

GSM601: Public Policy Studies
Atkinson Graduate School of Management
Willamette University

Professor Steven Maser
Mudd 310
X6237

MW 10:00-11:30 PM
Fall 2010
Office Hours: MW Noon-1:30 PM

This seminar studies public policy and the practice of policy analysis. It considers several questions: What are the rationales for collective intervention into the affairs of individuals? What are the limitations to collective action? What are the generic instruments of public policy? How can we measure social costs and benefits? What are the appropriate roles for policy analysts in democratic societies? As we answer these questions, we will also improve basic skills in thinking analytically, gathering information, and writing.

Learning in this seminar has three components: *studying*, *applying*, and *interacting*. You will *study* the tools and techniques of policy analysis in the text and supplementary materials. The texts are Weimer and Vining (WV), *Policy Analysis*, 5th edition (2011) and Eugene Bardach, *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis*, 3rd Edition (2009). Because policy analysis as a professional activity is client-oriented, you will *apply* what you study to policy questions framed by members of the Oregon Legislature or others who expect to pursue a policy initiative before the Legislature. You will complete a field project, an issue paper relevant to a proposal to be placed before the next legislative session. To produce a report that will be substantively useful and timely for your client, you will *interact* with the client, with interested parties in the community, and with members of the seminar. Refer to the *Guide to Field Studies*, paying special attention to the advice it supplies on managing field projects and making reports.

My role in the seminar includes helping you to learn the tools, which are rooted in economics, identifying the client and policy issues, supplying resources to support your field projects, and overseeing the field projects to achieve the twin goals of the seminar: learning policy analysis and preparing a useful report for your client. Your role includes learning the tools, executing your field project, and supporting your classmates in satisfying the needs of your clients. Your client's role includes framing the policy issues for us, helping us to identify important interests and resources, and providing feedback on the reports you produce. The larger goal of our mutual efforts is to do good.

Participating in this course entails a risk: client projects are subject to forces outside the realm of traditional academic exercises. The issues and players can change in the middle of the project. For example, the legislators serving as our clients may not win their elections in early November. What happens or doesn't happen in Washington, D.C. influences policy decisions in Salem. Your papers might prove to be irrelevant. That's life for a policy analyst; get used to it. Better to experience this and learn to deal with it during a class in graduate

school than on the job. To accommodate these uncertainties, we might deviate from the schedule of class meetings. We will work together to adjust our schedules to the demands of the projects.

The Policy Analysis Project

Government decision-makers often do not have the money or staff to undertake the research and analysis needed for important policy and program decisions. That is especially true for a citizen legislature such as Oregon's. As faculty and students, we are a valuable resource for undertaking this research. We also have a vested interest in good government. We have an opportunity to work on interesting and relevant problems. We can make a difference.

Having solicited advice from several students, alumni of the Atkinson School and their associates, I will present you with a set of issues likely to come before the Oregon legislature during the session that begins in January, 2011. We will discuss these at the first meeting of the class. Focusing on an issue or proposal does not imply that I, or members of the class, endorse a specific piece of legislation, a particular proposal, the views of a sponsor, or the positions of a political party. Rather, it acknowledges issues of social concern that merit attention. A student who objects for personal reasons to working on one issue should be able to find an unobjectionable alternative on which to make a productive contribution.

While our work focuses on the interests of our clients, neither existing law nor the specification of a proposed law necessarily constrain the class. You can research the issue in its broad social context, define the problem as you understand it, and develop recommendations appropriate to your definition. In sum, the class will examine the underlying public problem associated with an issue, consider what, if any, government action is appropriate, and suggest solutions, evaluating them in terms of their social, economic, and political implications. Throughout the process, you will give your client status reports and confirm that you are on the right track.

Project Management

You will be interacting with individuals off campus who care deeply about the issues. You will be seen as representing me, the Atkinson School, and the University. With regard to field projects as educational exercises, I operate under the medical maxim from the physician's Hippocratic Oath: do no harm. No harm to you, to the School, to the University, to the client, to any one. To that end, communication among us is important. Follow several principles. First, do not surprise me; no questionnaire, interview protocol, draft, or final report leaves the Mudd building without prior approval from me. Second, do not surprise your client; if you are in doubt about the appropriateness of something your team intends to do, ask your client. Third, do not surprise your team; be professional and cooperative, live up to the agreements you make. My aim is to avoid misunderstanding about what we should be doing, when, and with whom.

If you have questions about an activity you plan to undertake, or concerns about something that arises during off campus interactions, and you want reactions from me, do not

hesitate to contact me by email or telephone, either at School (503-370-6237) or at my cell (503-575-8256; preferably after 7 AM and before 10 PM). I check my email regularly, including weekends. Again, don't hesitate to contact me. And check your own email frequently for messages from members of your team.

To facilitate researching and writing the policy analysis paper, we will run the course on a WISE site. We'll be able to create files that can be accessed only by the members of your team and by me. Consider using Googledocs to work on documents as a team. If you interview someone, write your notes in a file accessible to everyone on your team. If you draft a section of the report, save it for access by other members of your team. Word to the wise, however, backup your work! For videoconferencing, we can arrange for you to use the University license for Adobe Connect.

Evaluation

Policy Analysis Project 40%

The team will receive one grade for the project. Team members will evaluate each other's contributions and individual grades will be adjusted accordingly.

Memoranda and matrix 30%

Two, two-page memoranda: one on a topic associated with textual material (individual work product) and on a matrix of policy risks (team product).

Class contribution 30%

Contributing orally or in writing facilitates learning and reinforces behavior expected in a typical workplace. To make a useful contribution you should be prepared, informed, and questioning. I recommend that you form study groups to discuss the reading assignments before class.

You can contribute in two ways: by engaging in discussion during class or by making entries into a blog, or, for that matter, both. The blog will be in WISE. A blog is like an online journal or diary. Focus on learning and articulating lessons about policy analysis: what works, doesn't work, why and when. Everyone can comment on the blog and you can comment on anything anyone contributes, just as you can comment during class and comment on something another student says.

I will assess your contributions to class discussions and the blog. Quality is more important than the quantity. I consider the following:

- Are you prepared for case discussions?
- Do you present ideas clearly, concisely and persuasively?
- Do you assist your peers with constructive criticisms?
- Do you integrate material from the text into your comments?
- Do your comments transcend the "I feel" syndrome, showing evidence of analysis, integrating concepts and discussion?

- Do you display a willingness to test new ideas or are your comments safe?
- Do you advance our understanding of the situation by asking a key question, summarizing and recapitulating, citing relevant personal examples, or stating concepts more clearly—especially if discussion becomes muddled?

I may contribute to the blog, as well as monitoring and assessing your contributions to it and to others', just as I will during class discussion.

Plan to contribute every week. That's not a requirement but actions have consequences. If you miss class for any reason, you will receive a 0 for that class. If you attend class but do not contribute to discussion in class or to the blog, you will receive a 1. If you contribute in a material way to class or to the blog, you earn a 2. By "material," I mean, for example, a comment directly from a reading that helps our understanding. If the quality of your contributions is significant, you earn a 3. By "significant," I mean a comment that advances our understanding through an insightful interpretation, or, a lesson learned that's generalizable and useful to others. In that same vein, you can earn a 4 by making a constructive criticism, whether of something I say or do or something another student says or does; giving good advice; or asking an insightful question. The most valuable contributions are those that help others. I plan to review the blog every Tuesday morning, assessing them by class time.

I expect you to speak with me about making up any class that you miss, which can offset a 0. In calculating your contribution score, I will drop the lowest score, unless it's a zero and you haven't spoken with me about making up the class.

Access and accommodation

Willamette University seeks to be a diverse community and to provide equal opportunity in its educational programs, activities and employment. In keeping with the letter and spirit of federal and state laws, the institution is committed not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, marital status, or sexual orientation.

Students requesting accommodations for a disability need to be registered through the Willamette University's Disability Services Office. Any student requesting academic accommodations due to a disability is requested to provide a Schedule of Academic Accommodations from Disability Services within the first two weeks of classes.

Contact the Bishop Wellness Center Disabilities Services Office by phone at 503-370-6471 or visit their website at <http://www.willamette.edu/dept/disability/>

Schedule

- 8-24** **The Policy Analysis Project**
Reading *Guide to Field-Study Projects* pp. 5-11
Discuss proposed policy studies and select topics; review issues of teamwork
Contact client to arrange a meeting on 9/2 or as close to that as possible
- 8-26** **What is a policy analysis?**
Reading WV Ch 1 and 2
Bardach, A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis, 3rd Edition, pp.1-64
Assignment Bring to class an article or url for an article in the *Wall Street Journal*,
Oregonian, *Economist*, *New York Times*, or any other paper, magazine, blog
or ezine, domestic or international, about a public policy. Be prepared to
identify what the policy is.
Exercise: Prepare to discuss Question 1, Ch 1 and Question 2, Ch. 2
Review the issue paper in Ch. 1; given the instructions in Bardach, identify
what you like most about the paper and what you would improve. Be prepared
to discuss the strengths and weakness of the paper.
- 8-31** **Professional Ethics**
Reading WV, Ch. 3
Exercise Questions 1 and 2
- 9-2** **Client Meetings**
Reading *Guide to Field-Study Projects*, pp. 32-36.
Exercise Prepare questions to learn more about the policy issues as well as the client's
values, interests, and objectives
- 9-7** **Defining problems and policies**
Reading WV, Ch. 4, 5
Exercise Submit a one-page memorandum describing the problem the client posed
along with your thoughts about possible solutions
- 9-9** **Field Projects**
Reading WV Ch. 14, Bardach, Part 2, *Guide to Field-Study Projects*, pp. 12-32, 37-41,
45-47; UO Research Resource Guide
Exercise Plan and allocate workload and responsibilities; discuss potential group
problems.
- 9-14** **Limitations of the competitive framework**
Reading WV Ch 6
Assignment Bring to class an article or url for an article in the *Wall Street Journal*,
Oregonian, *Economist*, *New York Times*, or any other paper, magazine, blog
or ezine, domestic or international, about a public policy. It may be the same
article you brought to class on 8-26. Be prepared to identify the policy and the
market failure it aims to correct.

- 9-16**
Reading
Question
Due 9-16
- Rationales for public policy: Distributional goals**
WV Ch 7, *Field Guide* pp. 43-44
Questions 1 and 2; Does your field projects involve market failures or other market limitations?
Submit scope of work to client today and negotiate agreement by 9-26
- 9-21**
Exercise
Due 9-21
- Field Projects: Update class and client**
Discuss alternative rationales for public policy on your issue
Prepare a two-page memorandum to your team outlining a rationale for public policy on your issue. In effect, redefine the problem. You may discuss this with members of your team before preparing your memo; members of your team can explore different rationales. The work you submit, however, should be your own.
- 9-23**
- Meet with team/client**
- 9-28**
Reading
Question
Assignment
- Limits to public intervention**
WV Ch 8, 9
What are the risks of government action on the issue raised by your client?
Bring to class an article or url for an article in the *Wall Street Journal*, *Oregonian*, *Economist*, *New York Times*, or any other paper, magazine, blog or ezine, domestic or international, about a public policy. It may be the same article you brought to class on 8-26. Be prepared to identify the policy and the costs of public intervention.
- 9-30**
Reading
Question
- Generic policies**
WV Ch 10; Bardach Appendix B
What range of alternative policies is appropriate for your issue?
- 10-5**
Question
- Field projects: Update class and client**
What have you learned thus far? What resources are you using in your research? What problems have you experienced and how are you managing them?
- 10-7**
Reading
- Adopting Policies**
WV Ch. 11, *A Note on Mapping*, Bardach Appendix D
- 10-12**
Reading
Due 10-12
- Implementing Policies**
WV Ch. 12; Bardach Appendix C
Prepare a two-page memorandum to your team outlining the adoption and implementation problems you anticipate with respect to your issue. You may discuss this with members of your team before preparing your memo; members of your team can explore different concerns. The work you submit, however, should be your own.

- 10-14**
Reading
Question
Government Supply
WV Ch. 13 *Guide to Field-Study Projects* pp. 41-45, 54-56
1 and 2
- 10-19**
Reading
Question
Exercise
Confronting Policy Problems
WV Ch. 15
1 and 2
Design a goals/alternatives matrix for your policy issue; discuss the risks of implementing possible alternatives.
- 10-21**
Reading
Question
Benefit-cost analysis
WV Ch 16
1 and 2; which elements your field project lend themselves to benefit-cost analysis and how would you proceed?
- 10-26**
Due
Field Project
Two page memorandum plus matrix: present your goals/alternatives matrix and the risks of implementing possible alternatives
- 10-28**
Reading
Question
Role of statistics
WV Ch 17, 18
1 and 2
- 11-2 to 11-4**
Reading
Work in teams
Guide to Field-Study Projects pp. 48-end
- 11-9**
Question
Project update for class and sponsor
What have you learned thus far? What resources are you using in your research? What problems have you experienced and how are you managing them?
- 11-11**
Work in teams
- November 16**
Project update for class and sponsor
- Due**
Oral presentation to class of preliminary findings and recommendations with request for feedback
- November 18**
Draft Reports Due
- Due**
Draft of paper, including alternative, criteria, evidence, and recommendations.

November 23 Final Reports Due (submit to sponsor)

Question: What obstacles do you anticipate if the organization implements your recommendations and how would you advise the organization to manage them?

What questions do you have? What do you like about the reports and what would you improve?

November 25 Thanksgiving Holiday

11-30 Presentation to client

12-2 Debrief and lessons learned