PUBLIC AFFAIRS 873  
INTRODUCTION TO POLICY ANALYSIS

CREDITS: 3

CANVAS COURSE URL: https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/293253/modules

COURSE DESIGNATIONS AND ATTRIBUTES: General

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course provides an introduction to the study of public policy and the professional practice of policy analysis. We consider the following fundamental questions:

• What are the rationales for collective interference in private affairs?
• What are the limitations to collective action?
• What are the generic instruments of public policy?
• How can we assess the effects of programs in meeting their goals?
• What are the appropriate roles for policy analysts in democratic societies?

We also seek to improve our basic skills in analytical thinking, information gathering, and writing as we attempt to answer these questions.

MEETING TIME AND LOCATION: T: 1:20 – 3:15pm; Education L159

INSTRUCTIONAL MODE: In-person

This class meets for one 115-minute class period each week over the spring semester and carries the expectation that students will work on course learning activities (reading, writing, problem sets, studying, etc) for about 6 hours out of classroom for every class period.

INSTRUCTOR: Professor Yang Wang

OFFICE HOURS: W: 9-11am (Virtual), and by appointment

INSTRUCTOR EMAIL: ywang26@wisc.edu

COURSE LEARNRING GOALS
The course contributes to several Student Learning Goals. Most fundamentally, it requires demonstration of the following two goals:
“Students will communicate in clear written language: a real-world problem, relevant scholarly studies and practical applications, a policy-analytic method to investigate the problem, and client-oriented advice to mitigate the problem.” (Goal III A)

“Students will demonstrate the ability to maintain fidelity to objective social science-based research methods.” (Goal IV D)

**GRADING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Four memorandum exercises</td>
<td>20% (4*5%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pop-briefing</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Additional Assignments</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm (03/29/22)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy analysis project</td>
<td>40%</td>
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Grade Criteria: A >= 93%, AB >= 89%, B >= 80%, BC >= 75%, C >= 65%, D >= 55%, F <55%

**TEXTBOOK AND OTHER RESOURCES**

We will use the following textbook, which is available on reserve:


A few additional readings and other relevant course materials are available through Canvas. Please identify and draw from scholarly research relevant to your particular policy analysis project.

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Course Content</th>
<th>Readings for that class</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>Policy Analysis: Overview</strong> We consider two important questions that we will revisit</td>
<td>Weimer and Vining, Chapters 2 and 3</td>
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| 4 | **Market Failures as Rationales for Public Policy**  
Welfare economics specifies the assumptions for the Pareto efficiency of market allocations. Certain violations of these assumptions underlie the common market failures (public goods, externalities, natural monopolies, and information asymmetries), which provide important rationales for collective interference with individual choices. Our goal is to understand market failures, and other limitations of the competitive framework, for purposes of framing and modeling policy problems. | Weimer and Vining, Chapters 4, 5, and 6 |
| 5 | **Goals Other Than Efficiency as Rationales for Public Policy**  
Though efficiency is almost always one of the relevant goals in policy analysis, it is rarely the only one. It is useful to develop conceptual foundations for thinking about distributional and other goals that commonly arise in policy analysis. | Weimer and Vining, Chapter 7 |
| 6 | **Government Failure as Limitation and Rationale**  
Just as markets fail in systematic ways, so too does collective action. Such generic government failures interfere with the effective correction of market failures and produce public policies that themselves are policy problems. | Weimer and Vining, Chapters 8 and 9  

Memo 2 due (03/01). |
| 7 | **Structuring Analysis**  
An overview of the steps in the rationalist mode of policy analysis. We consider how to frame and model policy problems, select appropriate goals and criteria, specify policy alternatives, predict and value consequences, identify tradeoffs among alternatives, and effectively communicate recommendations. | Weimer and Vining, Chapters 14, 15 and 16 |
<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Policy Design</strong></th>
<th><strong>Weimer and Vining, Chapters 10 and 13</strong></th>
<th><strong>Memo 3 due (03/22).</strong></th>
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<td></td>
<td>A discussion of how to design policies. We will consider generic policies as starting points for design, as well as borrowing and adapting designs used in other contexts.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td><strong>Midterm</strong></td>
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<td>10</td>
<td><strong>Class Workshop on Goals/Alternatives Matrices</strong></td>
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<td>Bring your goals/alternative matrix for your project to class. Be prepared to present it as a PDF file to the class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td><strong>Thinking Strategically: Adoption and Implementation</strong></td>
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<td>12</td>
<td><strong>Cost-Benefit Analysis</strong></td>
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<td>Although cost-benefit analysis (CBA) is rarely appropriate as a decision rule, it provides useful protocols for valuing the efficiency impacts of policy</td>
<td>Weimer and Vining, Chapters 16 and 17 Moore, Mark A., Anthony E. Boardman, Aidan R. Vining, David L. Weimer, and David H. Greenberg. &quot;&quot;Just give me a</td>
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alternatives. We review basic concepts underlying CBA such as willingness-to-pay, opportunity cost, discounting for time, and the treatment of risk. We also consider the conceptual and practical limitations to its application.


| 13 | **Project Submission** | Project report is due at the beginning of the class (04/26). |
| 14 | **Project Wrap-Up** | Memo 4 due (05/03) |
|    | This session is set aside for revisiting topics of interest and discussing successful completion of projects. |

This schedule is subject to changes.

**LECTURES**

Ideally, you will read/view the assigned material before coming to class, so lecture provides a second exposure to the material. I will not go over all of the details in lecture but will highlight the most important parts.

**COURSE WEBPAGE**

We have a CANVAS webpage for this course. You can find most course materials there (please go to Modules), including the syllabus, links to other important webpages, and so forth. You will also submit your homework and other assignments onto CANVAS course webpage, so please make effort to get familiar with how it works. You are responsible for accessing the course webpage on a regular basis.

**ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION**

Attendance is required for this class. Please email me if you cannot make it to the class (on time) for any reason. To have an inspired class requires effort on the part of the instructor and the student. Please actively participate in class and let me know if you have question or concern about the class.

**ASSIGNMENTS**

The four memorandum exercises provide an opportunity to practice analytical writing: the first exercise provides a general introduction; the remaining three are related to your policy analysis project and those of others.

The pop-briefing simulates the sort of oral report you are likely to be called upon to make while you are working on a major project. You will have a total of ten minutes to introduce the issue you are addressing in your policy analysis project, pose an analytical question you are trying to address, and lead discussion of it. Work hard to keep the introduction of your issue to about one minute. You should allow at least five minutes for discussion. The discussion may be extended...
at my discretion. I will randomly select two or three presenters each class beginning on 
**February 15th.**

A semester-long **project** on a randomly assigned topic gives you an opportunity to apply the 
concepts and craft skills introduced in the course. I will base my assessment primarily on your 
first draft, which is due on **April 26th**, and secondarily on your revisions, which are due **May 7th** in PDF format with an accompanying memorandum explaining any revisions you made to the 
first draft. The title of the file should be (your last name)_(word conveying subject)_2022.pdf. Please have a separate page at the end of the report on how you have responded to comments on 
your initial report draft.

There are also additional assignments based on the readings almost weekly. You can choose to 
skip one week during the semester without losing any credit.

**EXAM**
In-class midterm exam will be closed book, closed notes. Proctoring will be required. It is within 
the instructor’s discretion to engage the use of a proctoring service, such as Honorlock, during 
the semester if circumstances result in exams or other testing moving from in-class to online or 
another virtual option. Failure to use the proctoring service assigned will result in point 
deduction for the exams. Once the decision to use the proctoring service is made by the 
instructor and the student has registered for the class, the use of the proctoring is a condition of 
enrollment in the class.

**GRADING**
Your grade will be based on how well you do. You are encouraged to help your classmates 
understand how to solve a problem. However, every student is ultimately responsible for solving 
his or her own specific problem answers. There will be no working together permitted on the 
exams. Therefore, you are responsibility for making sure that you can do the problems yourself 
before you come to the exams.

**CLASS MANNERS**
- Please come to class on time. If you know that you will be late, please let me know in 
  advance.
- Please do not leave class early. If you have to leave early, please let me know in advance.
- Please turn off or at least mute your electronics including laptops and cell phones.

**PRIVACY OF STUDENT RECORDS & THE USE OF AUDIO RECORDED**
**RECORDED LECTURES STATEMENT**
Lecture materials and recordings for this course are protected intellectual property at UW-
Madison. Students in this course may use the materials and recordings for their personal use 
related to participation in this class. Students may also take notes solely for their personal use. If 
a lecture is not already recorded, you are not authorized to record my lectures without my 
permission unless you are considered by the university to be a qualified student with a disability 
who has an approved accommodation that includes recording. [Regent Policy Document 4-1]
Students may not copy or have lecture materials and recordings outside of class, including 
posting on internet sites or selling to commercial entities, with the exception of sharing copies of
your personal notes as a notetaker through the McBurney Disability Resource Center. Students are otherwise prohibited from providing or selling their personal notes to anyone else or being paid for taking notes by any person or commercial firm without the instructor’s express written permission. Unauthorized use of these copyrighted lecture materials and recordings constitutes copyright infringement and may be addressed under the university’s policies, UWS Chapters 14 and 17, governing student academic and non-academic misconduct. View [more information about FERPA](#).

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO SUCCEED IN THIS COURSE

- [University Health Services](#)
- [Graduate Student Services](#)
- [Office of the Registrar](#)
- [Office of Student Financial Aid](#)
- [Dean of Students Office](#)

### COURSE EVALUATIONS

Students will be provided with an opportunity to evaluate this course and your learning experience. Student participation is an integral component of this course, and your confidential feedback is important to me. I strongly encourage you to participate in the course evaluation.

### STUDENTS’ RULES, RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

During the global COVID-19 pandemic, we must prioritize our collective health and safety to keep ourselves, our campus, and our community safe. As a university community, we must work together to prevent the spread of the virus and to promote the collective health and welfare of our campus and surrounding community. Please visit here: [https://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/#rulesrightsandresponsibilitiestext](https://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/#rulesrightsandresponsibilitiestext).

### DIVERSITY & INCLUSION STATEMENT

*Diversity* is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals. The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.

### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY STATEMENT

By virtue of enrollment, each student agrees to uphold the high academic standards of the University of Wisconsin-Madison; academic misconduct is behavior that negatively impacts the integrity of the institution. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these previously listed acts are examples of misconduct which may result in disciplinary action. Examples of disciplinary action include, but is not limited to, failure on the assignment/course, written reprimand, disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion.
ACCOMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES STATEMENT
The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (UW-855) require the university to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities to access and participate in its academic programs and educational services. Faculty and students share responsibility in the accommodation process. Students are expected to inform faculty [me] of their need for instructional accommodations during the beginning of the semester, or as soon as possible after being approved for accommodations. Faculty [I], will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to provide reasonable instructional and course-related accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA. (See: McBurney Disability Resource Center)

ACADEMIC CALENDAR & RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

• See: Academic Calendar & Religious Observances