

Georgia Institute of Technology
School of Public Policy
PUBP 3030 Policy Analysis
Fall 2026

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The PUBP3030 course schedule is split into two sections. In the first section we consider different justifications for public policy. In other words, we consider the question: by what criteria is it acceptable for the government to employ coercion (hard or soft) with the aim of changing the behavior of individuals? For most policy analysts, this question is addressed within the market failure framework. There are, however, several critiques of and alternatives to this framework as a justification for public policy. We will explore the welfare economics perspective and some of these critiques and alternatives. We will also address the questions: (1) if government action is justified, what instruments or tools does the government have at its disposal; (2) how might we choose among them; and (3) how should we expect individuals to respond to the chosen instrument? The second section of the course examines policy analysis in practice, using case studies and applicable tools such as data collection, program evaluation, and data visualization.

PRE/CO-REQUISITES

To be successful in conducting and producing professional-level policy analysis, you will need to draw upon and, at times, integrate many of the lessons learned in other classes. Students are expected to come to the course with the tools developed in microeconomics and statistics (or may be taking these courses concurrently). Cost-benefit analysis, policy process, and substantive policy courses will also enhance the course experience.

COURSE GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

The primary goal of this class is for you to learn what policy analysis is and how to conduct one using empirical data. The work you do outside of class will be **as important** as the work in class. The course is experiential in nature and involves considerable “hands-on” work. In addition to the primary goal given above, other goals include:

- (1) Evaluate claims that a problem is reasonably the business of government
- (2) Use policy analysis tools to compare the merits and disadvantages of different policy approaches to a particular problem and estimate the likely consequences of proposed policies
- (3) Develop and strengthen skills in data analysis and problem-solving
- (4) Translate these skills into a written and oral argument on a policy (both individually and in a group setting)
- (5) Provide exposure to a wide variety of contemporary public policy controversies

These objectives satisfy designated learning objectives for courses carrying social sciences credit (Core Area E) at Georgia Tech: “Students will be able to describe the social, political, and economic forces that influence social behavior.”

COURSE MATERIALS

Select chapters from the following books will be posted to the course website/Perusall:

- (1) Bellinger, William (2016) (2nd Edition). The Economic Analysis of Public Policy. Routledge.
- (2) Weimer, D. L., & Vining, A. R. (2017) (6th Edition). Policy analysis: Concepts and practice. Routledge.
- (3) Stone, Deborah. (2012). Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making, 3rd edition. W.W. Norton.
- (4) Tullock, G., Seldon, A., Brady, G.L. (2002). Government Failure, A Primer in Public Choice. Cato Institute.
- (5) Salamon, Lester, ed. (2002). The Tools of Government: A Guide to the New Governance. Oxford University Press.

Course Website

We will rely heavily on the course website on Canvas for my official communications with you regarding this class. This will include announcements, changes to the course calendar or syllabus, and my feedback to you regarding your class performance.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

| Assignment | % |
|--|----|
| Presentation | 25 |
| Case Study | 10 |
| Exercises | 10 |
| Reading Assignments | 10 |
| Participation (e.g., in-class discussion & discussion board posts) | 10 |
| Policy project | 35 |

Grading Scale

Final grades will be assigned as a letter grade according to the following scale (there is no rounding):

| | |
|---|---------|
| A | 90-100% |
| B | 80-89% |
| C | 70-79% |
| D | 60-69% |
| F | 0-59% |

COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND POLICIES

Health-Related Considerations

If you do not feel well, please do not come to class. If you are ill for any reason, please contact me so we can make appropriate accommodations. In-person lectures will not be recorded. You should work with a classmate to receive a copy of course materials if you miss a class for any reason. In addition, I strongly urge you to take care of yourself by getting enough sleep, eating a nutritious and well-balanced diet, exercising regularly, and managing stress in healthy ways.

Late Work

Due dates for all assignments are noted in the syllabus and are non-negotiable. Late work will not be accepted. Exceptions to these guidelines will be made only under unusual circumstances and will require valid documentation from the student. Please contact me if illness, family medical problems, or emergencies, etc. occur.

Academic Integrity

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. For information on Georgia Tech's Academic Honor Code, please visit <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/policies/honor-code/> or <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/18/>. If you are struggling in this class, please come see me so that we can work together to identify those elements where you may need additional guidance and instruction. My goal is to create a learning environment that is challenging and encouraging. You are responsible for knowing what plagiarism is (see this link for more: <https://www.onlinecolleges.net/for-students/avoid-plagiarism/>). Cheating and/or plagiarizing on an assignment denies you the opportunity to learn. It also puts you in jeopardy since any student suspected of cheating or plagiarizing on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, which will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

AI Policy

Plagiarism includes the use of AI, such as ChatGPT and others, to generate original content. AI is tool that can help you clean programming code, explore ideas, or break the writing block. However, these tools should be used critically and always in accordance with professional expectations. To be very clear, particularly with respect to narrative writing, do not present the output of AI tools as your own writing, which constitutes a violation of academic integrity (see policy above). Further, in the same way we do not cite Wikipedia in academic writing, we also do not treat AI as an authoritative source, i.e., we do not cite AI the way we cite articles, books, etc. Keep in mind, these tools are aggregating information from existing sources. The best practice is to find and cite the original sources.

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

At Georgia Tech, we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgment, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. See <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/22/>

for an articulation of some basic expectations that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class. Disorderly conduct which interferes with teaching, research, administration, or other university or university-authorized activity will not be tolerated and will be immediately reported to the Office of The Dean of Students for appropriate disposition which may result in disciplinary action including possible suspension and/or expulsion from the university.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, contact the Office of Disability Services at (404)-894-2563 or <http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/>, as soon as possible, to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Accommodations for Religious Observances

I respect your right to observe your religion and will do what I can to accommodate your needs. With this in mind, you are permitted to be absent from class to take part in religious observances. For planning purposes, I ask that you provide me with written notice of your upcoming absence within the first two weeks of class. For more information on Georgia Tech's policy regarding student rights and responsibilities around planned absences from class, please see <http://catalog.gatech.edu/rules/4/>

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help students master course content and support students' broad academic and career goals. This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question: How do I understand human experiences and connections? Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome: Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social, or geographic relationships develop, persist, or change. Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies: Intercultural Competence, Perspective-Taking, Persuasion