

**PPOL 5300-Managing the Policy Process
(Fall 2026)**

Thursdays, 03/09/2026-26/11/2025

19:00-21:50

Room 6602 (lift 31/32)

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Course Description

This core MPM course introduces students to key concepts and practices in public policy. The first part of the course will deal with the roles of key building blocks of the policy systems, such as value for public policy, policy instruments, policy actors and policy environment in shaping policymaking. The second part of the course will examine key stages in policy-making process, such as agenda setting, policy formation, decision-making, policy implementation and policy evaluation. The last part will cover important considerations in conducting policy analysis, such as identifying policy problems, establishing criteria, assessing policy alternatives, choosing among policies and projecting policy impacts.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- ◆ Be familiar with key terms, concepts, approaches, and frameworks concerning public policy;
- ◆ Describe important structures and interactions among key components of policy systems, such as policy actors, policy environment and policy instruments;
- ◆ Understand key theories and frameworks of the policy process and identify areas of potential improvement in a given context;
- ◆ Demonstrate competency in applying basic techniques of policy analysis to real policy problems

Textbooks

1. Hassel, A. and Wegrich, K. (2022). *How to Do Public Policy*, Oxford University Press.
2. Wu, X., M. Ramesh, M. Howlett, and S. Fritzen (2018). *The Public Policy Primer: Managing the Policy Process*, Routledge. 2nd Edition.
3. Bardach, E., & Patashnik, E. M. (2019). *A practical guide for policy analysis: The eightfold path to more effective problem solving* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: CQ press.
4. Weimer, D. L., & Vining, A. R. (2017). *Policy analysis: Concepts and practice* (6th ed.). New York: Taylor & Francis.

Assessment

The assessment of student performance in the course will be primarily based on three individual assignments and one group project. In addition, students who actively contribute to in-class case discussion and to Canvas discussion forums will be awarded up to five points for participation. Please note that when grading participation we take into account both quality and quantity of your comments. The following weights will be used to determine course grades:

Component	Weight	Due Date
1 st Assignment	25%	7 October
2 nd Assignment	20%	19 October
3 rd Assignment	20%	4 November
Group project	30% (15% for in-class presentation + 15% for commentary/op-ed)	26 November (presentation), 6 December (op-ed)
Class participation	5% (in-class and after-class participation)	

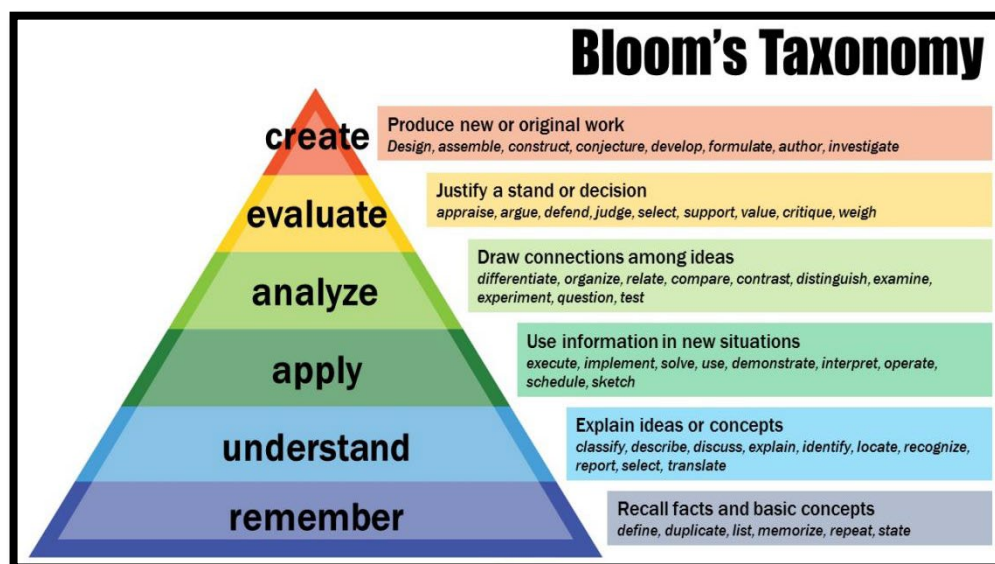
EXPECTATIONS:

This is a core course for MPM students. By this point in your university career, I expect that you are responsible, independent students. At the same time, the topic matter (or most of it) will be new to the majority of you. This can mean a heavy load at times. ***Attendance is mandatory, and the expectation is that you will do the readings for each session before the class.***

The reason that it is so important to do the readings and class assignments is that this course is only as good as what you each are willing to put into it. Case discussions (usually during the second half of the lectures), in particular, will only work well if students are prepared, and come to class willing to engage in fruitful discussions. This is not a brain-transfer from the instructor to the classroom. Public policy is a cooperative, interdisciplinary endeavour, and working through the material together is as much an element of the course as the subject matter itself. The structure of the course gives multiple ways for students to contribute, orally and in writing. But working on oral skills is an important element of the class, and the expectation is that all students will contribute to the discussions.

GRADING:

For each assignment, we will provide the outline and detailed marking rubrics. But for all assignments, it will be helpful to keep Bloom's Taxonomy in mind.



In general, the different levels relate to grades as follows (but keep in mind, different assignments may have particular requirements that need to be met which may change this a bit):

Create: 100%
Evaluate: 90%
Analyse: 80%
Apply: 70%
Understand: 60%
Remember: <60%

REGRADE POLICY

If you are dissatisfied with your grades or discover an error in the grading, you have the right to request a regrade. You have **three days** to review your grades. Requests for regrading will only be accepted **if your mark is below 75%**. Please bear in mind that a regrade does not guarantee a higher mark (in other words, your new grade could be higher, lower, or the same as the original).

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY CODE

All work must be entirely your own. Please cite the relevant work whenever you borrow ideas from others, using the proper reference format (e.g., APA, MLA). Examples of violations of the academic integrity code include but are not limited to: failure to use quotation marks when quoting, failure to give full credit when paraphrasing, use of others' ideas or work products, submission of work prepared through impermissible collaboration, and submission of work prepared by you for another class. (Your work in this class may be related to your work in another class, but the work you submit for this class should not duplicate that submitted for another class. If you anticipate an exception, please do not hesitate to ask.) Violation of the Academic Integrity Code may result in failure in the course, as well as more serious academic sanctions. For details about the academic integrity code, please refer to <https://acadreg.ust.hk/generalreg.html>.

Please check for plagiarism before you turn in each homework, for example using the anti-plagiarism software Turnitin available on Canvas. **A rule of thumb is that the similarity score should not exceed 15%, excluding references.**

POLICY ON GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN ASSIGNMENTS

Given the evolving landscape of GenAI tools, HKUST allows faculty members the flexibility to set their own course-level policies. In this course, we have adopted the policy of **“Restricting all use of generative AI for assessment.”** This means that the use of generative-AI in any academic work, including but not limited to essays, presentations, and reports, is strictly prohibited. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation in upholding the values of academic honesty and originality. Should we find any student has used generative-AI in work submitted for assessment for this course, we will treat such cases as plagiarism (as it is not work done by the student himself/herself). This will apply during the semester that the course is offered and up to one year thereafter.

LATE HOMEWORK POLICY

The only legitimate justification for late homework submission is sick leave, family emergency, or work schedule conflicts. For sick leave, you need to present proof of sickness such as a “certificate of sickness” which is obtainable from the doctor. In any other case, extensions on homework due dates are granted only on a case-by-case basis, and **you will need to formally request extensions from the instructor by email at least three days before the due dates** (please note that extensions granted orally or through WeChat do not count).

The “hard deadline” for each assignment is 2 days past the original due date. Late submissions are penalized if extensions are not granted beforehand: your grade will be reduced by 20% if the homework is one day overdue, and by 40% if two days overdue. Any submissions are not accepted beyond the hard deadline.

TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

*Note: All readings and case materials can be accessed through Canvas. **Readings marked with * at the beginning and the case materials are the high-priority ones.** Others are optional. This list is preliminary and subject to adjustment. Policy is constantly evolving – so we will adjust accordingly. Up-to-date reading lists, assignments, and announcements will all be posted on Canvas.*

PART I. Building Blocks of Policy Systems (4 weeks)

Week 1 (3 September): Introduction to Public Policy and Policy Analysis

1. *Hassel, A. and Wegrich, K. (2022). *How to Do Public Policy*, Oxford University Press. Chapter 1: Public Policy. pp. 5-31.
2. *Wu, X, M. Ramesh, M. Howlett, and S. Fritzen (2018). *The Public Policy Primer: Managing the Policy Process*, Routledge. 2nd Edition. Chapter 1: Introduction: Managing the Policy Process, pp. 1-25.
3. Head, B. (2008). Wicked Problems in Public Policy. *Public Policy*, 3(2), 101-118.
4. Peters, G. (2005). The Problem of Policy Problems. *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis*, 7(4), 349-370.
5. Smith, K. and C. Larimer (2009). *The Public Policy Theory Primer*, Westview Press. Chapter 1 Public Policy as a Concept and a Field (or Fields) or Study.
6. Weimer, D. & A. Vining. (2017). *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice*, Chapter 1: “Preview”. pp. 3-29. Chapter 2: “What Is Policy Analysis”. pp. 30-41.

Case 1: Uber: Threat or Opportunity for Hong Kong’s Transportation?

- Is it a policy problem?
- What is the problem facing Hong Kong?
- What kind of policy problem is it? (Hint: try to characterize the problem using concepts/frameworks we introduced in class)
- What course of action do you recommend for the decision-maker in this case?

Week 2 (10 September): Value for Public Policy

1. Stone, D. (2012). *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making*. London and New York, NY: WW Norton and Company. Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5
2. de Graaf, G., L. Huberts, R. Smulders (2016). Coping with Public Value Conflicts. *Administration & Society*, 48(9)

Case 2: Apple: Privacy vs. Safety

- What value conflicts are involved in this case?
- Should Apple unlock the iPhone used in the San Bernardino shooting? Why or why not?
- What are Apple's responsibilities for public safety (with respect to fighting terrorism and other crimes)? Does Apple have minimal or extensive responsibilities for public safety?
- What are Apple's responsibilities for customer privacy? Are these responsibilities minimal or extensive?

Week 3 (17 September): Policy Instruments

1. *Hassel, A. and Wegrich, K. (2022). *How to Do Public Policy*, Oxford University Press. Ch 4.4 "The Government's Toolbox" pp.102-105.
2. *Howlett, M., M. Ramesh and A. Perl (2020). *Studying Public Policy*. Routledge. 4th Edition. Chapter 5: Policy Formulation. pp. 142-170.
3. Weimer, D. & A. Vining (2017). *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice*, Chapter 10: "Correcting Market and Government Failures: Generic Policies," 6th edition, pp. 205-258.
4. Wu, X. and M. Ramesh. (2014) "Market Imperfections, Government Imperfections and Innovative Policy Mixes in Singapore", *Policy Sciences*, 47(3): 305-320.

Case 3: Beyond Dongjiang: Hong Kong's Journey toward Water Security

- What are the main objectives/goals of the water supply policy in Hong Kong (Hint: recall the values for public policy)? Have these objectives been met? Are there potential tradeoffs among these objectives (Hint: think about the unintended side-effects of the current policies)?
- What policy instruments have been used by the HK government to solve water supply problem? How would you categorize these instruments (e.g., information-based, authority-based/regulation, treasure-based/financial, organization)?
- What alternative policy instruments can be used for securing a stable and sustainable fresh water supply for Hong Kong? What are the pros and cons of these policy instruments?

Week 4 (24 September): Policy Actors and Policy Environment

1. *Knill, C. and Tosun, J. (2020). *Public Policy: A New Introduction*. Red Globe Press. Chapter 3: The Context for Policy-Making: Central Institutions and Actors
2. *Brinkerhoff, D. & B. Crosby (2002). *Managing Policy Reform: Concepts and Tools for Decision-Makers in Developing and Transitioning Countries*, Kumarian Press. Chapter 6 Stakeholder Analysis; Chapter 8 Political and Institutional Mapping
3. *Howlett, M., M. Ramesh and A. Perl (2020). *Studying Public Policy*. 4th Edition. Chapter 3: The Policy Context.
4. Ostrom, E. (2010). Beyond markets and states: polycentric governance of complex economic systems. *The American Economic Review*, 641-672.
5. Eggers, W., L. Baker, R. Gonzalez, A. Vaughn (2012) *Public sector, disrupted. How disruptive innovation can help government achieve more for less*. Deloitte.

Case 4: Dams and the Displaced: Lessons from the Myitsone Dam in Myanmar

- Summarize the impoverishment outcomes of the internally displaced people. Do some impoverishment outcomes matter more than others for the wellbeing of internally displaced people?
- What are the main stakeholders involved in the controversies of Myitsone Dam? Which stakeholders should have accountability and responsibility for the resettlement outcomes of the internally displaced population?
- How can the Myanmar government prevent impoverishment outcomes for displaced communities arising from large development and infrastructure projects?
- With increasing pressure from the Chinese government to resume construction of the Myitsone Dam, how should the Myanmar authorities proceed?

No class on 1 October - public holiday.

Assignment No.1 is due 7 October.

PART II. Key Stages in Policy-Making Process (4 weeks)

Week 5 (8 October): Agenda Setting

1. *Hassel, A. and Wegrich, K. (2022). *How to Do Public Policy*, Oxford University Press. Chapter 3. "How to Set the Agenda"
2. *Wu, X., M. Ramesh, M. Howlett, and S. Fritzen (2018), *The Public Policy Primer: Managing the Policy Process*, Routledge. 2nd Edition Chapter 2: Agenda Setting, pp. 26-49.
3. Birkland, T. A. (1998) Focusing Events, Mobilization, and Agenda Setting. *Journal of Public Policy*, 18(1): 53-74
4. Stone, D. (1989). Causal Stories and the Formation of Policy Agendas. *Political Science Quarterly* 104 (2), 281–300.
5. Feezell, J. (2018) Agenda Setting through Social Media: The Importance of Incidental News Exposure and Social Filtering in the Digital Era. *Political Research Quarterly*, 71(2), 482-494.

Case 5: Agenda-setting of PM2.5 (related to Assignment No. 2)

- Why didn't PM2.5 rise to policy agenda before 2011?
- How did PM2.5 rise to the policy agenda in the end of 2011?
- What groups of actors played particularly important roles in agenda setting of PM2.5?

You may try to explain these questions using the Multiple Stream Framework or any other frameworks/concepts introduced in lecture or course readings or from other literature.

Week 6 (15 October): Policy Formulation and Decision-Making

1. *Hassel, A. and Wegrich, K. (2022). *How to Do Public Policy*, Oxford University Press. Chapter 4 "How to Choose and Design Policy Instruments"
2. *Wu, X., M. Ramesh, M. Howlett, and S. Fritzen (2018), *The Public Policy Primer: Managing the Policy Process*, Routledge. 2nd Edition. Chapter 3: Policy Formulation, pp. 50-75. Chapter 4: Decision-Making, pp. 76-99.
3. Kingdon, J. (1995). "How Does an Idea's Time Come? Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies." In *Classics of Public Administration*, 7th edition, pp. 454-459.
4. Sabatier, P. A. (1988). An advocacy coalition framework of policy change and the role of policy-oriented learning therein. *Policy Sciences*, 21(2-3), 129-168.
5. Jones, B. D., & Baumgartner, F. R. (2012). From there to here: Punctuated equilibrium to the general punctuation thesis to a theory of government information processing. *Policy Studies Journal*, 40(1), 1-20.
6. Pal, L. (2011). "Assessing Incrementalism: Formative Assumptions, Contemporary Realities," *Policy and Society* 30(1)
7. Allison, G. Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis, *The American Political Science Review*, Volume 63, Issue 3 (Sep., 1969), 689-718.

Case 6: Dilemma over Conservation and Development of Hong Kong's Country Parks Peripheries

- Who are the main supporters of the proposal and what are their justifications?
- Who are the main opponents to the proposal and what are their justifications?
- What are the key issues involved in dealing with the dilemma over conservation and development of Hong Kong's country parks peripheries?
- What are potential options for the government of HKSAR (please restrict your attention to policy options based on the development of country parks peripheries only)?

Assignment No.2 is due 19 October.

Week 7 (22 October): Policy Implementation

1. *Hassel, A. and Wegrich, K. (2022). *How to Do Public Policy*, Oxford University Press. Chapter 5 "How to Implement Public Policy"
2. *Wu, X., M. Ramesh, M. Howlett, and S. Fritzen (2018), *The Public Policy Primer: Managing the Policy Process*, Routledge. 2nd Edition Chapter 5: Policy Implementation, pp. 100-123.
3. Weaver, K. (2010) But Will It Work?: Implementation Analysis to Improve Government Performance. *Issues in Governance Studies*. No. 32.
4. Brinkerhoff, D. & B. Crosby (2002), *Managing Policy Reform: Concepts and Tools for Decision-Makers in Developing and Transitioning Countries*, Kumarian Press. Chapter 7 Policy Characteristics Analysis

Case 7: The Price of Blue Sky: “Coal-to-Gas” Program in North China (related to Assignment No. 3)

- How were the coal-to-gas targets (convert heating energy source for X number of households) enforced by all levels of government?
- Why were targets exceeded in all regions?
- What went wrong during the implementation of the coal-to-gas program?
 - Why did the local enforcement staff use extreme measures to enforce targets for coal-to-gas project?
 - Why did some villagers still try to secretly burn coal after the ban?
 - Why was there insufficient supply of natural gas and why was the construction of pipelines behind schedule?

Week 8 (29 October): Policy Evaluation

1. *Hassel, A. and Wegrich, K. (2022). *How to Do Public Policy*, Oxford University Press. Chapter 6 “How to Evaluate Policies”
2. *Wu, X., M. Ramesh, M. Howlett, and S. Fritzen (2018), *The Public Policy Primer: Managing the Policy Process*, Routledge, 2nd Edition. Chapter 6 “Policy Evaluation,” pp. 124-139.
3. McConnell, A. (2010). Policy Success, Policy Failure and Grey Areas In-Between. *Journal of Public Policy*, 30(3), 345-362.
4. Bovens, M., P. 'T Hart, S. Kuipers (2008). *Oxford Handbook of Policy Analysis*. Chapter 15 The Politics of Policy Evaluation.

Case 8: Measured Approach: TEGV Assesses its Performance & Impact on Educational Enrichment Programs

- What has TEGV done well in terms of their approach to evaluation, and where have they fallen short? Discuss both pluses and minuses in the nature of each assessment described in this case.
- What are the challenges in conducting evaluation for NGOs?
- What should TEGV do to improve its practices in evaluation?

Assignment No.3 is due 4 November.

PART III. Conducting Policy Analysis (3 weeks)

Week 9 (5 November) Policy Analysis: Problem Analysis

1. *Weimer, D. & A. Vining (2017). *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice (6th edition)*, “Steps in Rationalist Policy Analysis” and “Problem Analysis” in Chapter 15: “Landing on Your Feet: Organizing your Policy Analysis”, pp. 342-354.
2. *Bardach, E. & Patashnik, E. M. (2019). *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*, Part I. The Eightfold Path, Step One: Define the Problem, pp. 1-14. Step Four: Select the Criteria, pp.31-49.
3. Patton, C, D. Sawicki and J. Clark (2016). *Basic Methods of Policy Analysis and Planning*. Chapter 4, “Verifying, Defining, and Detailing the Problem,” pages 140-168.
4. Guess, G. M., & Farnham, P. G. (2011). *Cases in public policy analysis*. Georgetown University Press. Chapter 2: Problem Identification and Structuring. pp. 23-73.
5. MacRae, Duncan & Dale Whittington. (1997). *Expert Advice for Policy Choice*. Chapter 2: Selecting Criteria, pp. 66-111.

Case 9: Fighting Crime: the Case for Empty Prisons

- What kind of problem are we dealing with?
 - What was the predominant problem definition when the case was written?
 - What are alternative problem definitions?
- How did different issue frames by past administrations lead to different policy recommendations?
- What policy recommendations would you propose based on your preferred problem definition?

Week 10 (12 November) Policy Analysis: Solution Analysis (I)

1. *Weimer, D. & A. Vining (2017). *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice (6th edition)*, “Solution Analysis” in Chapter 15: “Landing on Your Feet: Organizing your Policy Analysis”, pp. 355-375.
2. *Bardach, E. & Patashnik, E. M. (2019). *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*, Step Three: Construct the Alternatives, pp. 21-31. Part IV: “Smart (Best) Practices” Research: Understanding and Making Use of What Look Like Good Ideas from Somewhere Else, pp. 133-145
3. Patton, C & D. Sawicki (2016). *Basic Methods of Policy Analysis and Planning*. Chapter 6, “Identifying Alternatives,” pages 215-242.

Case 10: Public Managers and Plastic Bags: Designing and Implementing Effective Policies to Reduce Plastic Bag Use – Experience from Hong Kong, Ireland, Denmark, Kenya, and Singapore

- Why are the plastic bag taxes particularly successful in Ireland and Denmark? What lessons can be drawn?
- Stakeholder identification: Who are the key players in policy pertaining to plastic bags, and who are the most likely adversaries and supporters of plastic bag levies or bans? How could the key players, adversaries, and supporters be most effectively engaged?
- Given the successes and failures of plastic bag levies in other countries, how should Singapore proceed with reducing plastic bag usage going forward, given its political, economic, and cultural context?

Week 11 (19 November) Policy Analysis: Solution Analysis (II)

1. *Bardach, E. & Patashnik, E. M. (2019), *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*, Part I. The Eightfold Path, Step Five: Project the Outcomes, Step Six: Confront the Trade-Offs and Step Seven: Stop, Focus, Narrow, Deepen, Decide! Step Eight: Tell your story. pp. 69-96.
2. *Weimer, D. & A. Vining (2005). *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice*, Chapter 11: “Goals/Alternatives Matrices: Some Examples from CBO Studies,” 3rd edition, pp. 311-330.
3. Patton, C & D. Sawicki (2016). *Basic Methods of Policy Analysis and Planning*. Chapter 7: Evaluating Alternative Policies, pp. 243-313.
4. MacRae, Duncan & Dale Whittington. (1997). *Expert Advice for Policy Choice*. Chapter 5: “Aiding Choices with Criteria/Alternatives Matrix”, pp. 193-236.

Case 11: An Analysis of Subsidies and Other Options to Expand the Productive End Use of Scrap Tires in California

- How did the analysts come up with the relative weights of criteria used in the Quantitative Alternative-Criterion Matrix (Table 9)? Do you think it is a good approach? How would you do it differently?
- Is it possible to draw policy recommendations based on Qualitative Alternative-Criterion Matrix (Table 8)?
- What are main strengths and weaknesses of the analysis? How would you structure the analysis differently if you are the lead consultant for the analysis?

Week 12 (26 November) Final group project presentations

Group project commentary/op-ed is due 6 December.