

PA 8330: Seminar in Policy Analysis

Summer 2021 Syllabus
University of Nebraska at Omaha

Time: Online

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Course Description & Learning Objectives

Public policy analysis involves the systematic examination of public policies and the potential effects of policies. One component of the course deals with understanding how policy is made - the process and values of policymaking. The other component of the course focuses on the microeconomic analysis of public policies. Most public policies involve economic concepts, and it is imperative for students to learn these skills to understand the potential effects of policies. We will cover supply and demand, market failures, government failures, and the policy mechanisms to overcome these failures. Key thematic questions throughout the semester include and require students to think about and determine are: What is the nature of the policy problem? Is this problem a policy for government or the market to address? If government intervention is needed, what tools and what level of government should be involved? Finally, we will also discuss cost-benefit analysis and program evaluation. The course is heavily analytical, as this skill-set is important in the public sector and for consulting firms.

By the end of the course, students will be able to (learning objectives):

- Understand how public policy is made.
- Understand policy solutions as either problems for government or problems for markets.
- Understand microeconomic theories and applications to public policy.
- Be able to critique current public policies using microeconomics.
- Engage in basic policy analysis and evaluation.

Required Text

-Wheelan, Charles. 2010. *Introduction to Public Policy*. W.W. Norton.

Locations for readings not from the main textbook are indicated in the syllabus.

Course Requirements

1. Discussion Board (2 X 25 pts. = 50 pts.): There will be two discussion board weeks/topics. I will post a prompt for which you should respond in about a paragraph. This will be worth 15 of the 25 points. The remaining 10 pts. will be based upon your response to a peer's comment in about a paragraph. Responses and comments are due by 11:59 PM on Sundays. Responses should be thoughtful and will be graded upon quality of content and response.

2. Reflections (2 X 50 pts. = 100 pts.): Twice during the semester, I will post a prompt

for you to respond to in a well-written essay/memo. The prompt will address a policy which you should analyze. The memo should be 3-5 pages double-spaced and can be accessed in the respective week's module. I will provide rubrics with the prompts.

3. Problem Sets (2 X 50 pts = 100 pts.): Twice during the semester, there will be problem sets to complete. Problem sets will consist of short answer problems focusing on the analytical tools covered in class. They will involve making economic graphs, so you may use pen/paper to submit (scan and upload to Canvas) unless you are more comfortable using a computer. Problem sets are fairly involved and you should not wait until the day before to start. They will require some time and thought.

Grade Components

Discussion Board (2 X 25 pts.)	50
Reflections (2 X 50 pts.)	100
Problem Sets (2 X 50 pts.)	100
Total	250

Grading Scale

A+	97% - 100% (242 - 250)
A	≥93% < 97% (232 - 241)
A-	≥90% < 93% (224 - 231)
B+	≥87% < 90% (217 - 223)
B	≥83% < 87% (207 - 216)
B-	≥80% < 83% (199 - 206)
C+	≥77% < 80% (192 - 198)
C	≥73% < 77% (182 - 191)
C-	≥70% < 73% (174 - 181)
D+	≥67% < 70% (167 - 173)
D	≥63% < 67% (157 - 166)
D-	≥60% < 63% (149 - 156)
F	<60% (<149)

Round up from 0.5% has been included in the point spread above.

Course Expectations & Policies

Courtesy

Comments and language in class should be professional and courteous. Some of the topics we will be discussing/debating are sensitive in nature, with ideological divisions. Respectful disagreement is fine; insults are not, and will not be tolerated.

Diversity & Inclusiveness

There must be a clear respect for diversity maintained in the class. This includes respect for peo-

ple related to gender, sexual orientation, religious identity, disability, age, socio-economic status, ethnicity, race, culture and other differences (including political orientation). All of us have something to offer, and together, we can cultivate a classroom environment where individuals of varying opinions, experiences, and backgrounds are able to learn in a supportive and inclusive setting.

Late Work Policy & Make-Up Exams and Assignments

Since you have ample notice of the due dates of the assignments, and their requirements, no extensions will be given for assignments, unless there is approved medical, legal (jury duty), or university documentation. Materials turned in after the indicated due date and time will automatically receive a 10% deduction. Late work will receive an additional 15% deduction for each additional 24 hours that pass in which the assignment is not turned in. Accommodations are not retroactive, meaning you should not come to me weeks after an assignment(s) is due seeking an Incomplete or accommodation (unless I receive such instruction from the university - see Student Accessibility Services).

Extra Credit

No extra credit will be offered in this course.

Incompletes

Incompletes will only be given in the most extreme and extenuating circumstances.

Student Privacy

Per regulations outlined in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), I will not discuss your grades, class performance, or any issues dealing with your personal circumstances as they relate to this course with another party that cannot legally access your your collegiate records or legally obtain such information. I will not field phone calls from your parents concerning your performance or circumstances related to this course. Your performance may be discussed with other members of the faculty as it pertains to your progress in the program, consideration for awards/funding, and as it is relevant to other university and department-related considerations.

Student Accessibility Services

Reasonable accommodations are provided for students who are registered with Accessibility Services Center (ASC) and make their requests sufficiently in advance. For more information, contact ASC (Location: H&K 104, Phone: 402.554.2872, Email: unoaccessibility@unomaha.edu)

Academic Misconduct

Students are expected to adhere to all the rules, regulations, and standards set forth by the University of Nebraska at Omaha with regard to academic dishonesty (<http://www.unomaha.edu/graduate-studies/academic-integrity.php>). This statement covers plagiarism (intentional or unintentional), cheating on examinations, using or stealing others' work, and so forth. The penalty for academic dishonesty could be a failing course grade and/or disciplinary actions.

Syllabus Change Policy

The contents of this course syllabus are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances.

Course Schedule

Week 1 (May 17 - May 23): Introduction & Review of Policy Process

- Read: Wheelan, Ch. 1, pp. 3-31.
- Read: Wheelan, Ch. 6, pp. 177-213.
- Read: Wheelan, Ch. 15, pp. 511-547.
- Watch: Course Introduction and Syllabus Video
- Watch: Congress Video
- Watch: Policy Design Video
- Discussion Board 1: Responses due Sunday, May 23 by 11:59 PM

Week 2 (May 24 - May 30): Evaluating Social Welfare

- Read: Wheelan, Ch. 2, pp. 32-64.
- Read: Wheelan, Ch. 5, pp. 139-173.
- Watch: Equity v. Efficiency & Policy Theory Video.
- Reflection 1: Due Sunday, May 30 by 11:59 PM

Week 3 (May 31 - June 6): Market Models

- Read: Wheelan, Ch. 3, pp. 69-85.
- Read: Wheelan, Ch. 7, pp. 214-233.
- Watch: Supply & Demand Video.
- Watch: Determinants of Demand Video.
- Watch: Determinants of Supply Video.
- Watch: Elasticity Video.
- Problem Set 1: Due Sunday, June 6 by 11:59 PM

Week 4 (June 7 - June 13): Market Failures and Overcoming Market Failures

- Read: Wheelan, Ch. 3, pp. 85-95.
- Read: Wheelan, Ch. 4, pp. 106-138.
- Read: Wheelan, Ch. 8, pp. 250-287.
- Watch: Collective Action Problems Video
- Watch: Negative Externality Video
- Watch: Pigouvian Tax Video
- Watch: Natural Monopoly Video
- Problem Set 2: Due Sunday, June 13 by 11:59 PM

Week 5 (June 14 - June 20): Government Failures

- Read: Weimer and Vining, Ch. 2, pp. 163-191 (Located on Canvas).
- Watch: Rent-Seeking video
- Watch: Rent Control video

- Watch: Logic of Bureaucracy video
- Discussion Board 2: Responses due Sunday, June 20 by 11:59 PM

Week 6 (June 21 - June 27): Cost Benefit Analysis, Program Evaluation, & Summary

- Read: Wheelan, Ch. 12, pp. 405-443.
- Read: Wheelan, Ch. 13, pp. 444-475.
- Read: Wheelan, Ch. 14, pp. 479-505.
- Watch: Cost Benefit Analysis Video.
- Watch: Course Summary Video.
- Reflection 2: Reflection due by Sunday, June 27 @ 11:59 PM.