## NYU Wagner logo

# MSPP-GP 3100.001

# Applied Policy Analysis

# Summer 2024

## Course Information

Instructor:Karina Christiansen, PhD MPP

* Email: kmc596@nyu.edu
* Office Hours*:* By Appointment

**Lecture:** M/T May 20 & 21, **OFF M 5/27,** T**/**W May 28 & 29, M/W June 3 & 5,

5:30-9:30pm

**Rooms:**

Monday 5/20 40 W 4th St (Tisch Hall) **Room LC15**

Tuesday 5/21 40 W 4th St (Tisch Hall) **Room LC3**

Tuesday 5/28 40 W 4th St (Tisch Hall) **Room LC3**

Wednesday 5/29 40 W 4th St (Tisch Hall) **Room LC3**

Monday 6/3 40 W 4th St (Tisch Hall) **Room LC15**

Wednesday 6/5 40 W 4th St (Tisch Hall) **Room LC3**

## Course Description

Students often pursue policy studies out of a motivation to serve the public interest – to make a difference in public life, either from within, or by influencing those within, seats of public policy decision-making. How, in practice, are policy professionals influential? One characterization of the policy analyst is as a “technical, nonpartisan problem solver” – a methods expert, able to apply tools of analysis to a variety of issues, comparing and contrasting alternatives based on criteria such as efficiency, effectiveness, or feasibility. Their credibility is in their objectivity. Another characterization is that a policy analyst is “a producer of policy arguments,” who recognizes that “to say anything of importance in public policy requires value judgments, which must be explained and justified.”[[1]](#footnote-1) What is the role, then, of a policy professional in real world applied settings - a city agency, a non-profit advocacy organization, a consulting firm? When and how does that role shift between analyst, adviser, or advocate? How do ethics, moral considerations, and values come into play?

The goal of this course is to explore these questions – what it means to be a policy professional in applied settings – while practicing concrete skills and modes of inquiry central to the policy discipline: effective written and oral communication, ability to apply ethical frameworks to public policy decision-making, and to conduct a frame-critical policy discourse analysis.

## Learning Objectives

* Practice clear, persuasive, and effective policy communication through writing and oral presentations.
* Understand and apply basic principles of ethical frameworks for policy analysis: social justice, Kantian v Utilitarian theories of the moral life, respect for autonomy, and beneficence.
* Understand and apply frame-critical policy analysis: what values are embedded in policy narratives? How do political actors use symbolic representation (e.g. metaphor) to argue for their version of the problem/policy solution?
* Gain practice working in situations that mimic real world settings: collaboratively, under time constraints, for different audiences, and with limited information.

## Assignments & Grading

The final grade will be based on meaningful class participation and two written assignments: [1] an Executive Summary and [2] a Request for Proposals.

**[1] Class Participation (30%):** Your attendance and active participation is required to meet the learning objectives in this course. You will be expected to come to class prepared for meaningful participation in course discussions and small group activities. Each student will facilitate class discussion on two readings – offering a brief summary of the reading’s main concepts/arguments and its relevancy to the course, and ask your classmates at least four open-ended questions for discussion or activities to promote student engagement with the topic. Prepare for class discussion to last around 25 minutes per reading. Facilitators should **submit discussion questions by 12:00pm ET on the day of class** by email. You will likely receive feedback and edits prior to class. Your facilitation of a reading is worth 10% of your final grade and your active participation in these discussions is worth 10% of your final grade. The remaining 10% of your participation grade will come from submitting thoughtful **reflections on the asynchronous materials to the NYU Brightspace Discussion thread by 3:30pm ET the day of class**. Any missed Discussion post will result in losing 3% per missing post. As a short and intensive course, attendance is particularly important. One unexcused absence will result in a 6% reduction in your grade. Two unexcused absences will require a meeting with the Professor to identify additional required class assignments to make up for missed materials in order to avoid a larger reduction in your final grade and to ensure learning objectives are met.

**[2] Executive Summary (30%):** The executive summary is typically the most important part of a policy memo – it is also the part most likely to be read. A good executive summary manages to communicate the most essential information found in the brief or report: what the problem is, why it matters, and what ought to be done about it. It is written in clear, active, and concise language. You will receive a policy report in class on Tuesday, 5/21 with the executive summary redacted. In class we will have an exercise on writing top lines on that report for your supervisor (in this case your audience is the executive director of an anti-poverty nonprofit). An original executive summary for the report will be **due on Saturday, 5/25 at 11:59pm.** It should be no more than 300 words, single-spaced, 12 point font, with 1 inch margins (word document only).

**[3] Request for Proposal (RFP) (40%):** A final RFP will be **due before 11:59pm ET on Saturday 6/15**. Government agencies frequently pursue the administration’s policy agenda via contracting for services with nonprofit providers. For example, the de Blasio administration contracted with nonprofit community based organizations (CBOs) across all five boroughs to provide [alternatives to detention and incarceration (ATD and ATIs)](https://criminaljustice.cityofnewyork.us/programs/alternatives-to-incarceration/), to offer social and public health programming in lieu of jail or prison. ATD and ATI programs were part of the administration’s efforts to reduce the jail population, close the Rikers Island jail complex, and build jails with reduced capacity in the boroughs. For this assignment, you will write a Request for Proposals from the vantage point of a City office or agency in New York City, requesting a scope of services from a nonprofit organization to address a policy problem of your choosing. The RFP will provide a clear problem definition and statement of goals, a detailed scope of service including deliverables, requirements, and expectations for collaboration, and a set of performance measures. **The RFP will be due Saturday, June 15th at 11:59pm.** It should be no more than four pages, single-spaced, 12 point font with 1 inch margins (word document only).

## Course Schedule

Please complete all assigned readings **before** the assigned lecture. Asynchronous materials must be completed prior to our class meetings and a ~200 word reflection (unless otherwise specified) posted on the related Discussion thread prior to meetings at **3:30pm ET** on the day of class.

### Class #1: Ethical Frameworks and Public Policy [5/20/2024]

**Asycnhronous Materials:** Jacobson v. Massachusetts Case Study

* **Read**: Gostin, L. O. (2005). Jacobson v Massachusetts at 100 years: Police power and civil liberties in tension*. American Journal of Public Health*, 95(4), 576-581.
* **Listen**: Podcast (30 minutes): https://trumpconlaw.com/40-jacobson-and-covid
* **Post**: ~150-200 word reflection on the NYU Brightspace Discussion board

**Readings:**

* Beauchamp, T. L., & Walters, L. (1999). Ethical theory and bioethics. *Contemporary issues in bioethics*, 1-32.
* Gostin, L. O., & Powers, M. (2006). What does social justice require for the public’s health? Public health ethics and policy imperatives. *Health Affairs*, *25*(4), 1053-1060.
* Stone, D. A. (2002). Chapter 2: Equity. *Policy paradox: The art of political decision making.* WW Norton & Co, New York.

**Activities:**

* Applied Policy Analysis self reflection and discussion
* Public health and police power: applying Jacobson framework and ethical principles to current policy issues

### Class #2: Policy Communication: Executive Summary [5/21/2024]

**Asycnhronous Materials:**

* None

**Readings:**

* Mintrom, M. (2003). Chapter 1. *People skills for policy analysts*. Georgetown University Press.
* Public Policy Writing that Matters – Chapter 6: How to Structure Policy Memos and Briefs for Maximum Impact
* Public Policy Writing that Matters – Chapter 10: Eleven Strategies for Ruthlessly Pruning Needless Words

**Activities:**

* **Applied Skill:** What makes for effectve policy writing? Activity on addressing common writing challenges, from the CQ Press Writing Guide for Public Policy.
* **Policy Lab:** Writing top lines for a professional audience, using the “Still Life Report” on criminal justice sentencing issues and recommendations for reform. Read report, write a “top line” e-mail to your boss (the executive director of an anti-poverty non-profit). Compare and contrast with classmates – why did you select that content? What formatting is more or less effective? How easy is it to read and understand for a non-expert reader? How did you determine what your audience “needed” to know?

**Assignments:**

* Executive Summary, due Saturday, May 25th @ 11:59pm

### Class #3: Policy Communication: Problem Definition and Framing [5/28/2024]

**Asynchronous Materials:**

* Read: N.Y.C. Votes to Close Rikers. Now Comes the Hard Part. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/17/nyregion/rikers-island-closing-vote.html
* Watch: First 16 minutes: https://www.nonewjails.nyc/background
* Post: ~200-250 word reflection on the NYU Classes Forum: How did testifiers use ethical principles or problems frames to craft a persuasive argument? What strategies did you find most and least effective?

**Readings:**

* McBeth, M. K., & Clemons, R. S. (1999). Postmodern policy analysis in the premodern west: Problem definition in the Yellowstone bison case. *Administrative Theory & Praxis*, *21*(2), 161-175.
* Majone, G. (1989). Chapter 4: Analysis as Argument. *Evidence, argument, and persuasion in the policy process*. Yale University Press.
* Stone, D. A. (2002). Chapter 6: Symbols. *Policy paradox: The art of political decision making.* WW Norton & Co, New York.

**Activities:**

* Public Policy Testimony review

### Class #4: Policy Strategy: Evidence-Based Policy Making [5/29/2024]

**Asycnhronous Materials:** None

**Readings:**

* The Promise of Evidence-Based Policymaking: Report of the Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking (September 2017) Pages 1-21; Pages 87-104.
* Stevenson, Megan T. "Cause, Effect, and the Structure of the Social World." Available at SSRN (2023).
* Vital City Articles:
	+ What Really Drives Policy? <https://www.vitalcitynyc.org/articles/what-really-drives-policy>
	+ Fixing the Research to Policy Pipeline <https://www.vitalcitynyc.org/articles/fixing-the-research-to-policy-pipeline>
	+ Confronting Radical Uncertainty <https://www.vitalcitynyc.org/articles/confronting-radical-uncertainty>
	+ The World is Hard to Change <https://www.vitalcitynyc.org/articles/the-world-is-hard-to-change>

**Activities:**

* **Policy Debate:** Should NYC City Council require public policy program development within City Agencies to be evidence-based?

### Class #5: Policy Strategy: Program Development [6/3/2024]

**Asynchronous Materials:**

* **Read**: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: *Practical Guide for Implementing a Trauma-Informed Approach.* SAMHSA Publication No. PEP23-06-05-005. Rockville, MD: National Mental Health and Substance Use Policy Laboratory. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2023.
* **Post**: 200 to 250 word analysis – Identify a policy issue that you care about (e.g. early education, housing access, maternal health etc.), choose up to three components of trauma-informed implementation from the sub-headings in Chapter 3, and provide an analysis of how those components should translate into program development and implementation in your chosen policy issue.

**Readings:**

* Mintrom, Michael. "So you want to be a policy entrepreneur?." *Policy design and practice* 2, no. 4 (2019): 307-323.

**Activities:**

* Policy Entrepreneurs and Evidence-Based Policymaking

### Class #6: Policy Strategy: Implementation [6/5/2024]

**Asynchronous Materials:**

* **Read**: Guidebook for Crafting a Results-Driven RFP | Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab (2020); Pages 4-5, Pages 15-51
* **Post**: 200 to 250 words; Choose a policy issue area that you plan to use for your final assignment. You have a budget of $1,000,000 to contract out to a third party to implement a program to address your policy issue. Identify the policy problem and the stakeholders that would be involved in a program development process: End-users or program recipients; front-line staff and supervisors; vendors or providers, subject matter experts. Describe how you would gather information from and about these stakeholders and how they would influence your program development planning.

**Readings:**

* Jamie Levine Daniel & Rachel Fyall (2019): The Intersection of Nonprofit Roles and Public Policy Implementation, Public Performance & Management Review, DOI:10.1080/15309576.2019.1601114

**Activities:**

* Develop and present Request for Proposal (RFP) for your Policy Issue.

**Assignments:**

* Final Assignment (RFP) due Saturday, June 15th @ 11:59pm ET

## Course Policies

I am committed to making this course a valuable learning experience for you. You will be held accountable to the following policies. In return I ask you to communicate with me any information that I need to help you be successful in this course. My goal is for you to learn and succeed; the more I know, the more helpful I can be. I will be accountable to you to follow these policies (where applicable) as well.

* You are expected to attend all live sessions and actively participate (e.g., listen actively, ask thoughtful questions, demonstrate knowledge of readings). As a courtesy to your classmates, please be punctual. Please switch phones to silent and do not text during class. A pattern of absences or arriving late or leaving early will result in a lower grade. There are only 6 class meetings in this course – missing any class means missing a significant amount of course content. For each unexused absence, I reserve the right to lower your course grade by one letter grade category (e.g., A- to B+).
* Generally deadlines are non-negotiable, unless there is prior and formal instructor approval. However, if you are concerned about not being able to make a deadline or are experiencing unusually difficult circumstances, please reach out so we can discuss an alternative plan. If there is something going on in your life that may affect how you handle this course and you feel comfortable sharing, please let me know.
* Though I am listed as the instructor, during this course we will learn from each other in a dynamic, interactive way. Consider your peers as resources and turn to one another if you have questions.
* I encourage your participation in every way, including asking questions via e-mail. However, I ask that you provide a 24-hour time window for me to respond to your questions or concerns.
* All papers in this class must be typed using 12-point, Times New Roman font, single-spaced with 1-inch margins on the sides, top, and bottom. Proofread all work.
* Use direct quotes in moderation and provide appropriate citations for ideas taken from other sources. Paraphrased material must be acknowledged; even ideas and organization derived from your own previous work must be acknowledged.[[2]](#footnote-2) Use [APA style guide](https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/references/examples) for references.
* You are encouraged to be mindful of creating a respectful, inclusive learning community. This means actively listening to all members of the course, engaging in thoughtful dialogue, and respecting diversity of perspectives and viewpoints.

## Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a vital component of Wagner and NYU. All students enrolled in this class are required to read and abide by [Wagner’s Academic Code](https://wagner.nyu.edu/portal/students/policies/code). All Wagner students have already read and signed the [Wagner Academic Oath](https://wagner.nyu.edu/portal/students/policies/academic-oath). Plagiarism of any form will not be tolerated and students in this class are expected to report violations to Professor Christiansen. If you are unsure about what is expected of you and how to abide by the academic code, you should consult with Professor Christiansen.

## Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at NYU

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please visit the [Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) website](https://www.nyu.edu/students/communities-and-groups/students-with-disabilities.html) and click on the Reasonable Accommodations and How to Register tab or call or email CSD at (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are strongly advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

## NYU’s Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays

[NYU’s Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays](https://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/university-calendar-policy-on-religious-holidays.html) states that members of any religious group may, without penalty, absent themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations.

## Cell Phone Use

Cell phone use is prohibited during course meetings because it not only distracts you during class but it disrupts other students (especially during group activities.) If you need to make a phone call or send a text message, please leave the class discussion and return after you completed your call or text. As a remote course, it will be easier and more tempting to pass time on your phone or on your computer for activities not related to the class. Doing so is a disservice to yourself and to your classmates. Active class participation is part of your final grade and it is required to meet the learning objectives of this course. This is a professional degree, and you will be expected to engage during class time in a professional manner. If you repeatedly use your phone/computer for non-class activities during class meetings throughout the semester, Professor Christiansen and NYU Wagner Student Services will schedule a meeting with you to discuss your personal circumstances.

1. Majone, Giandomenico “Analysis as Argument” – see readings for Class #4. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. These policies rely heavily on those developed by Sophia Hwang and Corianna Sechel of NYU. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)