



Department of Political Science
and Criminal Justice

Master of Public Administration Program

POLS 4330 / 7320, Section A
Public Policy Analysis
Fall Semester 2009
W 7:05-9:55 p.m.

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Office Hours: M-Th 2:30-4:30 p.m.

Purpose

Government officials make decisions. Each of these decisions can affect millions of people and redistribute millions or billions of dollars. Some policy decisions are sound; some policy decisions are irrational. Many irrational decisions were based on the best of intentions.

This course will introduce you to explanations of how public policy is developed. It will also provide you with knowledge about a wide variety of analytical techniques for developing and evaluating policies that satisfy criteria for sound policy: efficiency, effectiveness, feasibility, ethics, equity, and others. These techniques are applicable to every conceivable environment--the public sector, the corporate sector, even your own home. By learning these techniques, you will become a more analytical thinker and have a more advanced skill as a practical, effective problem-solver.

Learning Objectives

- Be able to list and describe the models of public policymaking.
- Be able to use methods of evaluating proposed public policies.
- Know the approaches to policy evaluation for existing public programs.

Information literacy

Concerning NGCSU's Information Literacy Learning Outcomes (based on NGCSU's Quality Enhancement Plan): These are the five outcomes.

1. The information-literate student determines the nature and extent of the information needed. *Know*
2. The information-literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently. *Access*

3. The information-literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system. *Evaluate*
4. The information-literate student, individually or as a member of a group, uses information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose. *Use*
5. The information-literate student understands many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally. *Ethical/legal¹*

The policy analysis research paper is designed to contribute to these outcomes. See p. 3 and the appendix.

Course Requirements

1. TEXTBOOKS

The required textbooks, which are available at the bookstore, are:

Dye, Thomas R. *Understanding Public Policy*. 12th ed. Upper Saddle River, N. J.: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008.

Patton, Carl V., and Sawicki, David S. *Basic Methods of Policy Analysis & Planning*. 2^d ed. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1993.

Study the assigned readings on a timely basis in accordance with the attached schedule. To "study" does *not* mean to scan; rather, to "study" involves careful reading and note-taking (or underlining) to facilitate retention of facts and to facilitate review for the examination.

2. EXAMINATIONS

There will be a midterm examination on September 23. It will account for 25 percent of the course grade. There will be a final examination on December 2. It will account for 30 percent of the course grade.

3. POLICY ANALYSIS RESEARCH PAPER

You are required to write a policy analysis research paper about a specific public policy. Your paper must (1) show an understanding of the policy, (2) present an enumeration of alternatives to the prevailing policy, (3) analyze the various alternatives, (4) select an alternative based on the analysis, and (5) propose a practical

¹ Learning Outcomes adapted from the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) standards.

method of evaluating your selection after it has been implemented. The research paper must be based on and must make specific reference to literature of political science (i.e., your textbooks, lecture notes, monographs, articles in political-science journals, etc.). Reference to your textbooks is *essential*.

Students are required in all M.P.A. courses to use full-blown APA style on *all* papers (including research papers, term papers, written case-study assignments, etc.). It is advisable to obtain a copy of the style manual. It is available, for example, at this Web site:

<http://www.apastyle.org/pubmanual.html>

A really helpful resource is the accompanying software to the APA style manual. The software is available by direct download or by purchase of an actual CD-ROM. *I strongly advise the purchase of the CD-ROM rather than the direct download.* The software is available, for example, at this Web site:

<http://www.apastyle.org/stylehelper/>

Use the *modifications* to APA style that appear at this Web page:

<http://www.NGCSU.edu/bdf/MPAprog/APAmd.htm>

The policy analysis paper is due on April 9. Please submit *two* hardcopies. Do not use report covers; just staple. The paper will account for 30 percent of your grade. Lateness will involve a 10-percentage-point penalty per week or part thereof; the instructor will not be obligated to accept any term paper submitted after the final examination is concluded.

For additional information about preparing a policy analysis, see the attached article entitled, "Guidelines for Preparing Policy Issue Papers."

4. ATTENDANCE

Attendance is compulsory. You are considered responsible for being attentive to lectures and class discussions, for taking notes, and for being aware of the content of all class announcements. Please take note of the university's policy on "Class Attendance" (2008-2010 *Undergraduate Bulletin*, pp. 79-80), which is incorporated herein by reference. A student who accumulates more than two unexcused absences on this one-class-per-week schedule can expect to receive a "W"

or "WF", or to sustain a reduction in the course grade by one or more letter-grade levels.

5. PARTICIPATION

Class participation and proper conduct are both expected, and will determine 15 percent of the course grade. As stated in the "Regulations of the M.P.A. Program," the participation requirement is based on this policy:

In most classes, it is improper for a student to be a passive spectator in class sessions. M.P.A. students are expected to be active participants in the proceedings of their classes. Contributions to class discussions are vital to the experience of graduate study in public administration and enhance the value of the program for all students enrolled in it.

Accordingly, the score for participation and conduct will involve these considerations: (1) ability to cite and interpret readings assigned for homework, (2) contribution to collective problem-solving processes, (3) demonstration of adaptability in coping with new situations, and (4) ability to support and enhance the value of the work of peers.

The conduct requirement includes the expectation that you will not allow any cellphones or other electronic devices to emit signals that will disturb the class. Turn them off or don't bring them to class.

6. OTHER REQUIREMENTS AND NOTICES

a. Other controlling documents. All of the rules, regulations, and standards published in the undergraduate and graduate bulletins of North Georgia College & State University and the "Regulations of the M.P.A. Program" are incorporated by reference in this document.

b. Academic integrity; plagiarism and cheating. NGCSU's integrity code--"On my honor, I will not lie, cheat, steal, plagiarize, evade the truth, or tolerate those who do"--reflects the university's commitment to academic integrity. The "Academic Integrity Policy" (2008-2010 *Undergraduate Bulletin*, p. 90; see also the *Student Handbook*) is incorporated herein by reference. Please note that in this course, as in all others at NGCSU, plagiarism and other forms of cheating are expressly prohibited. Any student who commits plagiarism or cheating may receive a reduced grade, which may involve a failing grade, and his or her matriculation in the M.P.A. Program may be terminated by the M.P.A. Advisory

Committee. A report of the incident will be provided to the university's Academic Integrity Council. The council and the vice president for academic affairs may take additional action, which may include a formal reprimand, probation, suspension, or expulsion.²

c. Disabilities. North Georgia College & State University is committed to equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you believe that you have a disability requiring an accommodation, reasonable *prior* notice needs to be given to the instructor and the Office of Student Disability Resources. In this case, contact Elizabeth McIntosh, coordinator of student disability resources, at Barnes Hall, Room 122 (706-867-2782).

d. On-line students' evaluation of course. Course evaluations at NGCSU are now conducted on-line through BANNER. Evaluation of the class is considered a component of the course and students will not be permitted to access their course grade until the evaluation has been completed. The evaluations will be accessible beginning one week prior to the final-exam week.

e. Course grades. Course grades are available on BANNER Web 2000 within about two days of the end of final examinations. Except in emergency situations, please do not request grades by telephone, E-mail, or similar method.

SCHEDULE OF READING ASSIGNMENTS

<u>Day</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic and Readings</u>
W	Aug. 19	Distribution of Syllabus Introduction D 1-12 Institutionalism D 12-13, 272-291 Policy Process D 14, 31-59

² If you would like to read a discussion of the *rationale* for the rules about plagiarism, you are welcome to read my essay that is accessible on the Internet at <http://www.NGCSU.edu/bdf/Studies/plgrm.htm> .

- W Aug. 26 Group Theory; Subgovernment Model
D 19-21, 125-154
Elitism; Public Choice
D 21-25, 177-216
Systems Theory
- W Sep. 2 Incrementalism; Rationalism
D 15-19, 60-92, 155-176
Rationalism; Game Theory
D 25-27, 93-124, 292-314
- W Sep. 9 Innovation and Diffusion; Technocracy
Behavioralism
D 27-30
- W Sep. 16 Policy Evaluation
D 333-350
Strategy; Cause and Effect
Review
- W Sep. 23 MIDTERM EXAMINATION
- W Sep. 30 DISCUSSION OF POLICY ANALYSIS RESEARCH PAPER
Policy Analysis
PS 1-8
Principles
PS 8-20
- W Oct. 7 ADVISEMENT FOR SPRING SEMESTER
Analytical Process--Overview
PS 21-30, 46-52
Equity and Ethics
PS 30-46
- W Oct. 14 Analytical Process--Steps
PS 52-68
Methods
PS 74-109
- W Oct. 21 Data Analysis; Reporting
PS 109-146
Problem Definition
PS 147-168
Political Analysis
PS 168-185
- W Oct. 28 Evaluation Criteria; Alternatives
PS 186-226, 227-256
Evaluating Policies
PS 257-275
Evaluating Methods
PS 275-331
- W Nov. 4 PRE-REGISTRATION FOR SPRING SEMESTER
Selection
PS 332-349
Evaluation
PS 355-378
- W Nov. 11 POLICY ANALYSIS RESEARCH PAPER DUE
Experimentation; Evaluation
PS 378-397
- W Nov. 18 Review
- W Nov. 25 No Class - Thanksgiving Eve
- W Dec. 2 FINAL EXAMINATION

**QUESTIONS THAT MAY APPEAR ON THE M.P.A. COMPREHENSIVE
EXAMINATION**

1. What is public policy? What are some of the areas of public policy? Why do we study public policy?
2. Define "model." What do we mean by "models of public policy"?
3. What is the "process" of public policymaking?
4. Explain "institutionalism." What is role theory? What is Miles' Law? In what way is institutionalism deficient in explaining public policy?
5. What is "group theory"? What are the two varieties of group theory? What law did Roberto Michels express?
6. What is "elitism"? How do elites have so much influence, given their minority status? What is the elite consensus?
7. Explain the rational model of public policymaking. What is the method? Why is rationalism rarely used?
8. What is "incrementalism"? How effective is this model in explaining public policy? What are its advantages? disadvantages?
9. What is "game theory"? Give an example of an application of game theory.
10. What is "public choice"? In what ways are the theories of Anthony Downs reminiscent of this model?
11. What is "systems theory"?
12. Describe the model of innovation and diffusion. What kind of states tend to have innovative governments? What kind of states tend to have governments that follow the lead of other states?
13. What is "technocracy"?
14. What is "behavioralism"? Explain either of the following: Barber's theory of presidential character, or Downs' categorization of public administrators' temperament and behavior.
15. What approaches distinguish strategic thinking?
16. What steps occur in evaluation research?
17. Distinguish the entrepreneurial approach to public

policymaking from the approach of technicians and politicians.

18. What kind of governmental system would be required to bring about absolute equality among all citizens? What do governments in the United States do to decrease the amount of socioeconomic inequality?
19. What is Pareto optimality? What is the Kaldor-Hicks criterion?
20. What circumstances create a moral obligation to "blow the whistle"?
21. Provide some guidelines for doing (a) productive interviews and (b) sound survey research.
22. What are some characteristics of a good written report?
23. Why is problem definition such a difficult element of policy evaluation?
24. What is cost-benefit analysis? What is the principle that underlies CBA? What are the difficulties of doing CBA?
25. Under what circumstances are severe penalties desirable as a policy option? Under what circumstances is it best for the government to refrain from intervention? What are some intermediate policy options that are available to government officials?
26. Why are agency employees alarmed when policy analysts do policy evaluations?

Vocabulary

Loaded question	Opportunity costs
Marginal analysis	Externalities
Discounting	Sunk costs
Time value of a dollar	Satisficing
Present value	Groupthink
Future value	

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING POLICY ISSUE PAPERS

By William N. Dunn³

The process of policy analysis may be initiated at any point after some stakeholder⁴ perceives the existence of a problematic situation; that is, a situation where there is a sense of uneasiness or frustration about the satisfaction of some need, value, or opportunity.⁵ In policy analysis it is important to distinguish between problematic situations and policy problems per se, since a given problematic situation permits many alternative formulations of the "problem." A policy maker, for example, may recognize the need for assistance in clarifying or resolving a problematic situation but nevertheless may be unable to say definitely what the problem is. By contrast, a policy analyst, legislator, or client group may suggest to policy makers that some problematic situation be investigated. A policy analysis may then be undertaken by commissioning an analyst within or outside an agency or by contracting policy analysts in universities, nonprofit research institutes, or private consulting firms.

However the process of policy analysis is initiated, policy makers and policy analysts are themselves often unclear about the nature and scope of the problem to be investigated.

Different stakeholders, while agreeing on the existence of a problematic situation, frequently disagree about the nature of policy problems and their solutions. The existence of policy issues—that is, conflicts among stakeholders about the nature and range of possible solutions for policy problems—is the main reason why methods of problem structuring are central for public policy analysis. Policy problems are not "givens"; they are rather mental constructs that come about as different stakeholders react to the same problematic situation. In other words, many of the most important policy problems are "ill structured," "messy," or "squishy," such that a large

³ Appendix 1 in Dunn, *Public Policy Analysis: An Introduction* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1981), pp. 360-363.

⁴ Policy stakeholders . . . are individuals or groups who affect and are affected by the process of policy formation and implementation.

⁵ See Russell L. Ackoff, *Redesigning the Future: A Systems Approach to Societal Problems* (New York: John Wiley, 1984); and John Dewey, *Essays in Experimental Logic* (New York: Dover, 1953).

part of the task of policy analysis is to structure the problem itself.⁶

Purposes of a Policy Issue Paper

The main purpose of a policy issue paper is to structure policy problems. Consequently, a major task is to determine what policy makers and other stakeholders really want to accomplish. "Ultimate goals," as Quade observes,

may be easy to state but more immediate objectives that lead toward them are harder to determine. . . .

It is easy for an analyst to accept a client's view of what is wanted without further discussion and then to set about searching for feasible alternatives and gathering data without giving a thought as to whether the stated objective, if attained, will contribute to solving the problem under attack.⁷

All of this is to say that the fatal error in policy analysis is solving the wrong problem. "We fail more often because we solve the wrong problem than because we get the wrong solution to the right problem."⁸

A policy issue paper should provide answers to a number of questions. What actual or potential courses of action are the objects of conflict or disagreement among stakeholders? In what different ways may the problem be defined? What is the scope and severity of the problem? How is the problem likely to change in future months or years? What goals and objectives should be pursued to solve the problem? How can the degree of success in achieving objectives be measured? What activities are now under way to resolve the problem? What new or adapted policy alternatives should be considered as ways to resolve the problem? Which alternative(s) are

⁶ On "ill-structured," "messy," and "squishy" problems see, respectively, Ian I. Mitroff and Francisco Sagasti, "Epistemology as General Systems Theory: An Approach to the Design of Complex Decision-Making Experiments," *Philosophy of Social Sciences*, 3 (1973), 117-134; Russell L. Ackoff, "Beyond Problem Solving," *General Systems*, XIX (1974), 237-239; and Ralph E. Strauch, "A Critical Look at Quantitative Methodology," *Policy Analysis*, 2 (1976), 121-44.

⁷ E. S. Quade, *Analysis for Public Decisions* (New York: American Elsevier Publishing Company, 1975), p. 68.

⁸ Ackoff, *Redesigning the Future*, p. 21.

preferable, given certain goals and objectives?

Focus and Forms of the Policy Issue Paper

The policy issue paper may address policy problems in a wide variety of issue areas: health, education, welfare, crime, labor, energy, foreign aid, national security, human rights, and so on. Papers in any one of these issue areas may focus on problems at one or more levels of government. Health and air pollution, for example, are international, national, and local in scope. The policy issue paper may also take a number of specific forms, depending on the audience and the particular issue at hand. Thus, issue papers may be presented in the form of "staff reports," "briefing papers," "options papers," or so-called "white papers."⁹ An illustrative list of issues that may serve as the focus of a policy issue paper is presented below.

-- Which of several alternative contracts should be accepted by a union bargaining team?

-- Should the mayor increase expenditure on road maintenance?

-- Should the city manager install a computerized management information system?

-- Which public transportation plan should the mayor submit for federal funding?

-- Should a state agency establish a special office to recruit minorities and women for civil service positions?

-- Should a citizens' group support environmental protection legislation now before Congress?

-- Should the governor veto a tax bill passed by the state legislature?

-- Should an agency director support a plan for flexible working hours (flextime)?

⁹ For illustrations of the diverse forms of policy issue papers at the national, state, and local levels see Arnold Katz and Julia G. Lear, *The Policy Analysis Sourcebook for Social Programs* (Washington, D. C.: The National Planning Association, 1975).

-- Should a legislator support a bill restricting the sale of hand guns?

-- Should the president withhold foreign aid from countries that violate human rights?

-- Should the United Nations General Assembly condemn the violation of human rights in a particular country?

-- Should the United States withdraw from the International Labor Organization?

-- Should the foreign investments of multinational corporations registered in the United States be guaranteed by the government?

Elements of the Policy Issue Paper

A policy issue paper should be as complete as time and available information permit. An issue paper should "explore the problem at a depth sufficient to give the reader a good idea of its dimensions and the possible scope of the solution, so that it might be possible for a decisionmaker to conclude either to do nothing further or to commission a definitive study looking toward some action recommendation."¹⁰ An issue paper therefore deals primarily with the formulation of a problem and possible solutions, and only rarely reaches definitive conclusions. While an issue paper should contain concrete recommendations and outline plans for monitoring and evaluating policy outcomes, it is essentially the first phase of an in-depth policy analysis that may be undertaken at a later time.

In preparing an issue paper the analyst should be reasonably sure that all major questions have been addressed. Although issue papers will vary with the nature of the problem being investigated, most issue papers contain a number of standard elements.¹¹ These elements have been organized around [a] framework for policy analysis. . . .

[SEE THE TABLE ON THE NEXT PAGE]

¹⁰ Quade, *Analysis for Public Decisions*, p. 69.

¹¹ For formats of policy issue papers see Quade, *Analysis for Public Decisions*, pp. 68-82; and Harry Hatry and others, *Program Analysis for State and Local Governments* (Washington, D. C.: The Urban Institute, 1976), appendix B, pp. 139-143.

POLICY-INFORMATIONAL ELEMENTS OF ISSUE PAPER	POLICY-ANALYTIC COMPONENT	METHOD
-- Letter of Transmittal -- Executive Summary		
I. SOURCE AND BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM	POLICY OUTCOMES POLICY PERFORMANCES	Monitoring Evaluation
A. Description of Problematic Situation B. Outcomes of Prior Efforts to Resolve Problems C. Assessment of Past Policy Performance D. Significance of Problematic Situation		
II. THE POLICY PROBLEM	POLICY PROBLEMS	Problem Structuring
A. Problem Statement B. Approach to Analysis C. Major Stakeholders D. Goals and Objectives E. Measures of Effectiveness F. Potential Solutions		
III. POLICY ALTERNATIVES	POLICY ALTERNATIVES	Forecasting
A. Description of Alternatives B. Comparison of Alternatives C. Spillovers and Externalities D. Constraints and Political Feasibility		
IV. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	POLICY ACTIONS POLICY OUTCOMES POLICY PERFORMANCE	Recommendation Monitoring Evaluation
A. Criteria for Recommending Alternatives B. Description of Preferred Alternative(s) C. Outline of Implementation Strategy D. Provision for Monitoring and Evaluation E. Limitations and Unanticipated Consequences		
-- References -- Appendices		

Observe that each element of the issue paper requires different policy-analytic methods to produce and transform information about policy outcomes, policy performance, policy problems, policy alternatives, and policy actions. A policy issue paper, however, has one major characteristic not shared by integrated policy analysis. The issue paper is essentially a prospective (*ex ante*) investigation that begins with limited information about past policy actions, outcomes, and performance and ends with as much information as possible about the nature of policy problems, alternatives, and actions to be taken in the future.