

PS168  
Policy Assessment  
Winter, 1999  
Mr. Beck

The purpose of this course is to allow you to build on your policy analysis skills to where you can actually undertake a policy analysis. Your grade in this course will be based on a policy analysis you conduct and present (along with several short exercises related to your policy analysis). We will work on both theoretical and empirical skills relevant to policy analysis.

The principal text for the course is Weimer and Vining, *Policy Analysis* (referred to as WV in the syllabus). All other readings are available in a course reader (available from Cal Copy).

Your grade is based on the following components:

1. Written policy analysis – 40%
2. Oral presentation to clients – 20%
3. Three small exercises related to your analysis – 30%
4. Class participation – 10%

You may either work alone or in a small (2 or 3 person) group. Group projects should be appropriately larger than individual projects. The last few classes are devoted to oral presentations of approximately 15 minutes. We will spend some class time discussing the nature of the individual projects; students are also expected to meet with me outside of class to discuss their projects and to report on progress.

The class has five goals:

- I. To introduce students to the profession of public policy analysis. Should you consider a masters degree in public policy and/or a career in policy analysis (which may or may not require an advanced degree)?
- II. To make you a better consumer of policy analysis. At a minimum you will be better informed voter.
- III. To enhance complex decision-making skills.
- IV. To provide students a variety of useful analytic techniques.
- V. To introduce students to a variety of empirical methods for assessing public policy.

The reading list is given by week. Note that the last two weeks of the course are devoted to oral presentation of the projects. The class will serve as your client. The order of class presentation will be determined by lot. We will have approximately three presentations per day. The written report on the project is due Wednesday of finals week.

### Weekly schedule of readings

Week of January 4. What is policy analysis. An introductory example. Ethics and policy analysis. The course project. Read WV chs. 1-3.

Week of January 11.

A memo (two pages maximum) outlining your policy analysis project (including a statement about who your client is) is due in class Friday Jan 15. You should briefly state how you plan to go about the analysis. Remember that you must make an oral presentation in about six weeks, so set your project accordingly. We will discuss the scope of the project in class. In addition, I expect that everyone will have met with me in my office or after class to discuss the project.

Week of January 18 (note there is no class Monday 1/18) Equity, Efficiency, Market Failure. Read VW chs. 4-7

Week of January 25 Government solutions. Read VW chs. 8-9

Week of February 1 Doing Policy Analysis – Empirical Assessment. Read VW chs. 10-11 and 13 and Asher (forecasting).

Week of February 8 (note there is probably no class Friday 2/12) Cost-Benefit Analysis. Read VW chs. 12 and 14. Applications to health policy. Read Shelling.

Exercise using analytic methods due in class Wednesday Feb. 10.

Week of February 15 (note there is no class Monday 2/15) Statistical Analysis. Read VW Ch. 15, Tufte (analysis of quasi-experiments).

Week of February 22 Case studies of statistical analysis. Read Fairley and Mosteller (3 readings).

Exercise using empirical methods due in class Friday Feb. 26.

Week of March 1 – Oral presentations

Week of March 8 - Oral presentations

Wed. 3/17 – Papers due in Political Science Office by 10AM