

# Public Policy Analysis: Speaking Truth to Power

Political Science 4216  
Spring 2024  
T TH 9:30–10:45A  
209 Wehr Physics

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No theory is kind to us that cheats us of *seeing*.  
Henry James (1891)

Rule-following, legal precedence, and political consistency are not more important than right, justice and plain common-sense.  
W.E.B. Du Bois (1935)

Solutions to problems, scientific and practical alike, both reflect and create social constructs...By proposing new programs, the policy analyst suggests new hypotheses and hence new values that codify social relations.  
Aaron Wildavsky (1979)

## Course Description

This course is designed to provide upper-level undergraduates with a basic mastery of the art and craft of policy analysis as it is currently practiced in American political life. Politics is the process of collectively deciding who gets what, when, where, and how. In the last 60 years or so, the interdisciplinary field of policy analysis has taken on an increasingly important role in helping to shape (or at the very least justify) those collective decisions. This is so not only because policy analysis constitutes a means of “speaking truth to power” (i.e. providing impartial analysis to check the assumptions and intuitions of those with authority), but also because policy analysis is itself a means of exercising power – through the systemic definition of policy priorities, alternatives, evaluative criteria, and modes of outcomes measurement. This course thus invites students to better understand what public policy is, why we analyze it, and the role of policy analysis in the practice of American politics. By preparing several policy memoranda, students will also develop a set of skills for analyzing policy, while also understanding the limits of conventional policy analysis techniques. Finally, a team policy analysis project will allow students to apply analytic techniques to concrete scenarios confronting policymakers today.

## Learning Objectives

- *Problem Definition and Diagnosis:* Students will learn how to identify problems occurring in their local context that are amenable to policy intervention. Students will apply techniques of problem definition to concrete situations, identifying and analyzing policy issues from the perspective of multiple actors and interests. Students will learn how the diagnosis and definition of public problems shapes their politics.
- *Social Science Research Literacy:* Students will learn how to use basic descriptive and inferential statistics, as well as how to interpret social science research on public policy.

Students will become familiar with data sources commonly used by policy analysts, as well as techniques for analyzing these data.

- *Policy Alternatives:* Students will learn techniques for identifying and crafting policy alternatives, as well as how to compare the strengths and weaknesses of various policy instruments. Students will apply these skills to issues with varying levels of complexity.
- *Evaluation:* Students will learn how to apply multiple appropriate criteria for evaluating public policies and how to consider the ethical consequences of using these criteria. Students will be able to use basic techniques for forecasting the outcomes of various policy alternatives and for identifying tradeoffs between alternatives under conditions of uncertainty. Students will consider the limits of techniques for formalizing and quantifying the costs and benefits of these alternatives.
- *Professional Skills:* Students will develop the competencies required to work as policy professionals, including written and oral presentation of policy analysis. Students will also learn how to work effectively as a *team* to produce timely, coherent policy analyses, integrating the perspectives and experiences of multiple team members.

## Course Materials

There are two textbooks available for purchase at the Book Marq or wherever fine books are sold:

- Eugene Bardach and Eric Patashnik, *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis*, 6th ed. (CQ Press, 2020). ISBN: 9781506368887.
- Deborah Stone, *Policy Paradox*, 3rd ed. (WW Norton, 2011). ISBN: 9780393912722

All other readings will be made available via D2L.

**Note:** All readings in the syllabus are required. You should prepare these readings (using the reading questions on D2L as a guide) prior to the session for which they are assigned.

## Assignments

**Participation/Attendance:** This course requires an extensive amount of reading and preparation prior to class. To facilitate this, weekly reading questions will be posted to D2L and single-question reading assessments will be given. You are expected to attend each class session having read and digested all assigned material, ready to engage in an informed, lively discussion with the instructor and with other students. In the event of a lack of participation, I will call on students to discuss and critique the readings to stimulate a discussion. I strongly urge students to embrace risk-taking when sharing their thoughts in class. There's no need to hesitate or fear sounding less knowledgeable. Dare to speak your mind and express your ideas openly (if they pertain to the class subject). Each student's contribution and perspective hold value and deserve consideration in class discussions **If you do not speak at all during the semester or are absent for more than six (6) class sessions, you will receive no points for participation.**

**Case Exercises:** During the semester, you will complete two case exercises. The first of these you will complete on your own. The second will be completed in class as part of a team.

**Policy Memos:** Throughout the semester you will compose **four (4)** short policy memos, which will present you with concrete scenarios that will allow you to apply the analysis skills you

learn in each segment of the course. Each assignment will include a rubric so that you understand how your work is being evaluated. In general, maximum points will be awarded to written work that synthesizes knowledge of course materials with outside research on specific issues, takes an analytical approach that evinces coherent thinking, employs clear English with appropriate vocabulary, following style guidelines for writing policy memos, and turning in correctly formatted materials by the deadline. For more information, see **“The Art and Craft of Memo Writing”** handout on D2L. A paper copy of this guide will also be distributed in one of the first class sessions.

**Team Policy Analysis Project:** Over the course of the semester, you and a team of four colleagues will put your knowledge to work by preparing a formal policy analysis of an issue assigned to you from the list generated by students at the beginning of the semester. The grade for this project will be based on four assignments: three 1000-word briefing memos on problem definition, evidence, and criteria-alternatives, as well as an in-class presentation (including PowerPoint slides) that presents an analysis of multiple alternatives and a final policy recommendation. Your team will receive a team grade for each assignment. You will also receive an individual grade, based on a 360° review of your performance on each assignment. Further details on these assignments, as well as expectations for conducting team-based work, will arrive under separate cover.

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Due</b>
Mini-case Exercise	Individual	1%	1/21 by 11:59 PM
Memo #1 (Policy Scan)	Individual	2%	2/8 by 11:59 PM
Problem Definition Case Exercise	Team	2%	2/13 by end of class
Memo #2 (Problem Definition)	Individual	5%	2/18 by 11:59 PM
Team Problem Definition Briefing Memo	Team*	10%	3/3 by 11:59 PM
Memo #3 (Gathering Evidence)	Individual	10%	3/8 by 11:59 PM
Team Evidence Inventory Briefing Memo	Team*	5%	3/24 by 11:59 PM
Memo #4 (Criteria /Alternatives)	Individual	15%	4/7 by 11:59 PM
Team Criteria/Alternatives Briefing Memo	Team*	15%	4/19 by 11:59 PM
Team Presentation (slide deck, script, in-class talk)	Team*	20%	4/29 by 11:59 PM
Participation (including in-class quizzes/labs)	Individual	10%	End of each class
Team 360° Review	Individual	5%	Following each starred (*) team assignment

## **Assessment**

In general, maximum points will be awarded for work that effectively deploys insights from course materials and applies these insights in creative ways to novel situations, illustrating strong analytical skills, clear writing, and proper citation style. All work must be turned in by the deadline and is properly formatted.

Grades will be determined using the following scale:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Grade Points</u>	<u>Cut-off</u>
A	4	93+
A-	3.67	90-92.9
B+	3.33	87-89.9
B	3	83-86.9
B-	2.67	80-82.9
C+	2.33	77-79.9
C	2	73-76.9
C-	1.67	70-72.9
D	1	60-69.9
F	0	<60

Or, qualitatively:

A: Exceptional. Work is of nearly professional quality. Demonstrates a strong command of analytical principles and relevant evidence. Unusually thorough, strongly reasoned, creative, methodologically sound, and well-written.

A- Excellent. Work demonstrates a command of analytical principles / relevant evidence. Creative application of analytical principles to concrete situations. Mostly well-reasoned and well-written.

B+ Good. Work demonstrates a solid understanding of analytical principles and relevant evidence. No major analytical shortcomings, but some minor issues with reasoning or expository writing.

B: Competent. Adequate work with some clear weaknesses. Demonstrates competency with main analytical concepts, but limited understanding or application of concepts. Writing and reasoning need work.

B-: Not Adequate. Meets minimal expectations for advanced undergraduate work. Understanding of key issues is incomplete. Limited evidence of attention to writing and reasoning.

C+/C/C-: Deficient. Work is inadequate that barely meets minimal expectations. Numerous errors or misunderstandings of important issues. Minimal evidence of attention to reasoning or writing.

D/F: Unacceptable. Does not meet minimal expectations for assignment. An office-hours appointment is necessary.

## Course Policies

**Communication:** The best way to reach the instructor is by sending a courteous email. For longer conversations, stop by for office hours between 2 and 5 PM on Wednesdays in 411 Wehr Physics, or by appointment. All emails will be answered within 48 hours.

**Preparing for Class:** Students are expected to read all assigned readings and review all key concepts prior to class. Some best practices here include, but are not limited to: reviewing all assigned readings prior to arriving at class, using the reading questions on D2L to guide your reading, preparing notes and questions on each reading, and discussing readings with classmates before and after class.

**In Class:** Each class session will include some amount of both lecture and discussion. Your participation grade (see above) demands that you arrive at each of these sessions having done the assigned reading and ready to have discussion. You are also encouraged to bring in questions about applying the lessons and insights from the readings. Some class sessions will provide time for in-class teamwork. In these cases, you are expected to engage fully with your team to address the task at hand.

**Collegiality:** A course in policy analysis will invariably invite discussion of controversial policies or issues. Differing viewpoints—even vastly differing viewpoints—abound. This course depends on a collegial atmosphere for debate and discussion, including and especially of such matters. We will work best if we think of ourselves as a team. When differing viewpoints emerge, you are encouraged to listen to them with an open mind. When making arguments, you are encouraged to employ valid empirical evidence to support your claims. In some cases, it may be helpful to acknowledge pre-existing beliefs or experiences that shape your judgment about, or understanding of, key issues. During our discussions, behavior that is disrespectful of your colleagues, or of your instructor, will not be tolerated.

**Mobile Phones:** During class, please mute mobile phones and store them out of site unless needed for an activity. The presence of these devices has been shown to reduce available cognitive capacity.<sup>1</sup>

**Laptops:** Laptops will be permitted for the purposes of note-taking only. It is well-established that sound note-taking habits correlate with academic success.<sup>2</sup> While there is an ongoing debate in the research literature about the effectiveness of digital versus longhand note-taking, it is patently obvious that digital technologies have the potential to create unwanted distractions that might impede information retention.<sup>3</sup> Thus I would strongly advise that you take longhand notes in class.

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<sup>1</sup> Adrian F. Ward, Kristen Duke, Ayelet Gneezy, and Maarten W. Bos, “Brain drain: The mere presence of one’s own smartphone reduces available cognitive capacity,” *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research* 2, no. 2 (2017): 140-154.

<sup>2</sup> Keiichi Kobayashi, “Combined Effects of Note-Taking/-Reviewing on Learning and the Enhancement through Interventions: A meta-analytic review,” *Educational Psychology* 26, no. 3 (2006): 459-477.

<sup>3</sup> Benjamin Artz, Marianne Johnson, Denise Robson, and Sarinda Taengnoi, “Taking notes in the digital age: Evidence from classroom random control trials,” *The Journal of Economic Education* 51, no. 2 (2020): 103-115.

**Writing Guidelines:** All written assignments are to be written using a professional tone and an analytical writing style, which both provides sound evidence for factual assertions and presents information in a logical and coherent structure. Examples of this style can be found in the “Art and Craft of Memo Writing” handout, which can be found on D2L. If you need assistance with writing, you are encouraged to consult with Dr. Rocco or the specialists at Marquette’s Norman Ott Writing Center: <https://www.marquette.edu/writing-center/>.

**References:** When your written work includes assertions based on facts or evidence, you must make a reference to your sources. Depending on the nature of the claim you are making, those sources might be your own data analyses, evidence from peer-reviewed scientific journals, government reports, official statistics, newspaper articles, or interviews with stakeholders. You will cite these references in Chicago Manual of Style footnotes. For a quick guide to the Chicago Manual of Style, including citations to government documents, see: <https://tinyurl.com/3susw7fn>; On using footnotes in Microsoft Word, see : <https://www.customguide.com/word/how-to-add-footnotes-in-word>.

**Submitting Assignments:** All assignments are due in the appropriate D2L Dropbox by the date and time listed on their assignment guidelines. Assignments delivered between 1 and 24 hours late will lose 50% of their grade. Assignments delivered more than 24 hours late will receive a zero. Extensions can be granted by your professor, but only if you request them at least two days in advance of the due date. To allow time for proofreading of your work prior to submission, I would recommend setting an internal deadline, several hours before the official deadline. In the case of team-based work, that internal deadline for proofreading and final review may need to be a day before the official deadline.

**Academic Misconduct:** Information on Marquette’s Academic Misconduct Policy can be found here: <http://bulletin.marquette.edu/undergrad/academicregulations/> Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, individual violations, helping another student with any form of academic misconduct, failing to report any form of academic misconduct, or intentionally interfering with the educational process in any manner. Academic misconduct of any type is unacceptable and will result in immediate referral to Marquette’s Academic Integrity Director. If you are in doubt as to whether an action or behavior is subject to the academic misconduct policy, you should consult an appropriate member of the Academic Integrity Council, faculty or staff.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is intellectual theft by the unethical use of sources. It means use of another’s creations or ideas without proper attribution. Credit must be given for every direct quotation, for paraphrasing or summarizing any part of a work and for any information that is not common knowledge. Plagiarism is further addressed in the Academic Integrity Tutorial.

**Artificial Intelligence:** Artificial intelligence (AI) language models, such as ChatGPT, may not be used for course assignments except as explicitly authorized by the instructor. The following actions are prohibited in this course:

- Submitting all or any part of an assignment statement to an online learning support platform;
- Incorporating any part of an AI generated response in an assignment;
- Submitting your own work for this class to an online learning support platform for iteration or improvement.

**Accommodations:** If you need course adaptations or accommodations, or if you have medical information that may be pertinent to your performance in this course, please make an appointment with your instructor by the close of the first week of classes. For a student to receive special accommodations during exams, instructors must have a written notification from Marquette's Office of Disability Services (<http://www.marquette.edu/disability-services/>). If you know you need accommodations, please speak to ODS no later than the first week of classes. A policy and procedure document containing more information about accessibility for all students with disabilities at Marquette is available from the Coordinator of Disability Services (phone: 414-288-1645). All information is confidential.

**Absences:** Students are expected to attend all class meetings for courses in which they are registered and to be on time. The university allows students to add classes until the deadline to Add/Drop, as published in the [Academic Calendar](#). The obligation to attend class begins once students are registered for a class; therefore, students are not considered absent until registered and must be allowed to make up any work that was required before this time, if requested by the student. The following are considered excused obligations and are not to be counted as absences in the class: (1) jury duty, with appropriate documentation, or short-term military call-up, as outlined in the [Military Call to Active Duty or Training policy](#) in this bulletin; (2) the day(s) of religious observances, as listed on the [Campus Ministry website](#); (3) participation in Division-1 athletics or other university-sanctioned events (provided that this is documented to the instructor in advance of the activity and verified by an official of the University directly related to the activity. Further, students with confirmed COVID-19 diagnoses and in isolation must **not** attend class, but are expected to participate in all assignments. Students are expected to inform instructor of isolation dates and to communicate regularly about their ability to participate during that time. Medical documentation is NOT required for return to the classroom but may be required for return to some clinical sites. Students are to contact Office of Disability Services in the event they are not able to participate in coursework due to COVID-19 or symptoms of COVID-19 to explore if a reasonable accommodation can be afforded. Students symptomatic in isolation and needs testing or awaiting results must not attend class, but are expected to participate in all assignments to the extent possible based on severity of symptoms and seek out COVID-19 test through the [Marquette University Medical Clinic](#). tudents with confirmed COVID-19 exposure may attend class but are expected to wear a mask for 10 days, get tested on day 5 and monitor for symptoms.

**Planning Work and Personal Care:** As an undergraduate student, the responsibility for planning and executing your work in this class while balancing your other responsibilities is yours and yours alone. This is a balancing act, and one that will no doubt produce stress. Managing this stress is also your responsibility. Should the need arise, please contact the instructor, and/or avail yourself of the resources Marquette provides for its students. A list of these resources can be found here: <https://www.marquette.edu/student-affairs/care-team-resources.php>.

## Course Schedule

Note: Subject to change at Dr. Rocco's discretion.

### 1: Introduction to Policy Analysis

Date	Session	Readings/Assignments
1/16	Course overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Syllabus</li> <li>Bardach and Patashnik, Introduction (pp. xv–xx)</li> </ul>
1/18	Solving problems in the Polis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Case study: Operation Chandelier [D2L]</li> <li>Stone, Chapter 1</li> <li><b>Mini-case exercise – due to D2L Dropbox by 11:59 PM on Sunday, January 21.</b></li> </ul>
1/23	Analysis and/as politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Philip Rocco, “Prisoners of Their Own Device,” <i>The American Prospect</i>, April 2023. [D2L]</li> <li>Coral Davenport, “You’ve Never Heard of Him, But He’s Remaking the Pollution Fight,” <i>New York Times</i> June 2, 2023. [D2L]</li> </ul>
1/25	Analysis and the policy process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Werner Jann and Kai Wegrich, “Theories of the Policy Cycle,” in <i>Handbook of Policy Analysis</i>, ed. Frank Fischer, Gerald Miller, and Mara Sidney (CRC Press, 2007), 53–62. [D2L]</li> <li>Navroz K. Dubash, Aditya Valiathan Pillai, Christian Flachslan, Kathryn Harrison, Kathryn Hochstetler, Matthew Lockwood, Robert MacNeil et al., “National climate institutions complement targets and policies,” <i>Science</i> 374, no. 6568 (2021): 690–693. [D2L]</li> </ul>

### 2: Defining Public Problems

Date	Session	Readings/Assignments
1/30	Strategies for problem definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bardach and Patashnik, pp. 1–14 (Step 1).</li> </ul>
2/1	<b>No Class – Dr. Rocco is giving a talk @ University of Chicago</b>	
2/6	The promise and perils of numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Max Singer, “The vitality of mythical numbers,” <i>The Public Interest</i>, 23 (Spring 1971), 3–9. [D2L]</li> <li>Stone, Chapter 8</li> </ul>

2/8	Logic models and causal stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bobby Milstein and Tom Chapel, “Developing a Logic Model or Theory of Change,” University of Kansas Community Tool Box. [D2L]</li> <li>Stone, Chapter 9</li> <li><b>Memo #1 (Policy Scan) due by 11:59 PM on Thursday, February 8.</b></li> </ul>
2/13	Team problem definition exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No readings</li> </ul>

### 3: Formulating Questions and Assembling Evidence

Date	Session	Readings/Assignments
2/15	Identifying and gathering data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bardach and Patashnik, pp. 14–21 (Step 2).</li> <li>Dale Knapp and Jack Votava, <i>Broadband in Rural Wisconsin: Identifying Gaps, Highlighting Successes</i> (Madison, WI: Forward Analytics, 2020). [D2L]</li> <li>Handout on Key Data Sources [D2L]</li> <li><b>Memo #2 (Problem Definition) due by 11:59 PM on Sunday, February 18.</b></li> </ul>
2/20	Descriptive statistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jane Miller, <i>The Chicago Guide to Writing about Numbers</i>, Chapter 2. [D2L]</li> </ul>
2/22	Reading Observational Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jane Miller, <i>The Chicago Guide to Writing about Numbers</i>, Chapter 3. [D2L]</li> </ul>
2/27	Reading Systematic Reviews and Meta-analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anthony Petrosino, John Buehler, Carolyn Turpin-Petrosino, “Scared Straight and Other Juvenile Awareness Programs for Preventing Juvenile Delinquency: A Systematic Review,” <i>Campbell Systematic Reviews</i> 2013:5. [D2L]</li> </ul>

### 4: Alternatives and Criteria

Date	Session	Readings/Assignments
2/29	Constructing policy alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bardach and Patashnik, pp. 21–31 (Step 3); 147–55 (Things Governments Do).</li> <li><b>Team Problem Definition Due by 11:59 PM on Sunday, March 3.</b></li> </ul>
3/5	Inducements, coercion, persuasion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stone, Chapters 12–14</li> </ul>
3/7	Rights and powers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stone, Chapters 15–16</li> <li><b>Memo #3 (Gathering Evidence) due by 11:59 PM on Friday, March 8.</b></li> </ul>
3/12–14	<b>No Class – Spring Break</b>	

3/19–21	Choosing appropriate evaluative criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bardach and Patashnik, pp. 31–49 (Step 4).</li> <li>• Stone, Chapters 2 and 3</li> <li>• <b>Team Evidence Inventories due by 11:59 PM on Sunday, March 24.</b></li> </ul>
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### 5: Projecting Outcomes, Evaluating Alternatives, Confronting Tradeoffs, Telling Stories

Date	Session	Readings/Assignments
3/26	Extrapolation and forecasting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bardach and Patashnik, pp. 49–68 (Step 5).</li> <li>• Wisconsin Policy Forum, <i>Detour Ahead</i> (2023), pp. 3–4, 30–46. [D2L]</li> </ul>
3/28	<b>No Class – Easter Break</b>	
4/2	Break-even analysis, sensitivity, analysis, discounting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Break-Even Estimates, Sensitivity Analysis, and Discount Rates: A POSC 4216 Primer [D2L]</li> </ul>
4/4–9	Confronting tradeoffs and making recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bardach and Patashnik, pp. 69–84 (Steps 6 and 7).</li> <li>• Ari Brown et al., Medical Marijuana in Wisconsin: A Cost-Benefit Analysis, University of Wisconsin, Madison (2018). [D2L]</li> <li>• <b>Memo #4 (Criteria and Alternatives) due by 11:59 PM on Sunday, April 7.</b></li> </ul>
4/11	Confronting the limits of commensuration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zachary Liscow, “Equity in Regulatory Cost-Benefit Analysis,” Law and Political Economy Blog, October 4, 2021. [D2L]</li> <li>• Karen Tani, “The Limits of the Cost-Benefit Worldview: A Disability-Informed Perspective,” Law and Political Economy Blog, October 12, 2021. [D2L]</li> </ul>
4/16	Addressing difficult-to-quantify benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Michael Diamond, “The Costs and Benefits of Affordable Housing: A Partial Solution to the Conflict of Competing Goods,” <i>Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law &amp; Policy</i> 27, no. 2 (2020): 231-261. [D2L]</li> </ul>
4/18	Structuring narratives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bardach and Patashnik, pp. 84–93 (Step 8).</li> <li>• <b>Team Criteria and Alternatives are due by 11:59 PM on Friday, April 19.</b></li> </ul>

### 6: Final Projects

Date	Session	Readings/Assignments
4/23– 4/25	<b>Team meetings and instructor consultation – No class – Work independently with team</b>	
4/30 – 5/2	Final presentations	

