

PUBP 3030 POLICY ANALYSIS

Prerequisites: ECON 2016 (Microeconomics), PUBP 2020 (Political Processes), PST 2020 (Philosophy and Policy), PUBP 2030 (Organizations and Policy)

Policy analysis involves the structured investigation into rationales for and practice of public policy. “Structured” does not mean “value-free,” however: policy analysis combines science with values. Although an important goal of public policy analysis is to help policy makers arrive at viable and informed policy choices with a credible expectation of what the expected outcome(s) of those policy choices will be, students also need to learn about competing perspectives and paradigms for policy analysis. The focus of the course is on developing practical techniques for analyzing policies. A variety of concepts underpinning policy development and implementation are developed and linked to evaluating policy impacts (ex ante and ex post). But students also will learn about the assumptions that underlie those concepts and techniques, and about the professional roles and responsibilities of policy analysts.

The first part of the course integrates theories and analytical approaches learned in coursework in the study of more advanced policy analysis. The second part of the course emphasizes application of these approaches to selected real-world policy problems. The instructor will select several contemporary policies (e.g., biofuel subsidies, stem cell research funding, outsourcing government services, e-voting, immigration reform, congestion pricing, patent law, charter schools) to demonstrate policy analytic lessons of the course. Students will participate in exercises that illustrate the techniques and challenges of policy analysis.

Possible texts: Weimer & Vining; Munger; Wildavsky

Possible outline:

Policy analysis as a profession and a process

Rationales for public policy: economic and other paradigms

 The public interest (normative & positive/behavioral models of public policy)

 Market failure, government failure

 Distributional goals

 Alternative (development) paths

 Other goals; the role of values in choosing an analytic paradigm

Policy instruments

 Price, quantity controls

 Government supply (goods, services)

 Information, preferences

 Institutional rules (property rights, liability, etc.)

 Policy implementation

 Policy process and political feasibility

Conducting policy analysis

 Arguments, assumptions, evidence

 Gathering information

 Goals and alternatives

 Framing the analysis

 Making the argument/analysis

 Defining and measuring outputs and outcomes

 Cost-benefit analysis: techniques and critiques

 Risk-benefit analysis: techniques and critiques

 The role of values in choosing an analytic technique

Case studies

 Case Study #1

 Case Study #2