



# Oregon State University

## Ecampus

**Course Name:** Policy Analysis

**Course Number:** PPOL 422

**Term Offered:** Winter

**Credits:** 4

**Instructor name:** TBD

**Instructor email:** TBD

**Instructor phone:** TBD

**Link to instructor bio or website:** TBD

**Teaching Assistant name and contact info:** TBD

### Course Description

Overview of common policy analysis approaches, methods and tools used to identify, assess, present and select public policy. Assignments include reading, reflection, exercises and a multi-stage policy analysis memo project using analyses conducted in PPOL 421. **PREREQ:** You must have also received at least a C in PPOL 421.

### Course Goals and Learning Objectives

This course provides an overview of approaches, methods and tools commonly used by policy analysts to identify, assess and present alternative policies for addressing public policy problems. The main goals of the course are to learn how to 1) think critically about the role of the policy analysis and decision-making process; 2) identify sources of evidence for defining public policy problems and potential policy options; and 3) assess and present policy alternatives to key stakeholders in the decision-making process. As such, the course is designed to balance practical instruction and hands-on application with introduction to the theoretical contexts from which they are drawn. The course is also a Writing Intensive Course (WIC) and requires substantial formal and informal writing consistent with the professional field of public policy.

As a result of taking this class, you will be able to:

1. Describe key elements of public policy analysis and evaluation processes
2. Discuss the role(s) and responsibilities of policy analysts and their client(s)
3. Describe alternative approaches to policy analysis and decision-making
4. Identify and describe a variety of common tools used by policy analysts
5. Apply common policy analysis and evaluation tools
6. Use extant research to identify policy alternatives
7. Consume and respond to policy analysis materials thoughtfully and critically
8. Prepare a well-organized policy memo and related presentation

The course will not emphasize any particular substantive policy area (e.g., environment, education, etc). Rather, you are encouraged to select instructional materials and assignment topics that reflect your policy interests. Some of the learning activities rely on a set of instructional materials (selected from a short list of options) that will be used for multiple assignments. If you have a very specific substantive

interest area that is not reflected in the instructional materials, you are free to propose an alternative topic area, and I will work with you to identify relevant materials. However, I retain the option to decline your request if the existing instructional materials is (generally) reflective of your specific interest. I am far more likely to allow flexibility on topic area for the memos (interim and final) than for other, shorter assignments.

### **Communication**

Please post all course-related questions in the General Discussion Forum so that the whole class may benefit from our conversation. Please email the instructor directly for matters of a personal nature. I will reply to course-related questions and email within at least 36 hours, although I will make an effort to respond within 12 hours. I will return your assignments and grades for course activities to you within seven days of the due date. I will also offer on-line office hours from TBD.

### **Course Credits**

This course combines approximately 120 hours of instruction, online activities, and assignments for 4 credits. Prerequisites include BSPP prerequisites (Economics 201, Political Science 201, and Sociology 204, plus Math 245, Statistics 201 or Statistics 351), and BSPP program admission.

### **Technical Assistance**

If you experience computer difficulties, need help downloading a browser or plug-in, assistance logging into the course, or if you experience any errors or problems while in your online course, contact the OSU Help Desk for assistance. You can call (541) 737-3474, email [osuhelpdesk@oregonstate.edu](mailto:osuhelpdesk@oregonstate.edu) or visit the [OSU Computer Helpdesk](#) online.

### **Learning Resources and Materials**

For this course, the following textbooks are required:

Clemons, R. S., and McBeth, M. K. (2015). *Public Policy Praxis: A Case Approach for Understanding Policy and Analysis*. Routledge.

Patton, C. V., Sawicki, D.S. and Clark, J. (2013). *Basic Methods of Policy Analysis and Planning* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Additional materials will be posted on Canvas as needed.

You will need the capacity to record and post audio content for presentation purposes (e.g., a computer with microphone, a personal recorder that generates audiofiles, etc). You may also use video-recording for the presentation and other interactions, but the capacity to do so is not required. Finally, you may also find it useful to scan materials and upload content, but that capacity is not strictly necessary. You will not need access to any software other than basic Microsoft Office programs (Word, Excel,

Powerpoint), although you may find that other on-line software are useful in assignment completion (e.g., Jing, ScreenR, Audacity, Audioboo, Adobe Presenter, Articulate, Glogster, Prezi, Zoho Notebook).

**Note to prospective students:** Please check with the OSU Bookstore for up-to-date information for the term you enroll ([OSU Bookstore Website](#) or 800-595-0357). If you purchase course materials from other sources, be very careful to obtain the correct ISBN.

**Canvas**

This course will be delivered via Canvas where you will interact with your classmates and with your instructor. Within the course Canvas site, you will access the learning materials, such as the syllabus, class discussions, assignments, and projects. To preview how an online course works, visit the [Ecampus Course Demo](#). For technical assistance, please visit [Ecampus Technical Help](#).

**Fulfillment of BSPP/ WIC Requirements**

This course fulfills a methods core requirement for the BS in Public Policy (BSPP), and is expected to meet the learning objectives for the BSPP, as follows:

1. Apply social science methods and policy analysis to practical problems of government, communities, regions, and/or global issues.
2. Demonstrate the ability to apply oral and written communication skills in public appearances, written reports and documents.
3. Follow ethical principles for citing sources, using human subjects, serving the public, and working with colleagues.
4. Develop critical thinking about public policy issues and the ability to conduct professional analyses of social, political, and economic structures and bureaucratic processes.

The following table shows the alignment between BSPP and PPOL 422 learning outcomes:

<b>PPOL 422 Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>BSPP Learning Outcomes</b>
Describe key elements of public policy analysis and evaluation processes	1,2,4
Discuss the role(s) and responsibilities of policy analysts and their client(s)	1,2,4
Describe alternative approaches to policy analysis and decision-making	1,2,4
Identify and describe a variety of common tools used by policy analysts	1,2,4
Apply common policy analysis and evaluation tools	1,2,3,4
Use extant research to identify policy alternatives	1,2,3,4
Consume and respond to policy analysis materials thoughtfully and critically	1,2,3,4
Prepare a well-organized policy memo and related presentation	1,2,3,4

This course fulfills the Baccalaureate Core requirement for the Writing Intensive Curriculum (WIC). It does this by critical thinking writing assignments on current policy issues, interactive discussion board topics on critical policy issues, succinct writing summaries of the readings to practice policy memo

writing, and a final 2,000 word policy analysis memo on an important policy issues that will go through two drafts with feedback (see below).

*WIC Learning Outcomes:* At the completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Develop and articulate content knowledge and critical thinking in the discipline through frequent practice of informal and formal writing. This will be done through weekly Canvas discussion postings and responses, written summaries of instructional materials, interim policy memo drafts, peer reviews, and the Policy Analysis Memo (see below).
2. Demonstrate knowledge/understanding of audience expectations, genres, and conventions appropriate to communicating in the discipline. This will be done through weekly Canvas discussion postings and responses, written summaries of instructional materials, interim policy memo drafts and written peer reviews, and the final policy analysis memo.
3. Demonstrate the ability to compose a document of at least 2000 words through multiple aspects of writing, including brainstorming, drafting, using sources appropriately, and revising comprehensively after receiving feedback on a draft. *This will be accomplished through the writing of the final policy memo with feedback provided on two drafts for improvement.*

**Evaluation of Student Performance and Learning Outcomes**

Your performance will be assessed through a variety of activities, including discussion board posts and responses, assignments, memos and a presentation. The following table shows the activities and associated occurrences and points. A brief description of each activity type is provided in the table below; more information and instructions will be available via Canvas.

Activity	PPOL 422 Learning Outcomes	WIC Learning Outcomes	Number of Occurrences	Points per Occurrence	Total Points
Discussion board posts	1,2,3,4,5	1,2	8	2	16
Discussion board responses	1,2,3,4,5	1,2	8	2	16
Written summaries	1,2,3,4	1,2	4	10	40
Assignments	1,2,3,4,5,6	1,2	6	20	160
Draft Policy Memo 1	1,4,5,6,8	1,2,3	1	60	60
Draft Policy Memo 2	1,4,6,7,8	1,2,3	1	60	60
Final Policy Memo	1,4,6,7,8	1,2,3	1	60	60
Final Presentation	1,4,6,7,8	1,2	1	60	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8</b>	<b>1,2,3</b>			<b>472</b>

**Critical Thinking and Policy Analysis:** According to the National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking (1987), critical thinking involves:

“...the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action. In its exemplary form, it is based on universal intellectual values that transcend subject matter divisions: clarity, accuracy, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, depth, breadth, and fairness” (Source: <https://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/defining-critical-thinking/766>; accessed May 25, 2015).

The informal and formal writing assignments in PPOL 422 described below will directly involve critical thinking, as it is the core of policy analysis. For example, the required Policy Analysis Memo will have you identify a policy problem that needs scientific research. This process involves identifying what the “problem” is and what possible policies may be used to address the problem or what the current policies addressing the issues are. Often there is typically little societal consensus on what a problem is and how it should be addressed through policy. Therefore, you will need to think critically on how different political interests and constituencies define policy issues. Next, you will need to think critically about how to conceptualize the policy issue (e.g., how to define key concepts such as “prejudice” or “hate” for affirmative action or crime policy). The next step involves “operationalizing” concepts (i.e., how to measure concepts), which will involve critical thinking about what data and variables are needed to “measure” these concepts (e.g., verbal statements, behaviors, etc.). You also will need to identify, understand and apply existing research and theories on the topic through a review of the existing literature. There are no dominant perspectives or theories on most public policy topics, just conflicting causal explanations and methodological differences. You will need to review these different perspectives and critically think about the most robust/representative explanations for your topics, even if they challenge your own preconceived notions of society and politics you have been taught. Finally, you will need to think critically about what policy or policies are appropriate for your chosen issues and how best to pass and implement them.

**Discussion board postings and responses.** Discussion board postings and responses are intended to offer you opportunities to critically reflect on the material and engage in the material with other students. Discussion board posts and response opportunities will be offered during all 10 weeks of the class, but you need only participate in 8 discussions. Each discussion posting is worth 2 points and each response to another student’s posting (2 required) are worth 1 point each to encourage “minimally graded writing to articulate content knowledge and think critically about course material” per WIC requirements. Discussion board postings and responses must be submitted by the specific due date or you will not receive credit for that week. [16 points total]

**Written Summaries.** In general, written summaries are intended to assess your comprehension of course reading materials. The summaries are intended to accomplish two goals. The first goal is to help students distill the intricate and complex policy analysis approaches covered in class into manageable and memorable core concepts. I want each of you to be able to return to these summaries and quickly remember what it is about this or that approach/framework that was important. Second, each of the summaries will be written on actual policy analysis research. This is important (and we will learn in this class) because policy people rarely use academic research to make policy. My hope is that when you go out into the policy world, you will be better equipped to bridge the aloof ivory tower and the messy political world of actual public policy making (including analysis, evaluation, and implementation).

Written summaries will be offered during 5 weeks of the class, but only the top 4 scores will be used to determine your grade (i.e., you only have to complete 4 summaries, or you can do all 5 and the highest 4 scores will contribute to your overall grade). You may use any of the course materials to help you respond to the questions, but you must complete the summary within the assigned timeframe. You may not consult with other students on summary responses. Summaries must be submitted by the specified due date or you will not receive credit for that week. Detailed grading rubrics will be posted in Canvas. [40 points total]

**Assignments.** Assignments are intended to offer opportunities to practice selected course material content, and will take the form of short essays, problem sets, peer feedback and preparation for longer-term assignments. Six homework assignments will be offered, and you must complete all six in order to receive credit. You are welcome and encouraged to correspond with other students and receive peer review, but you must prepare and submit your work independently. If you work with other students, you must name the other students with whom you corresponded. Assignments submitted on time will receive full credit; assignments submitted late will receive only half credit. Detailed grading rubrics will be posted in Canvas. [160 points total]

**Policy Memo and Presentation.** Draft Memos 1 and 2, as well as the Final Policy Memo and Presentation are intended to provide opportunities to integrate the course material in a longer-term, individualized and creative context. In many ways, these tasks are cumulative – for example, the Final Policy Memo and Presentation will reflect a revised, polished version of the content submitted in Memos 1 and 2. Your grades will reflect your ability to incorporate instructor and peer feedback into subsequent iterations. You must complete both draft memos, the final policy memo and the presentation in order to receive credit for them. You are welcome to correspond with other students on these tasks, but you must prepare and submit your work independently. Late submission for Memos 1 and 2 will result in a 10-point penalty for each day overdue. The Final Policy Memo and Presentation must be submitted on time; no credit will be awarded for late submission. The Final Policy Memo grading rubric is included below and will be used for Draft Memos 1 and 2 to provide feedback for improvement. [240 points total]

*Policy Analysis Memo Format:* This assignment usually works best if the topic is relevant to your own interests and/or policy specializations in BSPP (e.g., rural policy, social policy, environmental policy, etc.) and uses the analyses you conducted in PPOL 421. The first two drafts of the memo should be 1,500 words (double-spaced, normal font, standard margins, numbered, etc.). The final revised memo will need to be at least 2,000 words. Policy Analysis Memos should use a consistent citation format, have proper grammar and spelling, and presents a proper introduction.

Your Policy Analysis Memo should include the components below. In each case it is essential that you draw on and cite relevant course and other external sources/materials (at least 7 external refereed sources):

1. **Introduction:** This section introduces your chosen policy area or problem. In this section you want to briefly establish why your policy area is important, how your paper addresses the policy area or problem, and tell us where your paper is going and how it plans to get there.
2. **Literature Review of Your Policy Area/Problem:** In this section you want to have an extended discussion of what was introduced in the introduction about your policy area/problem (a rule of

thumb here is that a sentence in the intro usually equals a paragraph in the body of the paper, but this is only a rule of thumb). In this section will overview your policy area by detailing what has happened (e.g., on the agenda, passed, being implemented; or put on agenda but failed to pass), the emergence of key issues/concerns/etc., and the current status of your policy area or problem. Most importantly, however, your literature review will tell us what we already know in terms of extant research (when it comes to sources academic presses and peer-reviewed journals are best. Focus on these where possible—but other sources can and should be consulted, such as government agency reports, trade books from trustworthy sources, etc.)

3. **Theories of the Policy Process and Your Policy Area/Problem:** In this section you will need to determine what the various theories, policy sub-fields, and policy process frameworks have to say about your policy area or problem. You do not need to cover every single theory, sub-field, or framework that we covered in class. In most cases what you pay attention to will be dictated by what has been done; in some cases however, (such as if you picked the broad area of environmental policy), you might find you have too many sources. In those cases pick the best of what you find.
4. **Analyze Current Policy Addressing the Issue, or the Lack of Adequate Policy:** What aspects of your policy or problem have been addressed extensively? To what end? Where is work needed? Ultimately, how this section is structured will depend on what you found in the previous section. The important part here is that you need to think synthetically (synthesize what you found), comparatively (compare findings, approaches, etc.), and analytically (argue and write well).
5. **Moving Forward:** In this final section, you have the opportunity to map where you would like to see policy changes to better address your policy area/problem. You can focus on whatever you like here: solutions, gaps in our knowledge, a specific research design that you would like to employ, etc.

**WIC Assessment:**

To achieve the required minimum of 5,000 words of writing in the course and the 2,000 word of revised work, the following course assignments will require the following amount of words:

Assignments	Will writing be graded or ungraded?	Number of words	Individual or group assignment?	Will students revise the assignment?	Total word count
Discussion Board Posts	Minimal Grading	150 each	Group discussion	No	150 X 8=1,200
Discussion Board Responses	Minimal Grading	75 each for 2 responses	Group discussion	No	150 X 8=1,200
Written Summaries	Graded	200 each	Individual	No	200 X 4=800
Assignments	Graded	300 each	Individual	No	300 X 6=1,800
Draft Policy Memo 1	Graded	1,500	Individual	Yes	1,500
Draft Policy Memo 2	Graded	1,500	Individual	Yes	1,500

Final Policy Memo	Graded	2,000	Individual	No	2,000
TOTAL				7,000 (including Draft Policy Memo 1 and 2 would be 10,000)	

### Grading Scale

The points earned in this course correspond to the following letter grades:

Proportion of Possible Total Points	Points	Letter Grade
93-100%	532 - 572	A
90-92%	515 - 531	A-
87-89%	498 - 514	B+
83-86%	475 - 497	B
80-82%	458 - 474	B-
77-79%	440 - 457	C+
73-78%	418 - 439	C
70-72%	400 - 417	C-
67-69%	383 - 399	D+
63-66%	360 - 382	D
60-62%	343 - 359	D-
Below 60%	0 - 342	F

### Course Content

The course will be based primarily on material from the textbooks shown below, but will also be supplemented by lectures, external content and a series of related activities.

Clemons, R. S., & McBeth, M. K. (2015). *Public Policy Praxis: A Case Approach for Understanding Policy and Analysis*. Routledge.

Patton, C. V. (2013). *Basic methods of policy analysis and planning* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

All supplemental materials, indicated by an asterisk (\*) will be provided as PDF files or HTML links in Canvas. The following table provides an outline of topics, activities and deadlines by week. Please be sure to double-check assignment instructions in Canvas in case of slight modifications.