

## **Public Policy Analysis (PLS 5843)**

Eastern Illinois University  
Department of Political Science  
Fall 2021  
Online

**Instructor:** Dr. Alexandria N. Wilson-McDonald

**Email:** awilsonmcdonald@eiu.edu

**Virtual Office Hours:** MW 1-3 pm, F 2-3 pm Central Time and by appointment. During this time I will be available via the Chat tool on our D2L course site. You can access the Chat tool under the “Communications” tab at the top of the course homepage. I am also available during these times to arrange a phone call or video meeting via Zoom.

**Email Hours:** Communicating with me via email is the best way to reach me. My email hours are 9-4 p.m., Monday through Friday (all times presented in the syllabus are in Central Time Zone).

**Technology Requirements:** Access to D2L and email

### **Course Description:**

This course provides an introduction to the practice of professional policy analysis. Policy analysts are responsible for defining and framing public problems, identifying and evaluating possible strategies for addressing problems, and recommending evidence-based solutions. The goals of this course are to provide students with an understanding of the role that analysis plays in the policymaking process, to make students critical consumers of policy analysis, and to equip students with the basic skills necessary to write and present a professional policy analysis paper.

### **Course Information:**

This is an online course, so we will not meet in person. Online courses give students flexibility, but they also require that a student be self-motivated. Even though this is an online course, it is not self-paced. This means that discussions and assignments must be submitted prior to the due date or students will receive a deduction in points. In order to do well in this course a student must possess time management skills. As this is an online course, participation is crucial to gaining the most knowledge from this course. In order to successfully participate, students must have thoroughly read the weekly reading materials prior to online discussions. This course will be based on our D2L system. All of our interactions and assignments will be done through D2L. It is imperative that students have a working knowledge of this system for success in this course.

### **Learning Objectives:**

- Student will learn the major steps in the policy process.

- Students will learn how to utilize a policy framework to understand a policy issue.
- Students will learn to design and carry out a public policy analysis for real-world problem.
- Students will learn to write policy communications including memos, a White Paper, and a policy analysis report.

### **Required Texts:**

Smith, Catherine (2019) *Writing Public Policy: A Practical Guide to Communicating in the Public Policy Process*. 5th Edition. Oxford ISBN. 978-0190854232.

Weible, Christopher and Paul Sabatier, eds. (2018). *Theories of the Policy Process*, 4th edition. Routledge. ISBN: 978-0-8133-5052-3.

All other required readings will be provided within the course on D2L.

**Course Assignments and Evaluations:** All course assignments will be graded and feedback will be returned to students within one week of submission.

### Online Discussion and Participation - Policy Briefings

Each week students will be required to engage in an online discussion serving as a “policy briefing,” one student from the class will serve as the discussant. These “policy briefings” simulate the sort of oral report you are likely to be called upon to make while you are working on a project as a policy analyst. However, unlike in a face-to-face environment you will present your policy briefing through discussion posts. You must provide an introduction to the issue you are addressing in your policy analysis project, pose an analytical question you are trying to address, and lead a discussion of it. Students will be assigned a week to post their policy briefing. You can find the discussant list for the semester under the page “Getting Started” in the D2L course. The rest of the students in the class will respond to the student’s briefing by giving at least one full response. These responses should be professionally written, in paragraph format, and be approximately 100-200 words. The discussion board will close each week on Sundays at 5 p.m.

In the first week of the course (Module 1) students will submit an introductory post. In this post, students will introduce themselves to the rest of the class. There is no required word count for this first post. Also in Module 1 students will complete a plagiarism quiz. This quiz is not graded and you may take it as many times as you need to score a 100%. Failure to complete the quiz will result in a deduction from your participation points for the first week.

### Homework Exercises

Students will complete the exercise at the end of the chapters in the Smith text. Students will complete these exercises with each chapter (see the course schedule for due dates). These exercises will help students to strengthen their writing skills which will benefit them when writing their policy memos and briefings. Exercises will be due at 5 pm on the Sunday of the week that they are assigned.

### Policy Memos

Policy memos address real situations in which a public or private decision-maker must make a decision. Usually, a decision-maker will have a variety of information at her/his/their disposal and, while the amount of information may be voluminous, it may be contradictory, incomplete, or simply confusing. Your job is to make an intelligent decision maker into a “smart consumer” by culling information and facts, applying your expertise, and presenting alternatives. The memo exercises provide an opportunity to practice analytical writing. There will be four memos due in the second half of the course each memo is related to the policy analysis project. While I will not review entire papers prior to the due date, I encourage you to take advantage of the resources provided by EIU to help you to polish your memos. I will, however, be happy to answer any questions about your writing and look over small portions of your memo during my office hours.

Memo 1 will include a statement of the problem, a statement on the symptoms of the problem, and a summary of policy alternatives with references (2-3 pages single spaced).

Memo 2 will include a policy alternatives matrix. In this matrix you will list a maximum of three policy alternatives for your policy problem. Each alternative should be evaluated based on political feasibility, economic efficiency, and social equity. Each alternative should be given a score on these different variables.

Memo 3 will include your policy recommendation out of the various policy alternatives presented. You will present your policy recommendation and assess whether it is political feasible, economic efficient, and socially equitable (1-2 pages single spaced).

Memo 4 will include your executive summary which includes a statement of the problem, the various policy alternatives, and your policy recommendation. (max. 1 page)

### Final Project: Policy Analysis Report and Presentation

This semester-long project on a policy issue will allow you to apply the concepts and theories introduced in this course. While doing so you will learn about a specific policy issue, by creating a comprehensive, structured policy analysis for a hypothetical client. This project will allow you to practice identifying data sources and evaluating their utility; establishing criteria to analyze a policy issue; and become familiar with the

political and economic institutions, assessing alternative policies, and selecting among policy alternatives. Finally, this project will allow you to develop the skills of crafting a concise argument for a specific policy to help alleviate the particular policy issue. For this project each student will be assigned a policy problem. An important lesson from the project is gaining experience in confronting new issues in which you may not possess previous knowledge. This is common for professional policy analysts. However, you will get a say in which policy area you would like to work in. You must email me within the first two weeks of class with your top three choices of policy areas listed in order of preference. I will do my best to give you a policy problem within your areas of choice. Your options include education, vaccination policy, immigration policy, cyber security, foreign policy, and environmental policy

Unlike a research paper, the purpose of this assignment is not to produce new knowledge, but rather to assess policy alternatives and provide your hypothetical client with the best course of action based on your research. This project is meant to simulate the work of professional policy analysts and provide you with the skills of producing a concise, evidence-based report on a policy issue in a relatively short period of time that is tailored to the needs of your hypothetical client. The “client” that has commissioned you to conduct the analysis can be a U.S. government agency, a local government agency, a non-governmental organization (NGO), a department of an international organization, or a private company with interest in the policy issue. While I will not review entire projects prior to the due date, I encourage you to take advantage of the resources provided by EIU to help you to polish your writing. I will, however, be happy to answer any questions about your project and look over small portions of your project during my office hours.

The final report must be 15-pages double-spaced in 12 pt, Times New Roman font. This report must include:

- An executive summary (no more than two pages)
- An introduction - discussing your policy issue and the economic, political, and social conditions surrounding your issue
- A discussion of at least three policy alternatives (including the status quo as one alternative), and the pros and cons of each policy alternative
- A policy alternatives matrix that succinctly highlights these pros and cons
- Your recommendation and evidence to support your recommendation
- References must be included and your use of citation format must be consistent

At the end of the semester you will submit a recorded 10-minute presentation on your policy project in which you will discuss what the issue is, the current policy on the issue, your list of policy alternatives (including the status quo), your recommended policy, and why you recommend this specific course of action. The final project should be presented as if the audience (the instructor) is your hypothetical client. Keep in mind that you have been commissioned to conduct this policy analysis by your “client.” While a policy analyst should never tailor their policy recommendation to the interests of their client, all policy recommendations should be evidence-based, your presentation should

keep the interests of your client in mind when attempting to convince them that your recommendation is the best course of action. Ultimately, it is up to you to evaluate what is most important - economic efficiency, political feasibility, or social equity in presenting your recommendation. Clients do not always accept and implement the analyst's recommendation, but it is your job to provide them with the best information possible to make an informed decision. Your presentation may take the form of a narrated PowerPoint presentation or a video recording of yourself presenting. Remember to maintain professionalism in your presentation, this will factor into your grade.

### **Grade Breakdown:**

Online discussion and participation (policy briefings) 10%, policy memos (10% @ 4) 40%, Homework exercises 10%, policy analysis report 30%, policy analysis presentation 10%

### **Grading Scale:**

Letter grades will be assigned according to the following numerical scales:

Letter Grade	Numerical Equivalent
A	90-100
B	80-89.99
C	70-79.99
D	60-69.99
F	<59.99

### **Important Policies:**

**Late Policy:** All assignments are to be submitted by 5:00 pm on the date in which they are due. Please check the course schedule for assignment due dates. Deadline extensions will be granted only in cases that conform with university policies. Official documentation must be provided for deadline extensions. Otherwise, 5 points will be deducted for each day that an assignment is submitted late. Turn late work in by emailing me within 48 hours of the due date, with flexibility for emergencies. Communication is vital—be sure to email me.

**Class Climate:** Students will engage in civil discussions, be respectful, supportive, curious, and open to learning from one another. Please let me know if you go by a name different from the roster and/or if you want to share your pronouns.

- **Be professional** at all times. You are preparing yourself to be a career professional, remember that you are establishing your professional identity. Professionalism should be practiced at all times within the virtual classroom including in discussion posts and emails to the professor.
- **Be respectful** of other people. Everyone is entitled to their own opinion. While it is okay to disagree, please do so with respect to others. If you believe that someone has intentionally offended or insulted you, please contact the professor immediately

to discuss what has occurred and how to address the issue. *Insults and hate speech are not tolerated in this class.*

**NETIQUETTE:** Student to student and student to instructor interaction is a critical element to a successful online course. Consistent with other forms of social interaction, certain rules of etiquette are expected and contribute to more enjoyable and productive communication. The following are tips for interacting online via email or discussion board messages:

- Remember that the person receiving your message is someone like you, deserving and appreciating courtesy and respect.
- Be brief; succinct, thoughtful messages have the greatest effect.
- Your messages reflect on you personally; take time to make sure that you are proud of their form and content.
- Use descriptive subject headings in your emails.
- Think about your audience and the relevance of your messages.
- Be careful when you use humor and sarcasm; absent the voice inflections and body language that aid face-to-face communication, Internet messages are easy to misinterpret.
- When making follow-up comments, summarize the parts of the message to which you are responding.
- Avoid repeating what has already been said; needless repetition is ineffective communication.
- Cite appropriate references whenever using someone else's ideas, thoughts, or words.

**Academic Honesty:** Students must follow EIU's Code of Conduct; violations include collusion, data falsification, plagiarism, submitting previously completed work, theft of academic work, class disruption, and complicity with others in violation of these standards. Violations are reported and punishment may be an F in the course.

This syllabus is subject to amendment during the semester. Any changes considered as necessary by the instructor might be made without prior notification. However, changes will be announced in class and/or via e-mail. If any changes are made, the syllabus will be updated and shared with the students via Canvas.

### **EIU Support System**

**Help with Technology:** If you need assistance with D2L, call D2L Support toll free at 1-877-325-7778. Support is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Email and Chat options are also available on the "My Home" page after logging in to D2L. Other D2L resources including a D2L Orientation course for students are available on the "my Home" page. If you find yourself in need of technological assistance regarding other software, hardware, network issues, EIU NetID/password, or Panthermail, contact the

ITS Helpdesk at 217-581-4357 during regular business hours or submit a help ticket at <http://techsupport.eiu.edu/>. Your professor cannot provide IT support.

**Mental Health Support:** Contact the [Counseling Clinic](#) for mental health treatment and support.

**Student Success:** Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center for assistance with time management, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696 or go to McAfee, Room 1301.

**Disability Services:** If you have a disability, contact me during the 1st week with your accommodations letter from the [Office of Student Disabilities Services](#). If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS). All accommodations must be approved through OSDS. Please stop by Ninth Street Hall, Room 2005, or call 217-581-6583 to make an appointment.

**Writing & Research Support:** While I will not review entire papers prior to the due date, I encourage you to take advantage of the resources provided by EIU to help you to polish your papers. I will, however, be happy to answer any questions about your writing and look over small portions of your papers during my office hours. You can contact the [Writing Center](#) for a wide range of writing support. Contact [Booth Library](#) for research assistance. The Political Science reference librarian is Professor Steve Brantley ([jsbrantley@eiu.edu](mailto:jsbrantley@eiu.edu)).

Course Schedule		
Date	Topic	Readings/Assignments
Module 1, August 23	Introduction	<b>Read:</b> Ch. 1 in Smith and the Appendix "Writing Clearly"  <b>Due:</b> Introductory Post and Plagiarism Quiz

## Course Schedule

<p>Module 2, August 30</p>	<p>Communicating in Public Policy</p>	<p><b>Read:</b> Ch. 2 in Smith</p> <p>Read through exercise #2 at the end of the chapter</p> <p>Musso, Juliet. 2000. "Tradecraft: Professional Writing as Problem Solving." <i>Journal of Policy Analysis and Management</i> Vol. 19, No. 4 (12)</p> <p><b>Due:</b> exercise #1 at the end of the chapter, use a policy issue of your choice</p>
<p>Module 3, September 6, No class -September 6 (Labor Day)</p>	<p>Defining the Issue</p>	<p><b>Read:</b> Ch. 3 in Smith</p> <p>Weimer, David. "Memoranda Writing"</p> <p>"Writing a policy memo" research guide from USC Libraries</p> <p><b>Due:</b> policy briefing post, complete exercise at the end of the chapter</p>
<p>Module 4, September 13</p>	<p>Evaluation &amp; Legislative History</p>	<p><b>Read:</b> Ch. 4 &amp; 5 in Smith</p> <p><b>Due:</b> policy briefing posts, exercises at the end of the chapters</p>
<p>Module 5, September 20</p>	<p>Petition, Propose, Request Action</p>	<p><b>Read:</b> Ch. 6 &amp; 7 in Smith</p> <p><b>Due:</b> policy briefing posts, complete exercise #2 at the end of Chapter 6 and exercise #2 at the end of Chapter 7</p>

## Course Schedule

<p>Module 6, September 27</p>	<p>Ethics</p>	<p><b>Read:</b> Ch. 8 and the Conclusion in Smith</p> <p>Lehman, Christopher and Robert Nelson. 1981. "Ten Commandments for Policy Economists." <i>Journal of Policy Analysis and Management</i>. Vol. 1, No. 1.</p> <p><b>Due:</b> policy briefings due, complete exercise at the end of Chapter 8</p>
<p>Module 7, October 4</p>	<p>Multiple Streams Framework and Social Construction Theory</p>	<p><b>Read:</b> Introduction and Ch. 1 in Weible</p> <p>Whetten, David A. (1989). "What Constitutes a Theoretical Contribution?" <i>The Academy of Management Review</i> 14, no. 4. 490-95.</p> <p><b>Due:</b> policy briefings due</p>
<p>Module 8, October 11, No class - October 15 (Fall Break)</p>	<p>Punctuated Equilibrium</p>	<p><b>Read:</b> Ch. 2 in Weible</p> <p>Shiffman J, Beer T, Wu Y. 2002. "The emergence of global disease control priorities." <i>Health Policy Plan</i> (3):225-34.</p> <p><b>Due:</b> policy briefings due, Memo 1</p>
<p>Module 9, October 18</p>	<p>Policy Feedback Theory</p>	<p><b>Read:</b> Ch. 3 in Weible</p> <p>Weaver, V., &amp; Lerman, A. 2010. "Political Consequences of the Carceral State." <i>American Political Science Review</i>, 104(4), 817-833.</p> <p><b>Due:</b> policy briefings due</p>

Course Schedule		
Module 10, October 25	Advocacy Coalition Framework	<p><b>Read:</b> Ch. 4 in Weible</p> <p>Daniel Nohrstedt and Christopher M. Weible. 2012. "The Logic of Policy Change after Crisis: Proximity and Subsystem Interaction." <i>Risks, Hazards, and Crisis in Public Policy</i>. 1(2) 1-32.</p> <p><b>Due:</b> policy briefings due, Memo 2</p>
Module 11, November 1	Narrative Policy Framework	<p><b>Read:</b> Ch. 5 in Weible</p> <p>Michael D. Jones &amp; Claudio M. Radaelli. 2015. "The Narrative Policy Framework: child or monster?" <i>Critical Policy Studies</i>, 9:3, 339-355.</p> <p><b>Due:</b> policy briefings due, Memo 3</p>
Module 12, November 8	IAD and SES	<p><b>Read:</b> Ch. 6 in Weible</p> <p>Azergun, N. (2020). "Resource allocation at an income-sharing community: An application of Elinor Ostrom's commons framework." <i>Economic Affairs</i>, (40), 367-384.</p> <p><b>Due:</b> policy briefings due, Memo 4 Due</p>
Module 13, November 15	Innovations and Diffusion Modules	<p><b>Read:</b> Ch. 7 in Weible</p> <p>Liang Ma.2013. "The Diffusion of Government Microblogging." <i>Public Management Review</i>, 15:2, 288-309.</p> <p><b>Due:</b> policy briefings due</p>
November 22, No Class - Thanksgiving	Enjoy the break!	

### Course Schedule

Module 14, November 29	Comparison of Theories of the Policy Process	<b>Read:</b> Ch. 8 in Weible  Paul Cairney. 2013. "Standing on the Shoulders of Giants: How Do We Combine the Insights of Multiple Theories in Public Policy Studies?" <i>Policy Studies Journal</i> . 41(1) 1-21.  <b>Due:</b> policy briefings due
Module 15, December 6	Course Conclusion - Work Week No Readings	<b>Due:</b> Final Policy Analysis Paper and Presentation due on Dec. 13th at 5 pm