

POLA 4110: Policy Research Shop

Instructor

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Office Location

Norman Mayer 302

Office Hours

By appointment

Course Information for Summer 2023

CRN: 20160 (Section 01 – in person)

CRN: 20187 (Section 02 – online)

CRN: 20161 (service learning)

Date & Time: MTWRF 1:00 – 2:45 PM

Classroom: Norman Mayer 102

Course Overview

This course creates a partnership between local government and Tulane students in order to address issues of concern to the city and to increase students' civic engagement. To that end, the professor has worked with local elected and appointed officials and bureaucrats to develop public policy research projects; students will be assigned to write policy briefs for one of these projects. In exchange for the policy brief, policy sponsors have agreed to allow the students to present their findings at an official forum.

This course is designed to increase your knowledge of (1) urban politics, (2) governance, (3) American politics, (4) public policymaking, and (5) policy research and its differences from other types of research. It helps students to understand the roles of various governmental and nongovernmental actors that affect the policy-making process and the tools or instruments that are commonly used by policy makers. Students will be expected to learn to communicate with policy makers and to articulate the results of their analyses to these groups. The course will improve writing and oral communication skills, as well as teamwork, to produce a professional-quality product that can be used by city officials in an area of concern.

The course includes a mandatory 20-hour service-learning requirement in which students will work in/for an office in local government.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will have demonstrated the following learning outcomes in fulfillment of the political science department's goals and missions: 1) basic knowledge of the methods, approaches or theories used in accumulating and interpreting information in American government; 2) research skills, in particular policy research; and 3) critical thinking skills and the formulation and defense of a thesis, using evidence to analyze empirical political and policy-related statements. Students will demonstrate this knowledge through producing, with a group, a professional-quality research product that will be made publicly available. Students will also present this work at the appropriate agency or department within government.

Required Texts

- Patton, Sawicki, and Clark. 2013. *Basic Methods of Policy Analysis and Planning*. Third Edition. Boston, MA: Pearson. ISBN 978-0-13-749509-2
- Additionally, there are several required articles (marked with *) located in the Files folder for this class on Canvas.

Assignments

- There will be two homework assignments in which students will apply course knowledge to analyze public policies.
- There will be two reflection essays in which students will consider the service learning experience within the framework of the course content.
- Students will complete a policy research brief for their assigned government partner. This is a group project; all group members will receive the same grade* so it is important that group members collaborate in a productive and respectful manner.
- Attendance and participation will also be factored into the final course grade. All students are expected to attend class, be on time, and be prepared to discuss the readings. Participation is a function not only of attendance, but also the quality of contributions. Participation in the service learning is included as part of the attendance and participation grade.

* The policy brief and oral presentation constitute a group project; all group members will get the same grade. However, if significant evidence exists that some group members did all the work and others did little, then group members may receive different grades.

These components will contribute to the course grade as follows:

Assignment	Date Due	Points
Homework #1	June 7	10 Points
Reflection #1	June 12	10 Points
Homework #2	June 19	10 Points
Reflection #2	June 30	10 Points
Policy Brief	June 28	50 Points
Attendance / Participation	-	10 Points
TOTAL		100 TOTAL POINTS

Course Policies

- **Format:** The format of the course will vary. Some classes will primarily consist of lecture, though I will frequently interrupt lecture to call on students to answer questions and give opinions. Other classes will operate as a seminar, and on those days students should be ready to engage one another in discussion. A few classes may consist of workshop sessions, in which case students should be ready to collaborate with me and fellow students to address a practical task. In all circumstances students are encouraged to stop me for questions or comments.
- **Grading:** This course will be graded according to Tulane's plus/minus grading system. Grades will be available by seeing me before or after class or during office hours. I will not provide grades over email or by phone.

A	93-100	A-	90-92.99	B+	87-89.99
B	83-86.99	B-	80-82.99	C+	77-79.99
C	73-76.99	C-	70-72.99	D+	67-69.99
D	63-66.99	D-	60-62.99	F	59.99 and below

- **Expectations:** Students are expected to attend each class, to be on time, and to have all course materials read prior to the class in which they are discussed. Please turn off all electronic devices during class. All assignments must be completed for a student to pass the course. Requests for regrading any exam or assignment must be made no later than one week after it has been returned. No make-ups will be allowed except in very serious circumstances (I reserve the right to determine what is “very serious”). Course incompletes will only be allowed for circumstances in which the student is physically unable to complete the course; the student must otherwise be passing the course in order to be granted an incomplete.
- **Accommodations:** If you have any kind of special circumstances, such as a disability, illness, or handicap, or if you are involved with a university activity that requires you to miss class, let me know as soon as possible. This information is confidential. All students attending Tulane University with documented disabilities are eligible and encouraged to apply for services with the Goldman Center for Student Accessibility. Please see me or go to <https://accessibility.tulane.edu> for more information. Students needing accommodations must provide me a copy of the accommodation granted by the GCSA as soon as possible.
- **Academic Integrity:** As described in the Tulane University Code of Academic Conduct, students are expected to uphold the honor and integrity of the academic process. Violations of the Code include, but are not limited to, cheating on an exam (either providing answers to or receiving answers from another student), plagiarism (the use of another author’s words or arguments without attribution), and collaboration (working with another person in preparing written work for fulfillment of any course requirement) that is unauthorized. If a student commits any violation of the Code, I will pursue disciplinary action as outlined in the Code.
- **Academic Freedom:** In any classroom situation that includes discussion and critical thinking, particularly about political ideas, there are bound to be many differing viewpoints. Students may disagree with each other at times, or with me. These differences can help enhance class discussion and create an atmosphere where students (and I) will be encouraged to think and learn. In any event, grades will not be adversely affected by any beliefs expressed in class or in assignments.

Course Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading</u>
Mon May 29	<i>No class – Memorial Day</i>	
Tue May 30	Introduction / Go Over Syllabus – <i>class online</i>	
Wed May 31	<i>No class – Professor travelling</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bardach App A*• Raising Min. Wage*• AirBnB*
Thur June 1	Service Learning Meeting – online	
Fri June 2	Service Learning Meeting – in person	
Mon June 5	Introduction to Municipal Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• About America*• Govt. in Louisiana*
Tue June 6	The Policy Analysis Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chapters 1 & 2• Bardach Intro*• Bardach Part I*
Wed June 7	Why Do Policy Analysis?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dunn Chapter 2* <p><i>Homework # 1 due</i></p>
Thur June 8	Policy Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chapter 4
Fri June 9	<i>Work Day</i>	

Mon June 12	Sampling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asher Ch. 4* <i>Reflection # 1 due</i>
Tue June 13	Methods – Intro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 3 • Bardach Part II*
Wed June 14	Methods - Univariate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Johnson & Reynolds Ch. 11*
Thur June 15	Methods – other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Johnson & Reynolds Ch. 12*
Fri June 16	<i>Work Day</i>	
Mon June 19	<i>No class – Juneteenth</i>	
Tue June 20	Methods – Bivariate & Multivariate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Johnson & Reynolds Ch. 13* <i>Homework # 2 due</i>
Wed June 21	Evaluation Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 5
Thur June 22	Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapters 6-8
Fri June 23	<i>Work Day</i>	
Mon June 26	Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 9
Tue June 27	Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dunn Ch. 9*
Wed June 28	<i>Work Day</i>	<i>Final Briefs due</i>
Thur June 29	<i>Presentations at City Hall</i>	<i>Presentations due</i>
Fri June 30		<i>Reflection # 2 due</i>

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Homework # 1

Please answer the following question in an essay of at least 3 pages (but not more than 5). Your essay must be typed, double-spaced, with 10 or 12 point font and 1 to 1 ½ inch margins. If you include any outside material, be sure to cite it. Please contact me if you have any questions about citations or other aspects of the assignment.

The essay is due online on **Wednesday, June 7, at 5:00 PM.**

Answer the following questions about one of the policy briefs assigned for May 31:

- What is the policy problem under investigation?
- How do other places address similar problems?
- According to scholarly research and others, how effective are the policies that attempt to ameliorate these problems? How is effectiveness measured? In short, what are the best practices to ameliorate these problems?
- Based upon these questions, which course of action do the authors recommend and why?
- Do the authors use evidence to support their recommendations? Do the recommendations flow from the evidence presented? Please explain.

To turn in the homework assignment, log onto Canvas and go to the webpage for the course. Click on the Assignments link in the left column and then click on Homework # 1. You must upload a file.

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Reflection # 1

Please answer the following question in an essay of at least 3 pages (but not more than 5). Your essay must be typed, double-spaced, with 10 or 12 point font and 1 to 1 ½ inch margins. If you include any outside material, be sure to cite it. Please contact me if you have any questions about citations or other aspects of the assignment.

The essay is due online on **Monday, June 12, at 5:00 PM.**

- What is the primary responsibility of the office to which you have been assigned?
- What are the current issues of concern to this office?
 - (Not just the issue you're working on, but generally what issues does this office deal with?)
- Does this office work directly with voters/constituents/residents in the city? If not, how would you describe the role "the people" play in this office?
- What groups have the most and the least influence on this office itself as well as the policy it implements?
- How do the responsibilities of this office relate to the major problems and issues of concern for New Orleans and/or Louisiana?
- How does the research you are doing for this office relate to its broader mission/issues of concern?

To turn in the reflection essay, log onto Canvas and go to the webpage for the course. Click on the Assignments link in the left column and then click on Reflection # 1. You must upload a file.

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Reflection # 2

Please answer the following question in an essay of at least 3 pages (but not more than 5). Your essay must be typed, double-spaced, with 10 or 12 point font and 1 to 1 ½ inch margins. If you include any outside material, be sure to cite it. Please contact me if you have any questions about citations or other aspects of the assignment.

The essay is due online on **Friday, June 30, at 5:00 PM.**

- What is your role in addressing the "problem" you have been assigned to study?
- What has been the biggest challenge in tackling that problem?
- In your work so far, have there been any successes or pleasant surprises in gathering information about your problem? If so, please (briefly) describe.
- What advice would you give your City Hall partner about how they might work more effectively with a public policy researcher in the future?
- Generally speaking, what have you learned about working in public policy at the local level? Is this something you would be interested in doing as a career? Why or why not?
- What about doing policy research? Is this something you might want to pursue?

To turn in the reflection essay, log onto Canvas and go to the webpage for the course. Click on the Assignments link in the left column and then click on Reflection # 2. You must upload a file.