



SCHOOL of  
PUBLIC POLICY

## **Program Evaluation and Applied Policy Analysis**

Preliminary syllabus

*Summer 2020*

### ***Instructors***

Douglas J. Besharov

Douglas M. Call

### ***Guest Instructors***

Neil Gilbert

David Myers

Anu Rangarajan

Alvaro Pereira

Gary Ritter

David Seidenfeld

Stefano Scarpetta

This course is designed to help students learn the concepts of program evaluation and policy analysis in a comparative context. Course topics include the methods used by different organizations to prepare policy briefs/analyses, evaluation methodologies for identifying the counterfactual, assessment of causal validity in research publications, and methods for synthesizing research.

As part of the course, students will prepare a policy brief/analysis. Students will select topics of interest to the OECD, the European Commission, or, with the instructors' permission, themselves. Likely topic areas for the policy analysis include: aging and pensions, education, employment and the labor market, the environment, families and children, health, housing, migration, and social welfare generally.

In addition to course instruction, the class will also visit international organizations and meet with senior officials to discuss different approaches to policy analysis, program evaluation, and policymaking. Organizations include the European Commission (in Brussels), the European Parliament (in Strasbourg), and the OECD (in Paris).

Interested students will also have the opportunity to apply for post-course internships with two offices at the OECD: (1) the Directorate for Employment, Labour, and Social Affairs and (2) the Economics Department. If there is a suitable project in which the student can be effectively involved, the internship can be offered. The internships generally last for two-to-three months (to be worked out between the student and the OECD and the student would be paid (about 700 Euros per month). Students who are interested in this opportunity should inform the course instructors at the time they apply for the program. The course instructors will then provide them the necessary information to apply.

### **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 instructors. If you have not done so before class begins, we will assume that you are affirming that you are fully prepared to participate in that day's class discussion.

### **Assignments**

For their final papers, students will prepare a policy analysis/brief. All other assignments in the course are for the purpose of assisting students in the process of completing their policy analyses/briefs.

***Initial topic selection and description.*** Students will select topics and briefly describe the scope of the topic and the motivating factor for the policy analysis/brief (usually two paragraphs long). Students will be provided with a list of possible topic areas that are of interest to the EC or the OECD in the month before the course begins. Students may then select one of the topics or choose their own topics. Project descriptions will be due to the instructors on ***Friday, June 12 by 5:00 p.m.*** The project descriptions will be used for discussion on the first day of class in Paris.

***Final paper.*** As the final product for the course, students will prepare policy analyses/briefs, using one of the templates discussed in the course. The final papers should be a minimum of fifteen pages of text (single spaced), not counting appendixes and should also include executive summaries.

Draft papers will be due on ***Friday, July 26.***

Final papers will be submitted via email to the instructors by ***Friday, August 29.***

### **Grading**

Initial project description 10%

Class participation	20%
Draft paper	10%
Final paper	60%

All late assignments will received a deduction of *one-third* a letter grade for each day that the assignment is late.

### **Required texts and assigned readings**

Rachel Meltzer and Alex Schwartz, *Policy Analysis as Problem Solving: A Flexible and Evidence-Based Framework* (New York: Routledge, 2019). ISBN: 978-1-138-63017-8

Additional assigned readings are available on Canvas (elms.umd.edu).

## **CLASS MEETINGS AND TOPICS**

*Note:* This is a tentative schedule.

### **Monday, June 15. Introduction to the course and problem identification**

Guest instructors: Neil Gilbert, professor, University of California, Berkeley; Alvaro Pereira, director of country studies, Economics Department, OECD; Stefano Scarpetta, director for Employment, Labour, and Social Affairs, OECD

*Note:* This class will be held at the OECD

### **Tuesday, June 16. Dimensions of policy analysis and developing program theories.**

Guest instructor: Neil Gilbert, professor, University of California, Berkeley

### **Wednesday, June 17. Policy Analysis: Criteria and options identification**

### **Thursday, June 18. Policy analysis: Option assessment**

Guest instructor: Gary Ritter, dean, school of education, Saint Louis University

### **Friday, June 19. Site visit to European Commission in Brussels**

### **Monday, June 22. Site visit to European Parliament in Strasbourg**

**Tuesday and Wednesday, June 23-24. Causal validity and methods for identifying the counterfactual**

Guest instructors: David Myers, president, American Institutes of Research; and David Seidenfeld, vice president for international research and evaluation, American Institutes of Research.

**Thursday, June 25. Process evaluations.**

Guest instructor: Anu Rangarajan, senior vice president, Mathematica Policy Research

**Friday, June 26. Performance measurement**

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**Friday, July 26. Draft policy analyses/briefs are due**

**Friday, August 29. Final policy analyses/briefs are due**