



PLCY 210 – Policy Innovation & Analysis  
Second Summer Session 2014  
Class Time: 9:45 – 11:15 M-F  
Saunders 213

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### ***Note about this Syllabus***

This course document is not static but rather a *living* syllabus; it may be updated and modified during the course. While there is a structure for our 6 weeks together with some lectures and readings, the class will be further enriched through your active participation. In addition to course announcements and emails, it is important that you frequent the Sakai site throughout the semester as assignments, requirements, and information may be updated.

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS**

There is universal agreement that we all want to live in a better world. There is a need to define innovative solutions to public problems, to provide analysis of different alternatives and to create a course of action that would benefit the largest number of stakeholders with the least amount of upheaval and resistance. This course focuses on the process of constructing, evaluating, and deciding among alternatives based on their ability to satisfy one or more of society's goals. The process begins with defining the problem and understanding stakeholders and their priorities; assembling objectives, and replicable and quantitative data; selecting criteria relevant for making a decision; and then evaluating the tradeoffs of different alternatives and finally making a recommendation. ***The goals of this course are to introduce you to the core steps, theories, and tools of this process, to give you practice applying these tools and to encourage you to evaluate the effectiveness of different policy alternatives.***

Fundamentally, this is a how to course on decision making, particularly in the public sector. While the information and tools it covers are also applicable to private sector decisions, most of the references in this course will involve problems facing public policy makers—e.g., a legislator, the manager of a public utility, the director of a public welfare program, an administrator in a school system, the mayor of a city, the governor of a state, or the president of the United States. The information and tools will be applied to substantive public policy topics with the idea that a good policy analyst can approach problems as a generalist and bring specific information from a given policy area to bear on the analysis.

When performed well, public policy analysis should help policy makers arrive at viable, informed policy choices with a credible expectation of what the expected outcomes of those

policy choices will be. This course is designed to help you develop the skills required to define and critically analyze policy topics and problems, articulate relevant decision-making criteria for policy analysis, evaluate alternative policy solutions, and assess the means and costs of implementation.

At the completion of the semester, I do not expect you to be an expert in policy analysis. I hope, however, that you will have learned more about what policy analysis is, how to do it, and its strengths and limitations. This knowledge will prove useful in whatever activities you pursue during and after your college career. It will help you to understand and contribute meaningfully to the policy-making process and to social change and innovation.

## **COURSE SPECIFICS**

### **Required Texts**

There are two required texts for this course:

Wheelan, C. (2011). *Introduction to Public Policy*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.

Bardach, E. (2011). *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving (4th Ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Congressional Quarterly (CQ) Press.

### **Additional Readings & Course Updates**

In addition to readings from the books above, we will also discuss a variety of other readings in the form of journal articles, press pieces, research reports, and/or excerpts from other texts.

These readings will be available on Sakai (<https://sakai.unc.edu>). **You should check this site regularly for announcements and updates about the course schedule and/or assignments.**

## **COURSE ASSESSMENTS**

You will have a variety of opportunities to demonstrate your learning and will be assessed in the following ways:

### **Assignments (10% of course grade)**

There will be a series of assignments to provide you with practice on the concepts learned in class. The due dates for some of these assignments are listed in the syllabus, but additional short assignments may be announced in class with due dates not listed on the syllabus. You will be given ample time to complete any assignment that is not listed on the course calendar. These assignments may require you to read or research an article on a timely topic, and respond to the article based on the area of policy analysis we are currently studying. The course will alternate between lecture and discussion components, as well as include a few group activities.

### **Policy Brief (60% of course grade)**

Throughout the course, you will write a policy brief related to your research topic. Additional information regarding the policy brief will be available on the course website as the semester

progresses. For most of you this will be your first time writing a policy brief, which involves an iterative process of defining a public policy problem, reading and synthesizing the literature, defining and evaluating alternatives and making a recommendation. Keep in mind that policy briefs are easier to write when the problem definition is precise, there is an identifiable need for government intervention and the author is open to considering a range of alternatives.

Students will work on their policy briefs in some class meetings, but mostly individually outside of class. I will assign general topics for the policy brief, based on input from the students. Our emphasis is on the process of writing a policy brief and not on a specific policy domain or topic. The goal of the policy brief is to allow you to apply, in a systematic manner, the information you learn in readings, lectures, and discussions. You will write the policy brief in two parts. Further details will be forthcoming.

A grading rubric will be posted for each part of the policy brief. You should review the grading rubric so that you understand the criteria that I will use in evaluating your work. Note that the assignment is cumulative so that Part 2 builds on Part 1. *The total brief will be expected to be approximately 12 pages in addition to the one-page executive summary.*

For research support, please consider both the Graduate Research Consultant (Alex Graddy-Reed, [agraddy@live.unc.edu](mailto:agraddy@live.unc.edu)) and UNC’s Writing Center (<http://writingcenter.unc.edu>) as resources.

**Exams (30% of course grade)**

There will be two exams in this course. Exam 2, while not “strictly” cumulative, will presume mastery of concepts from the first half of the course – and the ability to apply such concepts in novel situations. I have set aside two days to review the material learned prior to the exams (one day for each exam respectively); however, please do not ask me what will be on the exam

**EVALUATION**

Your grade will be based on the following graded activities:

ITEM	WEIGHT
<b>Assignments:</b>	10%
Library Assignment	(5%)
Problem Set	(5%)
<b>Policy Brief:</b>	60%
Policy Brief # 1	(15%)
Policy Brief # 2	(35%)
Policy Brief Presentation	(10%)
<b>Exams:</b>	30%
Exam 1	(15%)
Exam 2	(15%)
<b>Class Contribution</b> [see “class contribution” section]	+/- X ppts
<b>TOTAL</b>	100%

I use the following standard to associate a final numeric grade with a final letter grade:

Numeric Grade	Letter Grade	Level of Mastery
93 – 100%	A	Exceptional
88 – 92%	A-/B+	Very good
83 – 87%	B	Above average
78 – 82%	B-/C+	Average
70 – 77%	C/C-	Satisfactory
Below 70%	D+/D/D-/F	Poor/Deficient

Note that effort  $\neq$  mastery, but mastery = f(effort, X, Y, Z)

## **COURSE POLICIES**

### **Class Attendance**

Class attendance and participation is expected. To prepare adequately for class discussions, you must read the assignments *before* class. Be prepared to participate in class discussions and ask questions. You should ask questions during lectures, as this will get you actively involved, generate discussion, and indicate to the instructors which ideas and information you find interesting, important, or confusing.

### **Class Contribution**

The overall quality (and quantity) of your contributions will be assessed and can add up to 3 percentage points (ppts) to your final grade (0 = average contributions; +1 ppt = thoughtful, above average contributions; +2 ppts = insightful, critical contributions; +3 ppts = exceptionally insightful and productive contributions).

### **Class Protocol/Lateness/Courtesy**

Each class is a business meeting. You should be prompt and prepared. Arriving late will affect your grade. You are allowed one “come late” or “leave early” pass. Each additional will result in a ½ point deduction from your final grade. Not only do excessive absences, tardiness, and early departure suggest a lack of professionalism and commitment, but they also guarantee that you will not attain the objectives of this course. Please turn off your cell phones and other electronic devices to avoid distracting your classmates and the instructor.

### **Absences**

Missing class will materially affect your course grade. You are allowed one unexcused absence without penalty. After that, an unexcused absence will result in a 3-point subtraction from your final grade. For example, if you have an 89 final average and two unexcused absences your final grade will be 86 (an additional 3 points will be deducted for each absence thereafter).

Excused absences, including illnesses, family crises/deaths, university business, etc., require documentation verifying the reason for your absence. Discretion regarding what constitutes an excused absence rests with the instructor.

I stress attendance not only for your benefit, but also for the benefit of your classmates. While it is entirely possible that you, personally, could excel in this course with more than one unexcused absence, your poor attendance makes it more difficult for your classmates collectively to excel. This course depends upon active participation and input by all students.

### **Class Environment and Technology Use**

I view the classroom as a community of scholars who are learning from one another. To learn from someone else, you must actually pay attention to him or her. Yet, the act of concerted, focused attention on a task at hand is an increasingly difficult (but valuable) skill. To aid in the development of that skill, we will generally keep laptops closed. In the preparation and delivery of each classroom session, I am giving you my undivided attention. I expect the same in return. If you feel that you need to use your laptop for instructional purposes related to this course, you will sign a pledge that articulates your commitment to such a use. *If this commitment is then broken, your overall course grade will be decreased by 5 percentage points for each occurrence.*

If you want to store all class material on your laptop, transcribing your written notes after lecture is a great way to nail down the material. I will upload any relevant slides/handouts/materials for each class period to the course site in order to facilitate this process. Again, please turn off your cell phones and other electronic devices in order to minimize distraction for yourself and others.

### **Academic Honesty**

You are required to comply with the University's honesty policy regarding cheating and the use of copyrighted materials. The [Instrument of Student Judicial Governance](#), which contains the provisions of the Honor Code, states that students have four general responsibilities under the Code:

1. Obey and support the enforcement of the Honor Code;
2. Refrain from lying, cheating, or stealing;
3. Conduct themselves so as not to impair significantly the welfare or the educational opportunities of others in the University community; and
4. Refrain from conduct that impairs or may impair the capacity of University and associated personnel to perform their duties, manage resources, protect the safety and welfare of members of the University community, and maintain the integrity of the University.

Plagiarism is a violation of the Honor Code and is defined as “deliberate or reckless representation of another's words, thoughts, or ideas as one's own without attribution in connection with submission of academic work, whether graded or otherwise.” In addition, the Honor System suggests that all written work should be submitted with the following pledge: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment.” *This is a requirement with submission of all course assignments.*

### **Late Assignments & Make-up Exams**

I expect you to turn in all assignments on time. Grades on late assignments will be penalized at 10%. The due dates are marked clearly on the course syllabus and on each assignment.

Assignments turned in after 24 hours will **not** be graded (i.e. I will input the grade as a 0 for the assignment).

The exam dates and all other important deadlines have been scheduled in advance (see course schedule). It is your responsibility to modify your schedule to attend these exams. If you have an excused absence, the exam can be made up under my discretion and only in extremely compelling circumstances.

### **Grade Appeals**

If you feel that an exam, paper, or other assignment was graded incorrectly, you must submit a formal (i.e., type-written) explanation of the concern and your rationale as to why a different grade is merited. Before making such an appeal you should re-read your work, the standards/criteria by which it was assessed, and the comments that relate your work to those criteria. After your letter is received, your paper/exam/assignment will be reconsidered and a decision rendered within two class meetings. Depending on the situation, your grade may stay the same, be raised, or be lowered. This system is designed to minimize frivolous grade appeals and to ensure that you have carefully examined and reflected on the quality of your work before deciding to initiate a grade appeal. You have *\*two class periods\** after an assignment is returned to file a grade appeal. After two class periods, grades on the assignment are final.

### **Graduate Research Consultant**

In this course, you will be working with a Graduate Research Consultant (Alex Graddy-Reed) who will assist you in the research project. The GRC Program is sponsored by the Office for Undergraduate Research ([www.unc.edu/depts/our](http://www.unc.edu/depts/our)). I encourage you to visit this website to see other ways that you might engage in research, scholarship and creative performance while you are at Carolina.

\*\* I strongly encourage you to meet with the GRC before the Policy Brief assignments are due. You may also choose to meet with me as well, but I ask that you meet with the GRC first, and then schedule a meeting with me. I have also set aside time for additional meetings before the final policy brief is due.

Please email Alex Graddy-Reed ([agraddy@live.unc.edu](mailto:agraddy@live.unc.edu)) to set up a time to meet. She will not hold regular offices hours for this course.

### **Disabilities**

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with documented disabilities. The Office of Accessibility Resources & Services is located in Suite 2126 in the Student Academic Services Building (SASB), between the Rams Center and Morrison Residence Hall. The staff can be contacted by phone at 919-962-8300, or email at [accessibility@unc.edu](mailto:accessibility@unc.edu), or through the web at <http://accessibility.unc.edu>.