

**MPA 802: Approaches to Policy Analysis**  
**School of Policy Studies**  
**Queen's University**  
**Winter 2018**

**Instructor:** Eugene Lang, Adjunct Professor, School of Policy Studies

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**Office hours:** Thursdays 12:30-2:30 p.m., 5:30-6:30 p.m. (by appointment)

**Office:** Rm 330, RSH

**Location:** Section A, RSH Room 334

Section B, RSH Rm 202

### Course Objectives

The basic philosophy of the course is to approach policy analysis by doing policy analysis. Students will be organized in groups of about four or five. Each group will be tasked to work on a particular policy problem of their choosing (approved in consultation with the instructor) throughout the term. This project will take the form of a Memorandum to Cabinet (MC), the main instrument required for policy, program and legislative approval in the federal and provincial governments.

Another central notion underlying the course is that policy analysis is an iterative process of developing and sharpening arguments through briefings, debate, discussion and critique. Students will therefore be making brief presentations each week on the various dimensions of policy analysis required in a Memorandum to Cabinet, and receive constructive feedback from both the instructor and their colleagues.

**At the end of the course** students will understand effective problem identification/definition, policy research, policy option design and framing, implementation, communications, stakeholder engagement, risk mitigation,, executive briefing etc.

Students will gain experience in:

- Researching, shaping, writing and presenting a **Memorandum to Cabinet** and its various component parts
- Identifying a key problem/issue which needs resolution in the form of policy
- Preparing a **Background Analysis** from which policy options are logically derived
  - Using fact/evidence-based research and analysis
- Developing policy argumentation
- Writing policy documents in a clear and precise fashion conducive to executive level decision-making
  - Conducting effective oral briefings on all aspects of the MC
- Identifying realistic, implementable policy options

- Identifying financial implications of recommendations, including impact on the government's fiscal framework
- Identifying risks and proposing risk mitigation measures
- Articulating expected results and how they will be measured (key indicators)
- Preparing a **Strategic Communications Plan**
- Preparing an **Implementation plan** with stages of delivery and expected results
- Preparing a **Parliamentary Plan** and environment analysis
- Preparing and presenting a summary PowerPoint presentation of the MC

Ninety percent of the student grade is based on the team's performance, with 10% for individual classroom participation. A significant emphasis will be placed on developing strong briefing and presentation skills, both of which are critical to the policy analysis process.

### **Memoranda to Cabinet (Templates):**

Students will use the model outlined in the federal Government Templates and Drafters Guide for MCs:

<http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/index.asp?lang=eng&page=information&sub=publications&doc=mc/mc-eng.htm>

These templates provide the directives for the preparation of:

- 1) The Ministerial Recommendations /MR (maximum six-seven single spaced pages in English) to which will be attached a cover page (1 page) as well as Annex X,Y and Z (two pages each); and
- 3) The three "annexes" (Parliamentary, Communications and Implementation Plans, 2 pages each)

**[note, the Background/Analysis section is not mentioned in the Guide. Details on this will be provided by the instructor. The length of the Background/Analysis section should be around 7-10 single spaced pages]**

Preparing the MC requires extensive policy research and analysis, cost estimation, consideration of political and parliamentary dynamics, and implications on the government's fiscal framework and policy/legislative agenda. The MC needs to be written in a clear, concise and persuasive manner, free of jargon, such that non-experts (i.e. Ministers) can grasp its analysis and recommendations.

*Students who wish to present a MC in an area of provincial or territorial jurisdiction can do so and will use, for the purpose of this exercise, the Federal Government Templates.*

**Course Format:**

Students, in consultation with the instructor, will be required to select one policy problem/issue of relevance to a particular Ministry (or a combination of Ministries). The course format is that of a seminar based on teamwork, with regular presentations by students on their team's progress at various stages of the project, class discussion and regular peer feedback, the goal being to simulate as much as possible the iterative process of policy analysis and MC development. I will provide regular guidance and feedback throughout the process, and will provide lectures that will be supplemented by required readings.

**Communication with the instructor:**

Students are encouraged to communicate with me individually or as a team whenever they have a question, need guidance or wish to discuss a particular aspect of their project and deliverables. You can e-mail me at [Eugenelang4@gmail.com](mailto:Eugenelang4@gmail.com) or set up an appointment to meet on campus or in Ottawa.

**Required Readings**

Leslie A. Pal, *Beyond Policy Analysis* (in Queen's bookstore)

Government of Canada, Privy Council Office, *A Drafter's Guide to Cabinet Documents: Drafting Cabinet Documents*

<http://www.pco->

[bcp.gc.ca/index.asp?lang=eng&page=information&sub=publications&doc=mc/guide-eng.htm#IV.1](http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/index.asp?lang=eng&page=information&sub=publications&doc=mc/guide-eng.htm#IV.1)

**Recommended Readings**

David L. Weimar and Aidan R. Vining, *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice*, New Jersey, Prentice Hall (in Queen's library or available for purchase online)

Chapter 7, "Correcting market and government failures: Generic policies"

Chapter 8, "Landing on your feet: How to confront policy problems"

Chapter 9, "Benefit-Cost Analysis"

Chapter 10, "Thinking Strategically About Adoption and Implementation"

Michael Mintrom, *Contemporary Policy Analysis*, Oxford University Press, 2012

**Evaluation:**

**A) Participation: presentations and engagement in class discussions.** The participation grade will be based on weekly progress reports of your work and constructive comments on the work of your colleagues.

**B) Grading Breakdown:**

- Background/Analysis –**20% of final grade**
- Ministerial Recommendation – **20% of final grade**
- Parliamentary, Implementation and Communications Plans—**20% of final grade**
- PowerPoint Presentation on penultimate draft of MC—**10% of final grade**
- MC Final package – **20% of final grade**
- Class participation—**10% of final grade**

***N.B. Participation/peer feedback will be marked on an individual basis. All other deliverables will receive a team mark.***

**Course Schedule**

**January**

**Week 1**

Description of and goals for the course.

Identifying broad policy areas and selecting groups of students

Lecture: *What is policy analysis and what makes a good policy analyst?*

**Week 2**

Lecture: *Research sources and the Memorandum to Cabinet Instrument*

Lecture: *Problem Definition and Evidence*

Groups meet with instructor to discuss/refine their topic area

**Week 3**

Lecture: *Theory and the Role of Ideas in Policy Formulation.*

Lecture: *Policy and Money*

## February

### Week 4 Group Presentations begin for Background/Analysis assignment

Groups 1-4 present first draft of Background/analysis section to receive feedback from instructor and colleagues. 15 minute PowerPoint presentation per group. The full document is to be submitted for grading on this date.

### Week 5

Groups 5-8 present first draft of background/analysis section. 15 minute PowerPoint presentation. The full document is to be submitted for grading on this date.

### Week 6

*Lecture: Instrument Choice*

*Lecture: Policy Communications and Stakeholder Engagement (Guest Lecturer TBD)*

Week 7—no class, Reading Week

## March

Week 8 Group Presentations begin for Minister Recommendations assignment.

Groups 5-8 present first draft of Ministerial Recommendations to receive feedback from instructor and colleagues. 15 minute PowerPoint presentation. The full document is to be submitted for grading on this date.

### Week 9 Group Presentations

Groups 1-4 present first draft of Ministerial Recommendations assignment for feedback from instructor and colleagues. 15 Minute Power Point Presentation. The full document is to be submitted for grading on this date.

### Week 10

*Lecture: Policy Implementation*

*Lecture: Policy and Parliament*

Week 11 Group Presentations on Communications, Parliamentary and Implementation Plans

Groups 1-4 present first draft of Communications, Parliamentary and Implementation Plans. 15 Minute Powerpoint presentation. The full document is to be submitted for grading on this date.

Week 12

Groups 5-8 present first draft of Communications, Parliamentary and Implementation Plans. 15 minute Powerpoint presentation. The full document is to be submitted for grading on this date.

**April**

Week 13

Groups 1-8 present final MC Powerpoint (15 minutes)