

Georgia Institute of Technology
School of Public Policy
PUBP 3030 Policy Analysis
Fall 2019
Tuesday/Thursday 3:00-4:15pm
015 DM Smith
*This syllabus is subject to change

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The PUBP3030 course schedule is split into two sections. In the first section we consider different justifications for public policy. In other words, we consider the question; by what criteria is it acceptable for government to employ coercion (hard or soft) with the aim of changing the behavior of individuals? For most policy analysts, this question is addressed within the market failure framework. There are, however, several critiques of and alternatives to this framework as a justification for public policy. We will explore the welfare economics perspective and some of these critiques and alternatives. We will also address the questions, (1) if government action is justified, what instruments or tools does government have at its disposal; (2) how might we choose among them; and (3) how should we expect individuals to respond to the chosen instrument? The second section of the course examines policy analysis as it is practiced utilizing case studies and applicable tools such as data collection, program evaluation, and data visualization.

PRE/CO-REQUISITES

To be successful in conducting and producing professional level policy analysis you will need to draw upon and, at times, integrate many of the lessons learned in other classes. Students are expected to come to the course with the tools developed in microeconomics and statistics (or may be taking these courses concurrently). Cost-benefit analysis, policy process, and substantive policy courses will also enhance the course experience.

COURSE GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

The primary goal of this class is for you to have the experience of actually doing professional quality policy analysis. The work you do outside of class, work developing your policy analysis, will be **as important** as the work in class. The course is experiential in nature and involves considerable “hands on” work. In addition to the primary goal given above, other goals include:

- (1) Evaluate claims that a problem is reasonably the business of government
- (2) Use policy analysis tools to compare the merits and disadvantages of different policy approaches to a particular problem and estimate the likely consequences of proposed policies
- (3) Develop and strengthen skills in data analysis and problem-solving
- (4) Translate these skills into a written and oral argument on a policy (both individually and in a group setting)
- (5) Provide exposure to a wide variety of contemporary public policy controversies

COURSE MATERIALS

Textbook

Weimer, D. L., & Vining, A. R. (2017) (6th Edition). *Policy analysis: Concepts and practice*. Routledge. (W&V in Class Schedule). ISBN: 9781138216518 *Available at the GT Bookstore

Additional Materials

The course textbook will be supplemented by several additional materials. Other readings will be posted to the course website, however, students will also be expected to obtain the following materials independently:

- (1) Bardach, E. S. (2011). *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving* (Fourth edition). Los Angeles: Thousand Oaks: CQ Press College. *Available as an e-book through GT libraries
- (2) Harvard Kennedy School Case Program (<https://case.hks.harvard.edu/>): Create an account and purchase the following cases:
 - a. Examining the Role of Child Welfare in Addressing the Needs of the CSEC Population in Kentucky
 - b. Pricing Carbon: The Birth of British Columbia’s Carbon Tax
 - c. Michelle Rhee’s IMPACT on the Washington D.C. Public Schools

Course Website

We will heavily utilize the course website on Canvas for my official communications with you regarding this class. This will include announcements, changes to the course calendar or syllabus, and my feedback to you regarding your class performance.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Assignment	%
Problem/Tool Presentation	15
Case Study Memo	10
Exercises	20
Readings Warm-Ups	10
Participation (e.g. in-class discussion & discussion board posts)	10
Policy project	35
Problem statement memo (20%)	
Final paper (40%)	
Final presentation (30%)	
Peer evaluation (10%)	

Grading Scale

Final grades will be assigned as a letter grade according to the following scale:

A	90-100%
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	0-59%

Policy Analysis Project

Students will be organized into teams. Each team will be responsible for identifying a policy problem to analyze, collecting data designed to address the problem, designing and conducting an analysis of the data, developing a set of recommendations, developing a final project report, and presenting the project. Grades will be adjusted to reflect the peer evaluations noting individual contributions.

Problem/Tools Presentations

The “problem” presentation will require students to find a media article, summarize the problem/policy argument, and analyze the problem/policy issue from a market failure perspective. The second will require students to select a policy tool, summarize the way in which the tool was used in a policy context, the pros and cons of the tool, and alternatives to the tool. Students will do one of these presentations.

Case study memo

Students will prepare a brief memo analyzing one case study we examine in class.

Exercises

Exercises will be assigned to practice key concepts discussed in class. These assignments will be discussed in class and posted to Canvas. Exercises will be uploaded via Canvas either as an assignment or via a discussion board post.

Readings Warm-Ups

Every day students should be prepared for an in-class readings warm up to bring the readings to the front of your mind.

Participation

Because of the hands-on nature of this course, attendance and participation are critical for each student to achieve the course outcomes. Note that attendance and participation are not the same. Students who miss more than three classes will lose all participation points, as it is impossible for a student to participate if absent. Likewise, students who attend all classes but do not actively participate will not earn all participation points. Please contact me if illness, family medical problems, or emergencies, etc. occur. Outside of class participation is equally as important as inside of class participation. We will regularly utilize the discussion board feature on Canvas.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND POLICIES

Communication

Email is the preferred method of communication. All email messages must originate from your Institute-sponsored email account. Please use a professional salutation, proper spelling and grammar, and patience in waiting for a response. I reserve the right to not respond to e-mails that are drafted inappropriately. Please begin your subject with PUBP3030 when composing emails to me (e.g. "PUBP3030: Question About Case Study). Please email me directly (lrbullin@gatech.edu) rather than through the Canvas message system.

Electronic Devices

The use of laptops, tablets, or other mobile devices is permitted only for class-related work. Neither audio nor video recording is not allowed unless prior approval is given by the instructor. Please mute all electronic devices during class.

Late Work

Due dates for all assignments are noted in the syllabus and are non-negotiable. Late work will not be accepted. Exceptions to these guidelines will be made only under unusual circumstances and will require valid documentation from the student.

Academic Integrity

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. For information on Georgia Tech's Academic Honor Code, please visit <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/policies/honor-code/> or <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/18/>. If you are struggling in this class please come see me so that we can work together to identify those elements where you may need additional guidance and instruction. My goal is to create a learning environment that is challenging and encouraging. Cheating and/or plagiarizing on an assignment denies you the opportunity to learn. It also puts you in jeopardy since any student suspected of cheating or plagiarizing on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, which will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

At Georgia Tech we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. See <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/22/> for an articulation of some basic expectation that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class. Disorderly conduct which interferes with teaching, research, administration, or other university or university-authorized activity will not be tolerated and will be immediately reported to the Office of The Dean of Students for appropriate disposition which may result in disciplinary action including possible suspension and/or expulsion from the university.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, contact the Office of Disability Services at (404)-894-2563 or <http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/>, as soon as possible, to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Accommodations for Religious Observances

I respect your right to observe your religion and will do what I can to accommodate your needs. With this in mind, you are permitted to be absent from class to take part in religious observances. For planning purposes, I ask that you provide me with written notice of your upcoming absence within the first two weeks of class. For more information on Georgia Tech's policy regarding student rights and responsibilities around planned absences from class, please see <http://catalog.gatech.edu/rules/4/>

COURSE SCHEDULE

Day	Topic	Preparation	Due
Week 1	Markets Basics	Pareto Efficiency, Consumer and Producer Surplus, Deadweight Loss – Market for Salmon	
Tuesday (8/20)			
Thursday (8/22)		W&V Chapter 4; Planet Money Podcast #661: The Less Deadly Catch: https://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=601210373	
Week 2	Justifications for Public Policy	Market Failures: Externalities, Public Goods, Common Pool Resources – Public Infrastructure	
Tuesday (8/27)		W&V Chapter 5; The Indicator from Planet Money Podcast: The Private Firefighter Industry: https://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=736715592	
Thursday (8/29)		Humphreys & Matheson (2019)	Exercise #1
Week 3	Justifications for Public Policy	Putting Market Failure Identification into Practice	
Tuesday (9/3)			Problem/Policy Presentation
Thursday (9/5)			Problem/Policy Presentation
Week 4	Distributional Goals/ Government Failure	Equity, Equality, Security, Liberty, Social Justice, and Democracy – Wage Gaps Government Failure – Sugar Tax	
Tuesday (9/10)		W&V Chapter 7; The Indicator from Planet Money Podcast: Mind the Pay Gap: https://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=643054655	Exercise #2
Thursday (9/12)		W&V Chapter 8; Brownell & Frieden (2009) pgs 1805-1807; Lyons & Snowden (2015) pgs 6-10	
Week 5	Policy Instruments	Government Corporations and Government-Sponsored Enterprises, Economic Regulation, Social Regulation, Government Insurance, Public Information, Taxes, Charges, Tradable Permits, Contracting, Grants, Loans and Loan Guarantees, Tax Expenditures, Vouchers, Tort Liability, Indirect Government	
Tuesday (9/17)		Behn (2017)	Ideas for Final Project
Thursday (9/19)		W&V Ch 10; Salamon Chapter 1 (pages 19-41)	Policy Instrument Presentations
Week 6	Analysis in Practice	Problem Definition	
Tuesday (9/24)			Policy Instrument Presentations
Thursday (9/26)		Bardach pg 1-10; Kentucky Child Trafficking Case Study	Exercise #3, Case Study Memo
Week 7	Analysis in Practice	Assembling evidence, constructing alternatives, selecting criteria, projecting the outcomes, confronting the trade offs, deciding, & telling the story	
Tuesday (10/1)		Bardach pg 11-46	Final Project: Problem Statement Memo
Thursday (10/3)		BC's Carbon Tax Case Study	Case Study Memo

Week 8	Analysis in Practice	Interpreting regressions – Teenage Births	
Tuesday (10/8)		Bullinger (2017)	
Thursday (10/10)			Exercise #4
Week 9	Analysis in Practice	Interpreting regressions	
Tuesday (10/15)	FALL RECESS – NO CLASS		
Thursday (10/17)		Michelle Rhee’s IMPACT on DC Public Schools	Case Study Memo
Week 10	Program Evaluation	Data Analysis	
Tuesday (10/22)		Lindo & Packham (2017)	
Thursday (10/24)			Final Project: Problem Statement Memo, Round 2
Week 11	Program Evaluation	Data Analysis	
Tuesday (10/29)			
Thursday (10/31)			Exercise #5
Week 12	Data Visualization	Effectively Communicating Data	
Tuesday (11/5)		Schwabish (2014)	
Thursday (11/7)			
Week 13	Project Work Week	Project Work Week	
Tuesday (11/12)			
Thursday (11/14)			
Week 14	Presentations of Policy Research Reports		
Tuesday (11/19)			Final Project: Presentation
Thursday (11/21)			Final Project: Presentation
Week 15	Presentations of Policy Research Reports		
Tuesday (11/26)			Final Project: Presentation
Thursday (11/28)	THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS		
Week 16			
Tuesday (12/3)		Project Work Day – Incorporating Feedback from Presentations, Class Wrap Up	
Thursday (12/5)	READING DAY - NO CLASS		Final Project: Final Reports and Peer Evaluation

If you have any problems in this course, or in other aspects of your student or professional life, please feel free to come see me during office hours or by appointment.