

## PUAD 741-001: Policy Analysis Fall 2011

### Basic Course Information

<b>Time &amp; Place:</b>	Tuesday 7:20 – 10:00 p.m., Arlington Campus, Founders Hall 207
<b>Professor:</b>	Darrene Hackler
<b>Office Location:</b>	Department of Public & International Affairs, Robinson Hall A233
<b>Telephone:</b>	703-993-1418
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<b>E-mail:</b>	<i>dhackler@gmu.edu</i>
<b>Office Hours:</b>	Tuesday 4:00 – 5:00 p.m. or by appt.

### Required Reading:

*Note published editions.*

Weimer, David L. and Aidan R. Vining. 2011. *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Upper Boston: Longman/Pearson Higher Ed. ISBN: 9780205781300.

Bardach, Eugene. 2009. *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press. ISBN: 9780872899520.

Required and recommended readings in syllabus and project research.

### Course Description and Objectives

The course builds on the policy process course (PUAD 640). Thus, this course is not a review, but instead it examines the systematic methods of policy design, development, and assessment of policy solutions. It assumes that you already have some familiarity with the basic concepts and terminology of public policy and public administration.

This course will provide you with both rapid and more complex methods of public policy analysis. We are focusing on methods of analysis and decision-making. In particular, we will follow a process for policy analysis to enable you to: identify data sources and evaluate their utility, establish criteria to analyze the policy, assess alternative policies, select among policy alternatives, and finally monitor policy implementation and evaluation. However, this course is not about the theory and methods for implementation or evaluation. Those are covered in other courses (PUAD 622 and 742, respectively).

Policy analysis is used in a variety of ways inside and outside the public and nonprofit sectors, and the tools of policy analysis plays an important and essential role in decision making at all levels of governments and nonprofits. After taking this course, you will be able to:

- Conduct basic policy analysis for real-world problems;
- Prepare well-organized, clear, and understandable policy documents;
- Plan and present policy arguments and briefings;

- Understand the political context of policy analysis—remember that politics govern the exercise of authority, power, and privilege to determine who gets what, when, and how; and
- Read and understand policy research.

You should be aware that there are three prerequisites for this course (PUAD 502, 611, 640); in addition, you should have knowledge of microeconomics. We will review the foundations as they pertain to policy problems; however, I recommend that you search for other books that may help, such as Alchian & Allen's *University Economics* (1983) and W. Nicholson's *Microeconomic Theory* (multiple editions), and multiple other microeconomic texts. Also several online sources will give you some general principles and terminology: Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microeconomic> and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neoclassical\\_economics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neoclassical_economics)) or an article by Weintraub (<http://www.econlib.org/library/Enc/NeoclassicalEconomics.html>).

PUAD 741 will use Blackboard 9.1. You will need to login to My Mason using your PatriotPass username and password at <https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu>. Once logged in, click on the Courses tab on top right, and then under the 9.1 Course List find and click on the link for: 201170.71966: PUAD-741-001 (Fall 2011). See the "Students: Looking..." Box if you are having trouble on the My Courses page. Please ensure you check Blackboard regularly to receive time-sensitive mail, announcements, and postings.

If you have a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703.993.2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

## **Requirements**

Your grade will be based on the following:

- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| 1. Class participation, discussion, "pop briefings" | 20% |
| 2. Policy Memos                                     | 30% |
| 3. Policy Analysis Project (briefing and report)    | 40% |
| 4. Policy Analysis Project Presentation             | 10% |

## **Class Participation & Discussion**

First, please be punctual; class begins at 7:20 p.m. Please allow for parking/metro issues.

Second, given the nature of this seminar, your participation in class discussions and group exercises should demonstrate a command of the assigned material and the ability to relate the concepts to cases and current policy issues. Your active class participation will make the course more valuable for all of us. We will schedule one-two discussants for each week during the first class.

You will lead discussion once during the semester. In preparing for leading discussion, prepare a brief short 1-2 page memo related to the reading for that session as it relates to a current piece of policy analysis research. Your memo as well as your verbal discussion must utilize this research to frame your analysis of and comments on the readings. The research must include quantitative analysis (statistical, econometric regressions, survey analysis, etc...), which you must address when you lead discussion. In your memo, please include a citation or website address. Memos are due by 5:00 p.m.

Sunday (2 days before class) and should be sent to all class members via Blackboard Discussion forum “Discussion Lead Memos & Comments”. Please alert everyone with a Blackboard Mail message.

Memo formats may vary, but it is useful to discuss:

- Central idea(s), concept(s), arguments which you found stimulating, but not a book review of the readings or the outside research article;
- Connections, linkages, contradictions between one idea or approach; and
- Questions, concerns, disagreements with ideas encountered.

Be ready to lead the discussion based on this memo, but please do not summarize the readings since we will have all read them. Instead, provide comments for discussion, utilize your research example, and pose questions about the readings. Everyone must arrive at class with questions and/or issues to be raised in response to the discussion memo or his/her own comments and ideas. This exercise will prepare you for the type of analysis you will need for other class assignments.

### ***Policy Memos***

Policy memos address real situations in which a public or private decision-maker must make a decision. Usually, a decision maker will have a variety of information at her/his disposal and, while the amount of information may be voluminous, it may be contradictory, incomplete, or simply confusing. Your job is to make an intelligent decision maker into a “smart consumer” by culling information and facts, applying your expertise, and presenting alternatives. The memo exercises provide an opportunity to practice analytical writing, and each is related to the policy analysis project. \*See project description below and the last pages of the syllabus for descriptions of each policy memo and guidance. *Note:* Please come prepared to discuss the policy memo in class as it will frame the “pop-briefings” on your project’s progress.

### ***Policy Analysis Project***

A semester-long project on a policy issue gives you an opportunity to apply the concepts and craft skills introduced in the course: identification of data sources and evaluation of their utility; establishment of criteria to analyze the policy; assessment of alternative policies; and selection among policy alternatives. The policy analysis project is a group effort, and each group will represent a client (sector) and develop a comprehensive, structured policy analysis for this client.

Each group will assess economic sustainability policy in Arlington County based on your group’s client perspective. In 2009, the Arlington County Board adopted its first economic development strategy, *Arlington’s Framework for Prosperity* (Arlington Economic Development Commission 2009), which “cautioned that while Arlington was already a ‘world-class community’, it could not continue to be so without a commitment to aggressively mitigate threats and leverage growth opportunities” (Gordon 2011, 2). The Arlington Economic Development Commission wanted to understand the dynamics and interrelated factors that could produce ongoing economic prosperity and conceptualized this idea as “economic sustainability”. Its work led to the development of an economic sustainability framework for Arlington that interweaves three economic values—innovation, resiliency, and competitiveness—and represents what Arlington views as not only its strengths but also fundamental characteristics of economic sustainability.

Arlington Economic Development will be integrating the economic sustainability framework into future approaches to promote sustainability in Arlington County. As part of this work, Arlington developed 20 “Grand Thoughts” that are value-based interpretations of how the economy and the overall community are performing and possibly will guide the development of actionable steps and policy recommendations (Gordon 2011).

Your group will use these “Grand Thoughts” as a lens to examine and propose economic sustainability policy that increases the levels of innovation, resiliency, and competitiveness in Arlington. You will conduct this policy analysis from the perspective of Arlington clients, such as residents and community groups, business, nonprofits, and Arlington County government and Board of Supervisors. We will discuss project issues and progress weekly and may have several guest speakers. See memo 1 instructions to start reading about this policy issue; *more required readings will be assigned for this project and in preparation for each speaker throughout the semester.*

You should examine the legal, political, economic, social, environmental/ecological, and, where relevant, scientific aspects of your policy issue. The semester will allow you to develop information of sufficient depth on the issue in order to propose relevant goals and specify plausible policy alternatives. You must conduct a multi-goal analysis with explicit goals and plausible alternatives; this will require primary or secondary collection of data for the design of appropriate measures and analysis. The analysis will include a goals alternative matrix that you will use to make explicit arguments for the particular goals selected (and the criteria used to apply them), concretely specify policy alternatives, and project and value the consequences of each of the alternatives in terms of each of the goals. You should then argue for the selection of one of the alternatives. **NOTE:** Although the goals alternative matrix helps the client picture the situation quickly, you must discuss the matrix directly and explicitly in your report. State the goals and impact measures, discuss or at least indicate from where the data come, and discuss the alternatives by the goals. Use the matrix to interpret the evaluate alternatives for the client and suggest why one alternative is preferred based on your evaluative criteria (matrix goals/impacts).

The policy memos will help you with your project. Memo 1 will require you to dig into the project, conducting a thorough policy history. Memo 2 will ask you to assess the nature of the policy problem and determine whether it is a result of a market or government failure; that is, what is the underlying policy problem. Memo 3 will ask you to identify alternatives, prompting the need to expand or reformulate goals in order to value all consequences, and these reformulated goals often suggest new policy alternatives.

### **Project Briefing**

On the **Tuesdays of October 18<sup>th</sup> or 25<sup>th</sup>**, each group will provide a mid-project oral briefing on their project. Each person in the group must present. You will have a total of 15 minutes to provide an introduction to the issue you are addressing in your project, pose an analytical question you are trying to address, and describe your progress and next steps to complete analysis. Part of your briefing grade will also include *providing constructive in-class comments on other group presentations.*

### **Project Report**

The written analysis for the project is due via Blackboard on **Tuesday, December 6<sup>th</sup>**. The body of the report should be self-contained and no more than 25 double-spaced pages with normal margins and

pitch, excluding appendix material. In addition, you must have a polished executive summary which states the recommendation in the first paragraph and rehearses the analysis presented in the body of the report in 2 double-spaced pages. The executive summary, just like the body of the report must be self-contained, as it may be the only part of the report that would actually be read by a busy client. You must use informative headings that reveal the logic of the analysis. You may choose to have appendix material that complement your report such as literature reviews, detailed policy history, statistical background, extended descriptions of policy alternatives, illustrations of numerical calculations, development of important concepts, or discussion of similar policies in other time periods or places.

You must carefully cite all sources: provide a bibliography of relevant material and consistently use **appropriately formatted parenthetical citations**. This includes any World Wide Web material—make sure to identify the person or organization posting the material as well as a website address. An important skill is gathering and assessing information. The project gives you an opportunity to explore many sources of information—scholarly publications, especially in the policy journal literature, government documents, interest group and think tank reports, and experts. Be careful of the World Wide Web; although useful, make sure to carefully assess sources, organizational sponsors, and established editorial standards.

Assessment of final projects will be in terms of the quality of research, analysis, presentation style, and briefing presentation. See Blackboard Course Content for the project evaluation form.

### ***Project Presentation***

The final phase of your project is a 25-30 minute group presentation (all members must present) on **Tuesday, December 6<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup>**. An electronic copy of the presentation is also due via Blackboard on **December 6<sup>th</sup>**. ***NOTE: All must be in attendance to evaluate peers.*** A presentation Evaluation form will be submitted by each student for each presenter. See Blackboard Course Content for form to help prepare presentation.

### ***Grading***

I will be judging your writing and presentations as a whole, looking at your knowledge, as well as your judgment in selection and presentation of material. Please note that the GMU's graduate grading system allows grades of A, A-, B+, B, B-, C and F. Work that does not merit at least a B is not considered acceptable graduate work. The following is offered as a guideline:

**A/A-:** An excellent grasp of the facts. Evidence of considerable organizing intelligence and powers of argument.

**B+:** Sound factual knowledge. Evidence of sound expository power, i.e. a clear line of argument throughout the essay.

**B:** Knowledge of the basic facts. Ability to draw some conclusions, although of a somewhat superficial and generally conventional kind. Main lines of argument visible but with some problems.

**C:** Knowledge of the basic facts but weak in argument or relevance, OR reasonably relevant but displaying factual weakness.

## Honor Code Policy

George Mason University has an Honor Code, which requires all members of this community to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing are all prohibited. Please consult the Student Handbook for a full definition of these terms. **All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee.** Violations include but are not limited to the following:

- Cheating includes any “willful giving or receiving of an unauthorized, unfair, dishonest, or unscrupulous advantage in academic work over other students,” by any means whatsoever, or the attempt to do so. Examples: copying off another student; using notes during a closed-book exam; obtaining an assignment ahead of time from a student who took the class a previous semester; turning in the same work in more than one class (without prior authorization from all professors concerned).
- Plagiarism includes “presenting as one’s own the works, the work, or the opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgement” or “borrowing the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought of someone else without proper acknowledgement.” Examples: getting your paper off the Internet; turning in a paper that was written by somebody else; buying a paper; taking a written piece from someone else but rewording it so that it looks different.
- Lying includes “the willful and knowledgeable telling of an untruth, as well as any form of deceit, attempted deceit, or fraud in an oral or written statement relating to academic work.” Examples: lying to faculty member by saying you were sick when you were not; falsely claiming a death in the family or a personal emergency; falsifying any official documentation.
- Stealing encompasses “taking or appropriating without the permission to do so, and with the intent to keep or to make use of wrongfully, property belonging to any member of the George Mason University community or any property located on the University campus.” Examples: stealing exams or paper assignments from the professor for the purposes of cheating; selling notes you take in class to an individual or a business.

## Course Schedule†

Below is the schedule of topics and assigned readings that should be read *before* the start of that class. The two main texts are referred to by the author’s last name. Others are in *E-reserves* folder in Blackboard Course Content. See below schedule for important dates regarding last days to drop/add, etc. †*The schedule for readings and assignments may change due to unforeseen circumstances.*

**Week 1    8/30**    Introduction to Policy Analysis and the Role of the Analyst



Please read and come prepared to discuss.

Weimer and Vining Ch. 1, 2, 3 (NOTE: Ch. 1 is a template for a policy analysis project.)

*Further Recommended Reading:*

Musso, Biller, and Myrtle. 2000. “Tradecraft: Professional writing as problem solving.” *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 19(4) Fall:635-645. **ER**

Policy Analysis Project Assignment & Discussant sign-up

**Week 2 9/6 Foundations of Policy Analysis**

Weimer and Vining Ch. 14, 4

Bardach's Appendix A & W&V Ch. 1 will be used to demonstrate the "pieces" of analysis.

*Further Recommended Reading:*

Garrison, Stephen M. & Gregory M. Scott. 1998. "Policy Analysis Papers." Ch. 13 in *The Political Science Student Writer's Manual*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, p. 259-277. (NOTE: A guide for policy analysis reports that supplements Ch. 1 and 14. Each suggests what reports must convey and suggestions. *You should utilize this reading for Memo 1, your project briefing, and your final project report.*)

**Week 3 9/13 Rationales for Public Policy: Market Failures**


Weimer and Vining Ch. 5

**Week 4 9/20 Rationales for Public Policy: Other Than Efficiency**

Weimer and Vining Ch. 6

**Week 5 9/27 Rationales for Public Policy: Other Than Efficiency**

Weimer and Vining Ch. 7

✓  Policy Memo 1 Due by 7 p.m. via Blackboard

**Week 6 10/4 Group Meetings to work on Policy Project**

Garrison, Stephen M. & Gregory M. Scott. 1998. "Policy Analysis Papers." Ch. 13 in *The Political Science Student Writer's Manual*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, p. 259-277.

Meet with your policy group and use the session to progress on policy project and ready briefings.


- To prepare for your meeting, please compare your Memo 1 content with each other.
- Garrison & Scott (p. 262-265, 267-268, 272-276) with W&V Ch. 14 suggest the questions that must be addressed and help frame how you should structure your project readings and research.



**10/11 No Class: Fall Recess, progress on policy project.**

**Week 7 10/18 Government Failures and Policies**

Weimer and Vining Ch. 8, 9

✓  Policy Analysis Project Briefing


**Week 8 10/25 Steps of Policy Analysis**

Weimer and Vining Ch. 15  
Bardach Part I, II, III Appendix C

*Further Recommended Reading:*


Weimer and Vining Ch. 16

Boardman, Anthony, David Greenberg, Aidan Vining, and David Weimer. 2001. *Cost Benefit Analysis: Concepts and Practice* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. Ch 1, 2, 3. **ER**

✓  Policy Analysis Project Briefing

**Week 9 11/1 Steps of Policy Analysis Continued**

Review reading from previous week


✓  Policy Memo 2 Due by 7 p.m. **via Blackboard**

**Week 10 11/8 Policy Design: Correcting Market and Government Failures**

Weimer and Vining Ch. 10  
Bardach Appendix B

**Week 11 11/15 Policy Design: Correcting Market and Government Failures Continued**

Review reading from previous week

✓  Policy Memo 3 Due by 7 p.m. **via Blackboard**

**Week 12 11/22 Policy Design: Government Supply and Tools**

Weimer and Vining Ch. 13

Salamon, Lester. 2002. "The New Governance and the Tools of Public Action: An Introduction." Ch. 1 in *The Tools of Government: A Guide to the New Governance*, ed. Lester Salamon. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 1-47. **ER**


**Week 13 11/29 Strategy and Alternatives for Feasible Policy Adoption and Implementation**

Weimer and Vining Ch. 11, 12

Peters, B. Guy. 2002. "The Politics of Tool Choice." Ch. 19 in *The Tools of Government: A Guide to the New Governance*, ed. Lester Salamon. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 552-564. **ER**

**Week 14 12/6 *Policy Analysis Project Presentations***

✓  ***Policy Analysis Project Presentation Due via Blackboard***

✓  ***Policy Analysis Project Report Due via Blackboard***

**Final: 12/13 *Policy Analysis Project Presentations* 7:30 – 10:15 p.m.**

**Important dates to know:** Last day to drop with no tuition penalty, September 6; Last day to add classes, September 6, Last day to drop with no academic liability, September 30

***Policy Memo Exercises & Guidelines*****Memo 1: Understanding Economic Sustainability**

Part of policy analysis is becoming an expert in the policy problem. To understand the problem, you need to assess the symptoms, determine the magnitude of the problem, how it is distributed, and the length of time the symptoms have been around. A policy history will utilize multiple types of information to determine how the policy problem has evolved and how it has been addressed. Think about this task as gathering the necessary background on the policy problem and expertise in order to frame the issue and understand what the solutions could be (memos 2 & 3).

You should gather document and field research, examining academic journals and think tank reports. Please evaluate credibility of all sources. In Blackboard's Course Content, a folder for the project includes many documents that offer a starting place, particularly Arlington County's 20 Grand Thoughts research paper, Hackler's draft report and bibliography on Arlington's economic sustainability framework, and Kates et al. Please do not limit yourself to these or other materials in this folder. Arlington's economic sustainability framework is the result of there being a problem with traditional economic development policy to address community issues. Why is this policy important to Arlington? What is different about it? If the Grand Thoughts are value-based goals of an economic sustainability plan, what are the problems that these Grand Thoughts are addressing? [**NOTE:** Thinking ahead may help. As you move to memos 2 & 3, you will need to determine the rationale for the economic sustainability policy as well as possible policy solutions—how can Arlington promote economic sustainability and increase the levels of innovation, competitiveness, and resilience? Your client perspective will affect the solutions and measurements of these.]

This is an **individual** writing assignment. You should understand the perspectives of various clients after conducting this research, but it should better prepare you to develop the best policy solutions to the problem in order to give solid advice to your client, balancing analytical integrity, responsibility to a client, and adherence to ones' personal conceptions of the good society. You should refer to Chapter 14 and Garrison & Scott (**ER**, all but especially p. 262-265, 272-273), referencing the need for analysis and how analysis starts with understanding, defining, and describing the problem. Please follow the memo guidelines below. See "Writing a Successful Policy Memo" guidelines below for further details and instructions.

✓  Due by 7 p.m. September 27<sup>th</sup> ***via Blackboard***

## Memo 2: Framing the Policy Problem

One of the steps in defining a policy problem is framing it as a market or government failure. The framing helps you to determine if there is a strong rationale for government action and suggests generic policy alternatives for consideration. Prepare an analysis that introduces the problem implied by your project statement and frames it as a market or government failure. (Projects often begin as a request for analysis of a specific alternative to the status quo. In such cases, problem definition involves identifying the underlying policy problem that prompts interest in the alternative.) After writing an introductory paragraph, divide your memorandum into two distinct parts. In the first part provide a sketch of the context for your problem. The sketch may be in the form of a brief history, or it may simply describe the symptoms of the problem. The second part should clearly frame your problem as a market or government failure.

It is likely that you will be able to provide a useful frame by focusing on one market or government failure. It may be that several others are applicable as well. While you may note these in passing, try to stay focused on the one that best helps you understand the nature of the problem from the perspective of the good of society. You should think about whether the failure is affected by other limitations to the competitive framework (Ch. 6 of Weimer & Vining) or of need of the reallocation of opportunity and goods to achieve distributional and/or other Goals (Ch. 7 of Weimer & Vining). Your memorandum should show that you understand the concept of the type of failure and that you are able to apply it to a specific context, which is your policy problem.

Imagine that you are writing your memorandum to a colleague who will be working with you on the analysis. Assume that your colleague does not have much background in economics. Clearly explain any technical terms that you use. Also, avoid using diagrams. If you think that a diagram is essential, please insert it in an appendix. Please follow the memo guidelines below; however, since this is a **group** writing assignment, the memo should be jointly written and be 8-10 pages.

✓  Due by 7 p.m. November 1<sup>st</sup> ***via Blackboard***

## Memo 3: Goals and Policy Alternatives

When doing policy analysis, it is usually helpful to consider some possible policy alternatives in considerable depth well before preparing a full draft. Looking ahead to alternatives often helps one to refine goals and criteria. It also helps one anticipate the sort of information that will be useful for predicting consequences of alternative policies. Now would be a good time for you to focus on one of your promising policy alternatives for your project.

Following the guidelines below, please do the following: First, create a draft of your goals alternative matrix (goals and impact categories defined and measurable) with at least three policy alternatives to attach as an appendix to the memo. **NOTE:** You must have mutually exclusive policy alternatives, which you should briefly explain in your memo. Your goals, particularly the substantive ones, must not be uni-dimensional. Your matrix must include “draft” values measuring the goals (numbers, \$, ordinal categories) for your locality; you cannot use the values from other similar localities. Please cite sources for all data in matrix.

Second, clearly specify one of your policy alternatives in terms of all its essential elements. **NOTE:** For this assignment you are not allowed to select the status quo.

Third, briefly outline what you believe to be the major effects of the alternative — including both the use of resources required to implement it and its impacts.

Fourth, discuss what information you hope to use to predict the magnitudes of the major effects.

Please follow the memo guidelines below; however, since this is a **group** writing assignment, the memo should be jointly written and be 8-10 pages, not including the goals alternative matrix.

✓  Due by 7 p.m. November 15<sup>th</sup> via Blackboard

### Writing a Successful Policy Memo

Policy memos address real situations in which a public or private decision-maker must make a decision. Usually, a decisionmaker will have a variety of information at his/her disposal and, while the amount of information may be voluminous, it may be contradictory, incomplete, or simply confusing. Your job is to make an intelligent decisionmaker into a “smart consumer” by culling information and facts, applying your expertise, and presenting alternatives.

While no single template is always effective, there are some basic ingredients to most successful policy memos. They include

- a very concise summary of the decisionmaker’s problem showing you understand the issues;
- a synopsis of the analysis employed;
- clear, terse prose without technical jargon;
- a range of alternative solutions or strategies to deal with the problem; and
- a list of data or information that you would need to go into even greater depth.

Successful policy memos should be rigorous but creative. Practically speaking, this means that use of analytic tools from class are fundamental, but that supplemental information and approaches are welcome.

To structure an analysis, several questions are often convenient to ask yourself.

1. Who are the principal actors in the case at hand? What are the long run goals of each of these actors? What are the short run incentives of each? How is each rewarded?
2. What is the decision to be made? What are the options available? Are the apparent constraints really constraints or might some be loosened? Are the long run alternatives different from those in the short run?
3. What are the most likely unintended secondary consequences of proposed policies?
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each option? Which are quantifiable? What bounds can you put on those that are not quantifiable?
5. Can the problem be broken into several simpler problems?

There are several common problems people encounter in preparing policy memos.

1. The most common, most fatal, error in real-life policy writing is to lose the decisionmaker’s attention. If you “talk down” to him/her, go over his/her head technically, or use more words than you need to make a point, your memo will probably be disregarded. Obviously, the stakes

are not so extreme in this class, but consider these exercises as practice for the real-life policy memos you will be writing soon.

2. Another error is to make policy recommendations (as well as other statements) that are far too general. The more specific your policy recommendations, the easier it is for decisionmakers to see both the advantages and disadvantages.
3. A third common problem is to lose sight of what you are trying to accomplish. This can result in extraneous sentences and, sometimes, even paragraphs. All information included in the memo should contribute to the points you are trying to make.
4. A fourth error is to make statements not supported by facts. Unsupported assertions are often the vehicle by which your personal biases (the hallmark of discredited policy work) slip into the analysis.

Policy memos should be three typed, double-spaced pages, with 1-inch margins and in 12-point Times New Roman font. If you cite material, include either endnotes or parenthetical citations. Additional information should be labeled as appendices and may be devoted to charts, tables, graphs, etc.; however, the text should be able to stand alone without requiring the reader to refer to those exhibits.

*I strongly recommend that you exchange your memos with your colleagues* in the class for proofreading and editing before you submit them. You can help one another with suggestions for clarity and content of your assignments.

## ***Policy Analysis Project Assessment***

Analyst: \_\_\_\_\_

Issue: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Research**

Current policy:

Experiential problem:

General sources:

Evidence relevant to predictions:

### **Analysis**

Client orientation:

Problem definition:

Problem modeling (market and government failure):

Specification of goals/criteria:

Specification of policy alternatives:

Prediction/valuation:

Political feasibility/implementation:

Recommendations:

### **Presentation Style of Research**

Organization:

Clarity of text:

Executive summary:

Documentation:

### **Briefing Presentation (mid-project)**

Current policy:

Experiential problem:

Client orientation:

Problem definition:

### **General Comments**

### **Grade for project**