COURSE: MPA 802 – Approaches to Policy Analysis  

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Office: Room 334, RSH  
Office Hours: Thursdays 12:00-2:00 pm 5:30-6:30 pm  

Course Objectives  
The basic aim of the course is to learn policy analysis by doing policy analysis. Students will be organized in groups of five-six. Each group will be tasked to work on a particular policy problem of their choosing (approved in consultation with the instructor). 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 government. The course will build off the foundational elements of policy analysis taught in MPA 810 (Policy Challenges).

Central to the course is the iterative process of developing and refining the analysis and arguments through briefings, class discussion and critique (i.e. the process is itself core to the analysis). Students will therefore be making brief presentations each week on the various dimensions of policy analysis required in a Memorandum to Cabinet to receive constructive feedback from both the instructor and their colleagues.

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 through policy
- Using fact/evidence-based research
- Developing effective policy argumentation
- Writing policy documents in a clear, concise and precise fashion conducive to executive level decision-making
  - Conducting effective oral briefings on all aspects of the MC
- Identifying realistic, implementable policy options that mitigate the policy problem
- 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
Ninety five percent of your grade is based on the team’s performance, with 5% based on your group’s assessment of your individual performance as a member of the group.

Memoranda to Cabinet (Templates):

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


These templates provide the directives for the preparation of:
1) The Ministerial Recommendations /MR (maximum six-seven single spaced, legal size pages) to which will be attached a cover page (1 page)
2) The three “annexes” (Parliamentary, Communications and Implementation Plans, 2 pages each)

Preparing the MC requires extensive policy research and analysis, cost estimation, sensitivity to political dynamics, implications for 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 a mix of foundational lectures from the instructor on various aspects of policy analysis, supplemented by required and optional readings; regular presentations by students on their team’s progress at various stages of the project; and constructive feedback from the class and the instructor on those presentations. The goal with this approach is to simulate as much as possible the iterative process of policy work that occurs inside governments.

**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 or set up an appointment on campus or set up a conference call.

**Required Readings**

Leslie A. Pal, *Beyond Policy Analysis* (copies of which are in the Queen’s bookstore)


**Recommended Readings**


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”


**Evaluation**

**Grading Breakdown:**
- Problem Definition – a two page brief worth **30% of final grade**, to be submitted February 13 for grading
- Ministerial Recommendation – **35% of final grade**, to be submitted March 12 for grading
- Implementation and Communications Plans—**30% of final grade**, to be submitted April 2 for grading
- Group evaluation—**5% of final grade**

**Course Schedule**

**January 9**

Description of and goals for the course. Initial meeting of the groups.

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

**January 16**

Lecture: *Problem Definition and Research*
Lecture: *The Memorandum to Cabinet Instrument*

**January 23**

Lecture: *Theory and the Role of Ideas in Policy Analysis*
Lecture: *Policy and Money*

**January 30**

Group Presentations begin on Problem/Definition brief

Groups 1-4 present a 15 minute Powerpoint on their Problem/Definition and receive feedback from instructor and colleagues.

**February 6**

Groups 5-8 present a 15 minute Powerpoint on their Problem/Definition and receive feedback from instructor and colleagues.
February 13

Lecture: Instrument Choice
Lecture: Policy Implementation

February 18-21—Reading Week—no class

February 27

Group Presentations begin on Ministerial Recommendations assignment.

Groups 5-8 present 15 minute Powerpoint on draft Ministerial Recommendations and receive feedback from instructor and colleagues.

March 5

Groups 1-4 present 15 minute Powerpoint on draft Ministerial Recommendations and receive feedback from instructor and colleagues.

March 12

Lecture: Policy Communications
Lecture: Stakeholder Engagement

March 19

Groups 1-4 present 15 minute Powerpoint on draft Communications, Parliamentary and Implementation Plans and receive feedback from instructor and colleagues.

March 26

Groups 5-8 present 15 minute Powerpoint on draft Communications, Parliamentary and Implementation Plans and receive feedback from instructor and colleagues.

April 2

Guest speaker
ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Academic Integrity is constituted by the five core fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility (see www.academicintegrity.org). These values are central to the building, nurturing and sustaining of an academic community in which all members of the community will thrive. Adherence to the values expressed through academic integrity forms a foundation for the "freedom of inquiry and exchange of ideas" essential to the intellectual life of the University (see the Senate Report on Principles and Priorities www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/senate/report-principles-and-priorities).

Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the Academic Integrity Policy of the School of Graduate Studies, available at http://www.queensu.ca/sgs/forstudents/policiesprocedures/SGSAcademicIntegrityPolicyasofFeb2012.pdf.

Departures from academic integrity include plagiarism, use of unauthorized materials, facilitation, forgery and falsification, and are antithetical to the development of an academic community at Queen's. Given the seriousness of these matters, actions which contravene the regulation on academic integrity carry sanctions that can range from a warning or the loss of grades on an assignment or the failure of a course to the rescinding of a degree.

ACCOMMODATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

Students with physical and learning disabilities must contact the instructor as soon as possible in order for accommodations/modifications for course expectations to be made.

Queen's University is committed to achieving full accessibility for persons with disabilities. Part of this commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities. If you are a student with a disability and think you may need accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact Queen’s Student Accessibility Services (QSAS) and register as early as possible. For more information, including important deadlines, please visit the QSAS website at: http://www.queensu.ca/studentwellness/accessibility-services/