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:


Analyzing and Communicating Policy  
Spring 2024


Optional:


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:

Thursday, March 21st
3:30 p.m. – 4:50 p.m.
MARKETS AND MARKET FAILURES

Reading:

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:

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:

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.

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:

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:

WEEK 7
Tuesday, April 30th
3:30 p.m. – 4:50 p.m.
PRIVATIZATION AND PPPs

Reading:

Thursday, May 2nd
3:30 p.m. – 4:50 p.m.
CASE STUDY: CLIMATE CHANGE

➢ GROUP POLICY MEMO DUE

Reading:
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