

# **PUBP 6201 Syllabus**

Public Policy Analysis, Section TBA, 3 Credits

Fall 2026

## **A. Instructor Information**

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## **B. General Course Information**

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### **1. Description**

A fundamental principle of good governance is making decisions based on sound reasoning and good information. In this course we will develop the skill of analyzing public policies in a structured way using systematic logic and empirical evidence. Good policy analysis applies abstract theories in a practical way that generates insights useful to decision makers.

This course is based on two major themes of public policy and administration. The first is the concepts and process of public policy analysis, defined as “Client-oriented advice relevant to public decisions and informed by social values”. The second major theme is analytical methodology, including prospective tools and retrospective models used to make inferences about the likely or actual impacts of policies.

### **2. Course Learning Outcomes**

- Apply policy analysis frameworks and theories to evaluate public problems
- Work in a team setting to conduct analysis of a public policy problem
- Write a formal policy analysis document
- Present the findings of a formal policy analysis
- Critically engage in policy discussion by articulating theory and evidence-based positions

### **3. Required Course Materials**

These are the general textbooks will be used frequently in this course. The first is our main book. The rest I am just using chapters/data from.

- Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice. Weimer, Vining (WV)
- Theory and practice in policy analysis. Morgan (M)
- Handbook of Impact Evaluation. Khandker, Koolwal, Samad (KKS). - FREE
- Impact Evaluation In Practice. Gertler, Marti, Prem, Rawl, Verm (GMP) - FREE

You may want to buy a physical copy of WV, since it is a classic book that you will likely use in more than one course. That book is available in the bookstore, or anywhere you can find it. KKS and GMP are available for free on the world bank website. From M, will be focusing only on a couple of individual chapters. In addition, I will be providing other readings throughout the semester, which will be indicated in the Readings section in the weekly schedule. Other readings will appear below in the schedule which will correspond to files I upload to canvas.

#### **4. Grading Policy**

I like to keep things simple. Every assignment is graded on a percentage basis, 0-100%, and every assignment contributes a certain amount to the overall percentage for the final grade (see breakdown below). Canvas is somewhat clunky and likes points. To facilitate this translation, every assignment thus has 100 points. For the correspondence between percentage to letter grade, I follow the general guidelines set by the institute. Lastly, I do rounding. For example, 89.5 will be rounded up to an A.

##### *a) Assignments*

- 10% Activities
- 10% Attendance
- 10% Rough Drafts of Final Paper (2)
- 30% Exams (2)
- 30% Final Paper Parts (2)
- 10% Policy Analysis Presentation

#### **5. Description of Graded Components**

##### *a) Activities*

The activities grade will be assessed based on participation in the class activities, lecture discussions, tutorials, etc. There will be certain deliverables based on activities that count toward this. These deliverables will be a combination of instructor guided team and individual activities that are initiated in class and then finished later for submission at the end of that week.

*b) Attendance*

The data show that a big part of success in this course is showing up to class consistently. I will take roll manually at the beginning of class. If you arrive after I take roll, it is your responsibility to notify me that you are present after the lecture or class activities are done.

*c) Exams*

We will have a mid-term and a final exam. These exams test content knowledge derived from the lectures and course materials. These will be in person, closed book, no device quizzes (basic calculator permitted). They are generally comprised of multiple choice, true/false, short essay questions. As a side note, I also like to do Kahoot quizzes in class that are useful and fun but are ungraded but help students prepare for the exams.

*d) Paper Drafts*

Paper drafts are early drafts of Final Paper Part 1 and Part 2. These will be turned for evaluation before the final versions are due. These allow me to ensure you are on the right track and to give you feedback before grading your final versions. Rough drafts are not perfect final papers. These are approximations that show the general structure and idea that gives me an idea of where the paper is going. This allows me to gauge the direction of your work and gives me a chance to ensure you are not off track.

*e) Final Paper (Team Project)*

This will be a team project. Team size will depend on enrollment, such that there will be approximately 6 teams per semester. I have structured this assignment as two parts, but both parts should fit together as a coherent whole by the end of the semester. Part 1 addresses theory and Part 2 presents the analysis.

Part 1: Theory. This part of the paper generally has the following headings 1) introduction, 2) market and government failures, 3) policy instruments and alternatives, 4) references. First, it identifies a policy problem in a specified case, explains the background and importance of the problem, and states a research purpose (decision making or explanation). Second, it identifies the specific market and/or government failures at play in the public policy problem, i.e. theoretically framed policy problem related to the status quo of the case. The key here is the problem is explained in terms of policy analysis theory. Third, it identifies relevant alternative policy proposals that are different from the status quo which could potentially address the public policy problem at hand. It evaluates in a logical way the arguments for and against each alternative. It also includes a summary table at the end of the alternative-instruments section that summarizes the pro-cons of each alternative. Fourth, it will include a list of APA references at the end.

Part 2: Analysis. This part generally has the following headings 1) methods, 2) results, 3) limitations, 4) recommendations, 5) conclusions, 6) references, and sometimes 7) appendix. This part of the final paper analyzes the policy alternatives in terms of evidence identified from public sources. You will use analytical tools that we have examined in class or otherwise. These might include, benefit-cost analysis, decision analysis, regression, quasi-experimental design, network analysis, etc. First, you identify the methods of data collection and methods of analysis used to analyze the data. Second, you present the results of the analysis, which usually includes tables and figures. Third, you discuss the limitations of the analysis, e.g. challenges to validity, lack of data collection, use of simulated estimates, etc. Fourth, you distill your analysis into a set of recommendations for the client, which are practical and impactful. Fifth, you conclude by providing a brief summary of the entire project from start to finish. Lastly, you list all your references. You may also have an appendix heading that includes any R code use in the analysis or anything else useful for understanding the analysis.

Each part should be around 10 pages, double spaced. Part 1 and 2 together will probably around 20 pages, not including title, bibliography, etc. It will use peer reviewed academic source material. It will use APA in-text citation and bibliographic style. You will generally have a bibliography for both.

Turning in the Final Paper Part 2. I will not regrade Part 1 when you turn in Part 2. However, when you turn in Part 2. Combine both parts into a single document. The ultimate goal is to produce a single coherent paper. I am having you turn them in sequentially though to maintain your team's cooperative momentum across the semester and to provide continuous feedback.

Topic Selection. I recommend you avoid broad topics that have been exhaustively researched. Please find something relatively original, that hasn't been analyzed too much before. This is easier than it seems if you start at the local or state level where context factors shape the policy context into something more unique. You can do national or international policy also, but these often tend to be well covered already. Also, keep in mind the question of whether you can find data on the topic under consideration.

Client Orientation. Policy analysis is generally client focused, meaning it is usually conducted on behalf of a client. For logistical reasons it is not feasible to have every team work on behalf of an actual client. However, this does not prevent you from writing in this perspective. In other words, it is a simple matter to simply posit a client, generate hypothetical client concerns, and write from that perspective. As such, projects should identify a client orientation from a real world case, e.g. local governments, public agencies, non-profits organizations, city council members, legislators, etc.

f) *Presentation*

You will present your policy analysis to the class. The presentation should be around 10 minutes long. It will be in power point or some similar alternative presentation format. It will take the general structure of the paper. Each team member will participate, it will not have too much text on slides, and presenters will not read scripts.

At Georgia Tech, final course grades are awarded on a scale of A-F with no +/- grades permitted.

## C. Course Policies

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### 1. Attendance and/or Participation

The data show that a big part of success in this course is showing up to class consistently. I will take roll manually at the beginning of class. If you arrive after I take roll, it is your responsibility to notify me that you are present after the lecture or class activities are done.

### 2. Academic Integrity

Students are expected to follow the Georgia Tech Honor Code and Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement. On plagiarism, text that is copy-pasted without attribution and presented as your own is potentially a violation of the honor code/academic integrity and may be reported as such. Use appropriate attribution practices when in doubt, such as quotation marks, paraphrasing, and attribution with in-text citation and bibliographic entries (depending on the chosen style).

### 3. Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you require special accommodations contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) to obtain an accommodations letter, which they will deliver to me. I always comply with the ODS accommodations specified in the letter. Please also e-mail if you need to discuss further, e.g. if you will take exams at ODS please remind me to send my exams to the ODS facility. If you miss a scheduled exam with ODS, make up exams should be rescheduled with ODS and not with me, as I do not have the resources to provide accommodations. If a student misses the final exam due to an emergency or similar justification and ODS facilities have closed, an incomplete will be assigned until the student can take the exam with ODS after their facilities reopen.

### 4. Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

At Georgia Tech, we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. The Student-Faculty Expectations articulate 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.