

Environmental Policy Analysis

ENVS 454, Writing Proficiency 3

WWU Bellingham plus Peninsula, Olympic, and Everett Colleges

Winter Quarter 2017

Thursdays: 5 – 8 pm

Online: 1 hour per week

Student conferences: T,R: Noon – 2pm

(or by appointment)

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Course Description and Learning Objectives

This course is an introduction to the policymaking process and environmental policy analysis offered through our extension program. Public and environmental policy is a dynamic and experimental process where unintended consequences usually arise, the process cycles and recycles, and critical information must be reassessed. Topics include: approaches to the study of public policy, policy formulation and adoption, methods for the assessment of environmental policy alternatives, ethics and policy analysis, environmental policy implementation and evaluation, and the utilization of policy analysis in decision making. Special attention is given to the issue of Environmental Injustice, approaches and methods for critical analysis and evaluation of environmental policies, and practical applications of policy analysis.

The course lectures, content, and discussion will be delivered through a combination of videoconference sessions and a Canvas website. We appreciate your patience and flexibility as we continue to improve the delivery technology and web content.

The course is designed to meet the following learning objectives.

1. To hone your environmental reasoning skills through writing, analytical exercises, discussion, and presentations that develop your ability to understand issues, determine points of view, make inferences, and anticipate the consequences of recommended courses of action.
2. To help students perceive the future of society and environments as a range of alternate possibilities, which will be determined by the policies and decisions of the present, and understand the processes through which these policies and decisions are made.
3. To acquire a measure of logical skill in working through the moral dilemmas implicit in the assignment of social priorities and in the risks involved in seeking to attain those priorities.
4. To provide students experience with the analytical tools needed to assess impacts to human and environmental resources in order to write and speak effectively and persuasively in the policy arena.

Writing Proficiency

This course is structured as a WWU level 3 writing proficiency course because of the communication demands of the field of environmental studies. During my eight years as a public policy student at Northern Virginia's George Mason University, I was on the frontline of our nation's political "beltway" and experienced firsthand how policy development and success often centers on information used (or not) to support or oppose what can and should be done about particular problems. It is critically important for future environmental professionals to recognize the structure of these arguments, be critical toward them even when it agrees with one's point of view, and be able to effectively develop and structure their own policy positions. Therefore, students in this course will write multiple drafts of a policy analysis proposal, receive comments and suggestions for revisions, and generate 65% of their grade through three sequential writing assignments. This analytical and sequential writing assignment will enhance a participating student's abilities with one of the main communication tools of policy professionals.

Required Reading

Eugene Bardach and Eric Patashnik (2016, 5th edition), *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: the Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage. ISBN 9781483359465 (paper), ISBN 9781483359472 (ebook).

Randall S. Clemons and Mark K. McBeth (2017, 3rd edition), *Public Policy Praxis: A Case Approach for Understanding Policy and Analysis*. New York: Pearson/Longman. ISBN 9781138641662 (paper), ISBN 9781315630342 (ebook).

Instructor's Normative Philosophy

I always liked what my colleague and friend Professor Mark Stephan had on his office door. "I'm a radical pragmatist." At the beginning of this course, participants will be offered three questions adapted from Clemons and McBeth (2016, p. 167).

1. Does policy analysis serve the client (elected officials or others), interest groups, or the public?
2. Who has and should have power in a democracy?
3. Is the role of policy analysis to provide a policy recommendation or to educate all stakeholders, including the public, on various options?

The following paragraphs will give you some insight into how I might answer these questions. However, I do not offer these to help you come up with the right answer, but as a way to inform the development of your own response to these normative questions.

One of an environmental professional's most difficult challenges is the inherent tension between science and democracy. On the one hand, the complexity of environmental challenges and the concurrent demand for technical expertise often impedes public participation in environmental decision-making. The United States faces many environmental policy problems

that are highly technical and increasingly scientific in nature with high degrees of uncertainty, including climate change, endocrine disruptors, and habitat restoration. On the other hand, the United States is a democratic system that experienced a growing distrust of government and science over several decades and a resulting demand for citizen involvement in environmental policy decision-making. The need for an integration of science, ethics, and social decision-making is readily apparent, difficult to practice, and even more difficult to teach about.

The principal issue often becomes the mutually exclusive relationship between scientific expertise and participation. Emphasizing science and technical expertise too much as the ultimate voice on policy outcomes erodes democracy, especially since the function of scientific analysis is not to intended to choose but to influence an appropriate policy action (which is the principal role of risk management). Likewise, too much democracy may put scientific analysis in a peripheral role and risk having complex problems addressed in an ineffective and non-probabilistic manner. Achieving a balance between these conflicting demands of “technocracy and democracy” represents an essential challenge for our thinking in this course.

Instructor Biography and Publications

<https://huxley.wvu.edu/people/abelt>, https://works.bepress.com/troy_abel/, and [Google Scholar Profile](#).

Course Requirements

There will be a series of policy analysis exercises and a paper sequence. The former will consist of analysis exercises drawing from both readings and course lectures. For the latter, you will generate the key elements of an environmental policy analysis. This product consists of two intermediate assignments, a finished report (15-20 pages, typed, double-spaced) and a presentation to the class (10 minutes). A number of options will be available and a list of suitable topics will be discussed. This syllabus is subject to change. Changes, if any, will be announced in class and posted as a Canvas announcement. Students will be held responsible for all changes.

Course grades will be determined (*writing assignments*) approximately as follows:

<i>Problem Definition Statement</i>	10%
Final Presentation	15%
Policy Analysis exercises	20%
<i>Evaluation Criteria and Alternatives</i>	20%
<i>Policy Analysis Report</i>	35%
	100%

Policy Analysis Proposal

Because we are proposing to undertake an environmental policy analysis, your paper must concern some environmental problem, for which you will find a public policy solution. There should be a client: someone for whom you are “working.” Who your client is will determine how you view the environmental problem. Generally, your client is not a private company or individual. You will not be simply *studying* a problem; you will be proposing a research approach to determine how to *solve* the problem. However, we will not have enough time to actually do the research you propose in this quarter.

You must identify an environmental problem that needs solving but also that is not too enormous in terms of your coming up to speed on it. *Do not identify a problem that just needs studying* (as opposed to solving). Identify a party that might like the problem solved (your client). You have two weeks to do this, after which a preliminary definition of your paper topic is due. Prior to this, feel free to contact me and discuss your ideas. Your problem definition/client identification is due early and must be approved. After your problem definition is approved, proceed to the second written assignment and then the full paper, which is due the last day of class. All submissions will be submitted via Canvas. Your final report should have the following seven components (percentage importance in the overall paper grade is indicated):

- Introduction to the issue (10%)
- Problem definition and client identification – this is important. Be concise and don’t inappropriately narrow the set of possible solutions through your problem statement. (25%)
- Criteria to be used to evaluate policies – say why you have chosen these. Be specific – just saying distribution is a criterion is not enough. The criterion should be measurable; at least it should be clear how one would judge a policy alternative’s performance on each criterion. (20%)
- Identification of a small set of possible policies for evaluation. These policies should be clear and specific. Don’t just say a pollution tax (for instance) – say what is being taxed and by how much. Also, justify your choice of policies and your reasons for excluding policies that others might think are important. (25%)
- Description of your approach to analyzing these alternatives. Since this is a proposal, this will be one of the smaller parts of your proposal. (10%)
- Expected Results – this part normally involves the most time but for our simulation, this will involve only the presentation of an expected policy matrix and a brief discussion. (5%)
- References (5%)
- An 80% on your report will produce 28% towards your course grade (0.8×35).

You should use Bardach and past examples as a guide in putting your paper together.

Class Schedule and Readings

Class	Topic	Readings & exercises
Session 1, Jan 5 Abel in Bham	Introduction to the course and the nature and purpose of policy analysis.	Weimer & Vining (2005). "What is policy analysis?" Wildavsky (1979) "Analysis as art."
Session 2, Jan 12 Abel in Everett	Writing Workshop, Problem Definition, the Client, and the analyst.	Roberta Kjesrud and Troy D. Abel <i>Praxis</i> Chapter 1. Bardach, Part I. Weimer & Vining (2005). "Rationales for public policy: market failures" and Kahneman (2011). <i>Thinking fast and slow</i> excerpt.
Session 3, Jan 19 Abel in Poulsbo Problem statement due Jan 23.	Environmental Justice from a practitioner's viewpoint.	Running-Grass, Executive Director, Three Circles Center. Abel et al. (2016) "Seattle's scalar EJ Politics" and Seattle's Segregated riskscape .
Session 4, Jan 26 Abel in Port Angeles Exercise 1 due Jan 29.	Topic idea discussion. Environmental Justice and Problem research.	Cooper, M. H. (1998, June 19). "Environmental justice." <i>CQ Researcher</i> , 8, 529-552; Ringquist (2004) "Environmental justice."
Session 5, Feb 2 Abel in Poulsbo Exercise 2 due Feb 5.	Rationality and its critics.	<i>Praxis</i> Chapters 2 & 3. Gould and Cummings (2013). <i>Duwamish Valley Cumulative Health Impacts Analysis</i> .
Session 6, Feb 9 Abel in Bellingham Problem statement revision + policy criteria and evaluation due Feb 12.	Rational and Nonrational Environmental Justice.	<i>Praxis</i> Chapter 4. Shanahan et al. (2013) "Heroic Narratives" <i>Policy Studies Journal</i> .
Session 7, Feb 16 Abel in Everett	Assembling evidence and Postpositivism.	<i>Praxis</i> Chapters 5 & 6. Bardach, Part 2.
Session 8, Feb 23 Abel in Port Angeles Exercise 3 due Feb 6.	Assessing policy alternatives with best practices research, or "sideways" analysis.	Bickers and Williams (2001) "Analyzing proposed and existing public policies" and Abel and Stephan (2008), "Tools of environmental justice and meaningful involvement." <i>Environmental Practice</i> , 10(4). Bardach, Part 3
Session 9, Mar 2 Abel in Poulsbo	Evaluation matrices and democratizing analysis.	Patton & Sawicki (2012) "Displaying alternatives and distinguishing among them." Weimer & Vining (1999) "Goals/Alternatives Matrices." <i>Praxis</i> Chapter 7.
Sessions 10 & 11, Mar 9 & 16	Policy analysis ethos & Student Presentations.	Weimer and Vining (2005), "Toward Professional Ethics."

Abel in Everett/Bham	Final report due Mar 12.	
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Past Topics

- Participatory mapping for the Navajo Nation, Mountain caribou conservation, Persistent bioaccumulative toxin free purchasing, Mitigating oil pollution in the San Juan Marine Stewardship Area, Washington State’s reclaimed water policy, Wolf conservation planning and Greenhouse Gas Reduction strategies.

Academic Dishonesty Policy

Western Washington University students are responsible for reading, understanding, and following the policy and procedures regarding academic dishonesty as set forth in the *WWU Academic Dishonesty Policy and Procedure* (see [Appendix D](#) of the University Bulletin). Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are serious offenses and could lead to a failing grade and suspension from the University.

Code of Conduct

Western Washington University students are responsible for reading, understanding, and following the Students Rights and Responsibilities Code (see the current version of the [code](#)). Student conduct that substantially or repeatedly interferes with the ability of an instructor to teach or the ability of other students to learn is a violation of University policy. These expectations extend beyond the classroom to field trips, internship placement, and other off-site activities related to the fulfillment of academic requirements.

Disruptive behaviors, including excessive talking, arriving late to class, sleeping, reading newspapers, using unauthorized electronic devices during class is not permitted. Repetitive and seriously disruptive behavior, e.g., fighting, using profanity, personal or physical threats or insults, damaging property, may result in your removal from class in accordance with policies and procedures outlined in the WWU [code](#).

Any continued disruption of class will result in a report to the Assistant Dean of Students for a conduct code infraction. After one warning, if the disruption continues, you will be asked to leave the classroom for the remainder of class. If another student’s behavior is disrupting your ability to learn, please inform your instructor.

Reasonable Accommodation Policy

It is the policy of Western Washington University to provide reasonable accommodation to the known physical, sensory, or mental limitations of qualified individuals except where such accommodation would impose undue hardship on the institution. To request accommodation, students must contact WWU disability resources for Students at 360-650-3844 or www.drs.wvu.edu.

Ethical Computing Policy

Students are also responsible for knowing and adhering to WWU's standards for ethical computing. Refer to these web sites: [acceptable use](#) and [user agreement](#).