URBS 4/511: Urban Policy Analysis
Fall, 2006 Course Syllabus

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Course Purpose and Objectives
As a manager or planner in the public and private sector, you will face a variety of complex issues that require, quick, basic methods of policy analysis and evaluation. This course will present quantitative and qualitative methods that have been found useful in the field and will provide a theoretical basis for using these tools.

In this regard, the course will explore pursue the following objectives:

◊ To understand and apply the principles of policy analysis and evaluation,
◊ To understand and apply alternative policy analysis techniques,
◊ To understand the politics of decision making,
◊ To analyze the ethical, social justice and equity implications of policy issues, and
◊ To improve written and oral communication skills

For students lacking in political science coursework, a good background text for the course is C. Cochran and E. Malone. PUBLIC POLICY, 3rd ed., 2005.

Course Requirements and Structure
The course assignments will provide students with experiences in applied research, analysis, report writing, and making professional oral presentations. Specifically, the course requirements will include:

Policy Analysis Case Studies – All students will write 4 case studies of policy analysis practice and be prepared to make an oral presentation on one of these cases during the course. See separate assignment sheet for each case. Students will use the professional memo format and will respond to case questions (see case study assignment handout for further details). Presentations of case studies will not exceed 5 minutes and presentations will utilize PowerPoint to highlight main points.

Policy Paper – Graduate students will investigate a policy issue facing planners and policymakers. A separate assignment sheet will be provided identifying the process for completing this paper. The policy paper report should be approximately 10 double-spaced pages, include bibliography and footnotes, and include a formal 10 minute oral presentation of findings using PowerPoint.

Examinations - The course will have mid-term and final examinations. The exams will consist of in-class essay questions and students will be provided with study questions in advance.

Lead Discusssant of Assigned Readings - All students are asked to complete required readings prior to the class meeting in order to facilitate discussion and analysis of transit issues. For each class, students will be asked to serve as Lead Discussants and highlight major findings of authors and present your perspective.

Grade breakdown will be based on the following allocation: GRADUATE STUDENTS : Policy Paper (35%), Exams (35%), Case Study Analysis (20%), Lead Discussant, presentation and participation (10%); UNDERGRAD. STUDENTS : Final Exam (50%), Case Study Analyses (40%), Lead Discussant, presentation and participation (10%)
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Required Readings/Case Study Assignments*</th>
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<td>9/6/06</td>
<td>Introduction to the Course: Participants, Concepts, Requirements</td>
<td>Ch. 1</td>
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<td><strong>Intro. To Theory &amp; Practice of Policy Analysis</strong></td>
<td>Case #1: “Drug Abuse &amp; Waterville”</td>
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<td>9/13/06</td>
<td>Political Context for Policy Analysis</td>
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<td>9/20/06</td>
<td>The Rational Model and the “5 Step Process”</td>
<td>Case #2 “The Small Town Health Clinic”</td>
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<td>9/27/06</td>
<td>Critiques of Rationalism</td>
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<td>Alternatives to Rational Model – Positivism vs. Postpositivism</td>
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<td>Positivist Data Gathering Methods-Surveys and Cost-Benefit Analysis</td>
<td>Case #3 “Pocatello Prison Siting”</td>
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<td>10/18/06</td>
<td><strong>Mid-Term Exam</strong></td>
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<td>Focus Group &amp; Content Analysis</td>
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<td>No Class-American Evaluation Assoc. Conference</td>
<td>Case #4 “School Shooting”</td>
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<td>PRINCE technique and group decision making</td>
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<td>Evaluation – Principles &amp; Implementation, Best practices</td>
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<td><strong>Policy Paper Presentations</strong></td>
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<td>12/6/06</td>
<td>Policy Paper Presentations</td>
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<td><strong>Final Exam</strong></td>
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All readings are from course textbook: Randall Clemons and Mark McBeth. PUBLIC POLICY PRAXIS. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2001 available at University Bookstore. See separate sheet describing case and policy paper assignments.
Case #1: “Drug Abuse and Waterville”
- Review case materials on pages 1 and 2 of PUBLIC POLICY PRAXIS text
- Before reading Chapter one of text, write a maximum 3 page single-spaced memo to the city manager explaining how you, as a newly hired Assistant to the City Manager would “conduct a public policy analysis to identify the potential problems, issues, and policy alternatives and to prepare and present a recommendation to the city council.”
- If you signed up to present this case, prepare a short (5 minute) oral presentation using PowerPoint.
- Be prepared to submit and discuss this case on due date (9/13)

Case #2: “Small Town Health Clinic”
- Read Chapter 2 of text
- Review case materials on pages 53-54 of your text.
- Write a 3 page single spaced memo describing the extent to which this case reflects the strengths and/or weaknesses of the Rational model. Do you think the final decision that was made was in the best, long-term interests of the town? Explain why this case is an example of quadrant one of Figure 2-2.
- If you signed up to present this case, prepare a short (5 minute) oral presentation using PowerPoint.

Case #3: “Pocatello Prison Siting”
- Read Chapter 4 of text
- Review case materials on pages 89-92
- Write a 3-5 page single-spaced memo analyzing this case as an example of political pluralism, identify the key stakeholders in the case and the positions of each. Consider the 3 criteria for evaluating models presented in Chapter 2 and relate them to both rational and nonrational policy models. What do you think of the nonrational/political model as an effective tool of policy analysis?
- If you signed up to present this case, prepare a short (5 minute) oral presentation using PowerPoint.

Case #4: “School Shooting”
- Read Chapter 6 of the text.
- Review case materials on pages 217-223
- Write a 5 page single-spaced memo analyzing the following (see questions on p. 223 of text): conduct a content analysis of views of respondents, critique the facilitator, analyze the strengths and weaknesses of focus groups as a research tool, what is next – what would you do with this information?
- If you signed up to present this case, prepare a short (5 minute) oral presentation using PowerPoint.
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Graduate Policy Paper

Purpose
One way to appreciate the methods and utilization of policy analysis studies is to review and critique a study conducted by professional policy analysts. In this assignment you will examine a major policy analysis study conducted by a governmental or private “think tank” organization.

Assignment Process
1. Go to the policy organization’s web sites listed below and search their site for reports on topics of interest to you and that were completed in the last five years. Write down several titles and share them with your Professor during the individual Policy Paper meeting that will be scheduled.
2. Policy Organizations:
   - Worldwatch Institute – www.worldwatch.org
   - Brookings Institution – www.brookings.edu or www.brookings.org/metro
   - Urban Institute – www.urban.org
   - Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor/Program Evaluation Division – www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us – go to “Program Evaluation Reports”
3. Select one study and download a hard copy. Read the report.
4. Critique the report as an example of policy analysis. Specifically describe how the study addressed issues of:
   - Research Model – Does the study reflect Rational/Positivism or Nonrational/Post-positivism or hybrid of both? Give examples.
   - Research Methodology – What data gathering and data analysis methods were used? Do you think the data collected was appropriate and helped describe the policy problem?
   - Conclusions and Recommendations – What conclusions were reached and were they justified by data, interviews, etc?
   - Impact of study: Do you think that the study makes an important contribution to the field? Why?

Policy Paper Report: Write a ten page double spaced report (with footnotes and bibliography) and be prepared to make a 10 minute oral, Power Point presentation of findings.