

# UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS DARTMOUTH

## APPLIED POLICY RESEARCH

PST 385/PST 585

Instructor: Dr. Clyde W. Barrow, Chancellor Professor of Policy Studies  
& Director, Center for Policy Analysis ([www.umassd.edu/cfpa](http://www.umassd.edu/cfpa)),  
Classroom: Dion 108  
Telephone: 508-999-9265  
Email: [cbarrow@umassd.edu](mailto:cbarrow@umassd.edu)  
Office: 128 Chase Road, Room 110  
Office Hours: Tuesday 3:30 – 5:00  
Biographical Information: <http://dev.www.umassd.edu/cfpa/barrowbio.cfm>  
Policy Studies Program Information: <http://www.umassd.edu/cas/policystudies/>

### **REQUIRED TEXTS**

Eugene Bardach, *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. New York: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2005.

Peter J. Haas and J. Fred Springer, *Applied Policy Research: Concepts and Cases*. New York: Garland Press, 1998.

Catherine F. Smith, *Writing Public Policy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The course reviews the methods, techniques, and data sources for conducting applied policy research and the preparation of analytic reports designed to influence decision-making in government, business, education, and other organizational settings. The course will review the nature of policy research, the process of preparing to conduct applied research, how to conceptualize a research project, and how to conduct technical analysis and best practices research. The course will also teach students how to communicate their research findings to an appropriate audience through briefing papers, press releases, newspaper editorials, and formal testimony. These topics will be explored through class lectures, assigned readings, and in-class discussion. It is expected that all students will be active participants in the classroom discussion and that all students will make at least one formal presentation of their research findings at the end of the class.

The course requires that all students complete a 20 (undergraduate) to 25 (graduate) page research paper due on May 15, 2008 by 2:00pm. The research paper may focus on any public policy or public management issue of interest to the student. The draft and final paper will count for 75% of the total grade (including several intermediate assignments along the way), while an oral presentation/mock testimony of research findings will count for 20% of the total grade. Attendance will count for 5% of the total grade for undergraduate students (see below).

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### **TOPIC 1 STRATEGIES OF POLICY RESEARCH**

**Jan. 30, Feb. 6** This topic will cover the definition of policy research, the context of policy research, the major types of policy research, and the major approaches to policy research, including policy analysis, program evaluation, statistical analysis, best practices, and case study research. The advantages of situation-based policy research and the incorporation of multiplism into policy research strategies. Tensions between traditional academic and policy oriented research.

Required Reading: Haas and Springer, Chaps. 1-2.

Recommended Readings: Weber, "Science as a Vocation," in Gerth & Mills.  
Weimer and Vining, Chap. 2.

*Note:* Each student will meet with the professor during the first week of class to begin identifying a policy issue for the research paper. Students must have identified a paper topic by the end of the second week of class.

### **TOPIC 2 PREPARING FOR A POLICY RESEARCH STUDY**

**Feb. 13, 20** This topic will cover focus of information inquiry and the steps involved in conducting a focus of information inquiry, such as initial data and literature scan feasibility analysis, and project scoping.

Required Readings: Smith, Chap. 3 and Chap. 4  
Bardach, Part I, Step 1.  
Haas and Springer, Chap. 4, pp. 71-73

*Note 1:* A preliminary research bibliography is due in this meeting that includes at least 15 different sources, including at least one each from 8 of the 12 types of sources identified in the research paper requirements below (Feb. 13).

*Note 2:* Students should begin preparing a 1 to 2-page 'definition of the problem' or 'purpose of the study' paper as soon as their preliminary research bibliography has been approved by the instructor.

### **TOPIC 3 CONCEPTUALIZING THE POLICY RESEARCH STUDY**

**Feb. 27** This topic covers preliminary (logic) modeling of a social problem, the  
**Mar. 5** formulation of specific research questions, and the selection of research investigators.

Required Readings: Bardach, Part I, Steps. 2-5  
Haas and Springer, Chap. 3

Recommended Reading: Bill and Hardgrave, pp. 24-40

*Note:* Students should begin preparing a 4 to 5-page ‘legislative history’ as soon as their definition of problem paper has been approved and returned by the instructor. This paper should include a model of the policy making process relevant to the issue and an organization chart of the key government agencies involved in the policy process.

#### **TOPIC 4 TECHNICAL ANALYSIS**

**Mar. 12, 19** This topic covers the research activities involved in technical analysis, including  
**Apr 2** guidelines for designing an appropriate methodology, data sources, and other information gathering techniques, including surveys, focus groups, and key informant interviews. Arriving at conclusions and formulating tentative recommendations.

Required Readings: Haas and Springer, Chap 4, pp. 73-82.  
Bardach, Part II  
Smith, Chap. 5

Recommended Reading: Weimer and Vining, Chap. 13, pp. 309-323

*Note:* Students should begin preparing a 5- to 6-page ‘position paper’ that either models the social problem to be analyzed in the final paper or that defines the competing value positions of key stakeholders, including a very brief survey of supporting academic or policy research in the area. The position paper should conclude with one or two research questions that will be addressed in the final paper.

#### **TOPIC 5 BEST PRACTICES RESEARCH**

**April 9** This topic covers the concepts and techniques of ‘best practices research’, i.e., the identification of policy solutions that have been effective in other governmental jurisdictions, agencies, or locales. The methodological and practical pitfalls of this research strategy are identified, while the impact and transfer of best practices is analyzed through ‘the policy diffusion model’.

Required Reading: Bardach, Part III (pp. 91-106)

Recommended Reading: Walker, “The Diffusion of Innovations among the American States.” *American Political Science Review* (available through J-STOR).

*Note:* Students should continue conducting independent research (technical analysis) to answer their research question(s).



## **CLASS CANCELLATIONS**

Class will NOT meet on the following regularly scheduled class days:

March 26      Instructor attending meeting of the International Studies Association

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### **I. Grades**

Students will be graded on several assignments over the duration of the semester with the most significant weights allocated to the final research paper and oral presentation as follows:

	Undergraduate	Graduate	Due Dates
Attendance	5%	0%	
Preliminary bibliography	5%	5%	Feb. 13
Definition of the problem paper	5%	5%	Feb. 27
Legislative or policy history	10%	10%	Mar 12
Position paper	10%	10%	Apr 9
Oral Presentation/Testimony	20%	20%	Apr 30
Final research paper	40%	40%	May 12
Editorial or press release	5%	10%	May 12
	Total 100%	100%	

Attendance 90-100% present = A  
85 - 89% present = B  
80 - 84% present = C  
75 - 79% present = D  
<75% present = F

### **II. Research Teams**

Students have the option to work alone or to work in teams of 2 to 3 persons. The following rules apply if you decide to work as a research team:

1. The research team should be assembled by the end of the first week of class. There may be some room to reconfigure research teams during the second week of class, but there will be no changes to research teams after that time.
2. The research team should select a principal investigator, who will be responsible for:
  - a. notifying the professor of the team's members,

- b. convening meetings of the research team as necessary,
  - c. allocating research and writing assignments among the team,
  - d. acting as team liaison with the professor on the research project (although this role does not exclude any student from visiting the professor during office hours),
  - e. insuring that all assignments are turned in on time,
  - f. selecting the team member who will make the final oral presentation.
3. The research team will receive a *single grade* on all written assignments regardless of who actually prepares the assignment. This rule applies to:
- a. the preliminary bibliography,
  - b. the definition of the problem paper,
  - c. the legislative history,
  - d. the position paper,
  - e. the editorial/press release,
  - f. the final paper, and
  - g. the oral presentation.

### **III. Research Paper Requirements**

Students may select any public policy or public management issue as the topic of their research paper. The issue can be national, state, or local in nature and it may be located in any policy area (e.g., economic, social, environmental, education, transportation, etc.). Students are advised to meet with the professor as early as possible to begin identifying a research topic. All students required to meet with the professor, individually or in teams, during the second week of classes to discuss potential paper topics, research design, and research strategy. Prior to such a meeting, students should do some preliminary background research on one or more possible paper topics to assess the topic's viability as a research project. Students should conduct their preliminary research to (1) reaffirm personal interest in the topic, (2) confirm the availability of published sources on the topic, and (3) begin the development of a preliminary bibliography for further research. The preliminary research should not take more than 2 hours.

The research paper should be 20 (undergraduate) to 25 (graduate) pages in length not including the bibliography (6,000 to 7,500 words). Papers may vary in format, but in general all papers should include the following:

- an executive summary of research findings and policy recommendations,
- either a brief policy history (including pertinent legislation, treaties, administrative orders, judicial decisions) or a review of academic literature to define the problem(s),
- either identify the key actors on the issue and their articulated policy positions or describe alternative theoretical models for understanding the problem,
- technical analysis (data analysis, case study, best practices, comparative cases),
- evaluation and policy recommendations, including the rationale for recommendations,

- identify policy mechanisms or policy instruments available or to be created for implementing the recommendation(s), including the estimated costs and benefits of such recommendations.

All papers must cite or use at least 12 different sources (20 for graduate students), including at least one each from 8 of the 12 following types of sources:

- academic or theoretical literature (books and journal articles),
- legislation, treaty, administrative or judicial decision,
- government (or other) data source,
- government documents,
- documents/study by a non-governmental or parastatal organization,
- document/study by non-profit think-tank, private consulting firm, political party, or interest group, (i.e., 'grey literature' policy research),
- newspaper article,
- magazine or trade journal article,
- key informant interview(s),
- public opinion surveys,
- speech(es) by public figures, office holders, and decision-makers, and
- governmental or non-governmental websites (including interest group websites).

Expectations about quality and length of research papers for graduate students will be significantly higher than for undergraduates. This expectation will be incorporated into the grades for those assignments and this expectation will also apply to senior undergraduates who take the course for graduate credit.

#### **IV. Other Course Policies**

1. Late Examinations and Make-Ups. Under *normal* circumstances, assignments that are handed in late will be penalized one grade level for each day they are late. For example, an "A" examination that is taken one day late would be reduced to an "A-". Two days late would reduce it to a "B+", etc. It is possible on *exceptional* occasions to take a late examination or to make-up a missed examination. However, there must be a legitimate excuse such as illness, death in the family, extracurricular university activities, etc. Where possible, you should discuss this with the professor in advance.

2. Drops and Incompletes. You may drop any course within the guidelines established by the University. You will not be penalized simply for dropping a course. However, it is the student's responsibility to drop a course. It is my policy that anyone who merely stops attending class, fails to turn in course work, but remains enrolled in the class will receive an "F." Moreover, University policy prohibits professors from awarding an "I" to any student who fails to complete their course work, *unless* the student specifically requests an Incomplete before the last week of classes. The instructor is receptive to awarding Incompletes under exceptional circumstances (such as late papers and make-ups above). However, these must be arranged prior to the end of the semester.

3. Class Cancellation. It is not uncommon for one or two classes to be cancelled unexpectedly during the semester due to snow or to due to professional or personal exigencies (short notice meetings, dead battery, flat tire, instructor illness):

- a. Where possible, I will try to notify students of any class cancellation by email the evening before the class meets.
- b. It is not always possible to give advance notice of a class cancellation. In these cases, the rule is simple. If the instructor is not in the classroom within 15 minutes of the beginning of class, the class is cancelled without penalty to students.

4. Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty (see attached campus policy).

In addition, please note **Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 271, Section 50. Sale of research papers, etc.; taking of examinations for another at educational institutions:**

“Section 50. Whoever, alone or in concert with others, sells to another, or arranges for or assists in such sale for another, a theme, term paper, thesis or other paper or the written results of research, knowing or having reason to know that such theme, term paper, thesis or other paper or research results or substantial material therefrom will be submitted or used by some other person for academic credit and represented as the original work of such person at an educational institution in the commonwealth or elsewhere without proper attribution as to source, or whoever takes an examination for another at any educational institution in the commonwealth, shall be punished by a fine of not more than one hundred dollars or by imprisonment for not more than six months, or both.”

In other words, in Massachusetts it is a *criminal offense* to commit plagiarism, or to assist others in plagiarism, to sell and purchase research papers for use in a high education institution.

5. Supplemental Readings. Graduate students are required to do the supplemental readings and to make presentations on those readings in a seminar format.

## **SUPPLEMENTAL READINGS: ON LIBRARY RESERVE**

(required for graduate students only)

Bill, James A. and Robert L Hardgrave, Jr., *Comparative Politics: The Quest for Theory* (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1973).

Walker, J.L. 1969. "The diffusion of innovations among the American states." *American Political Science Review* 63 (September): 880-899. ([available through J-STOR](#)).

Weber, Max. "Science as a Vocation," in Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, ed., *From Max Weber* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 129-56.

Weimber, David L. and Aidan R. Vining, *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition (Prentice-Hall, 2005).