This course provides an overview of the process of policy analysis and of program evaluation in comparative perspective. It could serve as a student’s sole (or stand-alone) course on policy analysis and program evaluation, or it could also supplement other courses on policy analysis and program evaluation that students will take or may have taken. The policy areas to be considered include employment, health, families and children, social policy, pensions, migration, education, and, perhaps, the environment. The course will address these topics for developing as well as developed countries.

As a comparative course, a major theme running through the course is the conduct of policy analysis in various settings because of differences in types of governance, a country or region’s research infrastructure, politics, and culture. In addition, overarching the course is a concern for the moral dimensions of social programs and decision making in the face of substantive uncertainty and political pressures.

In the United States, there are two main types of policy analysis courses: (1) one is more akin to political science, and aims to explain why particular policies reach the policy agenda and how one or another is selected; and (2) the other is more program-based, and seeks to identify and apply the programmatic elements of a technical planning process—using the tools of program evaluation. This course adopts the latter, program-based approach, and focuses on four main topics: (1) planning programs, including specifying the problem, selecting a theory of change, and designing programs; (2) implementing programs; (3) assessing program impacts; and (4) monitoring the ongoing operations of programs. (For the purposes of this syllabus, “programs” include “policies.”)
As such, compared to many other courses, it spends relatively less time on how to perform regression and other econometric analyses. Instead, it focuses on providing students with a broad understanding of the full range of impact evaluation methodologies (including qualitative, pre-/post, comparison group, randomized experiment, and natural experiment studies) and the practical skills needed to assess and apply them. In doing so, it seeks to balance the actualities of conducting studies with the need to maximize generalizability as well as causal validity.

**Classroom procedures**

All students are expected to come to class prepared, having read and digested the readings. (Supplemental readings are optional.) If some unavoidable circumstance prevents you from being prepared, please inform the professors. If you have not done so before class begins, we will assume that you are affirming that you are fully prepared to participate in the class discussion.

**Assignments**

On the first day, students (either collectively or individually) will select a policy question or policy topic for which they will write a policy analysis, using the format described in class. During the course, students will prepare two 4-6 page memos that will be used to develop their final policy memos. The topics of the two memos are:

1. **Specifying and describing the problem, and identifying the causes of the problem,** including its nature and severity, size or extent, the population/s affected, the effects on the individuals involved and society as a whole; and their immediate/proximal and long-term/distal causes, and

2. **Identifying the realistic policy options and recommending one,** by first describing all of the realistic options (including “doing nothing”) in sufficient detail to judge their viability and utility, and then making a detailed recommendation (including a summary of reasons, with pros and cons) with an articulated program theory or logic model and the results of past evaluations.

The first memo will be due at **5:00 p.m.** on Sunday, July XX and the second memo will be due at **5:00 p.m.** on Sunday, July XX.

Students will take the comments and suggestions from the professors into account when preparing their final policy analyses. These analyses will be due four weeks after the final class session.

In addition, students will give 12-15 minute presentations on their combined memos 1 and 2. The use of PowerPoint is strongly encouraged. Students should be succinct, limiting what they say to what really matters, and what they display on the screen to information that can be
easily grasped and that supports their key points.

For the file name of memos, please use the following naming convention: CPA and PPE_Memo #_Your Last Name (example: CPA and PPE_Memo #2_Smith). Please make sure to send emails to both professors. (Use exactly the same naming convention for the subject line of your e-mail.)

Grading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memo #1</td>
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<td>Memo #2</td>
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<td>Presentation</td>
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<td>Final examination</td>
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<td>Final policy analysis</td>
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Required texts and assigned readings


CLASS MEETINGS AND TOPICS

Class #1. Monday

Introduction to the course and the OECD. The outline of the course, the deliverables for the course, the selection of memo topics, and the purpose and mission of the OECD.

Policy analysis. The ten steps of a policy analysis and where those steps fit in the framework of the course.

Reading
Douglas J. Besharov, Modern Policy Analysis (College Park, MD: University of Maryland School of Public Policy, Welfare Reform Academy, 2016) (6 pages). This reading depicts the steps in conducting a policy analysis and their causal linkages and where logic models, program planning/development, process evaluations, summative evaluations, and project redesign fit in modern policy analysis.

Logic models. The construction and use of logic models that incorporate inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts.

Readings
Douglas J. Besharov, Logic Models (College Park, MD: University of Maryland School of Public Policy, Welfare Reform Academy, 2016) (10 pages). This reading discusses the purposes and the elements of logic models, emphasizing the relationship and causal linkages between the elements.


Problem specification. The importance of being specific about the nature of the problem to be addressed. This includes identifying the affected population, assessing the problem (including its severity, incidence/prevalence, distribution, causes, and effects), analyzing the quality of data about the problem, and defining the problem to be addressed

Reading
Class #2. Tuesday

Program theory and program planning. A detailed discussion of the second two elements of program development: selection of a theory of change and program planning (including program design and evaluation and monitoring plans).

Reading

Donald C. Cole, Carol Levin, Cornelia Loechl, Graham Thiele, Frederick Grant, Aimee Webb Girard, Kirimi Sindi, Jan Low, “Planning an Integrated Agriculture and Health Program and Designing Its Evaluation: Experience from Western Kenya,” Evaluation and Program Planning 56 (2016): 11–22 (11 pages). This reading discusses the theory building activities of an agriculture and health program in Kenya and how the theory was adjusted based on additional information from needs assessments and pilot programs.

Class #3. Wednesday

Process evaluations. The use of process evaluations, including descriptive studies, implementation evaluations, and continuous monitoring.

Readings


Data collection. The methods for specifying data sources, assessing the reliability and validity of data indicators, and instruments for collecting data.

Readings

Douglas J. Besharov, Collecting and Assessing Data (College Park, MD: University of Maryland School of Public Policy, Welfare Reform Academy, 2014), 4–15 (11 pages).


Qualitative studies. The different forms of qualitative studies (expert assessments and case studies).

Readings
Class #4. Thursday

**Causation and the counterfactual.** Measuring outcomes and impacts (vs. activities and outputs), causal attribution, the counterfactual, and a taxonomy of variables (that is, the dependent and independent variables that help identify causation).

**Readings**


- Douglas J. Besharov, *Disentangling Causative Factors: Dependent and Independent Variables* (College Park, MD: University of Maryland School of Public Policy, Welfare Reform Academy, 2014) (5 pages).

**Threats to causal validity.** The different threats to the causal validity of summative evaluations, including extraneous variables, selection bias, mortality, implementation weakness, contamination, and behavioral responses.

**Reading**


Friday. NO CLASS

Class #5. Monday

**Randomized experiments.** The mechanics of randomization, the point at which randomization is performed, methods of randomization, and randomization designs (including lottery designs, phase-in designs, repeated [or rolling] randomization designs, rotation designs, randomization at the margin, encouragement designs, and randomization across units/staff persons).
Readings


Class #6. Tuesday

Comparisons to self. Intertemporal comparisons in single pre/post comparison, single post-only, and interrupted time series studies.

Readings


Comparison groups. Simple differences, matching, difference-in-differences, propensity score matching, and nonconcurrent multiple baseline designs.

Readings

Jae Ho Chung, “The Politics of ‘Pioneering’ in Anhui: Local Innovation, Provincial


Class #7. Wednesday

Econometric analyses. Basic correlational analyses, simple linear regressions, multivariate regressions, fixed effects, and factor analyses.

Readings

Douglas J. Besharov, Methods for Identifying the Counterfactual Part 4: Econometric Analyses (College Park, MD: University of Maryland School of Public Policy, Welfare Reform Academy, 2014) (11 pages).


Natural experiments. Instrumental variable designs, regression discontinuity designs (RDD), and pipeline studies.

Readings


Class #8. Thursday

Identifying viable options. After determining the nature of the problem, deciding what aspect of the problem to address through a policy or program. Matching the proposed solution to the problem and a theory of change. How to determine “realistic” options.

Readings


Assessment criteria. The selection of assessment criteria to weigh and select among options.

Reading
The ethics of policy analysis and program evaluation. A discussion of the ethics of policy analysis and program evaluation, including issues of denial of services and participant consent.

Reading

Friday. NO CLASS

Class #9. Monday

Generalizability. The different forms of generalizability (population, place, temporal, scale, treatment, and cross-effects validity).

Reading
Douglas J. Besharov, Generalizability (College Park, MD: University of Maryland School of Public Policy, Welfare Reform Academy, 2014) (7 pages).

Statistical conclusion validity. Understanding the magnitude of reported effects, the likelihood that an effect occurred by chance, measurement error, data mining, and the confidence level of a reported effect.

Readings

Note: As we have said before, this is not a course in statistics. For class discussion, we will focus on the concepts and not on the mathematic formulae. This means that you should study and understand the concepts independent of the formulae.


Cross-study analyses. Methods for looking across studies to come to policy conclusions (literature reviews, meta-evaluations, meta-analyses, and comparative effectiveness research).

Readings
Douglas J. Besharov, Cross-Study Analyses (College Park, MD: University of Maryland}
School of Public Policy, Welfare Reform Academy, 2014) (15 pages).


**Class #10. Tuesday**

**Performance measurement and review.** Performance management vs. performance measurement (performance monitoring), the different types of performance measures (resources, efficiency, outcomes, etc.), the identification of net outcomes and impacts on ongoing programs, and the assessment on ongoing program improvement efforts.

**Readings**


**Wednesday. Final exam**

**Thursday. Final presentations**