

**PPOL 5150-Public Policy Analysis  
(Spring 2024)**

Mondays, 05/02/2024-6/05/2024  
L1:9:00-11:50am, LSK1033  
L2: 1:30-4:20pm, Room 1410, Academic Building

Instructor: Professor Xiaofan ZHAO (趙小凡)  
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Office hours: Friday afternoons 2:30-4:30pm  
or by appointment (in-person or on Zoom - meeting ID: 694 669 5664)  
Teaching Associate:  
Dr. Holvert Hung Email: hholvert@ust.hk

### Course Description

Government officials are frequently confronted with decisions about whether or not to initiate, continue, modify, or terminate policies or programs, and the knowledge and skills in policy analysis are essential for them to make intelligent choices. The course 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.

### Course Objectives

This course is designed to help MPP students develop analytical skills in conducting policy analysis. Upon completion of the course, students are expected to: 1) identify basic concepts and techniques used in policy analysis; 2) demonstrate competency in applying basic techniques of policy analysis to real policy problems; 3) distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate uses of policy analysis in the public sector; 4) appreciate institutional and political context of policy analysis.

### Textbooks

1. 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.
2. 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 based on four individual assignments, class participation, two group project reports and a final presentation. The following weights will be used to determine course grades:

Component	Weight	Due Date
1 <sup>st</sup> Assignment	10%	18 Feb
2 <sup>nd</sup> Assignment	10%	7 April
3 <sup>rd</sup> Assignment	10%	21 April
4 <sup>th</sup> Assignment	10%	12 May
Class participation	15% (5% for attendance; 10% for in-class and after-class participation.)	
1 <sup>st</sup> group project report	15%	24 March

Final group project presentation & report	30% (10% for in-class presentation + 20% for written report)	6 May (presentation) and 19 May (report)
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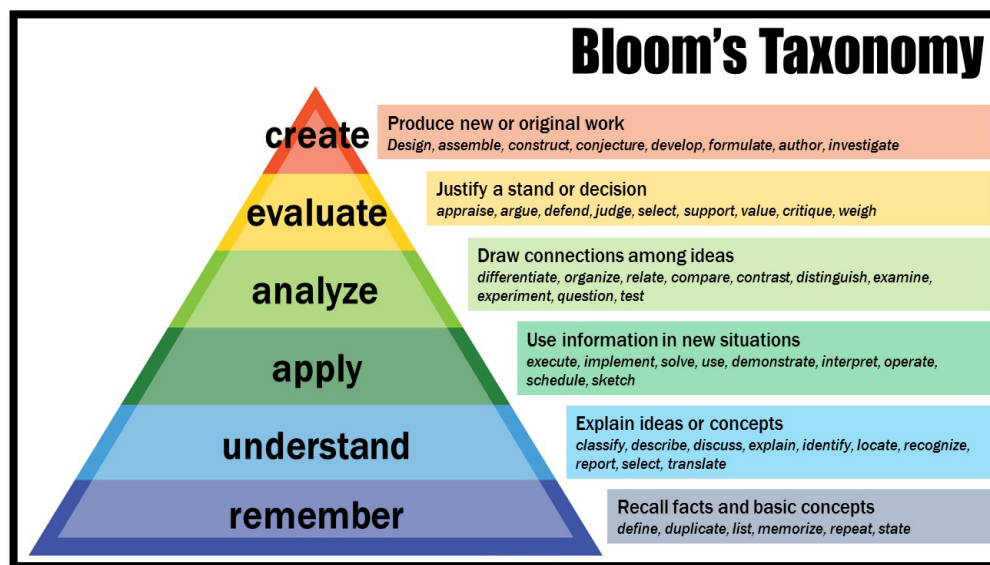
### EXPECTATIONS:

This is a core course for MPP 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%**

## 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 or family emergency. 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 five days before the due dates (please note that extensions granted orally or through WeChat do not count)**. For instance, if you have several assignments due at the same time, you may request an extension, which may or may not be granted.

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 30% if the homework is one day overdue, and by 50% 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. CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF POLICY ANALYSIS (5 weeks)**

### **Week 1 (5 Feb) Introduction to Policy Analysis: Profession and Products**

Readings:

1. 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. Chapter 16: “Case Study: The Canadian Pacific Salmon Fishery” pp. 376-397.

Case 1: Reducing the U.S. Kidney Transplant Shortage by Increasing the Number of Live-Donor Kidneys

Come to class prepared to discuss the following questions:

- What are the key elements of a policy analysis report?
- What is the policy problem at hand? (find the problem statement)
- Think back to the research papers you have written for undergraduate courses. In what ways were your paper similar in content and structure to the kidney shortage report? In what ways did your papers differ?
- Now think about articles you have read in scholarly journals. How does the sample policy analysis differ in content and structure from published academic research?

**Week 2 (19 February) Rationales for Public Policy: Market Failures**

Readings:

1. Weimer, D. & A. Vining (2017) *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice* (6<sup>th</sup> edition), **Chapter 4:** Efficiency and the Idealized Competitive Model. pp. 59-73, \***Chapter 5:** Rationales for Public Policy: Market Failures, pp.74 - 113.

Case 2: From Private Loan to Fundraising Fraud: the Wu Ying Case

Come to class prepared to discuss the following questions:

- Why did the official loan system fail in this case?
- When should government get involved in the private loan market? What went wrong with the private loan market?
  - What type of good is the loan, particularly loans to small and medium enterprises?
  - Are there externality-related market failures in the private loan case?
  - Are there monopoly-related market failures in the private loan case?
  - Are there information asymmetry-related market failures in the private loan case?

***Assignment No.1 is due 18 Feb.***

**Week 3 (26 Feb) Rationales for Public Policy: Other Limitations of the Competitive Framework and Distributional and Other Goals**

Readings:

1. Weimer, D. & A. Vining (2017) *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, **Chapter 6:** Rationales for Policy Analysis: Other Limitations, pp. 114-129. \***Chapter 7:** Rationales for Policy Analysis: Distributional and Other Goals, pp. 130-155.
2. Sovacool, B., Heffron, R., McCauley, D. et al. (2016) Energy decisions reframed as justice and ethical concerns. *Nature Energy* 1, 16024. <https://doi.org/10.1038/nenergy.2016.24>

Case 3: Development, Resettlement, and Social Exclusion at the Myitsone Dam in Myanmar

Come to class prepared to discuss the following questions:

- What are the main problems of the Myitsone Dam? Are these problems unpredictable and inevitable?

- Are there any distributional concerns of the projects? Who are the primary beneficiaries of the projects? Who are the sufferers?
- Try to analyse the case using the energy justice framework (Sovacool et al., 2016).

### **Week 4 (4 March) Policy Problems as Market and Government Failures**

#### Readings:

1. \*Gupta, D. (2001). Analyzing Public Policy: Concepts, Tools and Techniques. **Chapter 2:** Government and Market, “Government Failures” pp. 62-67.
2. \*Weimer, D. & A. Vining (2017) *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, **Chapter 8:** Limits to Public Intervention: Government Failures, pp. 156-181.
3. \*Weimer, D. & A. Vining (2017) *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, **Chapter 9:** Policy Problems as Market and Government Failures: The Madison Taxicab Policy Analysis Example. pp. 182-201.

#### Case 4: The Banana Project in Hainan Province, China

Come to class prepared to discuss the following questions:

- What were the key challenges of banana production in Hainan?
- What types of market failures can you identify in this case? Did the Hainan government do anything to fix these market failures?
- Besides market failures, are there other causes behind the failure of the banana project, e.g., government failures?

### **Week 5 (11 March) Correcting Market and Government Failures: Generic Policies**

#### Readings:

1. \* Weimer, D. & A. Vining (2017). *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice*, **Chapter 10:** “Correcting Market and Government Failures: Generic Policies,” 6th edition, pp. 205-258.
2. Bardach, E. & Patashnik, E. M. (2019). *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*, 6th Edition, SAGE Publications, **Appendix A.** Things Governments Do, pp. 147-155.

#### Case 5: Regulating the P2P economy: Airbnb

- What are the main arguments for regulating Airbnb?
- How has Airbnb been regulated so far? Are they effective? Why or why not?
- How should Airbnb be regulated? How would we know whether or not your proposed regulation(s) work?
- What are other policy instruments (in addition to regulation) that can be used to enhance public value from the development of P2P economy such as Airbnb?

## **PART II. CONDUCTING POLICY ANALYSIS: Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving in Policy Analysis (6 weeks)**

### **Week 6 (18 March) Defining the Problem and Gathering Information for Policy Analysis**

#### Readings:

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 One**: Define the Problem, pp. 1-14.
2. 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.
  3. Guess, G. M., & Farnham, P. G. (2011). *Cases in public policy analysis*. Georgetown University Press. **Chapter 2**: Problem Identification and Structuring. pp. 23-73.
  4. Bardach, E. & Patashnik, E. M. (2019). *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*, 6th Edition, SAGE Publications, **\*Step Two**: Assemble Some Evidence, pp.14-21; and **Part II**: Assembling Evidence, pp. 97-121.
  5. Weimer, D. & A. Vining (2017). *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice* (6th edition), **Chapter 14**: “Gathering Information for Policy Analysis”, pp. 326-339.

Case 6: Fighting Crime: the Case for Emptier Prisons

Come to class prepared to discuss the following questions:

- 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?

***1<sup>st</sup> Group Project Report is due 24 March.***

**Week 7 (25 March) Constructing the Alternatives**

Readings:

1. \*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
2. Patton, C & D. Sawicki (2016). *Basic Methods of Policy Analysis and Planning*. **Chapter 6**, “Identifying Alternatives,” pages 215-242.

Case 7: 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?

**(Mid-term break)**

***Assignment No.2 is due 7 April.***

**Week 8 (8 April) Selecting the Criteria and Projecting Policy Outcomes**

Readings:

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 Four**: Select the Criteria, pp.31-49.
2. MacRae, Duncan & Dale Whittington. (1997). *Expert Advice for Policy Choice*. **Chapter 2**: Selecting Criteria, pp. 66-111.
  3. \*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, pp. 49-69.
  4. \*Patton, C & D. Sawicki (2016). *Basic Methods of Policy Analysis and Planning*. **Chapter 7**: Evaluating Alternative Policies, pp. 243-313.

Case 8: Relocation of the Beijing Zoo (we will not discuss this case in groups, but I will use the case for illustration)

Come to class prepared to discuss the following questions:

- Which stakeholders presented their goals in this case?
- What are the goals of different stakeholders? What are the underlying values held by these stakeholders?
- Are there any differences between the direct goals, indirect goals, and basic goals of each stakeholder group?
- What should be the goals of relocating the Beijing Zoo?

Case 9: Liquor Tax Reform in Thailand: Competing Interests and Objectives

Come to class prepared to discuss the following questions:

- Which is a better liquor tax structure, specific or ad-valorem tax rates?
- From the government's perspective, which was the best excise tax reform option?
- From the perspective of liquor producers, which was the best excise tax reform option? Was the option that was best for Boon Rawd also the best for Thai Beverage? If not, why was this the case?
- What were the different perspectives that Cabinet should take into consideration when making this policy decision? What options should the government choose balancing all these different perspectives?

## **Week 9 (15 April) Using Decision Matrices in Policy Analysis**

### Readings:

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. Weimer, D. & A. Vining (2005). *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice*, **Chapter 11**: "Goals/Alternatives Matrices: Some Examples from CBO Studies," 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, pp. 311-330.
3. \*Bardach, E. & Patashnik, E. M. (2019), *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*, **Step Six**: Confront the Trade-Offs and **Step Seven**: Stop, Focus, Narrow, Deepen, Decide! **Step Eight**: Tell your story. pp. 69-96.
4. MacRae, Duncan & Dale Whittington. (1997). *Expert Advice for Policy Choice*. **Chapter 5**: "Aiding Choices with Criteria/Alternatives Matrix", pp. 193-236.

Case 10: An Analysis of Subsidies and Other Options to Expand the Productive End Use of Scrap Tires in California

Come to class prepared to discuss the following questions:

- 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?

***Assignment No.3 is due 21 April.***

### **Week 10 (22 April) A Practical Guide to Cost-Benefit Analysis**

Readings:

1. \*Boardman, A. E., Greenberg, D. H., Vining, A. R., & Weimer, D. L. (2018). *Cost-benefit analysis: concepts and practice* (5th ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. **Chapter 1: Introduction to Cost-Benefit Analysis.**
2. Stokey, E. and R. Zeckhauser (1978), *A Primer in Policy Analysis*, W. W. Northton & Company. **Chapter 9: “Project Evaluation: Cost-Benefit Analysis”**, pp. 134-158.
3. Lisa Heinzerling and Fran Ackerman (2002), *Pricing the Priceless: Cost-Benefit Analysis of Environmental Protection*, Georgetown Environmental Law and Policy Institute.
4. Arrow, K. J., Cropper, M. L., Eads, G. C., Hahn, R. W., Lave, L. B., Noll, R. G., . . . Stavins, R. N. (1996). Is There a Role for Benefit-Cost Analysis in Environmental, Health, and Safety Regulation? *Science*, 272(5259), 221-222. doi:10.1126/science.272.5259.221

In addition, you are encouraged to read the two helpful guidebooks on CBA by the Asian Development Bank and New Zealand Treasury, respectively.

1. Asian Development Bank (2013). *Cost-Benefit Analysis for Development: A Practical Guide.*
2. New Zealand Treasury (2015). *Guide to Social Cost Benefit Analysis.*

Please come to class ready to discuss from both sides of pros and cons of using the cost-benefit analysis as a tool in public policy, considering moral and practicality issues.

Case 11: Cost-Benefit Analysis of High-Speed Rail Link between Hong Kong and Mainland China

### **Week 11 (29 April) Valuation Techniques in Cost-Benefit Analysis and Course Review**

Readings:

1. \*The Treasury of the New Zealand Government (2015). *Guide to Social Cost Benefit Analysis.* Step 4: Value the costs and benefits. (pp. 16-33)

Case 12: Assessing the Willingness to Pay (WTP) for Improved Water Supply in Sri Lanka

Readings:

1. Asian Development Bank (2013). *Cost-Benefit Analysis for Development: A Practical Guide.* Chapter 5: Assessing the Willingness to Pay (WTP) for Improved Water Supply in Sri Lanka

### **Week 12 (6 May) Final group project presentations**

***Presentation slides are due 6 May.***

***Assignment No.4 is due 12 May.***

***Final group project report is due 19 May (tentative; pending on ARO’s deadline for grade submission).***