

Hunter College
Department of Urban Affairs and Planning
RESEARCH METHODS AND POLICY ANALYSIS
URBS 310 (2600)

Spring Semester 2008
M, TH: 9:45-11:00 a.m.
Room: HW 1639
Office hours: 11 a.m.-noon
Mondays, or by appointment

Dr. Lynn McCormick
695 Park Avenue, Office: W1614
Phone: 212-772-5733, 914-633-5026
Email: mccormil@aol.com,
lmccormi@hunter.cuny.edu

Course Description

Urban planners often are employed as assistants to local and elected officials. Policy analysts may also work for non-profit organizations. In these jobs, analysts have to prepare—often very quickly—memos, speeches, or reports for their bosses. The process of completing these tasks is referred to as policy analysis. This process is usually undertaken to resolve a policy dilemma or controversy that can erupt, for example, over the use of vacant land—should it go to a private developer (think Donald Trump) or should it be reserved for the public as a city park? Planners and policy analysts prepare policy briefs on a wide variety of social issues.

The skills needed to be an effective analyst can be learned, and this class is designed as a part of that educational process. This course begins the process of making students capable and confident policy analysts. Toward this end, the course will be comprised of lectures about critical quantitative and qualitative analytical methods. To put these skills in practice, case studies will be discussed in the class and students will also prepare written assignments about a policy issue of their choosing. Because planning and policy analyses depend not only on written reports but also oral presentations, the class culminates with group oral reports from the students.

Course Objectives

This will be the opportunity for students to learn the professional skills to become effective planners and policy analysts. It is hoped that the students will emerge from the class able to:

- use the language of policy analysis
- write with clarity, coherence, precision
- use maps, charts, graphs, and other supporting documentation effectively
- speak publicly and make concise, clear presentations
- develop analytic models to support policy recommendations
- evaluate approaches especially in terms of their distribution impact
- sift through and synthesize mounds of information quickly
- gather policy relevant data
- gain sensitivity to political factors that affect policy outcomes
- use secondary data sources
- develop quantitative and qualitative analytical skills
- develop management skills and the ability to work and direct a team

While the emphasis will be on the policy analysis process, the class will also discuss how race, class, and gender issues influence the policymaking process.

Required Readings

The following are required for this course:

- One text, available at Shakespeare & Co, bookstore:
Eugene Bardach, A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving, CQ Press, 2000.
- Other readings, as assigned (available on Blackboard).

A portion of each class will be devoted to current public policy issues in New York City covered in *The New York Times*, *Gotham Gazette*, and other local media. Subscribe to *Gotham Gazette* Eye Opener (www.gothamgazette.com), which offers a daily summary of news free through your email.

Assignments and Course Grading Policy

The assignments for this course are listed below and each will be graded. I expect students to complete the assignments on time. Written assignments must be typed and double-spaced, unless otherwise indicated. I will accept either a paper copy or email text. If emailed, I expect the file to be free of viruses.

Students can revise their papers as many times as they want after receiving a grade and comments up to the last due date of May 19. Their earlier drafts and grading sheet must be submitted along with revisions. Grading sheets for each assignment are posted on blackboard, which state the criteria used for grading. Grading for the course is designed to reflect the major substantive and pedagogical objectives of the course and will consist of the following components:

	<u>% of Final Grade</u>
•Class participation/readings	10%
•Individual Assignments: Research proposal/IRB	5%
•Three individual papers (10% each)	30%
•Scope of Work on team project	10%
•Team presentation on policy issue	20%
•Team final paper on policy issue	25%

If work remains uncompleted at the end of the course, students will be graded on that portion which has been completed. Incompletes will be given only after consulting the instructor and will be based on her discretion.

Class Schedule and Readings

PART I. OVERVIEW—THE POLICY ANALYSIS PROCESS

January 28 (M): Introduction to the Policy Analysis Process—Objectives and Structure of the Course

January 31 (TH): The Process—Policy Settings, Products, and the Role of the Policy Analyst

Readings: Carl S. Patton & David S. Sawicki, *Chapter 2: The Policy Analysis Process*, pp. 21-67 (or 73), in Basic Methods of Policy Analysis and Planning (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall) and local newspapers/Gotham Gazette.

February 4 (M): The Process—Policy Settings, Products, and the Role of the Policy Analyst (continued).

February 8 (TH): The Process—The Policy Analytic Model

Readings: Bardach, Introduction, pp. xiii-xvi; Patton & Sawicki, Chapter 1: The Need for Simple Methods of Policy Analysis and Planning, pp. 1-20.

February 11 (M): Individual Assignments

February 14 (TH): Individual Assignments

February 18 (M): President's Day—No Class

PART II. STEPS IN THE POLICY ANALYSIS PROCESS

February 21 (TH): Step 1: Policy Problems—The Problem Statement

Readings: Bardach, *Section 1, Pt. I*, pp. 1-7; Patton & Sawicki, *Chapter 13: Campus Parking Policies*, pp. 421-434.

DUE: RESEARCH PROPOSAL.

February 25 (M): Step 1: Policy Problems—Causal Chains

Readings: continued.

PART III. DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

February 28 (TH): Step 2: Assembling Evidence—Quantifying the Problem

Readings: Bardach, *Section 2, Pt. I*, pp. 7-12; Patton & Sawicki, *Chapter 10: Downtown Development*, pp. 398-400.

March 3 (M): Step 2: Assembling Evidence—Data Gathering & Interpretation

Readings: Bardach, *Pt. II*, pp. 47-70; Herbert J. Rubin & Irene S. Rubin, *Chapter 9: Topical Interviewing*, *Chapter 10: What Did You Hear? Data Analysis*, Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995), pp. 196-256.

DUE: IRB TRAINING MODULE.

March 6 (TH): Step 2: Assembling Evidence—Data Gathering & Interpretation

Readings: continued; in-class interviews.

March 10 (M): Step 2: Assembling Evidence—Data Gathering & Interpretation

Readings: continued.

PART IV. STEPS (CONTINUED)

March 13 (TH): Step 1 (continued): Policy Problems—Political Analysis

Readings: Patton & Sawicki, *Political Analysis* in *Chapter 4: Verifying, Defining, and Detailing the Problem*, pp. 168-176; Patton & Sawicki, *Chapter 11: Defending against Accusations of Prejudice*, pp. 401-410.

DUE: PAPER #1.

March 17 (M): Step 3: Goals and Criteria—Goals of Actors

Readings: Bardach, *Section 4, Pt. I*, pp. 19-27 (see also Patton & Sawicki).

March 20 (TH): Step 3: Goals and Criteria—Measurable Criteria

Readings: continued.

DUE: PAPER #2.

March 24 (M): No Classes

March 26 (W): Classes Follow Monday Schedule: Scope of Work

March 27 (TH): Step 4: Alternatives—Brainstorming Solutions

Readings: Bardach, *Section 3, Pt. I*, pp. 12-19.

March 31 (M): Step 4: Alternatives—Best Practices Research

Readings: Bardach, *Pt. III*, pp. 71-85.

DUE: GROUP SCOPE OF WORK.

April 3 (TH): Step 5: Analysis—Project the Outcomes

Readings: Bardach, *Section 5, Pt. I*, pp. 27-37; Patton & Sawicki, *Chapter 15: A Tax on Paper Diapers*, pp. 446-449.

April 7 (M): Step 5: Analysis—Alternatives/Criteria Matrix

Readings: continued.

DUE: PAPER #3.

April 10 (TH): Steps 6 & 7: Confront the Trade-offs & Decide

Readings: Bardach, *Section 6, Pt. I*, pp. 37-40; *Section 7, Pt. I*, pp. 40-41.

PART V. FINAL PRODUCTS

April 14 (M): Step 8: Communicate the Story—Written Policy Briefs, Memos & Powerpoint Presentations

Readings: Bardach, *Section 8, Pt. I*, pp. 41-46.

April 17 (TH): Policy Speaker

April 21 (M): SPRING BREAK

April 24 (TH): SPRING BREAK

April 28 (M): Workshop

May 1 (TH): Team Presentations

May 5 (M): Team Presentations

May 8 (TH): Team Presentations

May 12 (M): LAST CLASS—Team Presentations

May 19—FINAL WRITTEN PAPER DUE & ALL REVISIONS

Assignments

Students are required to work on a single policy issue or problem throughout the semester. They will study and write about this problem both individually and as a group. A list of potential topics appears below. Students are encouraged to add their own ideas here. Students must choose topics by February 21.

POTENTIAL POLICY ISSUE TOPICS:

1. housing
2. economic development
3. employment and training
4. education
5. transportation & communications
6. sweatshops and labor issues
7. garbage disposal
8. downtown development (or outer borough development)
9. public safety and crime
10. public health
11. other issues

Class Participation/Readings:

Students are expected to come to class on time on a regular basis. You will be graded both on your attendance and class participation, showing you have read and thought about the assigned material.

Individual Assignments: Research Proposal/IRB

Each student is required to write a short topic statement of the public policy issue or problem he/she will study, which should include the main research question to be answered, corollary research questions and an initial bibliography of at least 3 key sources; DUE; February 21.

Each student must complete the Institutional Review Board training for research on human subjects; available http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/irb/citi_irb_training.htm; DUE: March 3.

Individual Papers:

Each student is required to complete three short papers, each approximately 5-10 pages in length (typed, double-spaced).

1. Conduct and write-up an interview with a classmate asking about his/her opinions, experiences, or ideas about a policy problem; DUE: Interviews take place on March 6, paper due March 13; append your rough interview notes to the paper.
2. Write a detailed “problem statement” for your chosen issue, which must include an interview with a relevant stakeholder; DUE: March 20.
3. Write a paper identifying and explaining the various policy solutions, or alternatives, you propose for your chosen issue; DUE: April 7.

Group Assignments:

Students will form groups of approximately four students each to tackle a specific policy problem. Initially, each student will individually research and write about this issue. Toward the middle of the semester, team members will combine their insight to draft a single policy document that incorporates some of the prior written work. Before completing this final written product, students will prepare a written “Scope of Work” that details specific research tasks and responsibilities. Groups will also give a presentation on their research to the class.

DUE:

1. Scope of Work; DUE: March 31.
2. Group Presentations; ON: May 1, 5, 8, 12.
3. Group Policy Paper; DUE: May 19.