

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOL OF SOCIAL POLICY & PRACTICE MASTER OF SCIENCE IN SOCIAL POLICY

MSSP 628 Policy: Analysis of Issues, Strategy and Process

Fall 2021

Class Meetings: Thursdays 1015AM- 1245PM Jaffe Building Rm 113 Find classroom using the link below
<https://www.isc-cts.upenn.edu/finder/classroominfo.asp?id=jaff-113>

Course Website: <https://canvas.upenn.edu/courses/1614152>

Instructor

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E-mail: cgodwin@upenn.edu

Office Hours: by appointment

Meetings: **Please feel free to email me anytime to schedule a meeting**

How to Contact Me

The best way to reach me is via email, and I'm very happy to receive them. Please indicate "MSSP 628 005" in the subject line of the email, so that I can prioritize it among my other emails. If I do not respond within 48 hours, please feel free to email me again to bring the email to my attention—I sincerely value quick communication and want to make myself available to you to contact me when you have questions.

Course Description

The goal of this course is to teach you to analyze policy issues and communicate analysis effectively in a professional policy brief. Policy analysis and policy communication are symbiotic in social policy, where strong analytical methods are worthless without the skills to communicate them effectively to allies, opponents, stakeholders, and policy makers. In this course, we will work to develop both analysis and communication in the setting of professional social policy work.

Policy analysis is client-oriented advice relevant to public decisions and informed by social values. It involves identifying potential policy alternatives and evaluating those alternatives to reach a recommended course of action.

Social policy is a subset of public policy which focuses on issues of inequality and access to basic resources needed for decent and humane living. Social policy issues often center on distributive and redistributive policy, including income security, health, housing, civil rights, social services, criminal justice, child welfare, and environmental protection. These subjects will be integrated into the course's examples, scenarios, and assignments to emphasize that the analysis of social policy occurs within the social, political, economic, and normative context of these policy areas. Particularly important will be considering impacts on the disadvantaged, including racial, ethnic, and gender minorities; the poor; and differently abled and disabled persons.

While our main task will focus on practical policy tools and analysis, a secondary goal is to familiarize you with contemporary and historical social policy debates and provisions through selected case examples and policy briefs. This will provide students with an understanding of the policy roles of the legislative and executive branches of government, including goal setting, policy rulemaking, regulation, implementation, allocation of resources, and financing. Many course examples will focus on the U.S. context; however, it is my intention that issues considered are universal and often internationally applicable.

Educational Objectives

By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

Conduct a professional analysis of social policies.

Craft a justified policy recommendation based on empirical data and social goals.

Construct a Theory of Change describing the causal chain of a policy intervention from policy inputs through to final policy outcomes.

Describe how political, legislative, and executive processes influence social policy and program development.

Understand the role of evidence in the analysis of social policies.

Recognize the roles and relationships that exist among federal, state, and local governments in the development and implementation of policy.

Demonstrate knowledge of the range of social policies.

Course Requirements and Expectations

Attendance: Students are expected to attend all classes, be prepared to discuss assigned readings, and participate fully in class activities. Please inform me in advance of anticipated absences.

Students may miss one session without penalty. However, if you choose to use this option, make sure to communicate by email that you will be absent. Unexcused absences will result in a 10% deduction from your course participation grade.

Active Participation: Our class time is a valuable resource to engage with your classmates, learning from them and allowing them to learn from you. It is crucial that each student comes prepared to actively engage in discussions and lectures in class. Those who divide their time between class and other activities such as email or texting will be docked class participation in their final grade. Please set aside class time for engagement and focus.

Inclusive Classroom Environment: At times, this class will touch on important issues relevant to important questions of policy and justice. It is critical that we maintain a classroom environment where diverse perspectives are respected and where differences in opinion are both tolerated and encouraged to be voiced in the classroom. These values of inclusion and mutual respect are important community values for this class.

Accommodations: University of Pennsylvania provides reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities who have self-identified and been approved by the Office of Student Disabilities Services (SDS) (<https://wlrc.vpul.upenn.edu/sds/>). If you have not yet contacted SDS and would like to request accommodations or have questions, you can make an appointment by calling SDS at 215-573-9235. The office is located in the Weingarten Learning Resources Center at Stouffer Commons 3702 Spruce Street, Suite 300 (<https://wlrc.vpul.upenn.edu/>). All services are confidential.

Writing Help: Writing is an essential professional skill for policy analysis and a core component of this course. Penn's Marks Family Writing Center has a variety of services for those who would like help with their writing (http://writing.upenn.edu/critical/writing_center). Please feel free to take advantage of these resources, which are here to help you build professional writing skills as efficiently as possible.

I am also happy to give direct feedback on your writing as you are working on your assignments, as I believe that direct and specific feedback is the best way to improve on writing. In interests of fairness, I cannot pre-review an entire assignment. For direct feedback, please feel free to email me anytime with:

1. An outline of no longer than two pages; or
2. A full page of an assignment of no longer than one page.

I will be happy to give you tips on ways to sharpen your communication.

Assignment Submission Instructions:

- Written assignments are due by midnight on the date indicated. Please submit assignments via the “Assignments” tab in the course website and by email to Krista.
- Assignment Checklist:
 1. Insert name, assignment number, date, and page number in the header for all pages.
 2. Submit each assignment to Canvas.
 3. List your last name, first initial and assignment number in the subject line of the email. (e.g.,
 1. **Godwin, C. - Assignment 1, Social Problem**)
- **Paper extensions are rare and should be arranged in advance with documentation of the underlying reason.** Balancing work by staying organized and on top of your deadlines is an important professional skill in the policy world.
- There is a one hour grace period after midnight, after which late assignments are docked 10% for each day late. Maximum deduction for lateness is 30%—i.e. very late assignments will receive 70% at maximum.
- Assignments will be evaluated based on their application of course concepts, the quality of the work, the clarity of expression, and the use of the evidence to support the analysis. Professional, well-structured writing is a key element in succeeding in this course.
- Papers should be typed in 12-point font, either double-spaced or single-spaced with spaces between the paragraphs, and utilize APA citation and reference format. The guidelines for APA format are found in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 6th edition (www.apastyle.org), with additional information on the Canvas site.
- Collaboration is encouraged. Your classmates represent one of your best resources both within the program and post-graduation. I strongly encourage you to communicate with each other about assignments and provide feedback on each other’s work. Collaboration and peer review is an excellent way for both you and your collaborator to grow as professionals.

Grading Policy: The final course grade reflects the extent to which each student has incorporated the requisite knowledge and analytic skills into assignments. The final grade will be weighted in the following manner:

Class Participation (10%)

Peer Review Assignments (10%)

Assignment 1 – Social Problem Definition (10%) - Sunday, September 19th at midnight

Assignment 2 – Alternatives and Criteria (15%) - Sunday, October 24 at midnight

Assignment 3 – Constructing an Outcomes Matrix and Confronting Trade-offs (15%)- Sunday, November 21 at midnight

Assignment 4 – Final Policy Analysis and Legislative Strategy (40%)- Friday, December 16 at midnight

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to adhere to the University's Code of Academic Integrity, available at <https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/code-of-academic-integrity/>. Care should be taken to avoid academic integrity violations, including plagiarism, fabrication of information, and multiple submissions (see descriptions below).** Students who engage in any of these actions will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct, which investigates and decides on sanctions in cases of academic dishonesty.

1. Plagiarism: Using the ideas, data, or language of another person or source without specific or proper acknowledgment. Example: copying, in part or in its entirety, another person's paper, article, or web-based material and submitting it for an assignment; using someone else's ideas without attribution; not using quotation marks where appropriate; etc.
2. Fabrication: Submitting contrived or altered information in any academic exercise. Example: making up data or statistics, citing nonexistent articles, contriving sources, etc.
3. Multiple submissions: Submitting, without prior permission, any work submitted to fulfill another academic requirement.

It is students' responsibility to consult the instructor if they are unsure about whether something constitutes a violation of the Code of Academic Integrity.

Required Texts

Bardach, E.M. & Patashnik, E. (2020). *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving* Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press. (4th, 5th, or 6th edition is fine)

Kingdon, J.W. (2011). *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, Updated 2nd ed. Boston, MA: Longman.

All other readings will be posted to canvas in the module for that week

Assignments

Assignment 1: Social problem definition

Length: No more than four pages

Due: Sunday, September 19th by midnight via Canvas: Assignments and by email

Identify a client for the paper, to whom you are an advisor. This can be an agency, organization, or political leader, including an advocacy organization working outside the government. The client should be able to take action or influence actions to address a public social problem. You are advising the client on whether, why, and how to proceed to address the problem or meet the missed opportunity.

First step: Problem Definition. Define a problem in a social policy area that you will follow throughout the term. The problem definition should both provide the background and context for the problem and come to a single statement of the problem, which should be clearly indicated for the reader. Recall the five components of a formal problem definition: 1) state the objectives; 2) frame; 3) quantify; 4) diagnose causes; and 5) justify government intervention. The reader should come away with a clear idea why this is a public problem that is an appropriate area for intervention from the agency of your choice.

Second step: Background and Context. Describe the important context within the social policy area you have selected. (1) What is the history of policy in your area, and how does it lead up to the current state of policy? In particular, why does this social problem still exist, and why has it not been sufficiently addressed earlier? (2) Who are the important stakeholders? Do they all agree with your framing of the problem? Are there particular segments of society that are disproportionately impacted? (3) Is there urgency in addressing this issue now? Does it fit with other initiatives pursued at the national, subnational, or international levels?

Assignment 2: Alternatives and Criteria

Length: No more than three pages of text, plus as many pages of ToC as you wish

Due: Sunday, October 24 at midnight via Canvas: Assignments and by email

First step, revisited: Problem Definition. Briefly restate your problem definition in current form, reflecting the revision through this point in your project. This should be no longer than a paragraph or two.

Third Step: Construct Alternatives. Please describe at least four policy alternatives (including the baseline condition of “let present trends continue”) that you have under consideration to solve your social policy problem. Be careful to only include description of the alternatives here and avoid launching into the analysis and evaluation of those alternatives.

Construct a Theory of Change (ToC) for each of the alternatives, describing the causal steps from inputs and activities through to final outcomes. Include the necessary assumptions at each stage of the ToC and postulate some empirical indicators that would indicate whether each causal step has been successful. Carefully consider implementation challenges that may arise in your postulated causal chains.

In the final policy analysis, you will limit yourself to three or four alternatives unless there is very good reason to diverge from that number. Letting present trends continue should be one of these but you need not devote a lot of time to it if present trends clearly lead to a bad outcome.

Fourth Step: Define Criteria. Define criteria to evaluate the success of your alternatives. Discuss how you will interpret and evaluate each of your criteria, which must include at least the “Effectiveness,” “Efficiency,” and “Equity” criteria. (You may include other criteria but these three are required).

Be sure discuss the measurements or evaluation procedures you propose to use for each criterion and discuss the feasibility of using these measures given available data and evidence. It should be clear to the audience how each criterion will be considered for the purpose of this analysis in a way that will be applied equally to each alternative.

The *Effectiveness* criterion requires you get specific about what it would mean to solve the problem, often including how to prioritize various kinds of improvements.

The *Efficiency* criterion may be defined either in terms of cost-effectiveness (i.e. an effective use of budget) or in terms of an overall assessment of the costs and benefits that would result from each alternative.

The *Equity* criterion may be defined in terms of outcomes (i.e. distributions), process (i.e. setting up a deliberative process), or both. In either kind of definition, it should be clear what is being evaluated—the question the equity inquiry sets out to answer—and how it will be applied to each alternative equally. Outcome equity should make clear what distributional outcomes are being measured and why those are important. Process equity should make clear who will be involved in the process and how they will be informed.

Assignment 3: Constructing an Outcomes Matrix and Confronting Trade-offs

Length: No more than eight pages, including the outcomes matrix

Due: Sunday, November 21 at midnight via Canvas: Assignments and by email

First step, revisited: Problem Definition. Briefly restate your problem definition in current form, reflecting the revision through this point in your project. This should be no longer than a paragraph or two.

Third step, revisited: Alternatives. Briefly summarize each alternative that you defined in Assignment 3. These summaries should give the reader an essential understanding of the alternative. They should be one paragraph each.

Fourth step, revisited: Criteria. Briefly summarize each criterion that you defined in Assignment 3, including how they will be evaluated within this analysis. They should be one paragraph each.

Fifth Step: Construct an Outcomes Matrix. Using your criteria and alternatives, construct an outcomes matrix based on your social policy. Describe for the reader how you projected each outcome in the matrix, taking care to communicate where and why there may be uncertainty in the projection. These descriptions should be methodical, walking through each projection and describing the reasoning behind the projection included in the outcomes matrix.

Six Step: Confront the Trade-Offs. After projecting outcomes and constructing your outcomes matrix, identify key trade-offs that will be crucial to determining your policy recommendation. Describe why these are important trade-offs, why they are pressing, and how you will reconcile them in your final analysis.

Assignment 4: Final Policy Analysis

Length: 15 pages of text, including executive summary but not including optional appendices (such as a ToC, graph, or matrix)

Due: Friday, December 16 at midnight via Canvas: Assignments and by email

The final policy analysis memo involves conducting and writing up a full policy analysis based on your assignments this term, including your problem definition, alternatives, criteria-based analysis, tradeoffs, and recommendation. The audience should have a clear idea from your memo how you worked through tradeoffs among your outcomes on the various criteria, the values that played into weighing those tradeoffs, and what uncertainties existed in the evidence. The final policy analysis should build on the steps from previous assignments to reach a justified policy recommendation. Consider weaving together these steps into a narrative, reworking your problem definition and policy context to prepare the reader for your final analysis.

After reaching your recommendation, describe the legislative path for your recommended change and your client's role in bringing that policy change to fruition. Who might sponsor the proposal? What committees have jurisdiction? Does the current social context contribute or detract from possible passage—is the issue on the agenda? Are there stakeholders that might be mobilized to influence change in this area? The reader should have a clear idea of the next steps and key takeaways that might be taken to influence change in this area.

Include an executive summary of your analysis. This should be a two-page summary of the analysis detailing the problem addressed, recommendation, methodology taken to reach the recommendation, and important next steps for the reader to consider. The executive summary should be conceptually separate from the main document with the idea that some readers may read only that summary.

Peer Review

Peer review puts you in the shoes of the audience, evaluating how successful a classmate was in achieving the goals of the assignment. The goal is to be constructive, giving your fellow student a lens into the perspective of the reader. What worked well in the assignment, and what was unclear? Did the author make assumptions without fully explaining them to the reader? What questions are lingering in your mind after reading?

Peer reviews should be structured in three sections. (1) What worked well? What aspects of the assignment were particularly clear? (2) What could be improved before the final analysis? What aspects seem assumed or unjustified in the current draft? If you were a stakeholder who opposed policy changes in this area, what aspects of the analysis would you critique? (3) Recommended next steps as the author thinks about working toward the next assignment and the final policy analysis.

Class Schedule and Required Readings

SECTION I: POLICY ANALYSIS

September 2nd (Week 1): Course Overview & Introduction to Social Policy

Course Overview

Boundaries of Social Policy

Key Concepts

Kingdon, Chapter 1, “How Does an Idea’s Time Come?”

**This chapter is on Canvas. Other Kingdon chapters will not be.*

Howard, J. (2018). “House Passes Scale-Back of Obama-Era Menu Calorie Count Rules.”

FDA. “Calories on the Menu: Information for Consumers.”

Bardach: “Introduction” and Part I: Steps 1 & 2 (“Define the Problem” & “Assemble Some Evidence”)

Bardach, Appendix C; Appendix D

Kingdon, Chapter 5, “Problems”

September 16 (Week 3): Wicked Problems & Intersectional Policy Issues

Wicked vs. Tame Problems

Addressing Wicked Problems with Policy

Intersectional Policy Problems

Australian Public Services Commission. (2007). *Tackling wicked problems: A public policy perspective*. Commonwealth of Australia.

Peters, B.G. (2017). What is so wicked about wicked problems? A conceptual analysis and a research program. *Policy and Society*, 36(3).

Read for the use of intersectionality to understand a policy problem:

Page, M. (2017). Forgotten Youth: Homeless LGBT Youth of Color and the Runaway & Homeless Youth Act. *Northwestern Journal of Law & Social Policy*, 2(2).

Optional:

Conklin, E.J., & Weil, W. (1997) *Wicked problems: Naming the pain in organizations*.

ASSIGNMENT ONE DUE SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 19 AT MIDNIGHT

September 23 (Week 4): Constructing Alternatives & Theories of Change

Constructing Alternatives

Theories of Change

Universal vs. Targeted Policy Design

Bardach: Part I, Step 3 (“Construct the Alternatives”)

Bardach: Appendix A (“What Governments Do”)

Rogers, P. (2014). *Theory of change*. UNICEF Methodological Briefs.

Powell, J.A., Menendian, S., & Ake, W. (2019). Targeted Universalism: Policy & Practice.

Optional:

Taplin, D.H., & Clark, H. (2012). *Theory of change basics: A primer on theory of change*.

PEER REVIEW DUE SUNDAY AFTER CLASS

September 30th (Week 5): Criteria, Equity, & Fair Public Decision

Making *Selecting Criteria to Justify a Policy Decision*

Conceptions of Equity

Justifiable Decision Procedures

Bardach: Part I, Step 4 (“Select the Criteria”)

Stone, D. (2012). *Policy paradox: The art of political decision making*, 3rd ed. (Chapter 3: “Equity”)

Dworkin, R. (1994). Will Clinton’s Plan Be Fair? *New York Review of Books*.

Brooks, R. (2021). Competence is Critical for Democracy. *New York Times*.

October 7 (Week 6): Projecting Outcomes & Cost-Benefit Analysis

Practical Policy Outcome Projection

Basic Cost-Benefit Analysis

Bardach: Part I, Step 4 (“Project the Outcomes”).

Zerbe, R.O., & Scott, T. (2015) A primer for understanding benefit-cost analysis. In *Actionable intelligence for social policy: Using integrated data systems to achieve a more effective, efficient, and ethical government*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Projecting Outcomes Worksheet

Optional:

Cellini, S.R., & Kee, J.E. “Cost-Effectiveness and Cost-Benefit Analysis.” In *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*.

Optional Module: Introduction to Cost-Benefit Analysis Technical Concepts

Intermediate Cost-Benefit Analysis
Spreadsheets

Munger, M. (2000). *Analyzing Policy*. (pp. 280–318; 322–47; 352–78)

October 14 (Week 7): Confronting Trade-Offs & Outcomes Matrices

Confronting Trade-Offs among Outcomes
Building an Outcomes Matrix
Justifying a Policy Recommendation

Bardach: Part I, Step 5 (“Confront the Trade-Offs”).

Weimer, D., & Vining, A. (2010). *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice*, 5th ed., pp. 340–82.

SECTION II: THE POLICY PROCESS

October 21 (Week 8): Policy Stream

Policy Actors
The Policy Stream
The Policy Primeval Soup

Kingdon: Chapter 2, “Participants on the Inside of Government”

Kingdon: Chapter 3, “Outside of Government, but Not Just Looking In”

Kingdon, Chapter 6, “The Policy Primeval Soup” (*particularly important*)

Legislative Process Flowchart (one page chart)

Web Legislative Resources (THESE ARE NOT REQUIRED READING—they are resources for your papers and future policy work):

1) Congressional Record: The Congressional Record provides daily and historic details of Senate and House proceedings, chamber activities, committee meetings, days bills were discussed and with more details, etc. <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/thomas.php>

2) www.thecapitol.net – for training and publications about how government works and such topics as how to prepare and deliver testimony, advocacy, etc. (at a cost)

3) Glossary of Congressional and legislative terms <http://www.thecapitol.net/glossary>

4) Glossary of terms used in the federal budget process – 182-page report
www.gao.gov/new.items/d05734sp.pdf

ASSIGNMENT TWO DUE SUNDAY, OCTOBER 24 AT MIDNIGHT

October 28th (Week 9): Stakeholder Analysis & Interviewing

Conducting a Stakeholder Analysis

AIIM Matrix

Strategic Interactions with Stakeholders

World Bank. (2001). Stakeholder Analysis.

Mendizabal, E. (2010). *The Alignment, Interest and Influence Matrix (AIIM) Toolkit*. Research and Policy in Development (RAPID), Overseas Development Institute (ODI): London, UK.

UCLA Center for Health Policy Research. (2nd) Section 4. Key Informant Interviews.

Optional Video: John Young. (2014). Policy Engagement and Influence: Seven Policy Entrepreneur Tools.

For Review: Schmeer, K. (2000). Stakeholder Analysis Guidelines, in *Policy Toolkit for Strengthening Health Sector Reform*. LAC Health Sector Reform Initiative.

PEER REVIEW DUE SUNDAY AFTER CLASS

November 4 (Week 10): Deliberation & Public Discourse

Policy Analysis as Discourse

Deliberation and Social Policy

Advocacy Coalitions

White, L.G. (1994). Policy analysis as discourse. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 13(3), 506-525.

Jenkins-Smith, H.C., et al. (2014). The Advocacy Coalition Framework: Foundations, Evolution, and Ongoing Research. (Chapter 6).

“Asarco Case”

November 11 (Week 11): Regulation and Rulemaking

Structure and Function of Executive Agencies

Rulemaking and the Regulatory Process

Program Monitoring

Reporting to Legislative Bodies

Lipsky, M. (2014). Rulemaking as a tool of democracy. New York: Dēmos.

Weiner, G. (2021). This Is No Way to Rule a Country. *New York Times*.

OMB Watch. Background on the Rulemaking Process.

OMB Watch. (2007). Regulatory Flowchart.

Optional: Kerwin, C.M., & Furlong, S.R. (2011). *Rulemaking: How government agencies write law and make policy* (4th ed.). (Chapters 1 & 2).

November 18 (Week 12): Federalism & Intergovernmental Fiscal Relationships

Federalism

Fiscal Relationships

Intergovernmental Grants

Edwards, C. (2013). Fiscal federalism.

Kelly, N.J. & Witko, C. (2012). Federalism and American inequality. *The Journal of Politics*, 74(2), 414-426.

Bardach, "Part II"

PAPER THREE DUE SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 21 AT MIDNIGHT

SECTION III: POLICY COMMUNICATION

December 2 (Week 13): The Political Stream & Rhetorical Messaging

The Political Stream

National Mood

Organized Forces

Consensus Building

Kingdon, Chapter 7, "The Political Stream"

Lakoff, G. (2009). The PolicySpeak Disaster for Health Care. *CommonDreams.org*.

Nelson, D., & Lackee, S.W. (2012). Lobbying coalitions and government policy change: An analysis of federal agency rulemaking. *The Journal of Politics*, 74, (2).

PEER REVIEW DUE BEFORE CLASS OR BEFORE 11/28

December 9 (Week 14): Policy Windows & Strategic Communication

Policy Windows

Strategic Communication

Building a Case for Change

Kingdon, Chapter 8, "The Policy Window, and Joining the Streams"

Institute for Local Government. (2013). Effective Public Engagement through Strategic Communication

Bardach, Part I, Steps 7 & 8; "Appendix B"

FINAL ASSIGNMENT DUE WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16 AT MIDNIGHT