PS185 POLICY ANALYSIS

Course Times: Fridays 10:15am - 13:30pm (Group B)
Location: TBD
Seminar Leader: Gale Raj-Reichert
Email: g.rajreichert@berlin.bard.edu
Office Hours: Wednesday and Friday 1pm to 2pm and by appointment

Course Description

This course introduces students to concepts and theories used in policy analysis and policymaking. What are public policies you may ask? Public policies are courses of action made by governments to solve societal problems by changing individual and group behaviors. They include laws, regulations, incentives/disincentives, punishments and providing services, goods and information. It is important to remember that policies not only include what governments choose to do but also what they choose not to do. Policies are developed by individual governments (central, regional/state, and city/municipal level governments), groups of governments and intergovernmental organizations. Policies can impact social and economic outcomes for people, communities, and industries, and have impacts on the environment not only in the place where the policies are made and implemented, but also in other parts of the world.

As an introductory course we will spend time learning about and discussing foundational concepts on **what** are public policies, **how** they are evaluated to understand their benefits and challenges, and importantly, from theoretical perspectives understand **why** certain types of policy mechanisms work or do not work in addressing or solving problems in the world.

The main questions this course addresses are:
- What assumptions and theories are used in policymaking?
- What are the concepts and methods used to evaluate policy effectiveness and impacts?
- How do policies change behaviors?
- Which actors have the power to engage in the policymaking process and why?
- Why are some policy issues focused on by governments, while others are not?

We will also apply the foundational concepts and theories to real-world policy case studies addressing policy problems in different country contexts.

A major assignment of this course is a substantial research paper analyzing a specific problem and policy solutions. The research paper must apply concepts and theories of policy analysis learned in the course or from your own individual research. It must also include evidence and data, gathered from your own research, to support your arguments and conclusions.

With this course, students will gain an understanding of a holistic approach to understanding public policy and policy analysis, conceptually and theoretically, and also empirically. Students will also learn how to communicate about policy problems, options and recommendations verbally and in writing. Students will also gain experience reading academic research and conducting their own research for a final research paper.

Requirements

Required Textbook and readings:
Please refer to the Course Reader.

In-class participation
Core readings must be completed *before* each seminar as our discussions will be based on them. Please read actively – try to relate what you are reading with what you already know and have gained knowledge about the topic from other courses or from your own personal interests and explorations (engage in a personal self-reflective discussion). Take notes, be critical, ask questions, and come to class prepared to discuss and share your ideas and thoughts!

We will be engaging in and discussing current issues concerning policy analysis and public policies. Many if not most of the issues will be news-worthy items and part of current public debates. It is highly recommended that you regularly check the news and/or other policy related reporting outlets (newspapers, news websites, policy briefs, X, Instagram, etc.) for insights and different opinions that relate to the topics in the course – which can be shared during class discussions. At the start of each class, we will spend the first 10 minutes discussing a current policy event. Students will be asked to volunteer a topic for discussion, so please come prepared having read a current policy issue in the news.

Participating in different ways, either through larger group discussions or in small group/partner exercises, is an integral part of the learning process and it is expected that every student makes a good effort in this regard.

Course Assignments, Deadlines, and Grade Breakdown

1. Discussion participation   15%
Half of this grade will be based on in-class discussions of the readings and also include participation in small group work or in pairs.

2. Written assignment   15%
For this first written assignment, you are to address the question 'What is policy analysis?'. Please reflect on the different ways in which policy analysis is conducted and for what purpose. Compare and contrast

between two to three different concepts, theories, approaches or methods of policy analysis (covered in class) and their strengths and weaknesses. Please reference your arguments based on readings. Your paper must be based on a minimum of 3 references. Two of these references must be from the syllabus.

The policy memo must be between **1,250 to 1,500 words** (not including the bibliography) in 1.5-spaced, 12 pt., Times New Roman. Please use the Chicago Style of Referencing.

**Please conduct research for this assignment. This is not an opinion piece.

Written assignment deadline: **Friday 22 March 2024** , by 6pm via Google Classroom.

3. Policy memo   15%
Please choose one policy problem and present points on two policy options weighing their opportunities/benefits and challenges/costs. One of these policies will be recommended and expanded on as the best policy option based on analysis and evidence.

The policy memo must be written **from the perspective of a particular actor** chosen from the following list:

- Staff for a member of parliament or congress or political party
- Industry lobby group
- Nongovernmental campaign organization
- Trade union representative
- A different actor (based on discussion with and approval of seminar leader)

This means you are a policy analyst working for or assisting one of these organizations and you are writing a policy memo to recommend a particular policy for your organization to present, lobby or campaign on in government.

The purpose of a policy memo is to **briefly and succinctly** inform a specific audience about a policy issue or policy problem and arguments for a specific policy recommendation.

The memo **must** include the following sections:

- Address the memo to a specific actor/organization.
- An 'Introduction' or 'Background' section briefly presenting the issue or problem. **IMPORTANT NOTE: the issue or problem is NOT the policy.** It is a problem that occurs in society in the real world for which a policy is created to solve or address.
- A 'Policy Options' section. Present 2 different policy options to address the policy issue or policy problem.
- A 'Policy Recommendation' section. Discuss and elaborate on your recommended policy option. Present academic concepts and arguments for why or for what reasons this is the best policy option for dealing with the issue or solving the problem (as discussed in the

Introduction and/or Background section). In this section you must discuss and explain what the policy tool or mechanism is, what are the assumptions behind why it works, and your assessment on the strengths, weaknesses and accuracies of these assumptions. Also, discuss the target population of the policy and how this makes the policy recommended stronger or weaker. Discuss any other theories that help us understand why your policy recommendation would lead to the desired changes in individual or group behaviors to solve the issue or problem. Also *briefly* compare and contrast the non-recommended policy option with reasons why the recommended policy option is more superior or better.

In this section, also address at least one weakness of the policy being recommended and provide a solution for mitigating this weakness.

This section is quite important, hence, put more effort into it!

Tips:

- You can use figures, graphs, and tables (unless excessive, they will not be included in the word count)
- Bullet points can help get points across quicker and also in a more succinct manner
- Always write in COMPLETE SENTENCES including bullet points
- Convince the reader of your arguments by citing papers, studies, research, news items, etc.

* This is an academic assignment and not one that is supposed to simulate a real-world policy memo. Remember, I will be grading this assignment for its academic quality.

**Please conduct research, including academic sources, for this assignment. This is not an opinion piece.

The policy memo must be between **1,500 to 2,000 words** (not including the bibliography) in 1.5-spaced, 12 pt., Times New Roman. Please use the Chicago Style of Referencing.

Policy memo deadline: **Friday 12 April 2024** , by 6pm via Google Classroom.

3. Individual presentation   10%
This presentation is on the preliminary research and analysis of your research paper (Assignment 4). Please make a 5 to 7 minute presentation on your policy research topic (also refer to instructions for the Policy Research Paper for more guidance). Following your presentation, we will have a 5 minute in-class discussion and feedback session. I will provide written feedback separately via email to each student.

In order to make sure everyone has sufficient time for their presentations, no one will be allowed to present longer than 7 minutes. Please practice ahead of time to make sure you do not go over 7 minutes.

The aim of this assignment is to prepare you for your policy research paper. Please use this as a good opportunity to receive feedback on your PRELIMINARY research idea for the policy research paper.

Your presentation must include the following topics (this loosely corresponds to the different sections of your research paper):

1. Clear introduction of the problem or issue.
2. Some background, details, and context which are helpful for understanding the problem and issue
3. The public policy for the issue problem you will analyze in your research paper. Include also the target population the policy addresses. Discuss whether you will be arguing **for or against** this public policy solution and two to three reasons why.
4. Discuss at least one **theoretical or conceptual argument** that helps explain why the policy you are analysing works or does not work in addressing or solving the problem.

**If you will be using a powerpoint presentation, please email it to me in advance.

Individual presentations will be scheduled for **week 12**.

4. Policy research paper   45%

The aim of the policy research paper is to present, discuss, and analyse a problem and a public policy solution to solve the problem resulting in arguments for or against the public policy solution.

IMPORTANT NOTE: the issue or problem is NOT the policy. It is a problem that occurs in society in the real world for which a policy is created to solve or mitigate the problem.

The research paper **MUST** address all of the following, which correspond to the different sections of the policy research paper:

1. INTRODUCTION section: Introduce a problem or issue which requires a policy solution. As an introduction section, please also include a synopsis of the paper.

2. BACKGROUND section: Discuss the background and context to the problem or issue. This can include a number of factors which helps us understand the reasons behind and the features of the problem or issue. This can be factors which are historical, geographical or location-specific, social, economic, political or geo-political, event-specific, etc. For a good and comprehensive discussion, a combination of factors should be presented – as problems or issues are complex.

3. ANALYSIS section: Discuss <u>**ONE**</u> public policy solution at the local, national or global scale (law, regulation, international treaty, etc.) that <u>**IS CURRENTLY or HAS BEEN USED**</u> to deal with the problem or issue. Discuss its challenges and opportunities and the reasons behind them.

   There are 2 options of argumentation you must choose for this section:

   a) <u>If you are arguing **IN FAVOR** of the public policy solution</u>, then your discussion here should provide convincing arguments and evidence for why you support the public policy solution. This requires convincingly <u>USING THEORIES AND CONCEPTS</u> to discuss <u>WHY THE POLICY WORKS</u> in solving or addressing the problem. Also, discuss one alternative policy which have failed (or would fail) and why – this would be done in a way to support your discussion in favor of the policy you are arguing for. *This is an important section of your policy research paper, so please put more effort here.*

   OR

   b) <u>If you are arguing **AGAINST** the public policy solution</u>, then your discussion here should provide convincing arguments and evidence to back up why the public policy solution is not or was not helpful or is failing or has failed. This requires convincingly <u>USING THEORIES AND CONCEPTS</u> to discuss <u>WHY THE POLICY DOES NOT WORK</u> in solving or addressing the problem. Also, discuss one alternative policy which is more superior and why – this would be done in a way to support your discussion against the policy you are arguing against. *This is an important section of your policy research paper, so please put more effort here.*

4. CONCLUSION section: This is a summary of your research paper, recapping the main points from each section. Do not include new arguments or findings in this section.

*For a good grade, your paper must lean heavily on academic concepts, ideas, and theories. We have read and discussed many of them in class, please refer to them and more from your own research. Please conduct most of your research based on academic papers, such as academic journals, academic books, and academic reports. Non-academic sources should be kept at a minimum.

** If you would like to modify your approach, please come see me in advance to discuss and receive approval for an exception to these instructions

IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER:
- This is a research paper, which means please do research for it. Start early!
- Arguments, in order to be strong and convincing, must be backed up with **academic concepts, ideas and/or theories and evidence** .
- Write clearly and logically.

- Please proofread your paper before turning it in to ensure there are no awkward sentences, grammatical errors, unfinished sentences, and spelling errors.
- Please come see me during office hours if you have ANY questions (for example on the topic, research, formulating arguments, conducting analysis, etc.) or would like to discuss your plans and progress on the paper.

The policy research paper must be between **3,000 to 3,500 words** (not including the bibliography) in 1.5-spaced, 12 pt., Times New Roman. Please use the Chicago Style of Referencing.

Research paper deadline: **Friday 17 May 2024, midnight** via Google Classroom.

<u>Academic Integrity</u>
Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Student Code of Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

<u>Attendance</u>
Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences will be allowed. For additional absences students must provide documentation for example of illness, medical appointments or government office appointments.

Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences, whether excused or not excused. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8. <u>This policy will be adhered to strictly in this class and will have implications on your participation grade.</u>

<u>Policy on Late Submission of Papers</u>
Assignments that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Assignments more than 24 hours late will not be accepted. Letters of accommodations from students must be shared with me at the start of the semester. <u>This policy will be adhered to strictly in this class and will have implications on your participation grade.</u>

Schedule

Week	Topic	Dates
1	What is public policy and policy analysis?	2 Feb
2	How do we understand policy problems?	9 Feb
3	Picking the right policy: Policy design and instruments	16 Feb
4	Nudges as public policy: What is it?	23 Feb

5	Policy analysis methods I	1 Mar
6	Policy analysis methods II	8 Mar
7	Policy evaluation	15 Mar
8	Merchants of Doubt (2014) documentary	22 Mar
9	Policy case study #1	5 Apr
10	Policy case study #2	12 Apr
11	Big data and artificial intelligence in policy evaluation	19 Apr
12	Student presentations	26 Apr
13	Policy case study #3	3 May
14	Wrapping up	10 May

Weekly Themes and Readings

Week 1: What is public policy and policy analysis?

We will begin the semester with an introduction to the origins of public policymaking and its aims and objectives.

Friday 2 February

Hassel, A. and Wegrich, K. (2022) Chapter 1 – 'Public Policy', in *How to do Public Policy.*

Mintrom, M. and Williams, C. (2012) 'Public policy debate and the rise of policy analysis', in Routledge Handbook of Public Policy.

Week 2: How do we understand policy problems? Understanding social constructionism and intersectionality in policy analysis

The first step to policymaking is understanding the policy problem – the problem definition stage. How societal problems are defined are contingent on a variety of factors, which are themselves theorized. We will discuss the limits and opportunities of the different theories presented.

Friday 9 February

Lister, R. (2010) 'What's the problem? Social constructionism', Chapter 5 in *Understanding Theories and Concepts in Social Policy,* Policy Press.

Schneider, A., Ingram, S., and DeLeon, P. (2007) Social construction and policy design, Chapter 4 in *Theories of the Policy Process*, Westview Press.

Manuel, T. (2006) 'Envisioning the Possibilities for a Good Life: Exploring the Public Policy Implications of Intersectionality Theory', *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy*, 28:3-4, 173-203.

Bishwakarma, et. a. (2007) 'Educating Dalit Women: Beyond a One-Dimensional Policy Formulation', *HIMALAYA, the Journal of the Association of the Nepal and Himalayan Studies*, 27: 1.

Supplementary reading: Hankivsky, O. et al. (2012) Intersectionality-based policy analysis, in An Intersectionality-Based Policy Analysis Framework, Simon Fraser University.

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Week 3: Picking the right policy: Policy design and instruments

There are a variety of classifications of policy instruments or tools. One classification distinguishes policies as regulatory instruments which permit or forbid certain behaviors through sanctions, financial based policies which (dis)incentivize behaviors through monetary rewards or by increasing costs, informational based instruments to raise awareness, and organizational arrangements for the provision of services and goods.

Friday 16 February

Schneider, A. and Ingram, S. (1990) Behavioral assumptions of policy tools, *The Journal of Politics,* 52 (2): 510-529.

Hassel and Wegrich (2022) How to Choose and Design Policy Instruments, Chapter 4 in *How to do Public Policy*.

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Week 4: Nudges as public policy: What is it?

This week, we will discuss these and a fairly new and innovative policy instrument -- 'nudges'. What are they? Are they really a 'new' policy instrument? What are its critiques about?

Friday 23 February

Sunstein, C.R. (2014) 'Nudging: A Very Short Guide', *Harvard University*.

Bhargava, S. and Loewenstein, G. (2015) Behavioral Economics and Public Policy, *American Economic Review: Papers & Proceedings,* 105 (5): 396-401.

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Week 5: Policy analysis methods I

Decisions on policies are based on knowledge and evidence, which are important and contested fields in public policy analysis and research. This week begins a two-part discussion on how policy choices are made. This week we will consider qualitative policy analysis methods and mixed methods which combine quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Friday 1 March

Yanow, D. 2019. 'Qualitative-interpretative methods in policy research', in Fischer, F. and Miller, G. (eds.) *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis: Theory, Politics, and Methods*, Routledge.

Weiss, C.H. and Birckmayer, J. (2006) 'Social experimentation for public policy', Chapter 39 in *The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy,* Oxford University Press.
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Week 6: Policy analysis methods II

Economic policy analysis, such as cost-benefit analysis and impact assessments, have been dominant in policy analysis. We discuss and critique these methods.

Friday 8 March

Hassel, A. and Wegrich, K. (2022) How to Evaluate Policies, Chapter 6 in *How to do Public Policy.*

Vining, A. R. and Weimer, D. L. (2009) Assessing the Costs and Benefits of Social Policies, Chapter 1 in *Investing in the Disadvantaged: Assessing the Benefits and Costs of Social Policies*, Georgetown University Press.

Supplementary reading: Sen, A. (2000) 'The Discipline of Cost‐Benefit Analysis', The Journal of Legal Studies, 29 (2): 931-952.

Week 7: Policy evaluation

Policy evaluation aims to understand whether policies are or have been implemented and how successful they are or have been at achieving their goals and objectives. Policy evaluation can be done to understand the outcomes of policies or as part of monitoring their implementation. Evaluation hinges on evidence. We will consider different types of data that are used as evidence as well as the politics behind them this and next week.

Friday 15 March

Pankhurst, J. (2017) 'Evidence-based policymaking: an important first step and the need to take the next', Chapter 2 in The Politics of Evidence: From evidence-based policy to the good governance of evidence, Routledge.

Bovens, M., Hart, P., and Kuipers, S. 2008. 'The Politics of Policy Evaluation', in Goodin, R.E., Michael, M., and Rein, M. (eds.) The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy, Oxford University Press.

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Week 8: Merchants of Doubt (2014) documentary

Friday 22 March

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SPRING BREAK
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Week 9: Policy case study #1

We will read, discuss, and analyze three policy case studies developed by Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. You will engage in small group exercises to explore questions surrounding policy problems, solutions, analysis and unintended consequences.

Friday 5 April

Harvard Kennedy School Case Study: 'Wir Schaffen Das: Angela Merkel and Germany's response to the refugee crisis in Europe'.

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Week 10: Policy case study #2

Friday 12 April

Harvard Kennedy School Case Study: 'A Rising Storm: Eric Garner and the Explosive Controversy over Race and Policing'

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Week 11: Big data and artificial intelligence in policy evaluation

Big data and artificial intelligence (the use of algorithms or machine learning) has become the next generation of tools of policy evaluation and implementation. We will learn and discuss these new tools and their trade-offs between efficiency and biases.

Friday 19 April

Schintler, L.A. and Kulkarni, R. 2014. 'Big Data for Policy', *Review of Policy Research*, 31: 343-348.

Radiya-Dixit, E. and Djanegara, N. T. (2023) 'Race and Surveillance Brief', Stanford Center for Comparative Studies in Race & Ethnicity.

Margetts, H. and Dorobantu, C. (2019) 'Rethink government with AI', *Nature*, 568: 163 - 165.

Supplementary watch: 'Coded Bias' – Netflix movie by Joy Buolamwini

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Week 12: Student presentations

Friday 26 April

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Week 13: Policy case study #3

Friday 3 May

Harvard Kennedy School Case Study "No Trust in Miracles": Leading through a water crisis in Cape Town

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Week 14: Wrapping up

Friday 10 May

Readings to be determined

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