + = A (Excellent)
Reaches well beyond basic requirements; demonstrates excellence in both form and content; depth of insights is notable

90 - 92 = A- (Very Good)

87 - 89 = B+ (Good)

83 - 86 = B (Satisfactory)
All requirements of the assignment are met at the standard expected of graduate school work; no major problems of form or content

80 - 82 = B-
Most requirements of the assignment are met at an adequate standard, but not all

77 - 79 = C+ (Below expectations)
Some satisfactory features, but also some problems with form and/or content

73 - 76 = C
Assignment shows significant deficiencies

Academic integrity

By registering in this class, you have acknowledged your awareness of the Academic Integrity Code, and you are obliged to know your rights and responsibilities as defined by the Code. Please familiarize yourself with

all of American University's policies regarding academic integrity – log in to www.myamerican.edu, click on "Academics," then click on "Academic Integrity" under "General Links" to read the Academic Integrity Code. Violations of the Academic Integrity Code will not be treated lightly, and disciplinary action will be taken should such violations occur. Please see me if you have any questions about the academic violations described in the Code in general or as they relate to particular requirements for this course. Failure to comply with the requirements of the Academic Integrity Code can result in failure in the course, as well as more serious academic sanctions.

Please note that the Code applies equally to the content of oral presentations, presentation aids such as PowerPoint slides, and written assignments. Some students seem to be more relaxed about cutting and pasting (from an internet site, for example) into a PowerPoint presentation than they would be in an essay, but this is NOT acceptable. Any written material that you copy in any way in any assignment must be enclosed in quotation marks, whether it's in a policy memo, take-home exam essay, "good practice" guide, or PowerPoint slide. Likewise for charts, tables, or graphs that you copy into a presentation or paper – the sources for these items must be identified in a caption. I do not require referencing of visual images such as photos, but other professors may.

The most common types of code violations seem to arise due to carelessness and deadline pressure; many are not premeditated. But penalties for violating the Code are steep either way, and therefore, students must be scrupulous about avoiding both impulsive lapses and deliberate violations. The best way to avoid the temptations of last-minute cutting and pasting is to start assignments early and give yourself enough time to put everything into your own words, to mark quotations appropriately, and to organize references.

In addition, please note the Academic Integrity Code's strictures against inappropriate collaboration with other students, submission of work already submitted in a previous course, and use of material obtained from "essay mills".