

**Syllabus for PUBPL 304-001**  
**Public Policy Analysis**  
**Spring 2021**  
**TTh 3:05 pm – 4:20 pm, Olmsted E-314 and Zoom**

**Professor:** Dr. Daniel J. Mallinson

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|----------------|--|
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| Class hashtag  | <a href="https://twitter.com/pubpl304">#pubpl304</a>       |
| Course Webpage | <a href="#">Link</a>                                       |

## 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.

**Technology:** We will be using (at least) five technological tools this semester to support our learning and collaboration: [Zoom](#), [Microsoft Teams](#), [a course website](#), [Nearpod](#), and [Canvas](#). Each serves a different purpose. If you have any issues with any of the technology, please let me know so I can help you work through them. I am also open to additional tools that may aid in our learning.

**Recording:** Video and audio recordings of class lectures will be part of the classroom activity. The video and audio recording is for educational use/purposes and only may be made available to all students presently enrolled in the class. For purposes where the recordings will be used in future class session/lectures, any type of identifying information will be adequately removed.

**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. 2020. *An Introduction to the Policy Process*. Fifth Edition. New York: Routledge. ISBN 978-1-138-49561-6. ([Link for Amazon](#))

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

## 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      | 40% |
| Executive Summary | 15% |
| Peer Review       | 15% |
| 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 the City of Harrisburg’s new comprehensive plan. 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 three-person team that will be responsible for part of the research project. Each team will produce a chapter for a final class white paper. Additionally, each team will try their hand at writing an executive summary and the best one will be used in the final report. See Appendix [A](#) for more details and deadlines.

**Peer Review:** Peer review is a standard practice in the scientific process. It involves other experts reviewing your work and providing their feedback, hopefully in a constructive manner. You will provide one short peer review for another team during the course. It will provide constructive feedback on their chapter. We will talk in class about what makes for a quality peer review. See Appendix [B](#) for more details.

**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 [C](#) for more details.

**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 [D](#) 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 a relatively small component of your final participation score. Of greater importance are the small homework tasks that will be assigned periodically throughout the class, an evaluation of your contributions to the team project, 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.

**Illness:** If you are not feeling well or if you have been in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, DO NOT COME TO CLASS. I cannot stress this strongly enough. We are counting on you to help contain the spread of the virus (and other illnesses) on campus by self-isolating if you have a fever, feel unwell, or have been in contact with someone who has tested positive or is showing symptoms. You may participate remotely or watch the recorded class. If you are not in class, you may be contacted by me check up on you. Again, this is important in the event that we need to follow up on a potential infection.

## 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](mailto: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 and Psychological 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>. Penn State's Code of Conduct can be found at the following link <https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/support-safety-conduct/student-conduct/code-conduct>. Direct all inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policy to Perdeta Bush (717-948-6180), the Equity and Compliance Specialist at the Penn State Harrisburg Office of Equity Compliance in Olmsted E-131.

# 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 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, SEC 205 - 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)

**In Case of Emergency** In the event of a University-wide emergency, course requirements, classes, deadlines, and grading schemes are subject to changes that may include alternative delivery methods, alternative methods of interaction with the instructor, class materials, and/or classmates, and a revised semester calendar and/or grading scheme.

For more general information about the emergency situation, please refer to:



- Penn State Harrisburg's home page at <http://harrisburg.psu.edu/>
- PSUAlert (<http://psualert.psu.edu/psualert/>). This is a service designed to alert the Penn State community via text messages to cell phones when situations arise on campus that affect the ability of the campus - students, faculty and staff - to function normally. Everyone is encouraged to sign up to receive the text alerts.
- Messages will be placed at the 717-948-6000 campus phone number

In the case of a University-wide emergency, please refer to the following about changes in this course:

- Canvas: <https://psu.instructure.com/courses/2116052>
- Instructor's email: [mallinson@psu.edu](mailto:mallinson@psu.edu)

## 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](mailto: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.

**Online:** [starfish.psu.edu](http://starfish.psu.edu)

**Via phone:** 717-948-6475

**Via email:** [LCOffice@psu.edu](mailto:LCOffice@psu.edu)

The Learning Center can help you in a variety of ways:

### Academic Success Coaches

Our professional coaches use individualized tools and learning strategies to help students with: Time management, organization, test-taking, study skills, as well as speech and presentation preparation and delivery.

### Subject Area Tutoring

Courses including accounting, biological and behavioral science, computer science, economics, finance, mathematics, physical sciences, statistics, and some world languages are supported by peer and professional tutoring.

### Writing

Our professional writing tutors can help students with the development of essays, argument papers, resumes, cover letters, scholarship applications and much more. We can help at any stage from brainstorming ideas, to citing sources, to polishing your final product.

If you have a request for tutoring help with a subject that is not in Starfish, send an email to [PSHLearningCtr@psu.edu](mailto:PSHLearningCtr@psu.edu) and we will try to find you an option. If you absolutely cannot find a time that works for you, please let us know at [LCOffice@psu.edu](mailto:LCOffice@psu.edu) and we will try to arrange a time that suits you.

Like us at [facebook.com/RusselleEHornSrLearningCenter](https://facebook.com/RusselleEHornSrLearningCenter), follow us on Twitter @PSUHLC, and on Instagram @russellehornsrllearningcenter

## 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 19: Introduction to the class and each other
- January 21: What is Public Policy?
  - Birkland Chapter 1
  - What is Public Policy Paragraph Due
  - Join a research team
- January 24: **Regular Drop Deadline**

## **Week 2: The Policymaking System**

- January 26: The Policy Process as a System
  - Birkland Chapter 2
- January 28: Inputs and Outputs
  - Birkland Chapter 2

## **Week 3: Research Week**

- February 2: Librarian Presentation
  - TBD
- February 4: Meeting with Councilman Madsen
  - Read your team's section of the comprehensive plan

## **Week 4: Wellness and Research Week**

- February 9: Wellness Day
  - **No Class Meeting**
- February 11: Team Project Work Day
  - **No Class Meeting**
  - I'll be on Zoom to answer any questions

## **Week 5: Structure and History of Policymaking**

- February 16: Structure and History
  - Birkland Chapter 3
- February 18: Structure and History
  - Birkland Chapter 3
  - **Annotated Bibliography Due**

## **Week 6: Official and Unofficial Actors**

- February 23: Official Actors
  - Birkland Chapter 4
- February 25: Unofficial Actors
  - Birkland Chapter 5

## **Week 7: Policy Analysis**

- March 2: Policy Analysis in Principle
  - Bardach and Patashnik Chapter 1 (See Canvas)
- March 4: Policy Analysis in Practice
  - Meet as a team and start working through the eightfold path

## **Week 8: Policy Writing and Wellness Day**

- March 9: Policy Writing
  - Smith Chapter 4 (See Canvas)
- March 11: Wellness Day
  - **No Class Meeting**

## **Week 9: Agenda Setting and Social Construction**

- March 16: Agenda Setting
  - Birkland Chapter 6
- March 18: Social Construction
  - Birkland Chapter 6

## **Week 10: Research Week**

- March 23: Work on Rough Draft in Teams
  - I will be on Zoom to address questions

- March 25: Work on Rough Draft in Teams
  - I will be on Zoom to address questions
  - **First Rough Draft Due**

### **Week 11: Policy Types**

- March 30: Policy Types
  - Birkland Chapter 7
- April 1: Policy Types
  - Birkland Chapter 7
  - **Peer Review Due**

### **Week 12: Policy Design and Tools**

- April 6: Design and Tools
  - Birkland Chapter 9
- April 8: Research Day
  - Work on revisions to your report chapter

### **Week 13: Implementation, Failure, and Learning**

- April 13: Implementation
  - Birkland Chapter 10
  - **Second Rough Draft Due**
- April 15: Policy Failure and Learning
  - Birkland Chapter 10

## **Week 14: Science and Theory**

- April 20: Policy Science
  - Birkland Chapter 11
- April 22: Policy Science and the Profession
  - Birkland Chapter 11
  - [Education for Public Service](#)
  - [Professional Masters](#)
  - [PhD](#)
  - **Executive Summary Due**

## **Week 15: Presenting Policy**

- April 27: Presenting Policy
  - Smith Chapter 9 (See Canvas)
- April 29: Practice

## **Week 16: Finals Week**

- **Final Paper and Reflection Essay Due May 6**

# Appendices

## A Policy Research Paper

This course is designed to not only give you an overview of the policy process, policy analysis, and policy as a profession, but to get you engaged directly in policy work. We do that through a partnership with Harrisburg City Council. Last year this class published its first white paper: *Improving Community Use of Harrisburg's Reservoir Park*. This semester we will be tackling Harrisburg city's new comprehensive plan. The comprehensive plan sets out medium-term (5-10 years) goals for the city across all areas of responsibility. For the remainder of the semester you will work in teams of three to develop a plan for implementing one of the eight parts of the plan: (1) Land Use & Community Facilities; (2) Housing; (3) Mobility & Access; (4) Economic Development; (5) Park, Open & Civic Space; (6) Historic & Cultural Resources; (8) Energy and Utilities. Note that you will not need to develop a comprehensive implementation plan for EVERY part of those sections. Each section is quite broad in scope. Part of your task is to narrow down to specific policy problems, goals, and solutions that can be achieved in 5-10 years.

Each team will produce on chapter of the final report as well as a draft executive summary. My role is 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. Additionally, if we can work out the schedule, we will present our report results and recommendations at a meeting of 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.

Your chapter will be graded based on how thoroughly, yet succinctly, it discusses the policy problem and potential solutions. I expect you will use the analysis and writing resources we learn in this class. Further, it is expected to be well polished in terms of grammar and readability. Finally, I expect you to use the following “data” in your analysis: (1) scholarly literature; (2) relevant data; (3) and exemplar policies from other cities. A layout template will be provided for formatting your chapter of the report.

Individual project grades will be adjusted based on feedback received in the end-of-semester peer evaluation surveys. This will help me understand the extent of each student's participation in the overall project.

**Annotated Bibliography Due February 18**

**First Rough Draft Due March 25**

**Second Rough Draft Due April 13**

**Final Report Due May 6**



## B Peer Review

Peer review is an important standard for academic research, including much policy research. Peer review provides an objective and outside set of eyes to check over your work. Refer to this *Step-by-Step Guide to Writing a Peer Review* for your review. Note that the aim of a solid review is not to summarize the work you are reading, but to critique it. A good critique is not simply about tearing apart a piece of work, but to identify avenues for strengthening the weaknesses you identify. Your review should be at least three double-spaced pages.

**Due April 1**

## C 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. I will choose the strongest executive summary to serve as the summary for our final report.

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 22**

## D Reflection Essay

I would like you to write reflection answering the following questions:<sup>1</sup>.

- 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 6

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<sup>1</sup>H/T to the Buck Institute for Education for these questions: [https://www.bie.org/object/document/self\\_reflection\\_on\\_project\\_work](https://www.bie.org/object/document/self_reflection_on_project_work)