Updated Syllabus
January 15, 2015

PBPL 846—Policy Analysis
Spring 2015

Time: 6:30-9:10 pm, Tuesday
Instructor: Mike Fotos
Office: Nutt Center (MCEC) 283a
Office phone: 4236
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Place: TBA
Office hrs: Tuesday, 2-5pm
Cell phone: (860)690-8614
PBPL office fax: 297-5358

Course objectives

In PBPL 846, students learn how to conduct empirical policy analysis using the “eightfold process” outlined in *A Practical Guide to Policy Analysis* by Eugene Bardach. Students who successfully complete PBPL 846 will know how to

- define a policy problem,
- frame questions to be answered by investigation,
- locate other studies of the problem, relevant professional literature, and subject experts,
- locate their investigations with respect to underlying social conditions and in relation to other studies of the problem,
- identify alternatives for remediation of the policy problem,
- select suitable criteria for evaluating the alternatives,
- design appropriate metrics for each criterion,
- collect data or evidence as required to fulfill the metrics, and
- analyze, evaluate, and present the findings, alternatives, and projected outcomes.

As the course progresses, students will read and discuss selected items from the professional literature on policy analysis and related applications of micro-economic theory. In addition to the items listed above, weekly readings and class discussion will enable students to better relate their work to the professional stream in policy analysis.

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to

- independently complete an empirical policy study that comports with recognized professional standards,
- present their work in a professional setting, and
- read, understand, and productively use the policy analytic work of other professionals in their respective fields.

In previous years, various themes or lessons from the field have figured in class discussions of the readings or student projects. Here are several.

- Just because “the government” does something that you don’t like does not make it a policy problem.
- Politics frequently offers the choice of modest progress toward a concrete goal or symbolic gestures in support of expressive purposes. Good analysis helps the client recognize when such choices present themselves.
• Inferential reasoning is a tool for solving problems. Dogmatic reasoning is the salve of the advocate. Competent analysts know the difference.
• To say something of general value you must first know something of particular application.
• Recognizing the source of the flaw in present policy while also recognizing that all plausible remedies may be subject to flaws yet unknown is the beginning of wisdom.
• Firm grasp of a fallacy enables one to gather facts and lose knowledge.
• Critical thinking requires that one first think critically about the way one thinks about social reality.
• Any claim that relies for its validity on an impossible assumption is assuredly invalid.
• Social processes change in response to measurement.
• Data are inconvenient.
• Beneficial reform includes measures to preserve the desirable features of society that presently exist.
• The easy stuff has been done already.

Student deliverables

Students will prepare an empirical study of a policy problem of their own choosing. Periodically throughout the term, students will submit written work indicative of their progress in preparing the final research project. Students will prepare and present their research and discuss theirs and other student presentations. Students are expected to attend class meetings, keep up with the readings and offer constructive contributions to class discussion.

Course readings

The primary texts all available through the College Bookstore. The required books are:


I strongly recommend and expect that every student will own and regularly consult these three handy guides to writing.

* How to Write a Sentence and How to Read One, Stanley Fish (2012) New York: HarperCollins
Additional readings will be posted on Moodle from time to time. Several examples are listed below.


Schedule of class meetings

January 20: Course introduction, discussion of student research ideas
Required readings: Syllabus, handouts in class

January 27: Introduction to analysis
Required readings: Bardach, Preface, Introduction, Part I; Munger, Preface, chapter 1

February 3: Public values, public decisions, public economies
Required readings: Orwell (1946) “Politics and the English Language,” Munger, chapters 2 & 12 (Conclusion); Ostrom (1980); Lindblom (1959) & (1979)

February 10: Reading to support your study design
Required readings: Bardach, Parts II & III, Appendices A, B, & C
Supplemental readings: Knopf (2006); Mongan-Rallis (web resource); The Writing Place (web resource); Orwell (1946)

February 17: The theory of markets and market failure
Required readings: Munger, case 1, chapter 3; Ostrom & Ostrom (1978)
Recommended cinema: Stalag 17 (1953), directed by Billy Wilder, starring William Holden; The Great Escape (1963), directed by John Sturges, starring Steve McQueen.

February 24: Markets and welfare economics
Required readings: Munger, chapters 4 & 5; Coase (1960) & (1974)

March 3: Making data; Democracy & government failure
Required readings: Pollock (2005), chapter 1; Bardach Appendix D; Munger, case 2, chapter 6
Re-read again: Bardach Parts I, II & III

March 10: Governments & markets
Required readings: Munger, chapter 7 & 8, case 3; Lowi (1972)
Supplemental readings: Sabatier (1986); Schattschneider (1960)

March 17: Spring break, no class meeting, wear something green.

March 24: Discounting I
Required readings: Munger, chapter 9; Kahneman & Tversky (1979)
Other required readings: More Bardach and stuff for your project

March 31: Discounting II
Required readings: Munger, chapter 10, Tversky & Kahneman (1986)
Other required readings: More Bardach and stuff for your project

April 7: Cost-benefit analysis
Required readings: Munger, chapter 11
Other required readings: as per student research agenda and instructor’s assignment

April 14: Discuss student research projects

April 21: Present and discuss student research projects

April 28: Present and discuss student research projects

General Information

Students are expected to maintain a valid email account and access to the Moodle web resources provided by Trinity College. For routine matters, the best way to contact the instructor is by email. If the matter requires voice communication, students should feel free to call Professor Fotos on his cell phone at the number listed at the top of this syllabus.

All cell phones, I-phones, Droids, pagers, or any other distracting electronic device must be turned off and stowed away and out of reach for the entire duration of every class meeting. Students may not record class meetings but they may use their laptops or I-pads to take notes while the professor is lecturing. However, during periods of class discussion and when other students are presenting or discussing their work, all electronic devices must be turned off and stowed away. Come to class prepared to take notes in the old-fashioned manner, with pen or pencil and a pad of paper.

Homework and research projects must be laser printed (or typed) in Times-New Roman, twelve-point font, double-spaced. I smile upon clarity of expression, good grammar, and fastidious spelling. Proofread your work! If it’s a close call between a B+ and an A-, a well-written assignment gets the benefit of the doubt. In a teaching guide prepared for the graduate program, Dr. Barnett offers an excellent summary of our expectations on writing skill and what Trinity College can do to help you improve yours.

You are encouraged to use the Writing Center, staffed by specially trained Writing Associates, to improve your writing—no matter your skill level. I suggest taking your writing projects to the Writing Center several times during the process of composing. The main Writing Center is in room 109 of the English House at 115 Vernon Street, and satellite locations with limited hours are located at the Nutt Center Room 183 and at the Library in the 24-hour area, Level A. For more information, visit: http://writingcenter.trincoll.edu. To reserve an appointment using the online scheduling system use: https://trincoll.mywconline.com/. Be sure to note the location of your reserved appointment. Appointments begin on the hour and half-hour and drop-ins are welcome.

Intellectual honesty is more than just an abstract goal. The Student Handbook discusses Trinity College policy on cheating and plagiarism. You are responsible for knowing and following school policy and the nine rules of Intellectual Honesty found in the Student Handbook. I will punish violations of that policy. You should also be on notice that I reserve the right to submit an essay or paper to the web-based vendor that Trinity College has retained for checking student submissions against papers that can be purchased on-line or down-loaded from the Internet.
The Preamble to the Integrity Contract applies to all students:

“We, the students of Trinity College, believe that as individual undergraduates we must assume responsibility for upholding our standards of academic integrity and social conduct. This document articulates those standards upon which the Trinity community can promote an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect in which scholarly work and learning thrive. With this document the Trinity College student body, in accordance with the mission statement of the College, declares its commitment to a code of honor that fosters moral growth and upholds academic and personal integrity. By signing this document, each matriculated student commits to act with honor and integrity at Trinity College.”

Due dates for written assignments*

February 3: Written statement of policy problem and research question
February 10: Preliminary list of bibliographical sources
March 3: Preliminary criteria-alternative matrix
March 24: Description of data and strategies for collecting, making, coding, etc. same.
April 7: Amended description of data, etc.
April 14: Research design (including literature review)
April 14-21: In-class project presentations
May 1: Final research project*

Basis for course grades

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statement of policy problem</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preliminary bibliography</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data and data strategy</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research design</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final project</td>
<td>25%</td>
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* Written assignments, except as otherwise noted, must be laser printed and submitted at the beginning of class on the due date.

* The final project must be laser-printed and delivered to MCEC 207 by 3pm on April 30.