

School of Government

PUBL 306 THEORY AND METHODS OF POLICY ANALYSIS

Trimester One 2007

COURSE OUTLINE

Contact Details

<u>Course Co-ordinator:</u>	Dr Karen Baehler	RH 823
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Class Times and Room Numbers

Lectures:	Thursday	2.40 – 3.30pm	RWW501
	Friday	2.40 – 4.30pm	RWW501
Tutorials:	Tuesday	12.40 – 1.30pm	GBG04
	Thursday	12.40 – 1.30pm	GBG05

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

This course introduces students to the world of policy analysis and advising – a world in which people who are strictly neither ordinary citizens nor elected representatives are officially authorised to inform and advise elected policymakers about the decisions facing government. Key features of this world include: the roles, identities, and attributes of analysts and advisors; the relationships between advisors and the elected representatives whom they are hired to serve; the multiple pathways through which policy information and

advice flows; and the nature of policy advice itself. Fundamental questions facing the student of policy analysis are the questions of value and smart practice: What are the defining features of good policy analysis and advice? How is good policy analysis and advice best produced?

This course addresses both of these fundamental questions within the larger context of New Zealand's policymaking system via three broad types of activities: familiarising students with the chief tools of policy analysis and advising, including both theories and techniques; helping students apply these tools to a contemporary ('live') policy issue of their choosing; and defining and encouraging those dispositions and habits of mind which are found in the best policy analysts.

What kinds of tools does the policy analyst need? 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 (including intervention logic), regression modelling, Treaty of Waitangi frameworks, and common sense.

How are such tools to be 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 different set of tools for his or her project, and perhaps some of you will 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; (4) be able to express ideas clearly, succinctly, and persuasively in both written and oral form; and (5) understand the role of policy analysts and advisers within New Zealand's public sector.

Course Content (see attached schedule for more detail)

Week	Topics
1	What is policy analysis and advice? Thinking about the policy problems of illegal drugs and world hunger
2	Framing and defining a policy problem
3	Layers of policy problems Student presentations on problem definition
4	Applied models for policy analysis

5	Applied models continued
6	Criteria, ideology, and policy outcomes
7	The case of New Zealand's dirty dairies
8	Matching policy options to problems Devising new policy solutions
9	The outcomes matrix Student presentations on policy options
10	Projecting outcomes Scenarios and policy logic
11	Evaluation and implementation The case of New Bedford Harbour's toxic cleanup
12	Whole-of-government strategic policymaking Student presentations on projecting outcomes

Expected Workload

Each week, students are expected to attend 3 hours of lecture and 1 hour of tutorial (starting in week 2). In addition, reading for lectures and reviewing notes should occupy an average of 3 hours per week, and research on your policy topic and preparation of policy memos should occupy an additional 3 hours per week. Total time devoted to PUBL 306 should be roughly 10 hours per week.

Readings

Readings correspond with *lectures*, so please complete 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 most items 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 expect you to reflect the content of the readings in your work. 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 Requirements

ASSIGNMENT	DUE DATE	WEIGHT	MAXIMUM WORDS
Indicative topic proposal (not marked)	Thursday 8 March	None	3 paragraphs
1 st memo	Wednesday 21 March	25%	2500
Terms test (take home)	Tuesday 3 April	20%	None
2 nd memo	Monday 21 May	25%	2500
Student presentation (not marked)	Friday 16 March Friday 11 May, or Friday 1 June	None	5 minutes + question time
3 rd memo	Monday 18 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. For purposes of presentations, the class will be divided into three sections. Students in the first section will present to the class on 16 March regarding the problem definition component of their policy memo exercise (see below). Students in the second section will present to the class on 11 May regarding criteria and options. Students in the third section will present to the class on 1 June regarding outcomes projection.

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

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 cite 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 the marker 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 Thursday 8 March. The lecturer will check these to make sure the topics are of manageable size (i.e., 'poverty' or 'climate change' 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

- 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? If so, what are the politics associated with the controversy?
- Can you place the problem within a 'system', as discussed in class?
- 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?

Memo #2 Criteria and Policy Options

- Briefly restate the problem definition from the first memo. You may alter, refine, or further explain the definition if you wish, based on feedback from the first memo and/or your own further reflections.
- Present a preliminary set of criteria/indicators for measuring progress in alleviating the policy problem described in the first memo. Explain why you chose these criteria/indicators, i.e., why they are best suited to the job of evaluating projected outcomes in this case.
- Present four or more policy options for addressing the policy problem.
 - The first option should represent the *status quo* (current policy) related to your topic. What is government's current involvement in the issue?
 - 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 any important components of the problem?

Memo #3 Outcomes Matrix and Projection of Outcomes

The first part of this memo will involve carefully summarising relevant material from the first two memos to explain your problem definition and selection of options and criteria.

- 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 a carefully selected set of:
 - policy options from memo #2 to be compared (the *status quo* plus two or more additional options), and
 - criteria from memo #2 for evaluating outcomes.

The second part of this memo should discuss how you would go about projecting the outcomes in your matrix if you had the time and resources to do so. What methods would you use and why? What types of data and information would you need? Where would you find it? How would you gather the information if it were not already available? What obstacles would you expect to encounter at the outcomes projection stage?

- Demonstrate one of the outcome projection techniques by applying it to part of your matrix. Intervention logic is a good technique to choose if you do not have access to real data.
- 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.

Penalties

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.

Mandatory Course Requirements

To fulfil the mandatory requirements for this course, you must sit the terms test and submit all three written assignments.

Communication of Additional Information

The Blackboard website will be your first port of call for notices, marks for assignments (listed 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.

Students may be contacted by email if necessary.

Faculty of Commerce and Administration Offices

Railway West Wing (RWW) - FCA Student and Academic Services Office

The Faculty's Student and Academic Services 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 Student and Academic Services Office on (04) 463 5376.

Easterfield (EA) - FCA/Education/Law Kelburn Office

The Kelburn Campus Office for the Faculties of Commerce and Administration, Education 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.
- Forms for FCA Student and Academic Services (e.g. application for academic transcripts, requests for degree audit, COP requests).
- Examinations-related information during the examination period.

To check for opening hours call the Student and Academic Services Office on (04) 463 5376.

General University Policies and Statutes

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the Victoria University Calendar or go to www.vuw.ac.nz/policy.

For information on the following topics, go to the Faculty's website www.vuw.ac.nz/fca under Important Information for Students:

- Academic Grievances
- Academic Integrity and Plagiarism
- Student and Staff Conduct
- Meeting the Needs of Students with Impairments
- Student Support

Manaaki Pihipihinga Programme

Manaaki Pihipihinga is an academic mentoring programme for undergraduate Māori and Pacific students in the Faculties of Commerce and Administration, and Humanities and Social Sciences. Sessions are held at the Kelburn and Pipitea Campuses in the Mentoring Rooms, 14 Kelburn Parade (back courtyard), Room 109D, and Room 210, Level 2, Railway West Wing. There is also a Pacific Support Coordinator who assists Pacific students by linking them to the services and support they need while studying at Victoria. Another feature of the programme is a support network for Postgraduate students with links to Postgraduate workshops and activities around Campus.

For further information, or to register with the programme, email manaaki-pihipihinga-programme@vuw.ac.nz or phone (04) 463 5233 ext. 8977. To contact the Pacific Support Coordinator, email pacific-support-coord@vuw.ac.nz or phone (04) 463 5842.