SW 861 Syllabus

Course Description:

This course examines how policy research methods are applied to the study of contemporary social issues. The course begins by exploring policy analysis frameworks, and the contexts of social policy and social policy research. The remainder of the course explores a variety of common approaches to the conduct of social policy research, by looking at the types of questions social policy analysts most frequently ask, and the types of answers that researchers are most often able to provide. The policy analysis approaches we will examine include: needs assessment methodologies (e.g. the "epidemiology" of social problems); analyses of client-level service utilization patterns (e.g. creating "typologies"); modeling trends in demand for services over time (e.g. forecasting); locational and other spatial factors associated with need, service use, and resource allocation decisions (e.g. block grant formula funding); machine learning (e.g. predictive analytics); the roles of qualitative research methods in policy research; comparative research on social welfare policy; performance management applications of administrative data; and longitudinal, multisectoral research using integrated administrative data systems. The application of these various methods is illustrated with studies of mental health, homelessness, criminal justice, child welfare, housing and segregation, welfare reform, income inequality and social service planning. Students participate as discussants of weekly readings, and as presenters of an assigned paper.

Course Objectives:

As a result of this course, students will have:

1) a basic understanding of the variety of contexts and roles for policy analysis (and the researcher) in the development of public policy;

2) an ability to apply a policy analysis framework in order to explicate and synthesize existing policy research in a topic area, so as to identify the value-theoretical dimensions of the previous work, and to explain how research results relate to policy-making and/or policy objectives;

3) an ability to conduct a needs assessment in a policy area, to plan a program or policy intervention based on the results, and to design an appropriate program monitoring or evaluation component into the intervention;

4) a basic knowledge of the methods appropriate to answer commonly asked policy analysis and research questions, and how to interpret the results of such methods.

Course Assignments:

1. Students as discussants: Each week, two students will serve as presenters and discussants of the required readings for that week. The students will summarize the readings, raise questions for class discussion, and be prepared to lead the class through answers to those questions.

2. Student papers: Students must write three papers for this course. Two papers ("policy briefs") deal with the existing literature, and the third represents student-initiated research. The briefs dealing with the existing literature are expected to be four to six pages in length (double spaced), and the paper on student-initiated research is to be ten to twelve pages.

Paper #1. Policy Analysis Brief: Explicate and synthesize three or four articles in a policy or program intervention, focusing on the known and unknown *effects*. Consider this an assignment from a commissioner or agency administrator who wants a brief synopsis of what we know about a given intervention (examples might be: family preservation, mobile psychiatric crisis services, offender work-release programs, regulations regarding abuse prevention of elders in nursing homes, mandatory HIV testing of pregnant women, etc.). Write a memo to the commissioner with your reading of the literature. Your analysis should focus on the more empirical side of the question (what works, what doesn't, and what we don't know). You should assume that the commissioner is considering implementing such an intervention. (One would ordinarily review more articles for such a piece, but for practice purposes, keep it to three or four -- so be selective.) **DUE February 14.**

Paper #2. Policy Research Brief. Select a policy or program intervention area of interest, identify three or four related articles, and describe the *methods* used to do policy or evaluation research in this area. Discuss the merits and/or limitations of these methods. It might help to imagine that you are working for the policy research division for a state agency that is considering a new policy/program, and you have been charged with determining how the agency will go about studying the need for and/or the impact of this policy, or for generating a menu of options for doing so. **DUE March 14.**

Paper #3. *Student Initiated Research.* Conduct a needs assessment for a hypothetical or real social service provider agency, government agency, neighborhood planning group, international humanitarian organization, etc., based on a service need or planning need that would assist the agency. The needs assessment can be based on direct estimation methods (measures of utilization, or other direct measures of a problem) or through indirect estimation methods (an index of population-based data). In other words, try to develop prevalence measures of the "need" through existing data sources. Describe a program or policy intervention you might suggest for this issue, based on either a theory of change or from an intervention research literature (keep to a very limited summary of the literature here; goal is not a literature review, but program rationale/description) and outline the steps you would take to implement it. Discuss potential problems with implementation. Design a data collection procedure that would enable an appropriate

evaluation to be conducted, including one that would detect potential implementation problems. **DUE April 25.** This paper will be presented in class.

Readings:

Required readings available through the course canvas account.

Suggested readings: A daily newspaper (Philadelphia Inquirer, The New York Times); political periodical (The Atlantic Monthly, The New Republic, The Nation, Slate, etc.); professional journals that address social policy or social problems (Journal of Policy Analysis and Management; Journal of Social Issues; Social Problems; Administration and Policy in Mental Health; Health Affairs; The Milbank Quarterly; Housing Policy Debate; Urban Affairs; The American Economic Review, etc).

SW861 - Course Outline

January 17: Course Overview and Introduction to Policy Analysis

        a. Syllabus Review
        b. Discussion of Student Interests
        c. Student Assignments: Discussants, Presenters
        d. Context: Role of Funders, Audience, Researcher's Organizational Auspices
        e. Typical Environments for Policy Research

January 24: Values and Problem Definition

        a. The Discovery of Social Problems
        b.   Critiques of Positivism
        c. Neo-liberalism critique
        e. Post-positivism and a Value-Reflexive Social Science

Assignment: Web search for policy analysis: values, perspectives, and methods (to be discussed in class)

Decker, P. (2014). Presidential address: False choices, policy framing and the promise of "Big Data." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *33* (2), 252-262.

Maynard, R. (2006). Presidential address: Evidence-based decision making: What will it take for the decision-makers to care? *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *25* (2), 249-265.

Meyers, SL (2002). Presidential address: Analysis of race as policy analysis. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *21* (2), 169-190.

February 31: Preparing for Policy Research and Comparing Data Sources

    a. Policy analysis options
        i.   Phases of knowledge development (re: i3)
        ii.   Pilot research (basic and applied; observational studies)
        iii.   Demonstration research with comparison groups (assessments/screeners, as well as interventions)
        iv.   Multisite experimental/quasiexperimental studies
        v.   Scaling/implementation/fidelity studies
    b. Data sources (benefits and risks):
        i.   Interviews and focus groups
        ii.   Survey data
        iii.   Administrative records

      iv.   Naturalistic/observational data (comparative effectiveness studies)
      v.   Primary data for intervention studies
      v.   Considerations for mixed method designs

I. ICPRS (Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research). A web-based resource for social and behavioral science data.

      Please review the following website:

      http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/

      And visit the following tutorial:

      http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/ICPSR/help/newuser.html

II. US Census: Please visit and tour the following web pages:

      American Community Survey (ACS)

      http://www.census.gov/acs/www/UseData/

      American Factfinder:

      https://www.factfinder.census.gov

      SIPP (Survey of Income and Program Participation:

      http://www.census.gov/sipp/

Pirog, M. (2014). Data will drive innovation in public policy and management research in the next decade. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *33*(2), 537-543.

Coalition for Evidence Based Policy. (2013). *Practical Evaluation Strategies for Building a Body of Proven-Effective Social Programs*. http://coalition4evidence.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Practical-Evaluation-Strategies-2013.pdf

White House Memo. (2013). Next steps in the evidence and innovation agenda. http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/memoranda/2013/m-13-17.pdf

White House Memo (2012). Use of Evidence and Evaluation in the 2014 Budget. http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/memoranda/2012/m-12-14.pdf

Klein, A & Sparks, S (2016). Investing in Innovation: An Introduction to i3.

Common Analytic Approaches Illustrated by Selected Topics

February 7: The 'Epidemiology' of Social Needs: Needs Assessments and Program Planning Applied to Adults with Severe Mental Disabilities

Conducting Needs Assessments:
   a. direct and indirect methods
   b. epidemiological measures: prevalence, incidence, relative risk, epidemiological survey methods
   c. application to formula-driven allocation decisions
   d. application to program planning:
   e. evaluating policy alternatives and feasibility
      -issues in program targeting
      -preparing for unintended consequences

Brown, R., et al. (2013). Pre-typhoon socioeconomic status factors predict post-typhoon psychiatric symptoms in a Vietnamese sample. *Social Psychiatry & Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 48 (11), 1721-1727.

Esteban, V, Adams, S, Calista, J., et al. (2007). The Latino mental health project: A local mental health needs assessment. *Admin and Policy in Mental Health*, *34* (4), 331-341.

Hanson, L, Denyse, H, McDowell, M, & Lois, D (2007). A population-based needs assessment for mental health services. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services*, *34* (3), 233-242.

Kamis-Gould, E. & Minsky, S. (1995). Needs assessment in mental health service planning. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health*, 23 (1), 43-58.

February 14: Services Utilization Research: Homelessness and Public Shelter Use

   a. Descriptive survival and hazard curves, measuring utilization trends over time
   b. Multivariate: proportionate hazard regression, discrete time logistic hazard regression, cluster analysis, latent class analysis
   c.   Machine learning approaches

Culhane, D.P. & Kuhn, R. (1997). Patterns and determinants of shelter utilization among single homeless adults in New York City and Philadelphia: A longitudinal analysis of homelessness. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 17 (1) 23-43.

Kuhn, R. & Culhane, D.P. (1999). Applying cluster analysis to test a typology of homelessness by pattern of shelter utilizaton: Results from the analysis of administrative data. *American Journal of Community Psychology*.

McAllister, W, Lennon MC, Kuang, L. Rethinking research on forming typologies of homelessness. *Am J Public Health*. 2011;101:596–601

Wong, I., Culhane, D.P. & Kuhn, R. (1997). The dynamics of family shelter entry, exit and return in New York City. *Social Service Review*.

February 28: Aggregate Program/Policy Impact over Time: Criminal Justice

a. Time series analysis
b. Interrupted time series
c. Pooled time series analysis
d. Forecasting applications

Jang H, Hoover, LT, Joo, JH. (2010). An evaluation of Compstat's effect on crime: The Fort Worth experience. *Policy Quarterly*, *13* (4), 387-412.

Lawton, BA, Taylor RB & Luongo, AJ (2005). Police officers on drug corners in Philadelphia, Drug Crime and Violent Crime: Intended, Diffusion, and Displacement Impacts. *Justice Quarterly*, 22 (4), 427-451.

Durso RM and Jacobs D (2013). The Determinants of the Number of White Supremacist Groups: A Pooled Time-Series Analysis. *Social Problems*, 60(1), 128-144.
http://socpro.oxfordjournals.org/content/socpro/60/1/128.full.pdf

March 7: Spring Break, no class.

March 14: Comparative Research: Income Inequality

a. Conceptual issues in comparative research
b. Methodological issues in comparative research

Smeeding, Timothy M. (2005). Public policy, economic inequality, and poverty: The United States in Comparative Perspective. *Social Science Quarterly*, *86*, 955-983.

Smeeding, T. (2009). New comparative measures of income, material deprivation and well-being. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *28* (4), 745-752. (NB This is one article in a related section in the PDF)

Burkhauser, RV, Smeeding, TM (2001). The role of micro-level panel data in policy research. *Schmoolers Jahrbuch*, 121, 469-500.

Grimm, M, Harttgen, K., et al. (2010). Inequality in human development: An empirical assessment of 32 countries. *Social Indicators Research*, 97 (2), 191-211. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40649364?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

March 21: The Analysis of Spatial Data: Housing and Racial Segregation

> a. An Introduction to Spatial Research
> b. Automated mapping tools: GIS
> c. Spatial statistics: spatial autocorrelation, clustering, and other segregation measures, regression applications
> d. The "Spatial Mismatch" literature

Wagmiller, RL (2007). Race and the spatial segregation of jobless men in urban America. *Demography*, 44 (3), 539-562.

Hillier, A. (2003). Spatial analysis of historical redlining: A methodological exploration. *Journal of Housing Research*, 14 (1), 137-168.

Kain, JF (2004). A pioneer's perspective on the spatial mismatch literature. *Urban Studies*, 41 (1), 7-32.

Bayer, P, Case MD, Ferreira F, McMillan, R (2012). Price discrimination in the housing market. *Journal of Economic Literature*.

March 28: Program Performance Measurement: Child Welfare

> a. Introduction to Performance Measurement (GPRAA)
> b. Continuous Quality Improvement
> c. The Evidence based Policy Movement.

Carnochan S, et al. (2013). The context of child welfare performance measures. *Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work*, 10 (3), 147-160. (pending delivery from interlibrary loan)

Usher, C., Locklin, E., Wildfire, J., Harris, C. (2001). Child welfare performance ratings: One state's approach. *Administration in Social Work*, 25 (1), 35-51.

Courtney, ME (2004). Unintended consequences of the push for accountability: The case of national child welfare performance standards. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 26(12), 1141-   .

April 4: Qualitative Research: Understanding School and Educational Policies in Context

a. The role of qualitative research in the policy research process
b. Approaches to qualitative research in the field
c. Examples of qualitative research influence educational policy

Rist, Ray (2000). Influencing the Policy Process with Qualitative Research. In Denzin and Lincoln (eds*), The Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA.

Scheurich, J. (1994). Policy archeology: A new policy studies methodology. *Journal of Education Policy*, 9, 297-316.

Lipman, P. (2002). Making the global city, making inequality: The political economy and cultural politics of Chicago school policy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 39, 379-422.

Casella, R. (2002). Zero tolerance policy in schools: Rationale, consequence and altneratives. *Teachers College Record*, 105 (5), 872-892.

April 11: Machine Learning: Predictive Analytics and Criminal Justice

a. Introduction to Machine learning

b. Case study: Probation and sentencing

c. Case study: Child welfare risk assessment

d. Ethical considerations and debate

Berk, Richard. (2009). Chapter 2 Some Important Background Material. Criminal Justice Forecasts of Risk: A Machine Learning Approach. New York: Springer.Berk Ch 2 Some Important Background Material.pdf

 Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Foust, R, Vaithianathan, R., & Putnam-Hornstein, E. (2017). Risk assessment and decision making in child protective services: Predictive risk modeling in context. Children and Youth Services Review, 79, 291-298. Risk assessment and decision making in child protective services.pdf

Optimizing Government Seminar Series, Penn Law. Watch this video of a panel discussing machine learning in government.
https://www.law.upenn.edu/newsevents/calendar.php#!event_id/54612/view/event

April 18:   The Integration of Administrative Data Sources: Challenges and Opportunities

> a. The next frontier in policy research?
> b. Challenges
> c. Case Studies: HMIS, South Carolina and the Philadelphia KIDS Project

Baily, WP (2005). Tools for monitoring the health care safety net: Integrated state data systems. http://www.ahrq.gov/data/safetynet/bailey.htm#contents

Fantuzzo, J & Culhane, D. (in press) Actionable intelligence for social policy. In Fantuzzo & Culhane (eds), *Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy*.

Culhane, DP, Fantuzzo, J, Rouse, H, Tam, V, & Lukens, J. (2008). Creating beneficial connections: The promise of integrated data systems for policy analysis and systems reform. Chicago: The MacArthur Foundation.

April 25: Student paper presentations