

**METHODS OF PUBLIC POLICY ANALYSIS & EVALUATION**  
**POLITICS 382**  
**Term 6, February 2010**

**Instructor**

Steve Hemelt, Assistant Professor  
Department of Politics, 304 South Hall  
Phone: 319-895-4322  
Email: [shemelt@cornellcollege.edu](mailto:shemelt@cornellcollege.edu)  
Office hours: M, Tu, Th; 11am-12pm and 2-4pm; or you can always email (or call) to set up an appointment.

**Consulting Librarian**

Laurel Whisler, Social Sciences  
Phone: 319-895-4260  
Email: [lwhisler@cornellcollege.edu](mailto:lwhisler@cornellcollege.edu)

**Quantitative Reasoning Consultant**

Jessica Johanningmeier  
Phone: 319-895-4222  
Email: [jjohanningmeier@cornellcollege.edu](mailto:jjohanningmeier@cornellcollege.edu)

**Class Meetings**

M – F, 9-11am (with some exceptions), 10 South Hall & 118 College Hall (computer lab)

**Course Description and Objectives**

This course will introduce students to the systematic methods of thinking about the assessment of public policies while equipping them with the basic statistical skills necessary to carry out such evaluations. In a broad sense, given a social problem of interest, policy analysts seek to critically evaluate a set of policy alternatives aimed at addressing that problem. It is the responsibility of policy analysts to provide relevant analytical information on each alternative; but it is ultimately up to policymakers and the public to decide what to do with that information. Policy analysis involves “looking ahead to anticipate the consequences of decisions and thinking critically about them” (Kraft & Furlong, 2009, p. 99).

This course will focus on the practical application of policy analysis concepts. There are three main sections of the course: First, we will review key statistical concepts and apply them to policy-oriented questions. Second, we will learn about structuring and organizing a traditional policy analysis/evaluation report. Finally, students will be exposed to one of the most used statistical programs in today’s governmental and research communities: STATA.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, part of our class will take place in the computer lab, so that students can gain hands-on experience with this valuable program.

By the end of the course, you will: (1) understand the basic statistical and economic concepts foundational to policy analysis; (2) better understand the role that policy analysis plays in the policymaking process; (3) become a critical consumer of policy analyses; (4) learn to perform basic data analysis (descriptive and graphical) using STATA; and (5) hone your critical thinking and presentation skills.

---

<sup>1</sup> For some basic information about STATA: <http://www.stata.com/>

## Required Texts

There are two required texts for this course:

Bardach, E. (2009). *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Pollock III, P. H. (2006). *A Stata Companion to Political Analysis*. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

## Recommended Texts

While not required, the following texts delve a bit deeper into the main course topics:<sup>2</sup>

Patton, C.V., & Sawicki, D. (1993). *Basic Methods of Policy Analysis and Planning*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Acock, A. C. (2006). *A Gentle Introduction to Stata*. College Station, TX: Stata Press.

Ott, R. L., & Longnecker, M. T. (2004). *A First Course in Statistical Methods*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole – Thomson.

## Additional Reading

In addition to the books listed above, you will also have some assigned readings in the form of articles or excerpts from other texts. These readings will be available online (Moodle), emailed to you, or handed out in class.

## Feedback

I assume you also have goals for taking this class. I am interested to know why you are taking this course as well as what you expect to learn from the experience. I am also interested in your suggestions for improving the course overall. Please feel free to share such comments and ideas with me as you think of them. I will also pay close attention to end-of-course evaluations and suggestions.

## Course Requirements

### Class Contribution

In addition to showing up and reading your assignments, I expect you to take an active and constructive role in class discussions. Students who fail to show up or consistently fail to engage course material cannot expect to score well on this portion of the overall class grade.

### Exams

There will be two exams. The first will assess your ability to apply key statistical concepts to policy-oriented questions and contexts. The second will take place in the computer lab and will test your mastery of data analysis skills using STATA.

---

<sup>2</sup> Some of the “additional readings” will come from these texts.



Tuesday, February 2	9am	<p>Statistical Concepts: Summarizing data and describing distributions; basic probability; binomial experiments</p> <p><i>Reading Assignment:</i> Ott &amp; Longnecker (2004): Ch. 3, pp. 66-85; and Ch. 4, pp. 109-122, pp. 129-138, <b>Problem Set #2</b></p>
	1pm	Review problems
Wednesday, February 3	9am	<p>Statistical Concepts: Normal distribution; sampling distributions and central limit theorem; confidence intervals; differences between sample means and hypothesis testing (part I)</p> <p><i>Reading Assignment:</i> Ott &amp; Longnecker (2004): Ch. 4, pp. 141-150, pp. 154-164; Ch. 5, pp. 174-182, pp. 185-197, pp. 201-217; and Ch. 6, pp. 233-245, pp. 260-268 <b>Problem Set #3</b></p>
	9am	<p>Statistical Concepts: Differences between sample means and hypothesis testing (part II); Chi-square test for independence</p> <p><i>Reading Assignment:</i> Ott &amp; Longnecker (2004): Ch. 6 sections from yesterday; and Ch. 10, pp. 477-481 <b>Problem Set #4</b></p>
	1pm	Review problems
Friday, February 5	9am	<b>EXAM #1 (Statistical Concepts)</b>
<u>WEEK 2 (2/8 – 2/12):</u> Monday, February 8	9am	<p>Defining the problem; market failures; Overview of “Eightfold Path” for policy analysis Steps 1, 2, and 3: Problem, Evidence, and Alternatives</p> <p><i>Reading Assignment:</i> Bardach, Introduction and Part I, pp. 1-26 Sawicki, D. S. (1982). On the virtues of doing nothing. <i>Journal of Policy Analysis and Management</i>, 2(3), 454-457.</p>

Tuesday, February 9	9am	<p>Types of policy alternatives Steps 4 and 5: Criteria and Outcomes</p> <p><u><i>Reading Assignment:</i></u> Bardach, Appendix B Bardach, Part I, pp. 26-52 Excerpt from Patton &amp; Sawicki (1993), Ch. 5, “Establishing Evaluation Criteria”</p>
Wednesday, February 10	9am	<p>Evaluation Methods Steps 6, 7, and 8: Tradeoffs, Decision, Write it up!</p> <p><u><i>Reading Assignment:</i></u> Excerpt from Patton &amp; Sawicki (1993), Ch. 7, pp. 275-319 Bardach, Part I, pp. 52-57 Bardach, Part II</p>
Thursday, February 11	9am	<p>Types of validity (external vs. internal) Smart practices in policy research Dissect a real-world policy analysis example</p> <p><u><i>Reading Assignment:</i></u> Excerpt from Shadish et al. (2002), pp. 53-61 (internal validity) and pp. 83-93 (external validity) Bardach, Part III Bardach, Appendix A (read carefully – mark down your comments, questions, and concerns about this example policy analysis).</p>
Friday, February 12	9am	<p>Ethics in policy analysis; future of policy analysis</p> <p><u><i>Reading Assignment:</i></u> Metcalf, C. E. (1998). Research ownership, communication of results, and threats to objectivity in client-driven research. <i>Journal of Policy Analysis and Management</i>, 17(2), 153-163. Excerpt from Weimer &amp; Vining (2005), Ch. 3, “Toward Professional Ethics” Lynn Jr., L. E. (1998). A place at the table: Policy analysis, its postpositive critics, and the future of practice. <i>Journal of Policy Analysis and Management</i>, 18(3), 411-425.</p>

WEEK 3 (2/15 – 2/19):

**Meet in College Hall 118**

Monday, February 15	9am	Lab: STATA – Introduction to interface; creating, altering, and labeling variables; descriptive statistics  <i>Reading Assignment:</i> Pollock, Ch. 1, 2, and 3
Tuesday, February 16	9am	Lab: STATA – Graphics: bar, line, scatter, histogram, along with graphical options  <i>Reading Assignment:</i> Excerpt from Kohler & Kreuter (2009) on making graphs in STATA
Wednesday, February 17	9am	Lab: STATA – Making comparisons; inferences about sample means (t-tests)  <i>Reading Assignment:</i> Excerpt from Acock (2009), pp. 103-131 Pollock, Ch. 4, 5, and 6
Thursday, February 18	9am	Lab: STATA – Chi-square; correlation measures; simple linear regression  <i>Reading Assignment:</i> Pollock, Ch. 7 and 8
Friday, February 19	9am	<b>EXAM #2 (STATA-based, in lab)</b>

WEEK 4 (2/22 – 2/24):

Monday, February 22	<b>5pm</b>	<b><i>Policy Analysis Paper DUE!</i></b>
Tuesday, February 23	9am	Student presentations
Wednesday, February 24	9am	Student presentations

Note: The contents of the schedule may be changed during the term to reflect course progress. Any changes will be announced in class.

**Add/Drop Policy**

I adhere to the policies stated in the Compass Student Handbook regarding add/drop requests. Any student wishing to drop the class on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the block is required to have met all the course requirements up to that point in time.

## **Academic Honesty**

As part of an academic community of learners, students are expected to complete original work that is evidence of high personal integrity and sound academic conduct. The following section is reprinted from the Compass, the Cornell Student Handbook:

A student is expected to explicitly acknowledge ideas, claims, observations, or data of others, unless generally known. When a piece of work is submitted for credit, a student is asserting that the submission is her or his work unless there is a citation of a specific source. If there is no appropriate acknowledgement of sources, whether intended or not, this may constitute a violation of the College's requirement for honesty in academic work and may be treated as a case of academic dishonesty.

Dishonesty in academic work includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating refers to the use of unauthorized sources of information on examinations or any attempt by students to deceive the evaluator of an examination, paper, or project. Plagiarism is the act of taking the work of another and presenting it as one's own, without acknowledgement of the original source.

A safe guide is to provide a full citation for every source consulted. Sources may include, but are not limited to, published books, articles, reviews, Internet sites, archival material, visual images, oral presentations, or personal correspondence. In addition, students should always keep previous drafts of their work in order to provide documentation of their original work. Finally, due to disciplinary differences, students should consult their professor, a librarian, and/or the Teaching and Learning Center for specific instructions on properly providing citations for sources.

I will follow the “Procedures for Dealing with Dishonesty in Academic Work” outlined in the Compass. Please do not hesitate to talk with me if you have any questions.