

School of Government

PUBL 306
THEORY AND METHODS OF POLICY
ANALYSIS

Trimester 1 2006

COURSE OUTLINE

Contact Details

Course Co-ordinator: Dr Karen Baehler RH 823
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Tutor: Tina Robilliard

Class Times and Room Numbers

| | | | |
|------------|-----------|-------------------|--------|
| Lectures: | Tuesday | 11.30am – 1.20pm | RWW129 |
| | Thursday | 11.30am – 12.20pm | RWW129 |
| Tutorials: | Monday | 12.40 – 1.30 | RWW221 |
| | Wednesday | 12.40 – 1.30 | RWW128 |

Tutorial Allocation Procedure

Tutorial groups will be arranged in the first lecture. There is a maximum of 15 students per tutorial class, so if the list is full, do not add your name to the bottom. Confirmation of your tutorial group will be posted on Blackboard on **Friday 3 March**. If you have any serious problems about the allocations please contact the course co-ordinator.

Electronic Access

The Blackboard website will be your first port of call for notices, marks for assignments (by student ID number), and selected course materials. Only students who are registered for PUBL 306 will have access. If you have problems with Blackboard, please contact the ITS service desk.

Copies of material handed out in lectures will be made available on Blackboard if an electronic version is available.

Course Objectives

“...speaking truth to power remains the ideal of analysts who hope they have truth, but realize they have not (and, in a democracy, should not have) power.”

Aaron Wildavski, *Speaking Truth to Power* (1987), p 13

The general study of public policy invites students to perform three different but intertwining roles: scholar, analyst, and citizen. The scholar seeks knowledge largely for its own sake and for the influence it may have on long-term social progress. The analyst seeks knowledge in order to advise current public officials to pursue promising policies and avoid potentially disastrous ones. The citizen (in a democracy) seeks knowledge in order to govern, for although voters do not choose policies directly, they choose the policy makers.

This course focuses (but not exclusively) on the second role – that of analyst and advisor – in three ways: (1) by exposing students to the chief tools of policy analysis and advising, including both theories and techniques, (2) by helping students apply these tools to a contemporary (‘live’) policy issue of their choosing, and (3) by encouraging dispositions and habits of mind found in the best policy analysts.

What are the policy analyst’s tools? In the words of public policy scholar Aaron Wildavsky (1987, p 3), these must include: “Qualitative political theory, for refining our picture of where we want to go; quantitative modelling, for systematizing guesswork on how to get there; microeconomics, for disciplining desire with limited resources; and macro-organisation theory, for instilling the will to correct errors: each has its place”. We will focus on a combination of hard and soft tools including values clarification, programme evaluation, systems analysis, scenario writing, regression modelling, Treaty frameworks, and common sense.

How are the tools applied? Again quoting Wildavsky (1987, p3), “there can be no fixed program, for policy analysis is synonymous with creativity, which may be stimulated by theory and sharpened by practice, which can be learned but not taught”. Each student will use a slightly different set of tools for his or her project, and some of you may invent new tools.

What are the desired dispositions and habits of mind of the policy analyst? A preliminary list would include curiosity, ingenuity, imagination, openness to varied perspectives, healthy respect for evidence (but not blind acceptance), a desire to question commonly held assumptions, a knack for connecting theory with reality, a strong appetite for argument and debate, a taste for clarity of communication, capacity to learn from both success and failure, high tolerance for uncertainty and delayed gratification, political dexterity, and willingness to make oneself unpopular when necessary (but those inclined to martyrdom need not apply).

Students who pass the course should (1) make progress in acquiring the analyst’s dispositions and habits of mind; (2) demonstrate a working knowledge of the analytical tools presented in the course; (3) understand the key features of a selected policy issue and how the analytical tools can be used to illuminate that issue; and (4) be able to express ideas clearly, succinctly, and persuasively in both written and oral form.

Text and Readings

Readings correspond with *lectures*, so please have a look at the related readings before each lecture (as indicated on the attached schedule). Tutorials will be devoted to a mix of discussion about the readings and hands-on practice of techniques being introduced, often using the students’ own research topics.

The text for the course is Eugene Bardach, *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*. Chatham House. 2001. It is available from the Book Centre. Bardach is a simple, elegant, and easy-to-read introduction to the basics of policy analysis, but more information is needed to complete his framework and illuminate its strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, additional readings are contained in a bound packet available from Student Notes Distribution Centre.

At the front of the course readings packet, you will find an annotated bibliography of the supplementary readings. The lecturers have marked each item as required, recommended, or optional and also included tips about what to look for in each reading. We hope this makes it easier for you to gain from the reading. The trick to a successful university career is learning to read fast and selectively! Don’t read every word, but do skim through everything to pick up the main points.

Although your assignments for this course are practical and applied rather than theoretical (see *policy memo assignments*, below), we will expect you to reflect the content of the readings in your work, and you will sometimes wish to reference the readings directly. Therefore, it is essential to keep up with the reading. If you get behind for one week, don’t despair and don’t succumb to the ‘domino effect’ of getting further and further behind the more you try to catch up. Read the material for the *upcoming class first*, before trying to catch up on previous material. Don’t read for facts. Instead, focus on the main conceptual point or argument of each article, or the technique being demonstrated, and think about how it relates to your policy topic (see *policy memo assignments*, below). If you don’t have time to read an assigned item from start to finish, try reading the introduction, conclusion and subheadings only. As a last resort, just looking for key words is better than nothing.

Assessment

| ASSIGNMENT | DUE DATE | WEIGHT | WORD LIMIT |
|--|---------------------------------------|--------|--------------|
| Indicative topic proposal (not marked) | Friday 3 March | None | 3 paragraphs |
| 1 st memo | Monday 20 March | 25% | 2500 |
| 2 nd memo | Wednesday 26 April | 25% | 2500 |
| Student presentation (not marked) | Tuesday 27 April or Thursday 2 May | None | 10 minutes |
| Terms test (take home) | Monday 22 May | 20% | |
| 3 rd memo | Wednesday 14 June | 30% | 4000 |

Written assignments are always due by 5pm on the date specified. They can be submitted to:

- the lecturer in class prior to the deadline, or
- the reception desk on the 8th floor of Rutherford House, where they must be stamped with the date and time received.

All written assignments (except the test) must be typed, with the exact word count indicated on the cover sheet. Please note that word limits are maxima: You may write *less*, so long as you thoroughly cover the topic.

Terms Test will cover the material on applied modelling in policy analysis. It will be a take-home test.

Student presentations are not marked. They are included as opportunities for practicing oral communication skills and to showcase students' work on a wide range of policy problems.

Policy Memo Assignments

- You will write three memos on various aspects of a single, contemporary policy issue. Each memo builds on the preceding memos.
- These are policy memos rather than essays, which means that they should go straight to the point and present only essential information and arguments, including proper referencing to sources of information. Be succinct. Be informative. Choose your words carefully to express your meaning. Explain the logic behind your statements. Support assertions with facts and sources.
- The chief purpose of the memos is to provide an opportunity for students to apply the course material to a 'live' policy issue. High-quality memos will demonstrate a firm understanding of the course material, creativity and innovation in connecting course material with the policy topic, critical thinking about conventional approaches to the topic, careful use of evidence to support arguments wherever possible, a balanced approach to controversial points, and clear and cogent writing. Students are expected to canvass available information about the policy topic in New Zealand and internationally, where relevant. Key sources will be government documents, many of which are available on the web, and academic literature, which can be found by searching the catalogue and electronic journal databases in the VUW library. If you are not familiar with the electronic journal databases, please ask a librarian for help. Each memo should include a list of at least 5 external sources of information (not including course materials).
- Generic essays on your policy issue are not acceptable for purposes of this course. You must show that you understand and have applied the particular concepts, frameworks, and methods introduced in this class. You may reference the readings from class where applicable.
- All memos must be typewritten, with the final word count indicated on the cover page.
- Please submit the memos cumulatively in a folder. This procedure will allow me to follow the writer's development from memo to memo.

Here is the scenario for the policy memos:

First, select a policy topic that interests you – an existing policy proposal, a problem that is currently being reviewed, or something that has been trialed in another country, perhaps. Good places to hunt for NZ topics are newspapers, websites of various government departments, or party websites. To get started, you can try the main portals to NZ government: <http://www.govt.nz> or <http://www.beehive.govt.nz>. Party URLs generally take the form: [www.\[insert party name\].org.nz](http://www.[insert party name].org.nz). For international topics, you might surf the websites of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (<http://www.oecd.org>), the United Nations (<http://www.un.org>), the Asian Development Bank (<http://www.adb.org>), World Bank (<http://www.worldbank.org>), or other international organisations.

Write 2 or 3 paragraphs describing the policy topic and why it interests you and submit it to the lecturer by Friday 3 March. The lecturer will check these to make sure the topics are of manageable size (i.e., ‘poverty’ or ‘species loss’ or ‘terrorism’ are too big). The topic proposals will not be marked.

Now, imagine that you are a policy analyst working in the New Zealand Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC). The head of the department has asked you to complete the following three policy memos related to your chosen topic. (In addition to the information provided here, you should check the course site on Blackboard for further tips on preparing high-quality policy memos).

Memo #1 Problem Definition and Criteria

- Present a preliminary definition of the policy problem behind your topic. This definition should address most of the following questions: What are the symptoms of the problem? What evidence do you have to support these? For whom is it a problem? Is there any controversy about how the problem should be defined? Can you place the problem within a ‘system’? Is it largely a failure of markets, or previous government actions, of society/community, or of distribution systems, etc? Why is it a public problem rather than a private problem? What is the political context for your policy problem?
- Describe the values involved in this problem; they may be social, economic, environmental, humanitarian, etc. Whose values are they and why should public policy be concerned with them?
- Discuss criteria for measuring these values.
- 2,500 words maximum, due 5pm, 20 March

Memo #2 Policy Options

- Summarise the status quo (current policy) related to your topic. What is government’s current involvement in the issue?
- Present three or more policy options (in addition to the status quo) for addressing the problem described in the first memo.
- For each option, describe the type of policy instrument or institutional process involved, using the categories discussed in lecture. Where appropriate, discuss relevant design issues for the options.

- Explain why and how these policy options fit the policy problem. Do they miss out any important aspects of the problem?
- 2,500 words maximum, due 5pm, 26 April.

Memo #3 Outcomes Matrix and Projection Outcomes

- Restate the problem definition from memo #1. You may alter, refine, or further explain the definition if you wish.
- Present the shell of an ‘outcomes matrix’ to address your policy problem. The shell should include (1) a carefully selected set of policy options from memo #2 to be compared (the *status quo* plus two or more additional options) and (2) a carefully selected set of criteria from memo #1 for evaluating outcomes. This part of your memo will involve carefully summarising relevant material from the first two memos to explain your selection of options and criteria.
- Finally, discuss how you would go about projecting the outcomes in your matrix. What methods would you use and why? What types of data and information would you need? Where would you find it? What obstacles would you expect to encounter?
- Demonstrate one of the outcome projection techniques by applying it to part of your matrix.
- Discuss how the political context for your issue would or would not affect your presentation of this analysis to the government.
- 4,000 words maximum, due 5pm, 14 June.

Tutorial contribution may be taken into account in the assessment of final grades, mainly in cases of marginal grade differences.

Mandatory Paper Requirements (Terms)

To fulfil the mandatory paper requirements for this paper you must:

1. Sit the terms test.
2. Submit all assignments by the due date. A late assignment will have its mark reduced by 3% (of the total mark) for each day it is overdue unless there is a very good reason why it was late. Assignments will not be accepted that are over a week late.

Access to Computers

Computing facilities are located at all three campuses, including within the libraries, and some Schools provide specialist computing resources for their students. The main SCS facility is Cyber Commons on level 2 of Kirk and Murphy buildings on the Kelburn Campus. A SCS Helpdesk is located on level 2 of Murphy Building and the Law Library. Additional information for students is available online (<http://distance.scs.vuw.ac.nz>).

Purchasing of Textbooks

This year Victoria University will be selling textbooks for Stage 2, 3 and Post Graduate Students at the Law School as well as at the bookshop on Kelburn Campus. They will be in the Old Government Buildings for 4 weeks at the beginning of Trimester 1. Information on their hours and where they will be located will be posted on noticeboards at Rutherford House and the Old Government Buildings.

They are also happy to receive orders via their website www.bookcentre.co.nz and by email Victoria-book-centre@bookcentre.co.nz. They can send books out or have them ready to be picked up from their bookshop on campus.

Faculty of Commerce and Administration Offices

Railway West Wing (RWW) - FCA Student Administration Office

The Student Administration Office is located on the ground and first floors of the Railway West Wing. The ground floor counter is the first point of contact for general enquiries and FCA forms. Student Administration Advisers are available to discuss course status and give further advice about FCA qualifications. To check for opening hours call the office on (04) 463 5376.

Easterfield (EA) - FCA/Law Kelburn Office

The Kelburn Campus Office for the Faculties of Commerce & Administration and Law is situated in the Easterfield Building - it includes the ground floor reception desk (EA005) and offices 125a to 131 (Level 1). The office is available for the following:

- Duty tutors for student contact and advice.
- Information concerning administrative and academic matters.
- FCA Student Administration forms (e.g. application for academic transcripts, requests for degree audit, COP requests).
- Examinations-related information during the examination period.

Check with the Student Administration Office for opening times (04) 463 5376.

General University Policies and Statutes

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly those regarding assessment and course of study requirements, and formal academic grievance procedures.

Student Conduct and Staff Conduct

The Statute on Student Conduct together with the Policy on Staff Conduct ensure that members of the University community are able to work, learn, study and participate in the academic and social aspects of the University's life in an atmosphere of safety and respect. The Statute on Student Conduct contains information on what conduct is prohibited and what steps can be taken if there is a complaint. For queries about complaint procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct, contact the Facilitator and Disputes Advisor. This Statute is available in the Faculty Student Administration Office or on the website at:

www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/StudentConduct.

The policy on Staff Conduct can be found on the VUW website at:

www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/StaffConduct.

Academic Grievances

If you have any academic problems with your course you should talk to the tutor or lecturer concerned or, if you are not satisfied with the result of that meeting, see the Head of School or the Associate Dean (Students) of your Faculty. Class representatives are available to assist you with this process. If, after trying the above channels, you are still unsatisfied, formal grievance procedures can be invoked. These are set out in the Academic Grievances Policy which is published on the VUW website:

www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/AcademicGrievances.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Academic integrity is about honesty – put simply it means **no cheating**. All members of the University community are responsible for upholding academic integrity, which means staff and students are expected to behave honestly, fairly and with respect for others at all times.

Plagiarism is a form of cheating which undermines academic integrity. Plagiarism is **prohibited** at Victoria.

The University defines plagiarism as follows:

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's work as if it were your own, whether you mean to or not.

'Someone else's work' means anything that is not your own idea, even if it is presented in your own style. It includes material from books, journals or any other printed source, the work of other students or staff, information from the Internet, software programmes and other electronic material, designs and ideas. It also includes the organization or structuring of any such material.

Plagiarism is not worth the risk.

Any enrolled student found guilty of plagiarism will be subject to disciplinary procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct (www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/studentconduct) and may be penalized severely. Consequences of being found guilty of plagiarism can include:

- an oral or written warning
- suspension from class or university
- cancellation of your mark for an assessment or a fail grade for the course.

Find out more about plagiarism and how to avoid it, on the University's website at:

www.vuw.ac.nz/home/studying/plagiarism.html.

Students with Disabilities

The University has a policy of reasonable accommodation of the needs of students with disabilities. The policy aims to give students with disabilities an equal opportunity with all other students to demonstrate their abilities. If you have a disability, impairment or chronic medical condition (temporary, permanent or recurring) that may impact on your ability to participate, learn and/or achieve in lectures and tutorials or in meeting the course requirements, then please contact the Course Coordinator as early in the course as possible. Alternatively you may wish to approach a Student Adviser from Disability Support Services to confidentially discuss your individual needs and the options and support that are available.

Disability Support Services are located on Level 1, Robert Stout Building, or phoning 463-6070, email: disability@vuw.ac.nz. The name of your School's Disability Liaison Person can be obtained from the Administrative Assistant or the School Prospectus.

Student Support

Staff at Victoria want students' learning experiences at the University to be positive. If your academic progress is causing you concern, please contact the relevant Course Co-ordinator, or Associate Dean who will either help you directly or put you in contact with someone who can.

The Student Services Group is also available to provide a variety of support and services. Find out more at www.vuw.ac.nz/st_services/ or email student-services@vuw.ac.nz.

VUWSA employs two Education Coordinators who deal with academic problems and provide support, advice and advocacy services, as well as organising class representatives and faculty delegates. The Education Office is located on the ground floor, Student Union Building, phone 463 6983 or 463 6984, email education@vuwsa.org.nz.

Manaaki Pihipihinga Maori and Pacific Mentoring programme (Faculties of Humanities and Social sciences and Commerce and Administration).

- **What:** Academic Mentoring for Maori and Pacific students studying at all levels in the above faculties. Weekly sessions for an hour with a mentor to go over assignments and any questions from tutorials or lectures. Registered students can use the faculty's study rooms and computer suite at any time at Kelburn and Pipitea.
- Mature student and Post grad network

If you would like to register as a mentor or mentee please contact the coordinator.

Where:

Melissa Dunlop
Programme Coordinator
Room 109 D
14 Kelburn Parade: back courtyard
Ph: (04) 463 6015
Email: Maori-Pacific-Mentoring@vuw.ac.nz

Please Note: A mentoring room will also be running at Pipitea Campus starting January. Please contact the Programme Coordinator for details.