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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


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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Assignment</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Feb 19</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd Assignment</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>March 26</td>
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<tr>
<td>3rd Assignment</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>April 9</td>
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<td>4th Assignment</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>April 30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>15% (5% for attendance; 10% for in-class and after-class participation.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1st group project</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>March 12</td>
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**EXPECTATIONS:**
This is a 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 sessions (usually Thursdays), 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 general marking rubrics. But for all assignments, it will be helpful to keep Bloom’s Taxonomy in mind.

![Bloom's Taxonomy](image)

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%
- **Analyze:** 80%
- **Apply:** 70%
- **Understand:** 60%
- **Remember:** <60%

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Final group project presentation &amp; report</th>
<th>30% (10% for in-class presentation + 20% for written report)</th>
<th>May 25</th>
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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.

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 request extensions from the instructor at least five days before the due dates. 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

Sessions 1&2 (Feb 7&9) Introduction to Policy Analysis: Profession and Products

Readings:


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?

**Sessions 3&4 (February 14&16) Rationales for Public Policy: Market Failures**

**Readings:**


**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 due 19 Feb.**

**Sessions 5 (Feb 21): Rationales for Public Policy: Other Limitations of the Competitive Framework and Distributional and Other Goals**

**Readings:**


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

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).

**Session 6 (Feb 23) Limits to Public Intervention: Government Failures**

**Readings:**

Come to class prepared to discuss the following questions:

- What are the tradeoffs involved in democracy? Despite the inherent problems of democracy, what is its paramount advantage compared to other systems of social choice?
- Politicians usually favour quick policy fixes rather than long-term solutions. Why is that? What are some common examples of such quick fixes that do not solve the problems fundamentally?
- Any single intervention by the government has at least one unintended side-effect, which is sometimes positive but often negative. Can you think of any government intervention that might have negative side-effects?

**Session 7&8 (Feb 28 & Mar 2) Policy Problems as Market and Government Failures**

**Readings:**


**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?

**Session 9 (Mar 7) Correcting Market and Government Failures: Generic Policies**

**Readings:**


**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?

**1st Group Project Report due Mar 12.**

**PART II Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving in Policy Analysis**

**Session 10 &11 (Mar 9&14) Defining the Problem**
Readings:


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?

Session 12 (March 16) Gathering Information for Policy Analysis

Readings:


Session 13&14 (Mar 21 & Mar 23) Constructing the Alternatives

Readings:


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?

**Assignment No.2 due March 26.**

**Sessions 15 (March 28) Selecting the Criteria**

**Readings:**


**Case 8: Relocation of the Beijing Zoo**

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?

**Session 16 & 17 (March 30 & Apr 4) Projecting Policy Outcomes**

**Readings:**


**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?

(Mid-term break)

**Assignment No.3 due April 9.**

**Session 18&19 (Apr 13&18) Using Decision Matrices in Policy Analysis**

**Readings:**


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 due 24 April.


Readings:


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


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
Session 22 (Apr 27) Valuation Techniques in Cost-Benefit Analysis

Readings:


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

Readings:


Assignment No.4 due April 30.

Session 23 (May 2) Final group project presentation (I)

Session 24 (May 4) Final group project presentation (II)

Session 25 (May 9) Final group project presentation (III) and Course Review

Final group project report due May 25.