



Robert M. La Follette
School of Public Affairs
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Public Affairs 380

Analytic Tools for Public Policy

Fall 2023

Instructor: Ross Milton, PhD, Assistant Professor of Public Affairs

Email: rtmilton@wisc.edu

Time: Tuesdays & Thursdays 1:00-2:15PM

Room: Social Sciences 6112

Office Location: Observatory Hill Office Building #305

Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:15-3:30pm or by appointment

Office Hours Location: In person preferred, virtual available on request.

Please let me know that you would like to meet virtually prior to the start of that day's office hours.

Credits: 3

Course Designations and Attributes: Social Science attribute (S), Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS)

Instructional mode: classroom (face-to-face)*

Requisites: None. Sophomore Standing.

Course Description

This course offers an introduction to the role of policy analysis and the analytical concepts and tools that are used in the practice. The first part of the course will introduce students to policy analysis, rationales for public policy, tools for framing policy problems, and the application of key concepts and methods from economics. In the second part of the course, we will apply these concepts and tools through guided hands-on data exercises, interpreting and generating relevant informational graphics, producing a policy memo, and presenting results to technical policy problems and solutions.

Course Credit Information

This class meets for two 75-minute class periods each week over the fall semester and carries the expectation that students will work on course learning activities (reading, writing, studying, etc.) for about 3 hours out of classroom for every class period. The syllabus includes information about meeting times and expectations for student work.

Course Learning Outcomes

After completing this course, students will be able to:

- Apply an analytical framework to real policy issues,
- Gather information to study a policy problem,
- Understand cost-benefit analysis,
- Interpret and produce tables and graphs,
- Produce and critique a policy memo, and
- Propose and communicate an analysis of a policy problem.

Required Readings

1. Wheelan, Charles, *Introduction to Public Policy*. 1st edition. ISBN: 9780393926651. Available at many book sellers, e.g: [Amazon](#), [Abebooks](#), or the university bookstore
2. Students are required to create an account on the Harvard Kennedy School Case Program (<https://case.hks.harvard.edu/>) and purchase the following case
 - o [Michelle Rhee's IMPACT on the Washington D.C. Public Schools](#)

Other required readings will be posted to Canvas.

Assessments and Grading

The final grade will weight assessments as follows

- 25% Assignments
- 25% Exam
- 10% Quiz
- 30% Group Policy Project
 - o (5%) First submission: Problem definition
 - o (10%) Second submission: Problem definition, stakeholder analysis, rationales for public policy, and policy alternatives.
 - o (15%) Final submission: Complete project
- 10% Group Presentations

Assignments that are graded using letter grades have the following numeric grade equivalents: A 95, AB 90, B 85, BC 80, C 75, CD 70, D 65, DF 60, F 50

Final Grades will be assigned using the following grading scale: 100-93 = A, 93-88 = AB, 88-83 = B, 83-78 = BC, 78-70 = C, 70-60 = D, <60 = F.

Short Assignments (25%)

There are several types of short assignments in the course. Most frequently are discussion warmup questions and discussion reflection questions. These assignments ask students to submit brief answers to a few questions about the day's readings prior to coming to class in order to prepare for the day's discussion and after class to reflect on the discussion. Take home assignments must be written individually in your own words but you may discuss these assignments in study groups (unless otherwise specified).

Additional exercises and in-class exercises will be used to practice concepts used in class. 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 with sufficient time to complete them. We will make extensive use of peer review for our group policy projects. Each peer review will have a deliverable reflection on your own project and the others you discussed.

Completing these assignments requires that you attend class regularly.

Exam (25%)

There is one midterm exam in the course. The exam will cover the broad concepts from the course as well as information from readings, lectures, and class discussions. The format of the exam will be

short answer format. You should expect to read and comment on an article on the test. The goal of the exam is for you to show that you can understand, synthesize, remember, and apply the information you learn in readings, lectures, and discussions.

Quiz (10%)

There is a brief in-class quiz that covers discounting, net present value, and cost benefit analysis.

Final Project / Group Policy Memo (30% of course grade)

Throughout the course, you will write – as a group assignment - a policy memo. I will assign policy to each group. For many of you this may be your first time writing a policy memo, which involves an iterative process of defining a public policy problem, reading and synthesizing the literature, identifying criteria for decision-making, defining and evaluating alternatives, and making a recommendation. Keep in mind that policy memos 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 primarily outside of class. When time is devoted to group work in class this will also include meeting with the instructor about your group's progress. The goal of the policy brief is to allow you to apply, in a systematic manner, the information you learn in readings, lectures, and class discussions.

Your group will write the policy brief in three parts. Each submission after the first will contain a revised version of the prior submissions until it has been built into a complete policy brief, of no more than 12 pages. The first submission will be the problem definition. The second will again include the problem definition and add a stakeholder analysis, rationale for the role of government, and policy alternatives. The third submission will add an executive summary, criteria, analysis, and recommendation. Specific guidelines will be posted for each part of the policy brief. A peer review will be a component of your grade on the policy project.

I encourage you to utilize UW-Madison's Writing Center as you prepare your policy brief for this class, <https://writing.wisc.edu/>, as well as seek out help from me.

Group Presentations (10%).

Students will present their policy papers in class presentations. More information on what makes a successful presentation will be available on Canvas and discussed in class.

Attendance and participation

My expectation is that you attend class regularly. While your attendance does not directly determine your grade, several assignments are completed in class and turned in for a grade, and many others depend on reflecting on in-class discussion. Thus, it will not be possible to complete them satisfactorily without being prepared for discussion, and participating in class and group discussions.

Class Policies

Communication with Instructor

I have regularly scheduled "office hours." These are times when my office door is open, and I am available to meet with any students who show up. You do not need to give advance notice that you are coming (you can if you want). If you would like to meet virtually during regularly schedule office

hours, please email in advance. My office is very difficult for people who have trouble with stairs to access. If this may present a problem for you, please let me know and office hours can be relocated.

In addition to office hours, I will typically be available before or after class lectures. This would be a good time to discuss material or ask questions about class logistics. E-mail communication is usually better reserved for timely or highly person-specific matters. Please include "PA 380" in the subject line of emails. If you have not heard back from me within two business days, please follow up as I may have missed your message.

Academic Integrity

By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UW-Madison's community of scholars in which everyone's academic work and behavior are held to the highest academic integrity standards. Academic misconduct compromises the integrity of the university. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these acts are examples of academic misconduct, which can result in disciplinary action. This includes but is not limited to failure on the assignment/course, disciplinary probation, or suspension. Substantial or repeated cases of misconduct will be forwarded to the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards for additional review. For more information, refer to <https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/misconduct/academic-integrity/>

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

McBurney Disability Resource Center syllabus 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 (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty [me] of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty [I], will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA." <http://mcburney.wisc.edu/facstaffother/faculty/syllabus.php>.

Diversity & Inclusion

Institutional statement on diversity: "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." <https://diversity.wisc.edu/>.

Grade Appeal Policy

If you think you deserve a different grade on an assignment, paper, or exam, you may write a memo to me and explain your rationale. Before making an appeal, you should review the assignment and the assessment of your work and re-read your assignment with these comments in mind. After your memo is received, your paper/exam will be reconsidered within 2 class periods. Depending on my reconsideration, 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 one week after the assignment is returned to contact your section instructor regarding the grade. After one week, all grades are final.

Late Assignments

It is important to complete the assignments in order to understand the materials. Assignments should be uploaded to Canvas by the time stated on Canvas. Late assignments will typically not be accepted.* Under the very rare circumstances that a late assignment is permitted, grades on those assignments will be penalized at 10 percentage points for every 24 hours the assignment is late.

Plagiarism and the Use of ChatGPT and Generative AI

ChatGPT and other generative AI tools are useful tools for certain parts of this course. For example, they can be used to help brainstorm examples. However, simply inputting my questions into an AI tool and submitting the results without attribution will be considered akin to plagiarism. If it is fairly clear that is what you have done you will receive a zero on the assignment.

AI tools are based on what they have been trained on, they do not produce new knowledge and often produce incorrect information. Please be careful in your use of them as turning in incorrect information due to a lazy use of AI will be graded harshly. If you go through college only doing work that ChatGPT can do on its own, you will likely find yourself replaced by ChatGPT in the workforce.

To help check for plagiarism and the use of generative AI, most or all written assignments will be submitted through "Turnitin" on Canvas.

Make-Up Policies

Ordinarily, no make-up exams will be offered.* The exam dates and all other important deadlines have been scheduled in advance. It is your responsibility to modify your schedule to attend these exams.

**Life is complicated and sometimes exceptions to this rule are necessary. If an extension is requested on an assignment, it is important that you make such a request before an assignment is due rather than after a missed deadline.*

Copyright and Faculty Lecture Content

Students do not have the right to post or sell materials from a class without permission of the original instructor who created the material. For example, students do not have the right to upload content that faculty have created to online learning platforms, such as Course Hero.

Students' Rules, Rights, and Responsibilities

<https://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/#rulesrightsandresponsibilitiestext>

Privacy of Student Records & the Use of Audio Recorded Lectures Statement

View [more information about FERPA](#).

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 requiring accommodation. [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. Students are also 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.

Course Schedule (subject to change)

1	1	Thursday, Sept 7	Introduction, Syllabus, What is policy analysis? Readings: 1. Wheelan, Ch 1.
2	2	Tuesday, Sept 12	The policy analysis process Readings: 1. The CDC Policy Process: Problem Identification and Policy Analysis Tabs 2. Musso, J., R. Biller, R. Myrtle (2000), “Tradecraft: Professional writing as problem solving.” Journal of Policy Analysis & Management 19(4): 635-646. In class: 1. Group Policy Project: Assigning project topics
	3	Thursday, Sept 14	Problem definition & Stakeholder identification Readings: 1. Bardach, Pages 1-14 2. Wheelan, Ch. 15.2 In class activity: 1. Reviewing problem definition statements
3	4	Tuesday, Sept 19	Gathering evidence and measuring problems Readings: 1. Wheelan, Ch 9 2. Bueno de Mesquita and Fowler, Ch 4
	5	Thursday, Sept 21	Economic Analysis & Markets Readings: 1. Wheelan, Chs 3.1-3.2, 7 2. NPR’s Planet Money “The Less Deadly Catch” In Class: 1. Half class for group work.
4	6	Tuesday, Sept 26	Market Failures: Externalities and Public Goods Readings: 1. Wheelan, Chs. 4, 8

	7	Thursday, Sept 28	Market Failures: Competition Readings: 1. Wheelan, Chs. 3.3-3.7, 8 In Class: 1. Half class for group work.
5	8	Tuesday, Oct 3	Problem Definition Peer Review Exercise Assignment due: 1. Group Policy Project: Problem Definition 2. Peer review reflection
	9	Thursday, Oct 5	Market Failures: Insurance Readings: 1. Wheelan, Chs. 3.3-3.7, 8
6	10	Tuesday, Oct 10	Other Failures of Markets: Equity and Distribution Readings: 1. NPR The Indicator Podcast, The Private Firefighter Industry 2. Wheelan, Ch 5
	11	Thursday, Oct 12	Policy Alternatives Readings: 1. Weimer & Vining, Ch 10 "Correcting Market and Government Failures: Generic Policies" 2. Appendix A "Things Governments Do," in Bardach, Eugene. (2020). A practical guide for policy analysis : the eightfold path to more effective problem solving. Washington, D.C.
7	12	Tuesday, Oct 17	Catch-up/ Mid term review
	13	Thursday, Oct 19	In-Class Midterm Exam
8	14	Tuesday, Oct 24	Policy Criteria: Equity & Efficiency in Practice Readings: 1. "An Introduction to the Congressional Budget Office" 2. Cook & Ludwig, More Prisoners versus More Crime is the Wrong Question Assignment due: 1. Discussion warm-up questions 2. Brief reflection
	15	Thursday, Oct 26	DCPS Case Study Readings: 1. "Michelle Rhee's IMPACT on the Washington D.C. Public Schools," Harvard Kennedy School Case Study Assignment due: 1. Discussion warm-up questions 2. Brief reflection
9	16	Tuesday, Oct 31	Policy/Program Evaluation: The effect of long-acting reversible contraceptives on teen births Readings: 1. Wheelan, Ch 13

			<p>2. Lindo, J.M. and Packham, A., 2017, "How much can expanding access to long-acting reversible contraceptives reduce teen birth rates?" <i>American Economic Journal: Economic Policy</i>, 9(3), pp.348-376.</p> <p>Assignment due:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discussion warm-up questions 2. Brief reflection
	17	Thursday, Nov 2	<p>Group work day and meetings (NTA)</p> <p>Assignment due:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Group Policy Project: Problem definition, stakeholder analysis, rationales for public policy, and policy alternatives.
10	18	Tuesday, Nov 7	<p>Peer Review Exercise</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assigned group projects <p>Assignment due:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Peer review reflection
	19	Thursday, Nov 9	<p>Group work day and meetings (APPAM)</p>
11	20	Tuesday, Nov 14	<p>Introduction to cost-benefit analysis and discounting</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wheelan, Ch 12 <p>In class:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CBA and Discounting worksheet (turn in).
	21	Thursday, Nov 16	<p>CBA: The social cost of carbon & the value of a statistical life</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Freakonomics podcast, "Who decides how much a life is worth" 2. Viscusi, "The devaluation of life" <p>Assignment due:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discussion preparation questions 2. Brief reflection
12	22	Tuesday, Nov 21	<p>Perils of quantification</p> <p>Readings</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Saldin, Robert, "Gaming the Congressional Budget Office" National Affairs, 2016
		Thursday, Nov 23	<p>Thanksgiving, no class</p>
13	23	Tuesday, Nov 28	<p>CBA class discussion/debate</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sinden, Amy "The Shaky Legal and Policy Foundations of Cost-Benefit Orthodoxy in Environmental Law" LPE Project 2. Liscow, Zach "Equity in Regulatory Cost-Benefit Analysis", LPE Project <p>Assignment due:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Brief reflection on debate

	24	Thursday, Nov 30	CBA Quiz and Group work day and meetings In class quiz Assignment due: 1. Group Policy Project: Complete report, Final Draft
14	25	Tuesday, Dec 5	Group presentations
	26	Thursday, Dec 7	Group presentations
15	27	Tuesday, Dec 12	Group presentations