

L32 Pol Sci 4043 01: Public Policy Analysis, Assessment and Practical Wisdom
Seigle Hall L003 M-W---- 1:00PM 2:30PM

Professor Itai Sened
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Office Hours Siegle Hall # 236: Tuesdays: 10:30 A.M. to Noon
Other times welcome by appointment.

TA: Ms. Elena Labzina: elena.labzina@wustl.edu

This course provides an introduction to the study, professional practice, ex-ante and ex-post assessment of public policy and the professional practice of policy analysis.

We will rely heavily on the classic textbook in this field:

David L. Weimer and Aidan R. Vining, *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice*, 5th edition Longman Publishing Group, 2010.

The course will cover a series of critical concepts in understanding, practicing, analyzing and assessing public policy.

We will consider a number of questions relating to the fundamental rationales for public policy, the limitations of public policy interventions and the generic instruments of public policy as well as how to measure economic and social costs and benefits of alternative public policies.

We also hope to improve students' basic skills in analytical thinking, information gathering, and writing on issues of economic social and public policies.

After learning the basic concepts students will split into work groups and will investigate major public policy debates in the U.S. today, such as Health Care, Education, Energy, Welfare and Taxation, using professional tools rather than preconceived ideologies. Students will then choose specific generic public policy projects to work on.

Four consecutive memorandum exercises (5% each), two briefings (5% each), and class participation (10%) will count together for 40% of the final grade. The memorandum and presentation exercises provide opportunities to practice analytical writing: the first will have students present a general introduction or background to a public policy of their choice. The remaining four will allow students to develop their respective policy analysis project.

The briefings simulate oral reports you are likely to be called upon to make while working on a major project in the public or private sector. You will have ten minutes to provide an introduction to the issue you are addressing in your policy analysis project, pose an analytical question you are trying to address, and lead discussion of it. You should allow *at least* five minutes for discussion. Your active class participation will make the course much more valuable for all of us.

30 percent of the final grade will depend on each student's semester-long project on his or her policy of choice. The individual project gives every student an opportunity to apply the concepts and skills introduced in the course to a topic of his or her choice.

The remainder 30 percent will be based on a midterm examination that will test students' mastery of the basic rationales for, and limits to, public policy.

Enjoy the Class!

Class 'by laws'

Course Work: Students are expected to read carefully the required reading before every class. In light of the relatively small size of the class we will try to have considerable time for class discussion of the reading materials and students will be expected to show proficiency during class discussion. Class participation will be evaluated by your actual participation in class, the four memos that you submit during the semester and the presentations that apply concept learned in class to current policy debates of your choice.

Grading

In this class like any other class, grading follows a rather simple logic. I articulate it here to help you form the appropriate expectations regarding your grades for the assignments in class.

A: Outstanding understanding of the material, ability to explain, creatively integrate and critique the material, coupled with a demonstrated ability to structure thoughts and present them in writing and oral presentations in a logical and perfectly lucid flow.

A-: Same as above short of 'outstanding' and 'perfectly lucid.'

B+: Very good understanding of the material and a demonstrated ability to explain, integrate, and critique the material, coupled an ability to structure the paper in a logical flow.

B: A good understanding of the material with some ability to explain, integrate, and critique the material coupled with an ability to structure the paper properly.

B-: An understanding of the material and an ability to explain and integrate it into a coherent paper.

C+: An understanding of the material with an ability to explain and integrate it.

C: Demonstrate knowledge of the material covered in the reading and in class.

D: Partial even if somewhat inadequate knowledge of the material.

F: No demonstration of knowledge of material.

Challenging a Grade

Grading takes time and reflection. If you feel that you got a lower grade than you deserve, write an account, explaining why you think that is the case and put it in my mailbox in the Department. I will reply with a detailed explanation of the reasons for the grade. If you are still unsatisfied, you can resubmit the challenge, further articulating the essence of your dissatisfaction. I will consider your notes and regrade your work. The grade you receive on the second grading is your final grade and it may be lower than your initial grade.

Course Requirements and Policies:

Preparation and participation – students are expected to have carefully read the readings prior to class meetings in which they are discussed, and to participate in class discussions. An essential part of this course is critical thought and discussion of political issues, not just reading about them. Note that a crucial part of participation involves respect for other students in the class and for their views.

Students with disabilities -- If you have a documented disability that may have some impact on your work in this class, please see me within the first two weeks of the course. Students who believe they have a disability and may require special accommodations, but who have not yet had that disability documented, are encouraged to contact the Cornerstone – Center for Advanced Learning at (314) 935-4153 or 4062.

Note on academic honesty -- Cheating, plagiarism, or any form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will result in disciplinary action as recommended by the Dean of Students.

Tentative Schedule

Wednesday, August 28: Organizational Session

Handing over the syllabus and bylaws of the class, registration issues and expectations.

Wednesday, September 4th: Introduction

Course overview. Projects and assignments discussed.

Reading: Weimer and Vining, Chapter 1.

Monday, September 9th: Policy Analysis: Overview

We consider two important questions that we will revisit throughout the course: What roles does policy analysis play in democratic societies? What roles should it play?

Reading: Weimer and Vining, Chapters 2, 3, and 13

Janet Musso, Robert Biller, and Robert Myrtle, "Tradecraft: Professional Writing as Problem Solving," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 19:4 (2000), 635-646.

Wednesday, September 11th: Market Failures as Rationales for Public Policy

Welfare economics specifies the assumptions under which market equilibria are Pareto efficient. We will begin a discussion of how certain violations of these assumptions are commonly identified as market failures: public goods, externalities, natural monopolies, and information asymmetries.

Reading: Weimer and Vining Chapter 4, 5

Monday, September 16th:

Market failures provide important rationales for collective interference with individual choices. Our goal is to understand these basic market failures, and other limitations of the competitive framework, for purposes of framing and modeling policy problems.

Reading: Weimer and Vining, Chapters 6

Wednesday, September 18th: Goals Other Than Efficiency as Rationales for Public Policy

Though efficiency is almost always one of the relevant goals in policy analysis, it is rarely the only one. It is useful to develop conceptual foundations for thinking about distributional and other goals that commonly arise in policy analysis.

Reading: Weimer and Vining, Chapter 7

First Memorandum is due: Discuss a general policy area you want to work on

Monday September 23rd Government Failure as Limitation and Rationale

Just as markets fail in systematic ways, so too does collective action. Such generic government failures interfere with effective correction of market failures and produce public policies that themselves are policy problems.

Reading: Weimer and Vining, Chapter 8

Wednesday, September 25th: Structuring Analysis

We will overview of the steps in the rational model of policy analysis. We consider how to frame and model policy problems, select appropriate goals and criteria.

Reading: Weimer and Vining, Chapters 14

Monday, September 30th: Specify policy alternatives,

We learn how to predict and value consequences, identify tradeoffs among alternatives, discuss recommendations.

Reading: Weimer and Vining, Chapters 15

Wednesday, October 2nd: Policy Design I

We will conduct a discussion of how to design generic policies as starting points for design, as well as borrowing and adapting designs used in other contexts.

Reading: Weimer and Vining, Chapters 9

Second Memorandum is Due: Submit your draft Policy Design.

Monday October 7th: Policy Design II

Students will discuss, compare and contrast their goals/alternative matrix for their projects, comparing notes and discussing items on their matrices across projects

Reading: Weimer and Vining, Chapters 10

Wednesday, October 9th: How is policy made in D.C. – The insight of an insider

Guest lecture by Robert Kallen, professor of economics at DePaul University.

Robert Kallen founded RSK Strategies, LLC, which provides expertise and capital to small and growing companies specializing in the food and education sectors. He was a staff attorney at the Federal Trade Commission in Washington, D.C. (1982-1984) and at the Environmental Law and Policy Center of the Midwest (1993-1995). Robert Kallen is currently the Secretary-Treasurer of the Concord Coalition Citizens' Council (a not-for-profit organization dedicated to deficit reduction), Treasurer of the Integrated Pest Management Institute and Treasurer of the Barat Education Foundation Board where he established Diversity-Forums.org, which provides panels to educational and corporate institutions to discuss issues surrounding race, class, gender, and business ethics. Additionally, he worked on the 1992 Clinton/Gore transition team for economics, was a legislative assistant in 1982 for Senator Paul Tsongas and is presently a member of the Next Gen PAC and a state leader for NoLabels.org.

Monday, October 14th: Review Session Towards Midterm

Wednesday, October 16th: Midterm exam

Test covering the concepts developed in the first half of the course.

Monday, October 21st: Thinking Strategically: Adoption and Implementation

A realistic assessment of policy alternatives almost always requires consideration of the feasibility of their adoption and implementation. How can we make predictions about feasibility? How can we alter policy alternatives to improve their feasibility?

Readings: Weimer and Vining, Chapter 11, 12.

Wednesday October 23rd: The Science of Policy Making

Required Reading:

Buzz Breedlove, "The Continuing Education of a Policy Salesman," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 21:1 (2002), 131-136.

Christopher K. Leman and Robert H. Nelson, "Ten Commandments for Policy Economists," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 1:1 (1981), 97-117.

Monday, October 28th: Cost-Benefit Analysis

Although cost-benefit analysis (CBA) is rarely appropriate as a decision rule, it provides useful protocols for valuing the efficiency impacts of policy alternatives. We review basic concepts underlying CBA such as willingness-to-pay, opportunity cost, discounting for time, and the treatment of risk. We also consider the conceptual and practical limitations to its application.

Readings: Weimer and Vining, Chapters 16 and 17

Wednesday, October 30th: Cost Benefit - Conclusion

In class workshop preparations for First draft of project report due on November 2nd.

Monday, November 4th: In class discussion of first draft of project reports

Students / Professor feedback on preparing the first draft of the project report in writing.

Third Memorandum is due: First draft of project report.

Monday, November 6th: Exemplary presentation of a project by Professor Sened

Professor Sened will present in class his study of alternative energy policy

Wednesday, November 11th: First draft of project report returned in class and discussed

Monday, November 13th: In class project presentation

First Draft of Final Project returned with comments

Wednesday, November 15th: In class project presentation

Monday, November 20th: In class project presentation

Monday, November 25th: Concluding Remarks of Class Presentations

Wednesday November 26th - 30th: Thanksgiving Break:

Enjoy Every Minute of it but don't Drink and Drive!!!

Monday, December 2nd: Politics Getting in the Way: A lesson from the 1978 Energy Act

Reading: Gyung-Ho, Jeong, William Lowry, Gary Miller and Itai Sened: "*Changing the Rules: The 1978 Energy Act and the Power of Preferences over Institutions,*"

Fourth and Final Memorandum is due: Second draft of Final Project.

Wednesday, December 4th: Concluding remarks.