

# PA 449

## Policy Research and Evaluation

Winter 2014

Tuesday and Thursday 1:00-2:15 pm 201D DeVos Center

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### Overview

This course will introduce students to public and the methods involved in public policy analysis. Public policy is typically defined as an action (or inaction) taken by governmental entities with regard to a particular issue or set of issues. Public Policy Research and Evaluation is the exploration of the decision-making processes involved in creating a solution to issues on the public's agenda. Policy analysis begins with the identification and definition of a problem, generating policy options or choices for addressing the problem, the selection of a particular policy option through political institutions and the development of a plan for implementation, implementation of said policy, and evaluation of that policy by the government and those affected by it.

This course provides a general introduction to public policy in the United States and provides an overview of policy making in the United States in a political, social, economic, and cultural context. This course studies the context in which public policy is made and implemented allows us to analyze how people's lives are affected quite differently by specific public policies. One underlying assumption is that public policy is informed by the beliefs and values people have about the issues of our society. Another assumption is that public policies do not solve society's problems; instead, policies are ongoing strategies that structure our lives and coordinate our behavior.

### Goals

- Analyze critically and explain how issues facing society become public policies (critical reading, critical thinking, effective writing).
- Analyze critically and explain the impact of specific public policies on various groups in society, especially groups defined by gender, race, class, and culture (critical reading, critical thinking, effective writing).
- Conduct and report research on both the making of public policy and its impact on groups in society (critical reading, critical thinking, effective writing).

### Classroom Policies

- **Attendance:** Class time will be devoted to both lecture and discussion. Informed discussions are encouraged and expected. Please do not feel shy

### Materials

The following books can be found at the campus bookstore, both a **required**:

- Anderson, James E. Public Policymaking (7<sup>th</sup> Edition). Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2011. (PP)
- Dye, Thomas R. Understanding Public Policy (13<sup>th</sup> Edition). Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2011. (UPP)
- Course Reserves which can be found by logging into the Course Reserves site at [www.gvsu.edu/library](http://www.gvsu.edu/library)

### Milestones

#### Crossfire Policy Debates

The class will have one group project, which is to construct and conduct one of four policy debates during the final weeks of class. There will be a total of four debates, with each team responsible for doing different topics. A total of four to six students will work on a policy debate team to facilitate one of the policy debates.

Worth 25% of your grade (Individual Reflection 10%, Group Presentation 10%, Group Policy Brief 5%)

#### Policy Analyses (Brief)

These 3-5 page assignments will be due twice during the semester. It will require students to provide a commentary on various aspects of policy. I will provide details for the assignments two weeks before they are due.

State of the Union—Policy Language Analysis

Public Policy Stages—Theories of Public Policy

Policy Implementation and Evaluation

or intimidated – your opinions are expected and valued. Additionally, students will be responsible for participating in leading discussions and presenting information on a weekly basis so your attendance is vital for a good grade in this course. After **three absences**, students will be encouraged to drop the course as multiple absences will lower their overall course grade by a half letter grade (A to A-, B+ to B, etc.). **Excused absences** will need to be accompanied with a note.

- **Technology Policy:** So as not to disturb the class, please turn off your cell phone before class begins. Computer use is fine, however if I see students using their computers for something other than taking notes, you will be marked absent for that days attendance, **no exceptions**.
- Additionally, **technological excuses** (“my printer died,” etc.) cannot be accepted under any circumstances. Always make back-ups for your work, and plan ahead so that you will have time to use the on-campus computers and printers if necessary. You may submit papers by e-mail. However, you may NOT consider an e-mailed paper to be submitted until you have received a reply from me confirming that I have received it. To this end, all papers should be submitted in .doc, .docx., .pdf, or .txt format only.
- **Email Communications:** Emails will be returned in a timely manner, however this may not always mean I will answer emails on the day they are received. Emails must include: a subject, your name and a salutation as well as the issue that needs to be address. This is practice for the future and also helps me to keep track of which students have issues throughout the course. NOTE: If your email does not have these components, they will not be answered.
- **Withdrawing from the Course:** The final day to withdraw from the course is **October 25<sup>th</sup> at 5pm**.
- **Students with Disabilities:** If you need academic accommodations because of learning, physical or other disabilities, please contact Disability Support Services at 616-331-2490 or [www.gvsu.edu/dss](http://www.gvsu.edu/dss). Furthermore, if you have a physical disability and think you will need assistance evacuating this classroom and/or building in an emergency situation, please make me aware so I can plan accordingly.
- **Late Work: Late Work:** Work will be accepted **within 12 hours from the end of the class period in which it is due**. All late work will be penalized with a full grade deduction (A papers will be graded as A- as the total points possible.). After the twelve-hour period is up, no late work will be accepted.
- **Academic Integrity:** Instances of academic dishonesty will be considered a violation of academic ethics. You should consult me if you are uncertain pertaining to an issue of academic honesty prior to submitting an assignment. Please refer to Section 223.01 of the Grand Valley State University Student code for a description of plagiarism.
- **Wikipedia:** At no time during this course should Wikipedia be used as a legitimate source of information.
- For all papers: journal articles, books, newspapers, in person interviews, public documents and government documents are the only sources that will be accepted. For **all papers APA Style** citations are the **only** accepted style for reference pages. Please see: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/> for an extensive list of the ways to cite sources. Another good resource is [www.citationmachine.net](http://www.citationmachine.net), which will actually format your citations in APA if you provide the source information.

Each worth 10% of your grade

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## Policy Analysis Reports

There will be **two** policy analysis papers due in this course of 12-14 pages each. You must choose one of the topics listed below in each category. The first will focus on a **local** or **state** policy issue. The second paper will focus on a **national** level policy issue.

Worth 40% of your grade.

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## Attendance and Participation

Attendance will be taken during each class period. Class participation in group activities, as well as during outside group meetings will be monitored and incorporated into your participation and attendance grade.

Worth 5 % of your grade.

## Evaluation

These grades reflect an evaluation of the accuracy, depth, and quality of expression within your work. Although a grade is not a precise measure, each carries a meaning.

- An " A " is reserved for the very best student work; it means that the student has exceeded expectations for the assignment in all aspects-accuracy and

depth of response as well as quality of expression.

- An "A-" means the student exceeded expectations in most aspects but not all.
- A "B+" or "B" indicates that, while accurate and adequate in depth and quality of expression, the assignment could still be significantly improved.
- Grades of "B," "C+," or "C" indicate that the student has met expectations for undergraduate work in the course, but that the work is generally undistinguished in its accuracy, depth, and/or quality of expression.
- Grades of "C-," "D," or "F" indicate that the student's work is below expectations for the course and serious deficiencies exist.

## Assignment Descriptions

### Crossfire Debates

For each debate, a team of two students will take on the following roles:

- Policy Reporters:** responsible for debriefing the class the policy backgrounds on the topic. This will occur on the **Tuesday** prior to the debate and each side's reporter should be prepared to present a 6-8 minutes brief of the policy issue to be debated upon as well as their sides main points.
- Policy Proponents:** provide a series of concrete arguments that support the chosen policy issue, along with research findings and statistics. These individuals will be responsible for crafting handouts, visual aids and other props necessary for promoting their side of the debate.
- Policy Opponents:** provide a series of concrete arguments that oppose the chosen policy issues, along with research findings and statistics. These individuals will be responsible for crafting handouts, visual aids and other props necessary for promoting their side of the debate.
- Debate Moderators:** responsible for asking probing policy questions relevant to the chosen policy issue, they are also responsible for asking follow up questions and taking questions from the audience during the debate. Moderators are also responsible for asking 5-7 questions to direct the debate during the debate period. Moderators will also manage rebuttals or supportive statements from the audience. Moderators are also responsible for concluding the debate period by providing a 2-4 minute summation of each policy position.

The format of the debate will be conducted as follows: During debate week one we will have two 4-6 person groups (pro and con), the rest of the class will act as a neutral voting body, the debate moderators (one for each team) will be responsible for asking questions and guiding the debate using the moderator debate flow chart at the end of the syllabus. The remaining members of the team will be responsible for 1) reporting to the class (neutrally) the context of the debate topic prior to the debate start (**Reporter**), 2) debating your side using a primary, secondary and tertiary argument to support their respective side (**Opponents and Proponents**). 3) The last part of class will be committed to voting on which team presented the most persuasive argument (**Class**).

Throughout the semester it will be each group's responsibility to gather information and assign roles for the upcoming debate. Group members will grade each other's participation and this evaluation will be incorporated into the final grade for this assignment.

Policy debate outline: must be identified and sent to the moderator of the opposing team before the debate (3 days in advance). This way the moderators from both sides can confer and decide which points to ask for clarification, when to provide discussion breaks for debaters, and to develop a summation statement concluding the debate prior to the debate.

Policy debate memo: Each team is required to share with the class as well as the professor an outline of their debate (1 typed page) that covers background, support for your argument and counter-arguments that you will cover during your debate). The remaining two pages will outline the major points the debate will cover (i.e., supportive documentation of your arguments). This paper should be shared with the class on the **Tuesday** before the scheduled debate.

- Possible Policy Issues
- Right to Die

- Fracking
- Gun Rights
- Raising Minimum Wage
- Eminent Domain
- Corporate Farming
- Drug Policy
- Nonproliferation
- Climate Change
- Public Sporting Security

### **Policy Analyses (Brief)**

Throughout the semester, students will be responsible for completing 3 writing responses based on readings from the texts. These assignments will be dispersed throughout the semester and will be worth 30% of your final grade.

### **Policy Analyses (Long)**

There will be two policy analysis papers due in this course, each worth 25%. You must choose one of the topics listed below in each category. The first will focus on a local or state policy issue. A list of possible topics can be found below. The second paper will focus on a national level policy issue.

Paper Components (must be included):

Executive Summary (1-2 pages)

- An executive summary previews the main points of an in-depth report; it is written for nontechnical people who don't have time to read the main report. The executive report contains enough information for a reader to get familiarized with what is discussed in the full report without having to read it. An executive summary should be written after you've written the main text and the points you highlight in the executive summary should cover the same main points in the same order that you raise them in the full body of the report. Use simple, declarative statements for each main point, avoiding jargon or highly technical language.

Introduction and Problem Statement (2-3 pages)

- This is the introduction to the policy analysis and the policy issue itself. Identify with clarity and specify the problem being addressed, along with the issues at stake and the primary options to change the current policy. This section should also provide a brief legislative history of the policy issue being analyzed.

Levels of policymaking and administration (2-3 pages)

- This portion of the paper should identify the major stakeholders currently involved in managing this policy area. Additionally, this portion of the paper should identify at least one local, one state and one national interest group who would have an opinion regarding changes to current policy.

Proposing Alternatives: (1-2 pages)

- This section should propose realistic alternatives to the policy under analysis. It should provide a discussion on the intended and unintended consequences of the policy. Finally, this section should detail who (i.e., a public agency, nonprofit, individual end-users of the policy area) will be most responsible for implementing alternatives. You should limit this section to 2-4 viable policy alternatives.

Cost/Benefit Analysis: (2-3 pages)

- This portion of the paper should provide a discussion of the two- four policy alternatives outlined in the Proposing Alternatives Section. Where possible, real data (dollar figures, employment data, etc.) should be utilized to illustrate cost savings or cost increases to policy changes. You can use a local, state or national foci for this portion of the paper. For example:
  - *You must decide whether to go out with your friends to a local "watering hole" on a Thursday night. Going out will have associated benefits and costs. The benefits include spending time with your friends and receiving free drinks from the bartender (who happens to be your best friend). The costs of the night include (at minimum) a cab ride home, missing class the next day (and possibly missing a surprise quiz), and waking up with a nasty hangover. Costs could run higher.*
- This section can also include qualitative data (i.e., quality of life issues, cost effectiveness evaluation, etc.) The types of questions to be answered in this section can include:
  - *Which of these alternatives is the cheapest or most efficient way to get this benefit?*

- *Do the economic benefits of providing this service outweigh the economic costs*
- *What are the social and/or private benefits (or costs) to choosing this alternative?*

#### Choosing an Alternative and Conclusion (2-3 pages)

- This final portion of the paper should make a compelling argument for policy change or for staying with the status quo and provide an overall conclusion to the policy issue analyzed.

All papers should be free of spelling and grammatical errors and use a proper and consistent reference style (see <http://www.apastyle.org/> for examples of APA style citations). The papers should be approximately 13-17 pages in length, double-spaced, and contain all the components listed above. The final paper is worth 25% of your total grade. The presentation is worth 10% of your total grade.

#### Local/State Policy Area Issues:

- Immigration Law (Senate Bill 1070, Arizona or Senate Bill 744, Mississippi)
- Michigan Headlee Amendment (Article 9 of the Michigan Constitution) or California Prop 13
- Oregon Urban Growth Boundary Policy (SB 100, Oregon State)
- Texas Gun Laws on School Grounds (EDC §37.125, Texas State)
- Right to Die Law (Initiative 1000, Washington State or Death with Dignity, Oregon State)
- Right to Work (House Bill 4003, Michigan or House Bill 1001, Indiana)
- Adoption of Obamacare: Comparison of Michigan and California

#### National Level Policy Issues:

- No Child Left Behind or Common Core Standards (Education)
- Affordable Care Act (Health and Welfare)
- Family Medical Leave Act (Health and Welfare)
- Kyoto Protocol (Environmental Policy)
- Voting Rights Act Changes (Civil Rights Policy)
- Pay Equity/Lilly Ledbetter Law (Equal Rights)
- Don't Ask, Don't Tell (Equal Rights)

### Class Schedule

<b>Topic and Dates</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Assignments</b>
Week 1: Introduction to the Study of Public Policy and Overview of Course Jan 7 and 9	PP Ch. 1 UPP: Ch. 1 ARES: Domhoff, Stone	Free Association (in class)
Week 2: The Study of Public Policy, cont. Conducting Political Debates Jan 14 and 16	See above Assigned Reading: The Policy Debate Manual (ARES)	
Week 3: Policymakers and their Environment Jan 21 and 23	PP Ch. 2 UPP Ch. 3 ARES: Ingram and Schneider, Olson	Local and National Policy Paper Choices Due
Week 4: Theories of Public Policy Jan 28 and 30	UPP Ch. 2 ARES: John, Heckathorn and Broadhead	
Week 5: Policy Formation and Policy Adoption Feb 4 and 6	PP Ch. 3 and 4 ARES: Cobb and Elder, Schattschneider	Writing Response #1 Due
Week 6: Budgeting and Policymaking, Policy Implementation Feb 11 and 13	PP Ch. 5 and 6	
Week 7: Policy Impact, Evaluation and Change Feb 18 and 20	PP Ch. 7, UPP Ch. 15 ARES: Evaluating Public Policy Evaluation, Theodoulou and Kofnis	
Week 8: Cost Benefit Analysis Feb 25 and 27	ARES: Kraft and Furlong, Theodoulou and Kofnis	Writing Response #2 Due
<b><u>Spring Break</u></b>		
Week 9: Health and Welfare and Education Policy Mar 11 and 13	UPP Ch. 5 and 6	Policy Debate 1 State Paper Due
Week 10: Criminal Justice Policy and Economic Policy Mar 18 and 20	UPP Ch. 4 and 7	Class Cancelled Thursday: UAA Conference
Week 11: Tax Policy and Environmental Policy Mar 25 and 27	UPP Ch. 8 and Ch. 10	Policy Debate 2 Writing Response #3 Due
Week 12: Civil Rights Policy and National Defense Policy Apr 1 and 3	UPP Ch. 11 and Ch. 13	Policy Debate 3
Week 13: Homeland Security Policy and International Trade Apr 8 and 10	UPP Ch. 14 and Ch. 9	Policy Debate 4
Week 14: Policy Presentations Apr 15 and 17		Catch Up Day: Tuesday Solo Policy Presentations
<b>Finals Week (Monday April 21<sup>st</sup>, 12-1:50 pm) Solo Policy Presentations Continued Federal Paper Due</b>		