

Public Policy Analysis: Assessment and Practical Wisdom (Political Science 4043 L32)

Class Time: MW, 10:00 – 11:30 am

Class Location: Siegle Hall L003

Instructor: Dan Butler

Email: daniel.butler@wustl.edu

Office Hours: MW 2:30-3:30 pm, Siegle 283

TA: Jonathan Homola (homola@wustl.edu)

Purposes

This course discusses public policy analysis with an emphasis on three points:

- (1) An introduction to Cost-Benefit Analysis
- (2) Using experimental methods to evaluate policy alternatives
- (3) Understanding how the political landscape affects the adoption of policy

In the course I assume you have are familiar with the material covered in a standard course on American politics and government (how the institutions and electoral system work). If you have any questions about your preparation for the course, feel free to contact me.

Class Meetings

Classes will be a combination of lecture and discussion. This includes answering questions and engaging with the comments from fellow students. For these reasons computers and phones will not be allowed in class.

Course Readings

The material in the course will use material from the following textbook:

Alan S. Gerber and Donald P. Green. *Field Experiments: Design, Analysis, and Interpretation*. W.W. Norton & Company

Michael C. Munger. *Analyzing Policy: Choices, Conflicts, and Practices*. W.W. Norton & Company

Other readings are listed on the session schedule given below.

Course Requirements

- (1) **Homework Assignments (During September and October) – 25%.** A total of four homework assignments will be given out during September and October. Your lowest score (among the four assignments) will be dropped in determining the grade for this portion of the course.
- (2) **Student research proposal (due Oct 15) – 5% of grade.** This will consist of a 2-page research memo outlining a project the student could do on his or her own as a semester long project. The grade will be docked roughly one step (i.e., roughly 3 percent of the grade for this assignment) for every day that the assignment is late.
- (3) **Feedback for partnering public officials (due Nov 10) – 5% of grade.** A group of public officials will submit memos on research projects they would like to run. Students will be expected to write a two-page memo that gives constructive feedback on how those partners could improve their projects. This assignment is worth 5% of the overall course grade. The grade will be docked roughly one step (i.e., roughly 3 percent of the grade for this assignment) for every day that the assignment is late.
- (4) **Mid-term exam (October 27) – 30% of grade.** The exam will be in class and will consist of essay, math based, short-answer, and a few multiple choice style questions.
- (5) **Final exam (December 15, 1:30 am) – 35% of grade.** The exam will consist of essay, math based, short-answer, and a few multiple choice style questions.

Grades will be based on the following scale:

| | | |
|------------|------------|------------|
| 100-94 = A | 80-84 = B- | 67-70 = D+ |
| 90-94 = A- | 77-80 = C+ | 64-67 = D |
| 87-90 = B+ | 74-77 = C | 60-64 = D- |
| 84-87 = B | 70-74 = C- | 0-60 = F |

For those taking the course pass/fail – you need to earn at least a C-

Academic Integrity

All students are expected to adhere to high standards of academic integrity. In this class that means that all work presented as original must, in fact, be original, and the ideas and contributions of others must always be appropriately acknowledged. Quotations must, of course, be acknowledged, but so must summaries, paraphrases, and the ideas of others. *Course Listings* and *Bearings*, and the [University Policies website](#) all contain full statements of the University's policy on academic integrity. If you have any doubts or questions about documentation requirements, please ask me. Don't guess. Because this

course is offered through the College of Arts & Sciences, any violations of academic integrity policy will be referred to the College's Academic Integrity Officer.

One further note: sanctions from the Academic Integrity Committee or the University Judicial Board range from warning, failure of an assignment, or failure of a course, to probation, suspension, or expulsion, depending on the severity of the offense. You should also be aware that graduate and professional schools routinely ask the Dean's Office to report serious violations of academic integrity to their admissions committees. Professional organizations such as the various state Bar Associations also request this information, as do some employers. The University answers all such inquiries fully and with exactitude.

Accommodations

Accommodations in the course schedule and assignments for university sponsored events, religious holidays, health reasons, etc., will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Whenever a request is made, my policy is to contact your 4-year advisor. I do this out of concern for you so that someone who works with you over a long-period of time can know how you are doing.

Schedule

SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION TO COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

August 25 Introduction

August 27 A Rationale for Policy Analysis

- Paul Bloom. "The Case Against Empathy." *The New Yorker*
- *Analyzing Policy* Ch. 4

September 3 The Welfare Economics Paradigm

- *Analyzing Policy* Ch. 7

September 8 Discounting 1

- *Analyzing Policy* Ch. 9

September 10 Discounting 2

- *Analyzing Policy* Ch. 10

September 15 Cost-Benefit Analysis

- *Analyzing Policy* Ch. 11

September 17 Finish Material on CBA

- HW #1 IS DUE

SECTION 2 – INTRODUCTION TO DESIGNING EXPERIMENTS

September 22 Introduction to Field Experiments

- *Field Experiments* Ch. 1 & 2.0-2.2

September 24 Causal Inference and Experimentation

- HW #2 IS DUE
- *Field Experiments* Ch. 2.3-2.7

September 29 Sampling Distribution

- *Field Experiments* Ch. 3.0-3.3

October 1 Hypothesis Testing

- HW #3 IS DUE
- *Field Experiments* Ch. 3.4-3.5

October 6 Attrition and Interference

- *Field Experiments* Chs. 7.0-7.3 & 8.0-8.2

October 8 Discuss Students' Designs 1

- HW #4 IS DUE
- Before Class watch the "Labs of Democracy" lectures online. Students should prepare their own research design and come prepared to discuss their ideas in class.

October 13 Discuss Students' Designs 2

SECTION 3 – THE POLITICS OF PUBLIC POLICY

October 15 A Framework for Public Policy Analysis

- FINAL VERSION OF STUDENT'S RESEARCH PROPOSAL IS DUE
- David Baron. 2003. "CAFÉ Standards," in *Business and Its Environment*, ed. David Baron. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

October 20 Problem Definition and Agenda Setting

- Frank Baumgartner and Bryan Jones. 1993. *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press [chapter 4]
- E.E. Schattschneider. 1960. *The Semi-Sovereign People*. Fort Worth, TX: HBJ. [chapter 4]

October 22

October 27 Midterm Exam (on material from Sections 1 and 2)

October 29 Discuss Partners' Research Proposals 1

- Before class students will be given the research memos that our partners have created. Students will come to class prepared to discuss what they have written and how we can improve the proposal(s).

November 3 Discuss Partners' Research Proposals 2

November 5 Case Study on Problem Definition: Estate (or Death) Tax Repeal

- Michael Graetz and Ian Shapiro. 2006. *Death by a Thousand Cuts: The Fight over Taxing Inherited Wealth*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. [Chapters 1, 2, 8, 20]
- Jonathan Weisman. April 13, 2005. "Erosion of Estate Tax is a Lesson in Politics: A Break for the Well-to-Do Becomes an Everyman Issue." *Washington Post*. Page E01

November 10 How are interests supposed to work?

- FINAL VERSION OF MEMO FOR RESEARCH PARTNER IS DUE
- *Federalist 10* and *Federalist 51*, online at <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/federal/fed.htm>
- EE Schattschneider. 1961. *The Semi-Sovereign People*. Fort Worth, TX: HBJ. [chapter 2]

November 12 Members of Congress and the Public

- Steven S. Smith, Jason M. Roberts, and Ryan J. Vender Wielen. *The American Congress*, 8th Edition. Cambridge University Press. [Chapter 4]
- Nyhan, Brendan, Eric McGhee, John Sides, Seth Masket, and Steven Greene. 2012. "One Vote out of Step? The Effects of Salient Roll Call Votes in the 2010 Election." *American Politics Research* 40 (5): 844-879.

November 17 Lobbying Congress

- John Wright. 1994. *Interest Groups and Congress* Needham Heights, MA [chapter 5]
- Frank Baumgartner and Beth Leech. 2001. "Issue Niches and Policy Bandwagons: Patterns of Interest Group Involvement in National Politics" *Journal of Politics* 63: 1191-1213. [Via JSTOR](#)

November 19 Pivotal Politics 1

- David Brady and Craig Volden. 2004. *Revolving Gridlock*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. [chapter 2]

November 24 Pivotal Politics 2

December 1 Budgetary Politics (Maybe)

- John Cogan. 1994. "The Dispersion of Spending Authority and Federal Budget Deficits," in *The Budget Puzzle*, eds. John Cogan, Timothy Muris and Allen Schick. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

- David Brady and Craig Volden. 2004. *Revolving Gridlock*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. [chapter 3]
- Lori Montgomery. January 6, 2007. "House Adopts Pay-as-You-Go Rules: Changes Aim to Curb Deficit Spending, Shed Light on Earmarks." *The Washington Post*.

December 3 – Review for Exam.

Dec 15, 10:30 am – Final exam