

School of Government

**PUBL 306**  
**Theory and Methods of Policy Analysis**

Trimester One 2008

**COURSE OUTLINE**

**Contact Details**

Course Co-ordinator: Dr Karen Baehler RH 823  
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**Class Times and Room Numbers**

Lectures:	Tuesday	10.30 – 12.20	RWW129
	Thursday	10.30 – 11.20	RWW129
Tutorials:	Wednesday	12.40 – 1.30	RWW129
	Thursday	12.40 – 1.30	RWW129

**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

Two fundamental questions face the student or practitioner of policy analysis: What are the defining features of good policy analysis and advice? How is good policy analysis and advice best produced?

This course addresses both 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 set of contemporary policy issues; 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.

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 theories and analytical tools presented in the course; (3) understand the key features of at least one selected policy issue and know how to apply core theories and analytical tools to illuminate that issue; (4) be able to express ideas clearly, succinctly, and persuasively in both written and oral form, (5) formulate their own personal answers to the two questions at the start of this section.

### **Course Content (see course schedule for dates)**

- What is policy analysis and advice?
  - Four practical examples
    - Microfinance for the poor (programme-based analysis)
    - Gambling in Australia (top-down policy review and deep background)
    - War in Iraq (mid-course evaluation leading to recommendations for policy change)
    - KiwiSaver (policy formulation and design)
- A practical guide to good practice
  - Bardach's eight-fold path
- What is policy analysis and advice?
  - A sample of theoretical answers
- A Treaty of Waitangi framework for policy
- What is the problem?
  - Wicked and tame problems

- Intervention logic: A place to begin analysing the problem
- Systems thinking as a way forward
- Contentious problem definitions
- The four examples
- Thinking about implementation at the front end
- What are the options?
  - A diversity of instruments for government action
  - Thinking about government's role vis a vis other social institutions
- Outcomes and criteria: By what standards should the options be assessed and compared?
  - What are the government's values and priorities?
  - What do stakeholders and the public say they want?
  - What are your department's outcomes?
- Options and criteria revisited
  - The four examples
- Assessing options: How are policy advisers meant to predict the future?
  - Cost-benefit analysis: The gold standard?
  - Alternatives to CBA: The multi-criteria decision matrix, logic mapping, and scenarios
- Where do recommendations come from? How should analysis be communicated?
- Applied models for policy analysis
- Evaluation
  - How do we know if policy is working?
  - Evaluating the four examples
- Wrapping up
  - Bardach plus

### **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.

The text for the course is Eugene Bardach, *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*. Second Edition. CQ Press. 2004. 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, supplementary readings are contained in a bound packet available from Student Notes Distribution Centre.

It is essential to keep up with the readings and students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the day's assigned readings. The trick to a successful university career is learning to read fast and selectively! Don't read every word, but do look through everything to pick up the main points. 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 the policy topic that you have chosen for your memo assignments (see 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	WORDS
1 <sup>st</sup> background paper	Monday 17 March	25%	2000
2 <sup>nd</sup> background paper	Monday 7 April	25%	2000
Terms test (take home)	Tuesday 27 May.	20%	None
Policy memo	Monday 9 June	30%	4000

Assignments are always due by 5pm on the date specified. For the policy memos, please email a copy of each assignment to both [Karen.baehler@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Karen.baehler@vuw.ac.nz) and [Francine.mcgee@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Francine.mcgee@vuw.ac.nz). These will be marked electronically, using the 'track changes' function in Word, so you should send your papers in a format that allows this (no pdf's, thanks). Please indicate your document's word length on the cover sheet and don't forget your name. We will discuss details about the background papers and policy memo – such as, what is the difference between these types of written products – in class.

#### *Background Paper 1: The Overview*

Apply Bardach's first four steps to ONE of the case examples from the first two weeks of class: microfinance for the poor, gambling, the war in Iraq, or KiwiSaver. In addition to the class readings on your topic, you need to consult at least five other qualifying sources of information such as government papers, academic studies, in depth pieces of journalism, or think tank reports on the selected issue. Feel free to read Wikipedia entries to inform yourself, but these and related sources should not be cited as authoritative. This memo should address all of the following questions.

- What is the main policy problem? Do key stakeholders agree about how to define the problem? If not, describe the disagreement(s). Maintain as balanced a view of the debate as possible and try to see it from multiple perspectives.
- What evidence is available to help us understand the problem?
- What policy options were/are being discussed, by whom, and why? Discuss at least three but no more than six.
- What sorts of values and criteria are motivating the political and policy debates around this issue?

#### *Background Paper 2: Unconventional Policy Options*

Construct two or three additional and less conventional policy options for addressing the policy problem from paper 1. Be bold and creative here, but not outrageous. Think outside the square. Try to break out of the tired old formulas for addressing these sorts of problems. This memo should:

- Describe the additional options and how they would work in practice. Provide as much detail as possible.
- Describe how and why they are different from the options discussed in memo 1.
- Explain why you chose these additional options and why you think they are appropriate. Why should government consider them?
- What resources did you use to construct them? Where did the ideas come from?
- Test each new option using intervention logic. Discuss assumptions and risks for each.

### *Policy Memo: Evaluation Ex Ante and Ex Post*

Gather evidence and apply tools discussed in class to analyse the likely impacts of your selected policy options (from papers 1 and 2). Write a final memo which summarises key points needed to understand the issue, describes and evaluates (*ex ante*) the selected policy options, and if possible, recommends a particular course of action for government to take. For the recommended option, briefly sketch a plan for how it could be evaluated (*ex post*) if government were to implement it.

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

*Tutorial contribution* may be taken into account in the assessment of final grades, mainly in borderline cases.

### **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. A written assignment that exceeds the word limit by more than 100 words will be penalised 5 marks.

### **Mandatory Course Requirements**

You must sit the terms test, submit all three written assignments, and receive a final grade of 50 or above to pass this course.

### **Communication of Additional Information**

The Blackboard website will be your first port of call for notices 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 are responsible for tracking down any material from missed lectures.

In addition to the marking arrangements noted above, there may be other occasions when information will be provided by email as well. Please make sure that the university has your current email address.

### **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 on the ground floor (EA005). This counter is the first point of contact for:

- 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.

### **Notice of Turnitin Use**

Student work provided for assessment in this course may be checked for academic integrity by the electronic search engine <<http://www.turnitin.com>>. Turnitin is an on-line plagiarism prevention tool which identifies material that may have been copied from other sources including the Internet, books, journals, periodicals or the work of other students. Turnitin is used to assist academic staff in detecting misreferencing, misquotation, and the inclusion of unattributed material, which may be forms of cheating or plagiarism. *At the discretion of the School, handwritten work may be copy typed by the School and subject to checking by Turnitin.* You are strongly advised to check with your tutor or the course coordinator if you are uncertain about how to use and cite material from other sources. Turnitin will retain a copy of submitted materials on behalf of the University for detection of future plagiarism, but access to the full text of submissions will not be made available to any other party.

### **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.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy/default.aspx](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy/default.aspx)

For information on the following topics, go to the Faculty's website [www.victoria.ac.nz/fca](http://www.victoria.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@yvu.ac.nz](mailto:manaaki-pihipihinga-programme@yvu.ac.nz) or phone (04) 463 6015. To contact the Pacific Support Coordinator, email [pacific-support-coord@yvu.ac.nz](mailto:pacific-support-coord@yvu.ac.nz) or phone (04) 463 5842.