

Syllabus for PUBPL 304-001
Public Policy Analysis
Spring 2020
TTh 3:05 pm – 4:20 pm, Olmsted E-308

Professor: Dr. Daniel J. Mallinson

Office:	Olmsted W-160K
Office Hours:	Wednesday 2 – 3pm, Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:30 – 3pm
Email:	mallinson@psu.edu
Twitter:	@djmallinson
Class hashtag	#pubpl304
Course Webpage	Link

Course Description

What is more important, clean water or jobs? Should a policy maximize effectiveness or efficiency? Is it possible to balance these things? How do we systematically analyze and solve problems? This course examines the struggle over competing values and ideas during the policy making process. It explores how the selection and definition of policy goals (i.e., equity, efficiency, welfare, liberty, and security), problem definitions, and solutions shape our evaluation of public policy. Furthermore, the course will help students build skills in policy research and the writing skills required of policy analysts. Finally, students will work in teams to conduct policy research on pressing problems identified by a member of Harrisburg's City Council. Given that this is a W course, writing is a major aspect of student assessment.

Learning Goals and Objectives

- Goal 1: Students will gain factual knowledge about contemporary policy debates
 - Objective 1a: Students will learn the background of current policy problems facing federal, state, and local governments
 - Objective 1b: Students will learn about the competing proposals for solving these problems
- Goal 2: Students will understand the policy process
 - Objective 2a: Students will learn key policy theories: the policy cycle, Multiple Streams Approach, Advocacy Coalition Framework, and Punctuated Equilibrium

- Objective 2b: Students will learn the role of formal and informal actors in the identification of problems, development of alternative, decision-making, and implementation of policy
- Goal 3: Students will analyze and critically evaluate competing policy ideas
 - Objective 3a: Students will identify competing values and goals in proposed public policies
 - Objective 3b: Students will evaluate the logic of a policy proposal; including the facts, assumptions, and inferences being presented (and ignored) by the proposer
 - Objective 3c: Students will develop analytical skills including identifying primary sources, creating and evaluating arguments, evaluating the graphical presentation of data, and more
- Goal 4: Students will develop their oral and written communication skills
 - Objective 4a: Students will contribute to class discussion and debates, as well as present research findings as a team
 - Objective 4b: Students will learn how to write in multiple forms, including a longer policy paper, shorter executive summary, and policy brief
 - Objective 4c: Students will learn how to evaluate the writing of others and how to reflect on their own writing

Methods for Learning and Teaching: This course will contain a mix of lecture, class discussion, and teamwork. It is vital for your own comprehension of the course material that you come to class prepared to discuss the readings and any relevant happenings in the news.

Reaching Our Goals

Attendance: Your attendance in class is always expected. Attending class will allow you to keep up with the course and provide for meaningful discussion as a class. I will be taking attendance in order to grade participation, but also as a way to get to know you. Please contact me via [e-mail](#) if you are unable to attend class. I will follow the University's attendance policy when it comes to excused absences. See <https://handbook.psu.edu/content/class-attendance>.

Preparation and Participation: I expect you to read the assigned material before class and be able to discuss what you read. Contributing to class discussion will make the course more interesting and will enhance your understanding of the material. Furthermore, it is helpful to keep up with current policy debates in the news, since they will be useful for reinforcing the concepts discussed in class.

Discussion Ground Rule #1 is Respect: We will be discussing some tough public policy problems in this course. There will inevitably be divergent opinions, some of them very strong, amongst the class. It is important that you be respectful of your peers and their opinions, lived experiences, and beliefs.

Do Not Suffer in Silence: Please do not suffer in silence throughout the course if you are struggling. Instead, let me know — as soon as possible — what things are not making sense and we can work it out. If you are having a problem of any kind in the course, please talk to me about it as soon as possible.

Be Flexible: While the syllabus represents an agreement between us, I reserve the right to revise and modify it throughout the course, if it is necessary to achieve our goals. Situations beyond either of our control can also emerge that require changes to the course. I will notify you right away when any changes are made.

Cell Phones and Laptops: Please be respectful of your fellow students and me by silencing your cell phone during class and limiting laptop use to only class-related activity.¹

Current Events: Politics happens in real time and the material we cover in class relates to these events. This is a great opportunity to become informed about national, state, and local policy developments. We will regularly discuss current events that are related to the class. Please be aware of what is going on, particularly as it relates to government bureaucracy. I will regularly tweet news stories relevant to our class using the hashtag #pubpl304. If you don't know where to start in finding news, just ask me.

E-mail Policy: I will work to respond to e-mails by the next business day. This means that e-mails sent on the weekends will be responded to by Monday.

Readings

The following book is required for the course:

Birkland, Thomas A. 2016. *An Introduction to the Policy Process*. Fourth Edition. New York: Routledge. ISBN 978-0-7656-4662-0. ([Link for Amazon](#))

Additional required readings that are not from the Birkland book will be made available on Canvas.

¹In fact, research demonstrates that students who take handwritten notes generally perform better than those that use laptops: Mueller, Pam A. and Daniel M. Oppenheimer. 2014. "The Pen Is Mightier Than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand Over Laptop Note Taking." *Psychological Science* 25(6): 1159-1168.

Lecture Slides

I will be using lecture slides throughout the course. These will be uploaded to the course website (<https://sites.psu.edu/djmallinson/pubpl-304>) and Canvas prior to each class period.

Assessing Your Progress Towards Our Goals

The following types of assessment will be used to track your progress towards meeting our course goals: policy paper, executive summary, policy brief, research presentation, reflection essay, peer review, and participation.

Each component represents the following percentage of your final grade:

Policy Paper Contribution	30%
Executive Summary	15%
Policy Brief	15%
Research Presentation Contribution	10%
Reflection Essay	15%
Participation	15%

We will use the following grade scale:

Letter	Percent
A	94 to 100
A-	90 to 93
B+	87 to 89
B	84 to 86
B-	80 to 83
C+	77 to 79
C	70 to 76
D	60 to 69
F	Below 60

Policy Analysis Project: The entire class will be working on a study of how the City of Harrisburg can better utilize Reservoir Park. This will help you develop project management, writing, and analytical skills. It will also provide a practical and tangible product that you can use when applying for jobs or graduate school. Within the class, you will be part of a two-person team that will be responsible for part of the research project. We will decide as a class what the parts of the project will entail and will divide our work accordingly. Additionally, each team will try their hand at writing an executive summary and policy

brief for the overall project. The best of each will represent the class and receive extra credit on the students' final grades. See Appendix [A](#) for more details and deadlines.

Executive Summary: Policy research papers are more often than not accompanied by shorter executive summaries of the research findings. To be honest, those are read more often than the entire paper. You will thus work together to craft an effective executive summary for your policy paper. See Appendix [B](#) for more details.

Policy Brief: Short presentations of information are just as, if not more, valuable in policy writing than long research papers. For this assignment, you will write a two page, two column brief on the class's report. The brief should include enough background on the topic so that a non-expert can understand it. It should also make specific recommendations for action that are based on the class's research. See Appendix [C](#) for more details.

City Council Presentation: We will present the findings of our study to members of Harrisburg City Council. We will also provide a copy of the final report and policy brief for their use. See Appendix [D](#) for more. Additional details on dates and times will be provided later in the semester.

Reflection Essay: At the end of the course, you will be asked to complete a reflective essay on what you learned through the team project. See Appendix [E](#) for more details.

Participation: Attending and engaging in class is incredibly important. It not only enriches the learning experience for yourself and your classmates, but also prepares you for succeeding in the working world. Thus participation will represent 15 percent of your final score. Your attendance is one component of your final participation score. Other components include completion of small tasks assigned throughout the course, an evaluation of your contributions to the team projects, and a subjective assessment of your engagement in class by the instructor.

Students also have an obligation to notify me within the first three weeks of the semester if they will miss any class session due to a religious observance. I am pleased to do this, but will need notification in order to plan make-up work.

Make-Up Grades: You are allowed to make-up academic work only in the case of excused absences. These absences may include missing class for a [University-sanctioned activity \(with proper documentation\)](#), [illness](#), [religious observance](#), or [family responsibilities](#). If you know in advance that you are going to miss class, please contact me before the absence to make arrangements for completing the work. If you are absent for an unexpected reason, please check in with me as soon as possible. You will have one week from the day of your return to class to make up a missed assignment.

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty is not limited to simply cheating on an exam or assignment. The following is quoted directly from the *PSU Faculty Senate Policies for Students* regarding academic integrity and academic dishonesty: “Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity free from fraud and deception and is an educational objective of this institution. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating of information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students.”

All University and Penn State Harrisburg policies regarding academic integrity/academic dishonesty apply to this course and the students enrolled in this course. Refer to the following URL for further details on the academic integrity policy of Penn State Harrisburg: <http://harrisburg.psu.edu/academics/academic-guidelines-and-policies>. Each student in this course is expected to work entirely on her/his own while taking any exam, to complete assignments on her/his own effort without the assistance of others unless directed otherwise by the instructor, and to abide by University and Penn State Harrisburg policies about academic integrity and academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty can result in an assignment of “F” or “XF” as the final grade for the student.

Disability Access

Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University’s educational programs. Every Penn State campus has a Student DisAbility Resources office. Student DisAbility Resources at Penn State Harrisburg is located in SEC 205. The Disability Services Coordinator, Alan Babcock, can be reached via email at aub15@psu.edu or phone 717-948-6025.

To receive consideration for accommodations, you must contact Student DisAbility Resources (SDR), participate in an intake interview, provide documentation of your disability, and complete a Self-Assessment. Additional information is available on the Disability Services website (<http://harrisburg.psu.edu/disability-services>). If the documentation supports requests for reasonable accommodations, SDR will provide you with an accommodations letter, which you will give to your professors. You will receive accommodations after you give your accommodations letters to your professors. You should share your accommodations letters with your professors as early in the semester as possible. Professors do not provide accommodations retroactively.

Counseling Services

Students may face a variety of concerns over the course of their time at PSH- depressed mood, anxiety, stress, family concerns, body image, substance use, sexuality and many others- that

may interfere with their ability to focus on their studies. Counseling Services provides FREE mental health and social support for all currently enrolled students. Staff follow strict legal and ethical guidelines concerning the confidentiality of counseling. Counseling services is located in SEC 205 and can be reached by phone at (717) 948-6025. You can find more information at the Counseling Services webpage, <http://harrisburg.psu.edu/counseling-services>.

Educational Equity

Penn State takes great pride to foster a diverse and inclusive environment for students, faculty, and staff. Acts of intolerance, discrimination, harassment, and/or incivility due to age, ancestry, color, disability, gender, national origin, race, religious belief, sexual orientation, or veteran status are not tolerated and can be reported through Educational Equity at the Report Bias site: <http://equity.psu.edu/reportbias/statement>. Direct all inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policy to our Penn State Harrisburg Office of Student Affairs at the following link <https://harrisburg.psu.edu/webform/office-student-conduct-incident-report-form>.

Mandated Reporting

As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment on our campus. I also have a mandatory reporting responsibility related to my role as an educator. It is my goal that you feel able to share information related to your life experiences in classroom discussions, in your written work, and in our one-on-one meetings. I will seek to keep information you share private to the greatest extent possible. However, per University policy AD85 (<https://policy.psu.edu/policies/ad85>), I am required to share information regarding sexual misconduct or information about a crime with the University including incidents of sex-based discrimination and harassment (discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, and retaliation). While faculty are ethically bound to report any information as it relates to University policy, we are also a resource and want to be sure you are aware of the services available to you.

The first resource that should you should contact is Felicia Brown-Haywood at the Penn State Harrisburg Title IX Office (E131 Olmsted Building): 717-948-6180.

Other resources that are available include:

- Penn State Harrisburg Counseling and Psychological Services, E131 Olmsted Building: 717-948-6025
- Department of Safety & Police
 - Campus Police: 717-979-7976

– Local Police: 717-543-2200 or 911

- YWCA Confidential Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Services: 1-800-654-1221 (available 24/7)
- Contact Helpline: 800-932-4616 (24-hour community crisis hotline)
- Pinnacle Health Harrisburg: 717-782-3131
- Penn State Harrisburg Student Health Services, 220 Capital Union Building: 717-948-61015
- Penn State Hotline: 800-560-1637 (Anonymous reporting)

Basic Needs Statement

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Office of Student Affairs (syw10@psu.edu, 717-948-6180) for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable him to provide any resources that he may possess.

Writing Tutoring and Other Academic Support

The [Russell E. Horn Sr. Learning Center](#) provides tutoring for writing assignments as well as for other aspects of the academic experience. You can make an appointment in one of the four ways listed below. An appointment is recommended, though not required.

Website	Online Scheduler	Phone	In Person
harrisburg.psu.edu/learning-center	psuh.mywconline.com	717-948-6475	SEC 201

Writing

The Learning Center provides tutoring support for writing assignments in this class. Do you need help developing your thesis and ideas? Do you need objective feedback when you're drafting or revising your papers? Do you have questions about MLA, APA, or Chicago styles? Do you want to improve your academic writing skills? The writing tutors at the Learning Center are experts at helping students improve their writing. Writing handouts are available at psu.box.com/v/WritingResources and in print in SEC 201.

Other Academic Support

Is English an additional language for you and your home language is “getting in the way?” Are you spending excessive amounts of time trying to finish your assigned readings? Are

you nervous about participating in class and presenting speeches? American & Academic Literacy (AAL) appointments support international and other multilingual students with their transition to the U.S., and can help all students with their speeches. Our Academic Skills Consultants can also help with time management, organization, and study skills. Like us at facebook.com/RussellEHornSrLearningCenter/ and follow us on Twitter @PSUHLC.

Course Schedule

We will attempt to follow this schedule as closely as possible, but we may take more time on some concepts and less time on others. For this reason, a digital version of this syllabus can be found on [my website](#). Slides used in class will also be posted on the online syllabus and Canvas before class. All changes to the schedule will be announced in class or via e-mail and the online syllabus will be constantly up-to-date. Required course readings are listed and due dates for assignments are in bold. Links to some additional readings are included in the syllabus on my website, others will be uploaded to Canvas. If you have trouble, please do not hesitate to [e-mail](#) me.

Week 1: Introduction

- January 14: Introduction to the class and each other
- January 16: What is Public Policy?
 - Birkland Chapter 1
 - What is Public Policy Paragraph Due
- January 19: **Regular Drop Deadline**

Week 2: The Policymaking System

- January 21: The Policy Process as a System
 - Birkland Chapter 2
- January 23: Inputs and Outputs
 - Birkland Chapter 2

Week 3: Harrisburg Government and Reservoir Park

- January 28: Reservoir Park
 - TBD
- January 30: Harrisburg City Government
 - TBD

Week 4: History and Structure

- February 4: History and Structure
 - Birkland Chapter 3
- February 6: Work on Ideas for Final Project
 - **No Class Meeting**

Week 5: Official Actors

- February 11: Official Actors
 - Birkland Chapter 4
 - **Ideas for Final Project Due**
- February 13: Discuss project and assign roles

Week 6: Policy Research and Writing

- February 18: Writing
 - USC Libraries. 2019. “Organizing Your Social Sciences Research Paper: Executive Summary.” <http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/executivesummary>.
 - “Tips for Writing an Executive Summary” (on Canvas)
 - Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN. “[Preparing Policy Briefs](#).”

- February 20: Research
 - Litman, Todd. 2012. *Evaluating Research Quality*. Victoria Transport Policy Institute.
 - Sisk, Amy. 2019. “What Responsible Reporting on Scientific Research Looks Like.” *StateImpact Pennsylvania*. January 14.

Week 7: Unofficial Actors

- February 25: Individuals, Parties, Interest Groups
 - Birkland Chapter 5
- February 27: Think Tanks and Other Organizations
 - Birkland Chapter 5

Week 8: Agenda Setting and Social Construction

- March 3: Agenda Setting
 - Birkland Chapter 6
- March 5: Social Construction of Groups
 - Birkland Chapter 6

Week 9: Spring Break

- March 10 and 12: No Class

Week 10: Social Construction Continued

- March 17: Social Construction of Groups
 - Stabile, Bonnie, Aubrey Grant, Hemant Purohit, and Mohammad Rama. (2019). “‘She Lied’: Social Construction, Rape Myth Prevalence in Social Media, and Sexual Assault Policies.” *Sexuality, Gender & Policy* 2: 80-96.

- March 19: Work on Research Project in Teams
 - **No Class Meeting**
 - **Research Update Memo Due**

Week 11: Policy Analysis

- March 24: Analysis and the Policy Process
 - Birkland Chapter 8
- March 26: Decision-making Theories
 - Birkland Chapter 8
 - **Rough Drafts Due**

Week 12: Policy Design

- March 31: Problems and Goals
 - Birkland Chapter 9
- April 2: Policy Tools
 - Birkland Chapter 9

Week 13: Implementation, Failure, and Learning

- April 7: Implementation
 - Birkland Chapter 10
 - **Executive Summary Due**
- April 9: Failure and Learning
 - Birkland Chapter 10

Week 14: Science and Theory

- April 14: Policy Science
 - Birkland Chapter 11
- April 16: Theories of the Policy Process
 - Birkland Chapter 11

Week 15: Hot Topics

- April 21: Healthcare
 - TBD
 - **Policy Brief Due**
- April 23 Drug Policy
 - TBD

Week 16: Hot Topics

- April 28: Choose Your Own Adventure
 - TBD
- April 30: Final Project Meeting

Week 18: Finals Week

- **Council Presentation TBD**
- **Final Paper and Reflections Due May 7**

Appendices

A Policy Research Paper

For the whole semester, you will work with a partner as part of the larger class research project on how Harrisburg City can better utilize Reservoir Park. This topic has been identified by members of Harrisburg city government as a pressing one for the city. Each pair will be assigned a role in the overall project. These roles will emerge from a class meeting where we will discuss the components of the overall project. Each team will produce one “chapter” of the final report, as well as a draft executive summary and two-page policy brief. My role will be to serve as a mentor and evaluator throughout the semester, and then as the final editor of the report that will be delivered to Harrisburg City Council.

There are several intentions with this project. One is to partner with and support a local institution that has limited research capacity. A second is to provide you with a real-world policy research experience and artifacts of your participation in that research. In the past, my students have successfully used their policy writing assignments in job interviews. They can also be useful for graduate school applications. Essentially, we want to move beyond the once and done nature of final projects and, instead, have you work on something that is more meaningful personally, professionally, and societally.

The research paper will be graded based on how thoroughly, yet succinctly, it discusses the policy problem and potential solutions, as well as its grammar and readability. Always keep in mind that we are not writing for academics, thus leave the dry technical prose on the cutting room floor. You need to convey an expertise in the subject in a way that is accessible to lay readers.

Grades will also be adjusted based on feedback received in mid- and end-of-semester peer evaluation surveys. This will help me understand the extent of each student’s participation in the overall project.

Ideas for Final Project Due February 11

Research Update Memo Due March 19

Rough Draft Due March 26

Final Report Due May 7

B Executive Summary

A strong executive summary is vital when producing policy research for a government, think tank, or other public and private consumption (e.g., contract work). Most decision makers will have little time to read your entire report. Their staff may do so, but having a shorter summary of the key points is helpful for getting your information into the policymaking conversation. Using the resources we discuss in class, as well as whatever other helpful resources you can find online, your team will need to write a two-page executive summary that will be the cover for the final copy of the research report. We will vote as a class on the best executive summary and that team will receive extra credit on their final grade.

The executive summary will be graded on how well it summarizes the overall research paper while keeping to two pages. Less successful summaries offer vague background information without speaking to the specific recommendations of the overall report. A successful summary uses strong, direct, and positive language to convince a reader of your recommendations.

Due April 7

C Policy Brief

A policy brief is a “short, [sometimes] neutral summary of what is known about a particular issue or problem. Policy briefs are a form of report designed to facilitate policy-making.”² Writing clear and accurate briefs is an essential skill of successful professionals in the political and business realms. A skillfully crafted brief has many advantages, including (1) improving the reader’s understanding of the topic, (2) saving time by making the information available to many people at once, (3) providing the basis for securing an agreement among contending people, and (4) providing a written record that may become important in reviewing the history of decisions made within the organization.

You will produce a policy brief for the overall project. Each brief must be no longer than two pages, single-spaced with double columns. Exceeding this limit will result in a one letter grade deduction for the assignment. The brief should have one inch margins and 12 point font. See the following [link](#) for many example student-produced briefs.

Your grades will be based on meeting the requirements of the brief and upon the evaluation of content, form, and grammar. Remember that polished, persuasive writing is expected. Feel free to use quotations, examples and data as well; just be sure to stay within the two-page limit. As with the executive summary, the class will vote on the best brief and the authors will receive extra credit.³

DUE April 21

²Eisele, F. Preparing a Policy Brief Issue [PDF Document]. Retrieved from https://www.courses.psu.edu/hpa/hpa301_fre1/IBInstructions_fa02.PDF. Word in brackets added by me.

³Adapted from Dr. Christine Kelleher Palus

D City Council Hearing

Policy analysts not only have to present their ideas in writing, they often have to also present them orally. This assignment will help you build skills in presenting a complicated policy problem and a proposed solution in a manner that is clear to the listener. It will also help you learn how to field questions from your audience.

The class will present its policy research to members of Harrisburg City Council during finals week. Each student will need to be involved in not only creating, but also delivering the presentation. Effective use of PowerPoint or Prezi is encouraged. This means not having too much text on slides and, thus, not reading your slides. Also steer clear of too many animations (and no sound effects...).

Students will be graded using the following criteria:

1. Presentation of the topic/problem (30 points)
2. Presentation of your recommendation(s) (50 points)
3. Style and clarity (10 points)
4. Time management (10 points)

E Reflection Essay

I would like you to write reflection answering the following questions:⁴.

- List the major steps that your team went through in producing the research paper, presentation, and brief
- What is the most important thing you learned in this project?
- What do you wish you had spent more time on or done differently?
- What part of the project did you do your best work on?
- What was the most enjoyable part of the project?
- What was the least enjoyable part of this project?
- How could your teacher change this project to make it better next time?

Essays that thoughtfully reflect on each question and not only answer the what questions, but explain why the student feels the way they do, will receive the highest grades. These should be no *shorter* than two pages.

DUE May 7

⁴H/T to the Buck Institute for Education for these questions: https://www.bie.org/object/document/self_reflection_on_project_work