

**Georgia Institute of Technology**  
**School of Public Policy**  
PUBP 6201 Public Policy Analysis  
Spring 2019  
Tuesday/Thursday 1:30-2:45pm  
311 Skiles

\*This syllabus is subject to change

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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Policy analysis courses often focus on techniques, practice, or concepts. Many techniques are covered in other courses. For example, the public policy curriculum at Georgia Tech includes the following courses that would emphasize various techniques for conducting policy analysis: Microeconomics, Public Finance Policy, Public Program Evaluation, Research Design in Policy Science, Applied Policy Methods and Data Analysis, Quantitative Models in Public Policy, Policy Implementation and Administration, Environmental Issues, Economics of Environmental Policy, and Information Policy and Management, among others. PUBP6201 will largely cover conceptual knowledge and practice.

The PUBP6201 course schedule is split into two sections. In the first section we consider different justifications for public policy. That is, we consider the question; by what criteria is it acceptable for government to employ coercion (hard or soft) with the aim of changing the behavior of citizens? For most policy analysts, this question is addressed within the market failure framework. There are, however, several critiques of and alternatives to this framework as a justification for public policy. We will explore the welfare economics perspective in detail and some of these critiques and alternatives. We will also address the questions, if government action is justified, what instruments or tools does government have at its disposal, and how might we choose among them? The second section examines policy analysis as it is practiced utilizing case studies and applicable tools such as data collection, program evaluation, and data visualization.

### **PRE/CO-REQUISITES**

The School of Public Policy describes PUBP6201 as a “capstone” course for MSPP students. To be successful in conducting and producing professional level policy analysis you will need to draw upon and, at times, integrate many of the lessons learned in other classes. Students are expected to come to the course with the tools developed in research design, statistics, and microeconomics. Cost-benefit analysis, policy process, and substantive policy courses will also enhance the course experience. Research design, statistics, and microeconomics may be taken at the same time as this course. For those with no background in statistics, or microeconomics, please speak with me about the appropriateness of this course.

### **COURSE GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES**

The primary goal of this class is for you to have the experience of actually doing professional quality policy analysis. This means that the work you do outside of class, work developing your policy analysis, will be **as important** as the work in class. The course is experiential in nature and involves considerable “hands on” work. In addition to the primary goal given above, other goals include:

- (1) enhance your understanding of the role of discretion and values in public policy analysis;
- (2) strengthen your skills in group analysis and group problem-solving;
- (3) provide a number of “low cost” opportunities for execution of context-based public policy analysis skills;
- (4) improve your individual and group communication skills by providing several opportunities for written work and oral presentation; and
- (5) give you exposure to a wide variety of contemporary policy controversies.

## COURSE MATERIALS

### Textbook

Weimer, D. L., & Vining, A. R. (2017) (6<sup>th</sup> Edition). *Policy analysis: Concepts and practice*. Routledge. (W&V in Class Schedule). ISBN: 9781138216518 \*Available at the GT Bookstore

### Additional Materials

The course textbook will be supplemented by several additional materials. Other readings will be posted to the course website, however, students will also be expected to obtain the following materials independently:

- (1) Bardach, E. S. (2011). *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving* (Fourth edition). Los Angeles: Thousand Oaks: CQ Press College. \*Available as an e-book through GT libraries
- (2) Harvard Kennedy School Case Program (<https://case.hks.harvard.edu/>): Create an account and purchase the following cases:
  - a. Examining the Role of Child Welfare in Addressing the Needs of the CSEC Population in Kentucky
  - b. New York City's Teen ACTION Program: An Evaluation Gone Awry
  - c. Pricing Carbon: The Birth of British Columbia's Carbon Tax

### Course Website

We will heavily utilize the course website on Canvas for my official communications with you regarding this class. This will include announcements, changes to the course calendar or syllabus, and my feedback to you regarding your class performance.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Assignment	%
Policy Article Memo & Brief Presentation	5
Policy Tool Memo & Brief Presentation	5
Case Study Memos (2)	20 (10 each)
Readings Warm-Ups	5
Participation (in and outside class, e.g. discussion boards)	15
Policy project (50%)	50
Problem statement memo (10%)	
Data description memo (10%)	
Preliminary Analysis memo (10%)	
Final paper (40%)	
Final presentation (25%)	
Peer Evaluation (5%)	

### Grading Scale

Final grades will be assigned as a letter grade according to the following scale:

A	90-100%
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	0-59%

### Policy Analysis Project

Students will be organized into teams of 4-5. Each team will be responsible for identifying a policy problem to analyze, collecting data designed to address the problem, designing and conducting an analysis of the data, developing a set of recommendations, developing a final project report, and presenting the project. Grades will be adjusted to reflect the peer evaluations noting individual contributions. Each sub-assignment is building text and analysis for the final paper.

### Case study memos

Students will prepare brief memos analyzing 2 of the 3 case studies we examine in class.

## **Two Policy Memos and Brief Presentations**

The first of these memos will require students to find a media article, summarize the policy argument, and analyze the policy issue. The second will require students to select a policy tool, summarize the way in which the tool was used in a policy context, the pros and cons of the tool, and alternatives to the tool. Both memos will be accompanied by short presentations to the class.

## **Readings Warm-Ups**

Every day students should be prepared for an in-class readings warm up to bring the readings to the front of your mind.

## **Participation**

Because of the hands-on nature of this course, attendance and participation are critical for each student to achieve the course outcomes. Note that attendance and participation are not the same. Students who miss more than three classes will lose all participation points, as it is impossible for a student to participate if absent. Likewise, students who attend all classes but do not actively participate will not earn all participation points. Please contact me if illness, family medical problems, or emergencies, etc. occur. Outside of class participation is equally as important as inside of class participation. We will regularly utilize the discussion board feature on Canvas, which will often be outside of class.

## **COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND POLICIES**

### **Communication**

Email is the preferred method of communication. All email messages must originate from your Institute-sponsored email account. Please use a professional salutation, proper spelling and grammar, and patience in waiting for a response. The professor reserves the right to not respond to e-mails that are drafted inappropriately. Please begin your subject with PUBP 6201 when composing emails to the professor (e.g. "PUBP6201: Question About Case Study). Please email the professor directly rather than through the Canvas message system.

### **Electronic Devices**

The use of laptops, tablets, or other mobile devices is permitted only for class-related work. Audio and video recording is not allowed unless prior approval is given by the instructor. Please mute all electronic devices during class.

### **Late Work**

Due dates for all assignments are noted in the syllabus and are non-negotiable. Late work will not be accepted. Exceptions to these guidelines will be made only under unusual circumstances and will require valid documentation from the student.

### **Academic Integrity**

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. For information on Georgia Tech's Academic Honor Code, please visit <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/policies/honor-code/> or <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/18/>. If you are struggling in this class please come see me so that we can work together to identify those elements where you may need additional guidance and instruction. My goal is to create a learning environment that is challenging but also encouraging. Cheating and/or plagiarizing on an assignment denies you the opportunity to learn. It also puts you in jeopardy since any student suspected of cheating or plagiarizing on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, which will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

### **Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement**

At Georgia Tech we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. See <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/22/> for an articulation of some basic expectation that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class. Disorderly conduct which

interferes with teaching, research, administration, or other university or university-authorized activity will not be tolerated and will be immediately reported to the Office of The Dean of Students for appropriate disposition which may result in disciplinary action including possible suspension and/or expulsion from the university.

### Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, contact the Office of Disability Services at (404)894-2563 or <http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/>, as soon as possible, to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

### Accommodations for Religious Observances

I respect your right to observe your religion and will do what I can to accommodate your needs. With this in mind, you are permitted to be absent from class to take part in religious observances. For planning purposes, I ask that you provide me with written notice of your upcoming absence within the first two weeks of class. For more information on Georgia Tech's policy regarding student rights and responsibilities around planned absences from class, please see <http://catalog.gatech.edu/rules/4/>

### COURSE SCHEDULE

Day	Topic	Key Concepts	Readings	Due
<b>Week 1</b>	What is Policy Analysis/Stats Review			
Tuesday (1/8)				
Thursday (1/10)			W&V, Chapter 1 (skim) Chapter 2	
<b>Week 2</b>	Justifications for Public Policy	Welfare Economics, Pareto Efficiency, Consumer and Producer Surplus, Deadweight Loss, Market Failure, Externalities, Public Goods, Tragedy of the Commons		
Tuesday (1/15)			W&V, Chapter 4	
Thursday (1/17)			W&V, Chapter 5	
<b>Week 3</b>	Justifications for Public Policy	Adverse Selection, Imperfect Information, Property Rights, Revealed Preferences; Communicating and Translating Market Inefficiencies		
Tuesday (1/22)			W&V, Chapter 6; Humphreys & Matheson (2019)	
Thursday (1/24)				Policy Article Memo and Presentation
<b>Week 4</b>	Government Failure/Public Choice			
Tuesday (1/29)			W&V Chapter 8; Brownell & Frieden (2009); Lyons & Snowden (2015); Fletcher et al. (2010)	
Thursday (1/31)				Policy Article Memo and Presentation
<b>Week 5</b>	Values Beyond Efficiency	Equity, Equality, Security, Liberty, Social Justice, and Democracy		
Tuesday (2/5)			W&V, Chapters 7; Stone (2002) Chapter 2	Discussion Board Post About Someone Else's Newspaper Article
Thursday (2/7)			Patrick et al. (2016)	
<b>Week 6</b>	Policy Instruments	Government Corporations and Government-Sponsored Enterprises, Economic Regulation, Social Regulation, Government Insurance, Public Information, Taxes, Charges, Tradable Permits, Contracting, Grants, Loans and Loan Guarantees, Tax Expenditures, Vouchers, Tort Liability, Indirect Government		
Tuesday (2/12)			W&V Ch 10; Salamon Chapter 1 (pages 19-41)	Policy Instrument Presentations

Thursday (2/14)			Optional: "The less deadly catch" Planet Money podcast Episode 661	Policy Instrument Presentations
<b>Week 7</b>	Analysis in Practice	Problem Definition		
Tuesday (2/19)			Bardach pg 1-10	Discussion Board Post About A Tool Different Than the One You Presented
Thursday (2/21)			Kentucky Child Trafficking Case Study	Case Study Memo
<b>Week 8</b>	Analysis in Practice	Assembling evidence, constructing alternatives, selecting criteria, projecting the outcomes, confronting the trade offs, deciding, & telling the story		
Tuesday (2/26)			Bardach pg 11-46	
Thursday (2/28)			BC's Carbon Tax Case Study	Case Study Memo
<b>Week 9</b>	Program Evaluation	Interpreting regressions		
Tuesday (3/5)			Bullinger (2017); Raissian and Bullinger (2017)	
Thursday (3/7)				Final Project: Problem Statement Memo
<b>Week 10</b>	Program Evaluation	Experiments		
Tuesday (3/12)			NYC Teen ACTION Case Study – written primer	
Thursday (3/14)			NYC Teen ACTION Case Study - videos	Case Study Memo
<b>Week 11</b>		SPRING BREAK - NO CLASS		
Tuesday (3/19)		SPRING BREAK - NO CLASS		
Thursday (3/21)		SPRING BREAK - NO CLASS		
<b>Week 12</b>	Program Evaluation	Difference-in-Differences		
Tuesday (3/26)				Final Project: Data Description Memo
Thursday (3/28)			Card & Krueger (1994)	
<b>Week 13</b>	Data Visualization	Effectively Communicating Data		
Tuesday (4/2)			Schwabish (2014)	
Thursday (4/4)				
<b>Week 14</b>		Project Work Week		
Tuesday (4/9)				
Thursday (4/11)				
<b>Week 15</b>		Presentations of Policy Research Reports		
Tuesday (4/16)				Final Project: Preliminary Analysis Memo
Thursday (4/18)				Final Report & Presentation
<b>Week 16</b>		Presentations of Policy Research Reports		
Tuesday (4/23)				Final Presentation
Thursday (4/25)		READING DAY - NO CLASS		Final Project: Peer Evaluation

**If you have any problems in this course, or in other aspects of your student or professional life, please feel free to come see me during office hours or by appointment.**