

COURSE OUTLINE
(2.9.24)

Harris School of Public Policy
PPHA 326: Analyzing and Communicating Public Policy

Tuesdays and Thursdays: 3:30 p.m.—4:50 p.m.

Professor Charlie Wheelan
E-mail: cwheelan@uchicago.edu
Office hours: Tuesdays 1:00 p.m.—3:00 p.m. or by appointment

OBJECTIVES

This course will focus on translating the tools of policy analysis into action and social change. We will focus on three related components: 1) Opportunities to apply the analytic tools learned in the core courses to designing real world policy solutions; 2) Exercises in writing and speaking that will refine the ability to communicate complex policy ideas concisely and effectively; 3) Understanding the interplay between policy and politics. We will use case studies to explore how policy changes happen.

Overall, the course will emphasize both the skills necessary to analyze complex policy problems and the tools necessary to communicate such analysis to relevant audiences. **THE COURSE REQUIRES A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF READING AND WRITING.**

INSTRUCTOR

Charlie Wheelan taught at the Harris School from 2004 to 2012 and is returning as a visitor from the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth, where he is the incoming faculty director of the Center for Business, Government, and Society. He earned his Ph.D. at Harris and has spent a career working at the intersection of policy, politics, and journalism. He was a correspondent for *The Economist* from 1997 to 2002 and later ran unsuccessfully for Congress in the Illinois Fifth District. He worked as a speechwriter for Maine Governor John McKernan, Jr., and later for Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley. He has won teaching awards at the Harris School and Dartmouth.

READING

This is a discussion-based course and students are responsible for doing all readings before the class for which they are assigned. The class will be taught in person without a remote option. All reading other than the required texts will be posted on Canvas.

Required Texts:

Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*, Vintage, 2013.

Luntz, Frank. *Words That Work: It's Not What You Say, It's What People Hear*, Hyperion, 2007.

Analyzing and Communicating Policy
Spring 2024

Solomon, Marc. *Winning Marriage: The Inside Story of How Same-Sex Couples Took on the Politicians and Pundits—And Won*, ForeEdge, 2014.

Greg Berman and Aubrey Fox. *Gradual: The Case for Incremental Change in a Radical Age*, Oxford University Press, 2023.

Optional:

Wheelan. *Write for Your Life: A Guide to Clear and Purposeful Writing (and Presentations)*, W.W. Norton, 2022.

ASSIGNMENTS

- Framing memo (due 4/16): Write a one-page exposition of how competing groups have “framed” an issue in order gain public support. Briefly evaluate the legitimacy and success of these efforts.
- Individual Case Study (due 4/23): Choose a specific policy change (e.g. passage of the Clean Water Act or the creation of the United Nations) and prepare a background memo of approximately 1,500 words on how the change was successfully enacted. **This assignment may be rewritten.**
- Group policy proposal (draft of long memo due 5/2; final projects due 5/16): Each group of four students will propose a major policy change requiring political action at some level of government. The finished project will include an extensive briefing paper making the case for the policy change. It will also include a series of tools for promoting the policy proposal to different audiences: 1) A one page summary document; 2) An Op-Ed making the case to a lay audience; 3) A press release; 4) An “elevator pitch” that frames the issue; 5) Talking points for media interviews; and 6) A confidential political strategy memo. Each group will make a presentation to the class on their proposal.

GRADING

The grade for the seminar is made up of the following: Group Policy Exercise (30%); Individual Policy Paper (30%); Framing Memo (25%); Quizzes (25%). Grades for rewritten assignments will be the average of the first draft and the rewrite. Late assignments cannot receive a grade higher than the lowest grade awarded to work turned in on time.

SCHEDULE

WEEK 1

Tuesday, March 19th

3:30 p.m. – 4:50 p.m.

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW OF MAJOR CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

**Analyzing and Communicating Policy
Spring 2024**

Reading:

Bruce Reed, "Bush's War Against Wonks," *Washington Monthly*, March 1, 2004.

Patrick Radden Keefe. "Buzzkill," *The New Yorker*, November 10, 2013.

Conrad Wilson. "Oregon Considers Scrapping Voter-Approved Effort at Drug Decriminalization," NPR Morning Edition, February 25, 2024.

Thursday, March 21st

3:30 p.m. – 4:50 p.m.

MARKETS AND MARKET FAILURES

Reading:

Wheelan. *Naked Economics*, Chaps. 1-4.

WEEK 2

Tuesday, March 26th

3:30 p.m. – 4:50 p.m.

NO CLASS; PROJECT GROUPS MEET

Thursday, March 28th

3:30 p.m. – 4:50 p.m.

POLICY DESIGN

Reading:

The Brookings-AEI Working Group on Criminal Justice Reform. *A Better Path Forward for Criminal Justice*, April 2021.

WEEK 3

Tuesday, April 2nd

3:30 p.m. – 4:50 p.m.

ILLINOIS CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

Guest: Paula Wolff, Director of the Illinois Justice Project

Thursday, April 4th

3:30 p.m. – 4:50 p.m.

UNDERSTANDING IDEOLOGICAL DISAGREEMENT

Reading:

Haidt. *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*, All.

WEEK 4

Tuesday, April 9th

3:30 p.m. – 4:50 p.m.

FRAMING

**Analyzing and Communicating Policy
Spring 2024**

Reading:

Luntz, *Words that Work*, Chapters TBD.

Nicholas Lemann. "The Word Lab: The Mad Science Behind What the Candidates Say," *New Yorker*, October 16, 2000.

Thursday, April 11th

3:30 p.m. – 4:50 p.m.

ORGANIZED INTERESTS AND RENT SEEKING

➤FRAMING MEMO DUE

Reading:

Naked Economics, Chapter 8.

WEEK 5

Tuesday, April 16th

3:30 p.m. – 4:50 p.m.

WRITING AND SPEAKING FOR POLICY AND PERSUASION

Guest: Steve Edwards, former radio host and CEO of Chicago Public Media.

Reading:

David Brooks. "In Her Own Words," *New York Times*, October 13, 2005.

Thursday, April 18th

3:30 p.m. – 4:50 p.m.

STRATEGY AND THE POLICY PROCESS

Reading:

David Moss and Dean Grodzins. "Martin Luther King and the Struggle for Black Voting Rights," Harvard Business School Case 716-042, February 2016. (Revised August 2021.)

WEEK 6

Tuesday, April 23rd

3:30 p.m. – 4:50 p.m.

HOW CHANGE HAPPENS: CASE STUDY DISCUSSIONS

➤INDIVIDUAL CASE STUDY DUE

Thursday, April 25th

3:30 p.m. – 4:50 p.m.

THE CASE FOR INCREMENTALISM

Reading:

Berman and Fox. *Gradual*, Chapters TBD.

3:30 p.m. – 4:50 p.m.
POLICY DESIGN: HEALTH CARE

Reading:

Atul Gawande. “Overkill,” *The New Yorker*, May 4, 2015.
David Leonhardt. “When Trust in an Expert Is Unwise,” *New York Times*, November 7, 2007.
David Leonhardt. “Making Health Care Better,” *New York Times Magazine*, November 3, 2009.
Ezra Klein. “Which Country Has the Best Health Care System?” (podcast), *Vox*, June 23, 2020.
“The Sick Factor: How to Fix the NHS,” *The Economist*, May 25, 2023.
Frank I. Luntz. “The Language of Healthcare 2009.”
Goodnough, Abelson, Sanger-Katz, and Kliff. “Obamacare Turns 10. Here’s a Look at What Works and Doesn’t,” *New York Times*, March 23, 2020. David Leonhardt. “Making Health Care Better,” *New York Times Magazine*, November 3, 2009.

WEEK 7

Tuesday, April 30th

3:30 p.m. – 4:50 p.m.
PRIVATIZATION AND PPPs

Reading:

Joseph Stiglitz. “Distinguished Lecture on Economics in Government: The Private Uses of Public Interests: Incentives and Institutions,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, vol. 12, no. 2, Spring 1998.
“PPP Contract Types and Terminology,” *The World Bank Public-Private Partnership Legal Resource Center*, June 23, 2022.

Thursday, May 2nd

3:30 p.m. – 4:50 p.m.
CASE STUDY: CLIMATE CHANGE

➤GROUP POLICY MEMO DUE

Reading:

David Owen. “Green Manhattan,” *The New Yorker*, October 18, 2004.
Rob Walton and Fred Krupp. “Restoring Fisheries, Scoring a Net Gain,” *Wall Street Journal*, July 11, 2016.
“The Contentious and Correct Option: Taxing Carbon,” *The Economist*, May 23, 2020.
Ryan Lizza. “As the World Burns,” *The New Yorker*, October 3, 2010.
Coral Davenport. “Strawberry Case Study: What if Farmers Had to Pay for Water?” *New York Times*, December 29, 2023.
Somini Sengupta and Monika Pronczuk. “Making Farming More Climate-Friendly Is Hard. Just Ask Europe’s Politicians,” *New York Times*, February 6, 2024.

Analyzing and Communicating Policy
Spring 2024

WEEK 8

Tuesday, May 7th

3:30 p.m. – 4:50 p.m.

CASE STUDY: MARRIAGE EQUALITY

Reading:

Solomon. *Winning Marriage*, All.

Thursday, May 9th

3:30 p.m. – 4:50 p.m.

ILLINOIS SCHOOL FINANCE REFORM

Guest: Robin Steans, Executive Director of Advance Illinois

WEEK 9

Tuesday, May 14th

3:30 p.m. – 4:50 p.m.

PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

Thursday, May 16th

3:30 p.m. – 4:50 p.m.

NO CLASS

➤FINAL GROUP PROJECT DUE

General Resources Available to Students

- [Harris Academic Support Programs and Handbook](#)
- [Student Wellness](#)
- [University Learning Resources](#)

Harris School and University of Chicago Policies

- [Harris School Policies](#)
- [University General Policies](#)
- [University Academic Policies](#)