Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service
New York University

CORE GP 1022 Introduction to Public Policy
Fall 2012, Thursday, 6:45 – 8:55 pm
Room 208, Silver Center

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Course Objectives

This is a required core course in the Wagner School curriculum. It is designed to provide students with an intellectual framework for developing their own answers to these questions:

1. In modern societies, what are the appropriate roles of organizations in the public sector, the private for-profit sector, and the private non-profit sector? This requires an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of each sector and the options for designing policies and programs that mix the sectors.

2. How can the professional activity of “policy analysis” contribute to promoting better policy decisions by public officials? This requires an understanding of the specific tasks involved in doing policy analysis and of the limitations of analytic work as a determinant of policy decisions.

3. How does the policy-making process actually work, and what is the role of policy analysts in the process? This question is addressed with particular attention to the U.S. context, but with some effort to deal more generally with modern democracies.

Course Organization and Requirements

As detailed in the outline below, the course is organized into three parts – one each corresponding to the three questions above. The weekly class sessions typically will consist of about 90 minutes of a combination of lecture and discussion covering the designated topic and readings, a 10 minute break, and a workshop session of about 30 minutes devoted to helping students prepare the required assignments. Some classes will have guest speakers.

Students must complete the three assignments described below:

#1 – Analysis of a non-profit organization – due October 4
Select a nonprofit organization and analyze the organization in terms of these topics:
a. Description of the organization’s mission, governance, finances and performance indicators.
b. Discussion of the extent to which the organization suffers from “voluntary failures” identified in readings and class presentations
c. Critique or defense of how this organization’s mission could or could not be better performed through a different allocation of responsibilities among the three sectors and/or a different relationship with the public and private sectors.

The analysis should be about 1,500 words. It should draw upon reports from the organization and, if practical, one or more interviews with agency staff or board members. More detailed guidelines for this assignment will be distributed in class.

Students should select their organization no later than the second class (September 13). The name of the organization should be submitted to the instructor via e-mail in advance of the second class. Selections will be discussed in the workshop portion of the second class, and information about preparing the assignment will be provided in the workshop portion of the second and third classes.

#2 – Evaluation of an official piece of policy analysis – due November 15

Students will select a written document intended as a piece of policy analysis and evaluate how well the document meets the professional standards of policy analysis. The evaluation should cover each of the steps described in the Bardach book, indicating strengths and weaknesses for each component. The evaluation should be about 1,500 words. More detailed guidelines for preparing this assignment will be distributed in class.

Students will be provided a list of recommended documents for evaluation, but you may select a document on your own. The name and full citation of document you are evaluating should be submitted via e-mail to the instructor no later than October 11, and preferably by October 4. The workshop portion of the classes four through six will be devoted to assisting students in preparing the evaluation.

#3 – Essay analyzing the policy-making process – due December 20 (or earlier) in lieu of a final exam.

Select two or more of the three policy areas covered in classes eight through thirteen – welfare reform, education reform and the NCLB legislation, and health insurance reform. Write an essay in which you (1) identify three general points about the policy making process that are part of the “multiple streams” framework or the “advocacy coalition” framework and that you consider particularly interesting, and (2) use the two or more policy examples to illustrate how these points are supported or contradicted by the facts in these cases. The essay should be about 1,500 words

Course Grades

Course grades will be a weighted average as follows:
Written assignment #1 – 25%
Written assignment #2 – 30%
Written assignment #3 - 35%
Class attendance and participation – 10%
Students with more than one absence for non-emergency or non-medical reasons may have their grades lowered, and students failing to meet the deadlines for assignments may have their grades lowered.

Criteria for letter grades follow the norms established for the Wagner School. The school-wide statement of grading policy is attached to this syllabus.

Course Readings

The required course readings are concentrated in three books available at the NYU bookstore:

Two supplementary readings available at the NYU bookstore are;

Additional shorter readings (required and supplementary) are listed below in the course outline and will be available on the course Blackboard site.
COURSE OUTLINE

Part I – The Three sectors – A mix not a choice

A. The market and government – why they need each other - September 6
   The case for a market system – its allocative and technical efficiency.
   Critiques of the market as normative and positive theory, and market dependence
   on government regulation.
   Alternative forms of government intervention and “partnership”.
   Required reading:
   Robert Kuttner, “The Limits of Markets,” American Prospect (March/April
   1997); Interested students may want to read the book by Kuttner from which this article
   is drawn – Everything for Sale: The Virtues and Limits of Markets.
   Introduction,” in Lester Salamon, ed., The Tools of Government, Oxford University
   Press, 2002. Interested students may consult additional chapters in this encyclopedic
   work.
   Recommended reading:
   Stone, Policy Paradox, Introduction and Chapter 1, Chapters 11-15.

B. The Non-profit Sector – where does/should it fit? - September 13
   The current role of non-profit institutions in U.S. society and elsewhere.
   The positive aspects of voluntary organizations, and the limits of voluntary
   organizations.
   Required readings:
   K. L. Roeger, A. Blackwood and S. L. Pettijohn, The Nonprofit Sector in Brief,
   Urban Institute, 2011.
   Lester Salamon, “Government-Nonprofit Relations in International Perspective,”
   in E. T. Boris and C. E. Steuerle, eds., Nonprofits and Government: Collaboration and
   Lester Salamon, Partners in Public Service: Government-Nonprofit Relations in
   Failure, Voluntary Failure, and Third-Party Government: Toward a Theory of

C. The “Right” Mix of the Three Sectors – September 20
   The nature of the relationships among the sectors. Policy decisions as choices about
   how to mix the sectors rather than as picking one. Considerations in designing
   relationships between government and nonprofit agencies.
   Required Reading:
   Lester Salamon, editor, The State of Nonprofit America, Brookings Institution
   Charles Brecher and Oliver Wise, “Looking a Gift Horse in the Mouth: Challenges
   in Managing Philanthropic Support for Public Services,” Public Administration Review,
   Special Issue, December, 2008, pp. 146-161.

**Part II – Policy Analysis as a Professional Activity – the elements and potential of professional policy analysis**

**A. The Tasks of Policy Analysis – September 27**

The eight steps in policy analysis and how to do them well.  
Recommended reading: Stone, *Policy Paradox*, Chapters 2-10 and Conclusion.  

**B. Consuming and Evaluating Policy Analysis – October 4**

A case study of policy analysis and applying the eight steps as a basis for assessment.  
Other criteria, including the “use” of analysis and its impacts.  

**Part III – The Realities of Making Public Policy – how the process actually works and how analysis fits in (or doesn’t).**

**A. Theories of the Policy Process – October 11**

The stages of the policy process, the “multiple streams” framework and the “advocacy coalition” framework - key concepts and hypotheses.  

**B. Money and Political Influence – October 18**

The role of money and its threats to democratic norms. The challenges of fairness in financing election campaigns.  

**C. Adopting, Implementing and Evaluating Policy –The Case of U.S. Welfare Reform. – October 25 and November 1**
Two weeks on how welfare reform was passed and implemented in the U.S. and how it has been and could be evaluated. How U.S. welfare policy differs from that of other nations.


Sheila Zedlewski, “Welfare Reform: What Have We Learned in Fifteen Years?” Urban Institute, Brief 24, April 2012.

C. Adopting, Implementing and Evaluating Policy: The Case of “No Child Left Behind” – November 8 and 15

Two weeks on how the NCLB program was adopted, implemented, evaluated and is now a target for reform. How U.S. education policy differs from that of other nations.


Note – Thanksgiving Holiday is November 22

D. Health Care Reform in the U.S. – November 29 and December 6

Two weeks on the evolution of U.S. health care programs and the reforms passed in 2010. Why did it finally pass and how should it be evaluated? How it is being implemented, and the role of judicial review. How U.S. health policy differs from that of other countries.


E. Ethical Issues for Policy Analysts – December 13

Three case studies illustrating issues relating to (a) how to respond to rejection of your advice (Clinton’s signing of welfare reform legislation), (b) how to deal with analysis that leads to conclusions that conflict with your personal values (the CBO’s
analysis of the Clinton health plan), and (c) how to respond to orders from a boss that require improper conduct (the Medicare actuary’s handling of cost estimates for Medicare part D legislation). There are no required readings for this session; the cases will be presented by the instructor.

**December 20 – Regularly scheduled final exam date. There will be no in-class examination; instead, the final written assignment is due no later than this exam period.**
Grading Policy
Students will receive grades according to the following scale:

A = 4.0 points
A- = 3.7 points
B+ = 3.3 points
B = 3.0 points
B- = 2.7 points
C+ = 2.3 points
C = 2.0 points
C- = 1.7 points
F (fail) = 0.0 points

Student grades will be assigned according to the following criteria:

(A) Excellent: Exceptional work for a graduate student. Work at this level is unusually thorough, well reasoned, creative, methodologically sophisticated, and well written. Work is of exceptional, professional quality.

(A-) Very good: Very strong work for a graduate student. Work at this level shows signs of creativity, is thorough and well-reasoned, indicates strong understanding of appropriate methodological or analytical approaches, and meets professional standards.

(B+) Good: Sound work for a graduate student; well-reasoned and thorough, methodologically sound. This is the graduate student grade that indicates the student has fully accomplished the basic objectives of the course.

(B) Adequate: Competent work for a graduate student even though some weaknesses are evident. Demonstrates competency in the key course objectives but shows some indication that understanding of some important issues is less than complete. Methodological or analytical approaches used are adequate but student has not been thorough or has shown other weaknesses or limitations.

(B-) Borderline: Weak work for a graduate student; meets the minimal expectations for a graduate student in the course. Understanding of salient issues is somewhat incomplete. Methodological or analytical work performed in the course is minimally adequate. Overall performance, if consistent in graduate courses, would not suffice to sustain graduate status in “good standing.”

(C-/+/) Deficient: Inadequate work for a graduate student; does not meet the minimal expectations for a graduate student in the course. Work is inadequately developed or flawed by numerous errors and misunderstanding of important issues. Methodological or analytical work performed is weak and fails to demonstrate knowledge or technical competence expected of graduate students.

(F) Fail: Work fails to meet even minimal expectations for course credit for a graduate student. Performance has been consistently weak in methodology and understanding, with serious limits in many areas. Weaknesses or limits are pervasive.