

*Carnegie Mellon University
Heinz College
School of Public Policy and Management*

90-730

POLICY ANALYSIS IN PRACTICE

Fall 2021 Syllabus

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DAY/TIME/PLACE: Monday, 8:35 a.m. – 11:25 a.m.
HBH 2003

OFFICE HOURS: By appointment only

NOTE: Prior to 2021, this course was called *Methods of Policy Analysis*. The name was changed to better reflect the content of the course.

PREREQUISITES

This course is designed for students in the Master of Science in Public Policy and Management program who have skills equivalent to what is taught in the School's core courses in economic analysis, statistical methods, management science, financial analysis, organizational design, policy and politics, and professional writing. In addition, an understanding of American government institutions and programs will be necessary in order for a student to participate effectively in the class discussions and to successfully complete the assignments.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

If you successfully complete this course, you will:

1. Have an in-depth understanding of several complex policy issues in diverse substantive areas.
2. Understand the major steps in the policy analysis and development process, including (a) how and when policy issues become important, and (b) how initiatives to address those issues are developed, analyzed, presented, implemented, evaluated, and terminated.
3. Understand a number of common pitfalls in policy analysis and how to avoid them;

4. Improve your ability to think critically about policy issues, think creatively about alternatives for addressing the issues, think analytically about the advantages and disadvantages of alternatives, and think practically about successful implementation of recommended alternatives.
5. Develop experience in analyzing different types of policy issues and different types of government programs.
6. Improve your skills in effectively communicating policy analyses to decision-makers.
7. Understand what it is like to work as a policy analyst in a government or civic agency and what techniques can be used to increase your effectiveness in that role.

OVERVIEW OF COURSE CONTENT

Successful policy analysis in real-world settings is far more than being able to collect data, run regressions, use optimization models, or identify market failures. It involves:

- anticipating issues that may need analysis;
- determining when a problem exists and what is causing it;
- defining and prioritizing the goals to be achieved in addressing the problem;
- developing creative alternatives to address the problem;
- analyzing the impacts of alternatives on different interests, both quantitatively and qualitatively;
- assessing the uncertainties in impact estimates;
- comparing alternatives in order to support decisions that can be successfully adopted and implemented in a political environment;
- communicating the results of analyses and recommendations in ways that will successfully influence policy decisions; and
- resolving ethical dilemmas in conflicting roles.

The course is designed to teach you a number of principles and approaches that can help you in carrying out these tasks and to provide you with experience in applying those principles to realistic policy problems. The course will improve your understanding of how public policies are actually developed, analyzed, and implemented, and it will explain the roles the policy analyst can play in improving this process. You will gain experience in analyzing policy problems through both class discussions and assignments. The examples used will primarily be based on real-world cases, with all the complexity that implies.

Statistics, econometrics, operations research, financial analysis, and other sophisticated analytical tools are taught in depth in many other courses at the Heinz College and elsewhere at Carnegie Mellon, and you will not learn more of these types of methodologies in this course. Instead, this course should complement those other courses by helping you understand when and how to apply analytic methodologies effectively in addressing real world problems. In addition, the course will also demonstrate approaches to analysis that can be used when data or time are insufficient to allow use of complex methods, as is often the case in many policy analysis roles.

The specific policy problems have been selected to expose you to a range of substantive areas (e.g., criminal justice, economic development, education, energy, environmental protection, health, and human services) and to a range of generic types of public policies (e.g., subsidy and entitlement programs, tax incentives, regulations, etc.). Some of the topics may be familiar to you while others will likely not be. The ideas, techniques, and experience in one substantive area can provide important lessons for tackling problems in other, seemingly very different substantive areas. Consequently, there is a significant benefit to learning about and doing policy analyses on diverse topics, including issues you may think you are not interested in. Moreover, having a basic understanding of multiple policy areas will help you to identify or pursue a wider range of job opportunities.

The topics discussed in class will be limited to U.S. domestic policy issues. Foreign policy and defense policy issues are not discussed, although the approaches to analyzing problems taught in the class will be applicable to many aspects of these issues. Since the cases and assignments deal with U.S. domestic policy issues in some depth, you need to have a reasonable degree of familiarity with U.S. federal, state, and local government institutions and programs to understand the class discussions and successfully carry out the assignments. International students without this level of understanding may need to spend additional time doing background research on the topics in order to understand class discussions and successfully complete the assignments.

Effective communication is an essential skill for a policy analyst. The ability to clearly and convincingly convey the results of an analysis to a decision-maker can make the difference between whether an analysis has an impact on policy or is ignored. Poor grammar, confusing style, and typographical errors in written materials can do as much or more to reduce the credibility of an analysis as can the inappropriate use of quantitative methodologies or inaccuracies in calculations. Consequently, you will be expected to produce well-written memoranda and other materials in the assignments. A significant portion of the grade for each assignment will be based on the quality of your writing and the thoroughness of your proofreading, and failing grades will be given to students who submit materials that are difficult to understand or have been poorly proofread.

COURSE MATERIALS

There will be no textbook for this course, since there are no textbooks that provide a good treatment of the full range of material in the course. Instead, most of the key concepts will be conveyed through a combination of lecture and discussion in class. This means that attendance in class is essential.

In addition, a group of journal articles and book chapters has been assembled to supplement the information provided in class. Although you will not be tested on the specifics in these readings, you will be expected to understand and remember the basic ideas and principles that the readings convey, and to demonstrate your understanding of the readings during the discussions in class and in the assignments you submit. When specific readings are assigned for particular class sessions, you should plan to complete those readings prior to class and be prepared for discussion about them in class.

The readings for the course will be posted on Carnegie Mellon's Canvas web-based course management system. Most classes will also have one or more handouts to support the discussion, but these will generally not be posted on Canvas.

In addition, since policy analysis is not just a task that is assigned to policy analysts working in government or civic agencies, but a set of critical thinking skills that can be applied to issues affecting citizens every day, I encourage you to read news articles about current public policy issues and think about how the techniques and perspectives being discussed in class might apply to them.

CLASS DISCUSSION

The class discussions are an essential part of the course, and you will need to participate actively to gain the maximum benefit from the course. You should prepare for each class by: (1) thinking about the discussions in the previous classes so you can ask questions about anything you didn't understand; (2) reading any materials and thinking about any questions specifically assigned for discussion at the class.

During the discussions in class, I encourage you to make comments and offer creative ideas. In most cases, there is no one "right" solution to any problem, so expressing concerns about the approaches being discussed and making suggestions for alternative approaches is welcome. In doing so, please treat other students and their ideas with respect. You can disagree with another student's ideas, explain why, and offer alternatives, but please do so in a respectful way. Disrespectful or offensive actions toward other students will not be tolerated.

Please do not engage in sidebar conversations with other students during class. If you have a question or an important point to make, you should make it publicly as part of the class discussion, or hold it for discussion after class. Since there is a lot of material to cover during the course, we will not be able to spend as much time on individual topics as they deserve, so do not be offended if I say we need to move on to a new topic sooner than you would like.

Although it will be helpful if you take notes on the key points covered in class, I recommend that you do not try to write down everything that is discussed in class. You will gain the greatest benefit from the course if you actively engage in thinking about the topics we discuss and if you contribute to the discussion in class. It is difficult for most people to do that if they are trying to write or type everything that is said. I will repeat the most important points in multiple classes, but if you feel you have missed or forgotten something important, feel free to ask about it.

ASKING QUESTIONS

Please ask questions during class or after class about anything you don't understand, including topics covered in previous classes. The goal of the course is to improve your knowledge and skills, and the only way I will know that you don't understand something is if you ask a question! Don't worry about asking "dumb questions" – it is almost a certainty that if *you* don't understand something, *someone else* doesn't understand it either, and so the answer to any question you ask will usually be helpful to other students as well as yourself. Asking questions

will never hurt your grade, but *failing* to ask a question about something you don't understand *could* hurt your grade if your lack of understanding leads you to do something incorrectly on an assignment.

ATTENDANCE & PROMPTNESS

Please plan to attend *every* class and be *on time*. The bulk of the material to be learned will come through the discussions in class, and the readings will not serve as an effective substitute. Therefore, missing a particular class means you will have missed the opportunity to learn the material covered in that class, and that could seriously impair your ability to understand the material in later classes and to successfully complete the assignments.

Coming to class late is disruptive to other students and means that you will miss important material. If you routinely arrive late, you will receive a failing grade for class participation. Being “on time” means being in the room and seated, *at or before* the scheduled class starting time. If something urgent requires you to be late or leave early on a particular day, please let me know in advance.

If you cannot attend a class because of a meeting or travel, please notify me of this promptly. Although I will not be able to repeat the material that you miss, I will ensure you receive any assignments or other materials distributed during the class.

If you are ill, you should stay home in order to avoid spreading infection to anyone else in the class and to help yourself get better as quickly as possible. If you can notify me before class that you are not attending, please do so, but otherwise let me know as soon as you are feeling well enough to do so.

ASSIGNMENTS

Individual, Not Group Work

In order to help you gain practical experience in carrying out policy analyses and to enable you to demonstrate that you have learned the principles taught in the course, you will be expected to complete several assignments during the course of the semester. All of the assignments will be individual projects, not group projects, and you will be responsible for carrying out all of the work on each assignment by yourself.

Allowing Adequate Time

The assignments will require you to use the approaches discussed in class to analyze policy issues with which you likely have little or no prior knowledge or experience; they will not merely be minor variations on examples discussed in class. There will not be a single “right” way to do the assignments (but there will be many wrong ways to do them). The principles and examples discussed in class will help you to develop a successful response to each assignment, but the class discussions will not tell you exactly how to do an assignment.

As a result, the assignments will involve considerable time and thought. In order to ensure you can allocate sufficient time to complete the work that is necessary, you will have several weeks to complete each assignment. However, that amount of time will only be adequate if you begin working on the assignment as soon as you receive it. It is unlikely that you will do well on an assignment if you wait until shortly before it is due to begin working on it.

The benefit of producing high quality work on the assignments, particularly the final assignment, can go beyond the grade you receive in the course. Since the assignments will focus on realistic policy issues, the material you prepare can be used to demonstrate to prospective employers the quality of the work that you can do. This can be a significant advantage when competing for policy analysis jobs.

Format of Submissions

All documents you prepare for an assignment should be submitted in Microsoft Office format (Word, Excel, and/or PowerPoint), not PDF or other formats. (If you want to *also* submit a document in PDF format to ensure proper formatting, that is fine, but please also submit the Word, Excel, and/or PowerPoint files that were used to generate it.) All assignments should contain sufficient supporting materials to enable me to determine how you reached your conclusions and to verify any calculations you made.

Before submitting your documents, make sure that they print out in a professionally formatted manner. A spreadsheet submitted merely as documentation of calculations does not have to be formatted for printing, but if a spreadsheet is submitted as a table for a formal memo or report, then it should be formatted to print in a way that would be acceptable as part of such a report.

There are no page limits on the material you can submit for an assignment, nor is there any “expected” length. In general, what you submit should be *as long as necessary* (in order to convey all of the important information) and *as short as possible* (by avoiding unnecessary or unimportant information).

Timeliness of Submissions

There will be a specific deadline for submission of each assignment. Late assignments will *not* be accepted. You will receive a failing grade if an assignment is submitted after the stated deadline. Deadlines for assignments are strictly enforced; if the deadline for an assignment is 5:00 p.m., an assignment submitted at 5:01 p.m. will be considered as a late submission and you will automatically receive a failing grade for that assignment. It will be far better for you to submit an incomplete or imperfect product *before* the deadline than to try and prepare something better but miss the deadline, because you can receive partial credit for the former but you will not receive any credit for the latter.

All assignments should be submitted by email (addressed to Miller.Harold@GMail.com) *before* the date and time specified as the deadline for the assignment. (Assignments should be emailed to me directly; I will *not* use Canvas for submission of assignments.) Do not assume that because you hit “send” that I received the email containing your assignment! If you do not receive a reply from me within a few hours indicating that I received the assignment, contact me to verify that I received it.

No extensions on deadlines will be granted. Moreover, if you do a poor job on an assignment or fail to submit it on time, you will not be given an opportunity to do additional assignments to raise your grade. “Incomplete” (I) grades for the course will not be given, except in cases of documented severe illness or other extraordinary circumstances with approval from the Dean.

GRADING

There will be no quizzes or tests in the course. Grades will be given for each of the assignments and also for class participation, and the grades will be combined based on the following weights:

- **Assignments 1 & 2 — 40% (total)**
- **Assignment 3 — 30%**
- **Class Participation — 30%**

The grades for the assignments will be based on (1) the creativity, quality, and thoroughness of the analysis, (2) the extent to which your submission was responsive to the specifications of the assignment, (3) the extent to which you used applicable principles and methods taught in class, and (4) the quality of the writing. Written documents must be proofread *carefully*. Significant numbers of typographical errors or confusing sentences may result in a failing grade for the assignment.

The grade for class participation will be based on both the quality and quantity of your contributions. A few thoughtful and creative ideas will carry more weight than many trivial or obvious points, and counterproductive participation (e.g., trying to dominate the discussion, going off on tangents, or belittling the ideas of other students) will carry negative weight. Given the importance of participation, failure to attend classes without acceptable justification could result in a failing grade for the class participation component, and possibly a failing grade for the course.

If you disagree with the grade you receive on an assignment or for the course as a whole, you are welcome to request that I re-evaluate the work you submitted and/or the computations I used in assigning the grade.

CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM

Since the assignments will NOT be group projects, you will be expected to work *independently* on each assignment and to submit written material that represents your own personal work effort. Unless it is specifically authorized in writing as part of a graded assignment, collaboration between you and another student is strictly prohibited and will be considered cheating.

If you do not understand an assignment, or if you are having significant difficulty completing it, you are welcome and encouraged to ask any questions you have during class or to send me an email with your questions. You are *not* permitted to seek assistance on graded assignments from other faculty or individuals who are not currently taking the course. If you do seek and receive such help, you will be considered to have cheated, since your submission is supposed to reflect only your own thinking and work. The only exception is assistance from the Carnegie Mellon

Global Communication Center (GCC). You are welcome to use the GCC if you have difficulties in writing clearly, but if you do, you must ask the tutor to send me a copy of the report on the tutoring session.

The most extreme form of cheating is directly copying another student's work. However, since there will be no single "right" way to do the assignments in this course, any unusual similarities between the approaches to analysis or presentation in the assignments submitted by you and another student will be taken as a rebuttable presumption that cheating has occurred by both you and the other student. Consequently, if you attempt to help another student with an assignment, you may well be subject to a penalty for cheating, so please restrain any impulses you may have to help other students who are taking the course. **If you have any doubt as to what type of assistance or collaboration is acceptable on a particular assignment, please ask me for guidance and wait for an answer before undertaking that assistance or collaboration.**

If you use materials from a book, article, website, or other source as part of your analysis and fail to properly reference it or to acknowledge that it is not your own creation, you will be considered to have plagiarized that material.

If you are found to be cheating or plagiarizing in the preparation of materials that are evaluated for grading purposes, you will not only fail that assignment, but you will automatically be failed in the course, and you will be referred to the Dean for additional disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion from the school.

COMPUTERS, PHONES, RECORDERS, ETC.

Cell phones, smartphones, music players, and other electronic devices should be muted or turned off during class. If you are expecting an urgent call during the scheduled class time that cannot be taken at any other time, please notify me at the beginning of the class.

You may use computers, tablets, or other devices in class for note-taking if you wish, but using these devices in class for other reasons is not permitted because it could become a distraction to other students as well as to you. You should also be aware that research has shown that retention is better if you take hand-written notes rather than typing notes into a computer.

You may not use audio or video recorders or cameras in class without prior permission.

FEEDBACK

You are strongly encouraged to let me know — in person, by telephone, via e-mail, or through an anonymous note — if there are ways that the course could be improved, if you are having problems mastering the material, or if the course is not meeting your needs or expectations. While it may not be possible for me to address all concerns or solve all problems, I will do my best to make improvements when possible and to explain why other concerns or suggestions cannot be addressed. There is no grade penalty for "complainers," and you are welcome and encouraged to make suggestions and criticisms. In addition, evaluation forms will be distributed at the middle and end of the course in order to get specific feedback on how well the course is

working. (These will be in addition to the official course evaluation form administered by the University.)

ADJUSTMENTS FOR COVID-19

Although we had all hoped that the COVID-19 pandemic would be behind us by now, it is, unfortunately, still very much with us at the beginning of the Fall 2021 semester. We should all do the best we can to keep ourselves and each other healthy. The following are the minimum steps we will need to take during the time we are together in the classroom.

Facial covering/mask:

- As long as the university is requiring that students wear a facial covering/mask, you will need to (1) wear a mask the entire time you are in class, unless you have an approved exemption from wearing a mask, (2) wear the correct type of mask (i.e., a multi-layer cloth or paper mask with no air vent, not a bandanna or scarf), and (3) wear the mask properly (i.e., over your nose and mouth and under your chin). If you do not have an appropriate mask or are not willing to wear it correctly, and you do not have an exemption, I will have to ask you to leave class.
- If and when students are no longer required to wear a mask, you will still be welcome to wear a mask during class if you wish.
- Since I will be wearing a mask during class, please let me know if you have any difficulties hearing or understanding me.

Food and beverages:

- During the time that masks are required, you are not permitted to eat food in class. You can drink water or other beverages as long as you do not remove or pull down your mask for longer than necessary to take a drink.
- If masks are not required, food and beverages are permitted as long as they do not create noise or odors that are distracting or offensive to others.

Remote learning:

- I am currently planning to conduct all of the classes on an entirely in-person, in-classroom basis. If I should become ill or test positive for COVID-19, I will either cancel a class or attempt to conduct the class over Zoom. If this happens, I will notify you as soon as possible.
- If the Heinz College or the University determines that this class should no longer be carried out in person, I will do my best to teach the course via Zoom. Since the course was not designed for remote learning, some adjustments may be needed to the syllabus and grading requirements.

READINGS

Students should read each of the following articles before the appropriate class indicated on the schedule on the following page. All readings will be available for download from Canvas for registered students.

1. Robert Behn, *The Craft of Memo Writing*.
2. Peter J. May, "Hints for Crafting Alternative Policies," *Policy Analysis* 7(2): 227-244.
Michael O'Hare, "A Typology of Governmental Action," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 8(4): 670-672.
3. Jack Walker, "Setting the Agenda in the U.S. Senate: A Theory of Problem Selection," *British Journal of Political Science* 7(4): 423-445.
4. Mark H. Moore, "Anatomy of the Heroin Problem: An Exercise in Problem Definition," *Policy Analysis* 2(4): 639-662.

Lee N. Robins et al, "Vietnam Veterans Three Years After Vietnam: How Our Study Changed Our View of Heroin," *The American Journal of Addictions* 19: 203-311.

Theodore J. Cicero et al., "The Changing Face of Heroin Use in the United States," *JAMA Psychiatry* 71(7): 821-826.
5. Arnold J. Meltsner, "Don't Slight Communication: Some Problems of Analytical Practice," in Giandomenico Majone and Edward S. Quade, *Pitfalls of Analysis*.
6. "Political Feasibility and Policy Analysis," Arnold Meltsner, *Public Administration Review*, November/December 1972.
7. Eugene Bardach, "On Designing Implementable Programs," in Giandomenico Majone and Edward S. Quade, *Pitfalls of Analysis*.

Additional short readings may be assigned during the course of the semester.

SCHEDULE

The following is a tentative schedule of topics. The topics may change or the number of days devoted to a particular topic may be increased or decreased depending on what happens in previous classes. If there are significant changes in the schedule, a revised schedule will be distributed.

DATES	TOPICS
August 30 (#1)	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>NOTE: Topics and Schedule are subject to revision</i></p> Course Overview Analyzing Policy Problems Case #1: Prescription Drugs and the Elderly
<i>September 6</i>	<i>Labor Day Holiday – No Class</i>
September 13 (#2)	<i>Complete Reading #1</i> Designing Subsidy and Entitlement Programs Analyzing Impacts of Policy Alternatives Case #2: Improving Access to Child Care
<i>September 13</i>	<i>Add/Drop Deadline</i>
September 20 (#3)	Designing Subsidy and Entitlement Programs (continued) Analyzing Impacts of Policy Alternatives (continued)
September 25	<i>Assignment #1 Due at 5:00 p.m.</i>
September 27 (#4)	Designing Incentives Analyzing Impacts of Policy Alternatives (continued) Case #3: Tax Incentives for Job Creation
October 4 (#5)	<i>Complete Reading #2</i> Designing Incentives (continued) Developing Policy Alternatives
October 11 (#6)	<i>Complete Reading #3</i> Agenda Setting in Public Policy Analyzing Indicators Case #4: State Support for Higher Education
October 18 (#7)	Analyzing Indicators (continued) Modeling Policy Problems Case #5: Prison Overcrowding
<i>October 20</i>	<i>Mid-Semester Grades Due</i>
October 23	<i>Assignment #2 Due at 5:00 p.m.</i>

DATES	TOPICS <i>NOTE: Topics and Schedule are subject to revision</i>
October 25 (#8)	Designing Regulations Modeling Policy Problems (continued) Analyzing Impacts of Policy Alternatives (continued) Case #6: Mandatory Sentencing
November 1 (#9)	<i>Complete Reading #4</i> Designing Regulations (continued) Analyzing Impacts of Policy Alternatives (continued) Case #7: Reducing Heroin Use
November 8 (#10)	<i>Complete Reading #5</i> Communicating Analysis Analyzing Impacts of Policy Alternatives (continued) Case #8: Infrastructure Investments
November 15 (#11)	<i>Complete Reading #6</i> Designing Regulations (continued) Analyzing Impacts of Policy Alternatives (continued) Case #9: Improving Air Quality
November 22 (#12)	<i>Complete Reading #7</i> Designing Regulations (continued) Analyzing Impacts of Policy Alternatives (continued) Implementation Analysis Case #10: Implementing Welfare Reform
November 29 (#13)	Implementation Analysis (continued) Ethical Issues in Policy Analysis Case #11: What Would You Do? Course Review and Wrap-Up
December 4	<i>Assignment #3 Due at 4:00 p.m.</i>
<i>December 15</i>	<i>Final Grades Due by 8:00 a.m.</i>