Syllabus for ESPM 4242/5242, Fall 2018

Logistics and Contact Information

Course Meeting Time and Location:
Tuesday/Thursday 11:45-1 pm
203 Green Hall
St. Paul Campus

Course Instructor:
Forrest Fleischman
Assistant Professor
Department of Forest Resources
101D Green Hall
ffleisch@umn.edu

Office Hours:
I will always be available without appointment for the 15 minutes after class. Beyond this, my office hours are by appointment: https://z.umn.edu/Forrest-Office-Hours. Just sign up, there is no need to contact me. I try to maintain 4-5 hours open per week.

Teaching Assistant:
Adrienne Strubb,
PhD Candidate, Natural Resource Science & Management
320 Green Hall
strub038@umn.edu
Office Hours: 10:30-11:30, Tuesday & Thursday

Prerequisites:
Graduate student, or undergraduate with junior or senior standing; undergraduate students MUST have taken ESPM 3241W or ESPM 3271 and ESPM 3261, or equivalent.

Required Reading:
Most readings for this course will be posted on Canvas. There is one required textbook:
Bardach, E. and E. M. Patashnik (2016). A practical guide for policy analysis: the eightfold path to more effective problem solving. Los Angeles, CQ Press/Sage. Note that earlier editions of this textbook contain substantially similar information, and could probably be used as a substitute. However they are not identical, so students using older editions may encounter minor differences in what they are learning, and will have to figure out on their own how to match page numbers of required readings segments, etc.
Course Description and Focus:
The goal of this course is to enable students to produce their own analyses of environmental policies using a diversity of methods, as well as to critique existing analyses.

Decades of research on the impacts of public policies have shown that policies frequently do not achieve their intended outcomes, and often have negative unintended consequences. Thus, policy professionals need skills and tools to understand the impacts of existing policies, as well as to compare potential future policy options in order to produce policies that are effective at achieving their goals. At the same time, the policy process is fundamentally political, which means that policy analysts must be prepared to participate in a political process of policy design, adoption, and implementation in which non-scientific values take precedence over analysis. Skilled analysts must thus have the technical ability to evaluate which policies are most likely to achieve stated objectives, while simultaneously negotiating a complex political terrain. This course aims to develop skills and tools for analyzing and presenting policies in ways that enhance both the effectiveness and the democratic legitimacy of public policy.

As such, this course focuses on fundamental elements of research design and interpretation in the social sciences, applying them to practical problems in contemporary natural resource management, as well as examining the politics of implementing the resultant ideas. Students taking this course are expected to have a background in basic principles from economics, public policy, and statistics. Grades will be based on students’ demonstrated ability to apply concepts of the course to producing and critiquing analyses of policy. This class draws on a project-based learning paradigm. Class sessions will be focused on skill development and application, and thus this will leading up to students completing policy analysis projects.

Students should be aware of the limitations of this course. Professional level policy analysis generally requires advanced statistical training, which cannot be covered in this course. Graduate study in an MPA, MPP, or applied economics program would be a good way to acquire this expertise (and is available at UMN through the Humphrey School & the Dept. of Applied Economics). Classic introductory texts include Wooldridge (2006), Meier and Gill (2000); Weimer and Vining (2011) and many others. This course focuses on foundational aspects of research design and causal inference, and the politics of the policy process which are sometimes overlooked in these more advanced courses, and thus will be a good complement or foundation for students pursuing more advanced study. Doctoral students will want to read broadly in associated literatures beyond this course (some of which are provided in the graduate student supplement) in order to gain the proficiency expected in research design and the philosophy of science that is expected of advanced graduate students (for example on preliminary exams).

Course Policies

Academic Freedom and Responsibility
In a course that is about controversial issues, such as public policy, there are often no “correct” answers, and the focus of this course is on learning analytic tools that enable finding better answers, rather than on finding one correct answers. Thus, students will be graded on the process through which they support the conclusions in their work, rather than on the conclusions that they come to. To put this in other words: The entire point of this class is to learn how to support your ideas with
evidence. You may take whatever position you want on any issue we discuss, as long as you can support that position with evidence. The expectation in this course is that you will approach controversy with an open mind, making up your mind in response to the evidence you find. An alternative method, which we will discourage, is to make up your mind first, and then search for evidence to support your prior conclusions. Be prepared to change your views after encountering evidence.

Students and faculty are expected to follow the university policy on academic integrity. The work you submit must be your own, you will cite sources for ideas, text, images, and analysis included in your work, any suspected or unintentional plagiarism will be addressed via individual conversations, and intentional academic dishonesty may lead to earning a failing grade for the course and/or to conversation with the participant’s departmental advisor, Director of Graduate Studies, department chair, and/or dean about the serious transgression.

**Appropriate Student Use of Class Notes and Course Materials**

All course materials, except for published readings, are covered by a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike International license. In no cases may materials generated or shared for this class be sold by anyone other than the person who originally created those materials. Our aim is to create and share Open Educational Resources.

**Disability Accommodations**

If you have a documented disability that affects the way you will learn in this course, please set up a meeting with me as soon as possible so that we can adapt the course learning environment to meet your needs. Even if you do not have a documented disability, you should still come meet with me if you are struggling with any part of the learning environment in this class, and would like to work with me to find ways to perform better in this class. I can almost always help. Note that one of the most common disability accommodations is to allow extra time or separate spaces for giving timed in-class exams, however there are no timed or in-class examinations in this class – in this sense the class already is providing a supportive environment for this common disability. The Disability Resource Center provides information regarding student access, resources, and support.

**Diversity, collegiality, harassment, and respect**

Both instructors and students are responsible for maintaining a classroom environment that is safe for all students, respectful of differences, and creates a supportive and challenging learning environment. Maintenance of a supportive classroom environment is first and foremost the job of the instructor, and if something I do in the classroom makes you uncomfortable, inform me so that I can fix it.

Students are expected to show up on time, treat each other with respect even when there are differences of opinion, and work together effectively. This can be challenging when working on controversial issues, so one very important ground rule for this class is to focus on the evidence, not on the people presenting it. Working in teams can be particularly challenging, and learning how to do so effectively is an important career and life skill. Students experiencing challenges in their team environment should bring those challenges to my attention as soon as possible.
Students should be aware of and abide by the Student Conduct Code, and violations may be referred to the Office for Community Standards. In addition to contacting the instructors, Students with concerns are encouraged to contact the Office for Equity and Diversity about sexual harassment concerns, and LGBTQA concerns, as well as the director of the ESPM program, or Student Conflict Resolution Center's staff.

Attendance & Makeup Work

General attendance policy
The goal of my attendance & makeup policy is to encourage students to thrive even when life events intervene. If you fall behind in your work or have trouble making it to class, or arriving on time, for any reason, you should discuss it with me and we will work together to help you perform as well as you can in the class. I will do this regardless of whether your absences are formally excused according to university policy. Students are expected to arrive on time and attend class regularly. I do not take attendance but in a class of this size, it’s easy to notice when students are regularly late or absent. If you miss more than 3 classes during the term, for any reason, you should schedule a meeting with me to discuss how to makeup the work you have missed. If I notice that your working is lagging, for attendance, or other reasons, I will request that you come meet with me. Please do so.

Missed class: First steps
If you miss a class for any reason, your first step should be to contact your classmates to obtain information and notes about what you missed in class. A substantial portion of class time will be spent working in teams on group projects, and thus, missing class will have a direct impact on your teammates, and you should discuss with them how to make up for time you may have missed working on those projects.

Missed class: graded assignments
There are graded in-class assignments in this class, all of which are listed, with dates, on this syllabus. If you miss a class that has a graded in-class assignment, it is your responsibility to make it up. The makeup procedure is as follows: (1) locate a peer-reviewed journal article that relates to the topic of that class (the TA or I can help you do so). (2) write a review (400-600 words) of the article that explains what the article is about and what you learned from the article. (3) email this review to ffleisch@umn.edu. I will accept makeup work completed within 2 weeks after your return to class. Please contact me if extended absence makes completing this assignment difficult.

Extensions and makeup work:
If an absence of any kind will cause you to miss a deadline for a graded assignment, you must contact me at the earliest possible time to arrange for an extension. I do not accept late work without a pre-arranged extension. If I am contacted at the earliest possible time you could have arranged an extension, I will be lenient and work with you to come up with a plan to complete any work you missed. If this happens after the work was due, as sometimes happens, I will work with you to come up with a plan to make up the missed work.
Health and Stress Management.
Sometimes life happens at times that are not convenient for coursework. If there is any way that I, as your instructor, can help you with life events or challenges, please ask. I cannot guarantee that I can help, but there are often small changes, adjustments, or suggestions that I can make that may help you. Students come to the classroom with a variety of personal experiences and backgrounds, and some challenges can be exacerbated by the stresses of university life. Students struggling with relationship issues, caring for family members, alcohol and drug use, feeling down, having anxiety or difficulty concentrating, or lack of motivation should reach out to professional resources available for helping them succeed at the university (and in life). Useful resources include the Student Mental Health Website, the Center for Spirituality, and International Student & Scholar Services. Students struggling with difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient/nutritious food should connect with Nutritious U or another local resource. Please inform the instructor if he can assist you in any way in dealing with these issues.

Use of Personal Electronic Devices in the Classroom
In this class, we will use a stow & go policy with regards to electronic devices. This means that we will use electronic devices in the classroom for learning purposes, and put them away when we are not using them for that purpose. I will communicate clearly when I expect you to use (and not use) electronic devices. In general, you will use electronic devices when doing team work, but not when in class discussions, lectures, or group presentations. I encourage students to take notes by hand wherever possible, as there is solid research showing that taking notes by hand encourages more effective learning. Since most of our readings are made available in digital form, it may occasionally be necessary to pull up a reading on a digital device during discussion. By the way, it’s really easy to tell when a student is using electronic devices for non-academic purposes. There are occasionally legitimate reasons why students need to see communications devices during class (e.g. for genuine emergencies) but otherwise, the expectation is that students use communications devices in class time only for purposes related to the class.

Grading:
Undergrads (enrolled in 4242)
For undergrads enrolled in the course, grading will work as follows.

- 6 memos, at 60 points each: 360 points
- 11 small assignments at 10 points each: 110 points
- 5 team presentations of 25 points each: 125 points
- 3 team papers, at 75 points each: 225 points
- 1 final team project: 200 points

Individual grades for all team-based components of the class will be adjusted based on peer evaluations.

Points will be translated into grades as follows:
Total: 1020 points
- A: More than 930 points
- A-: 900-929.999 points
- B+: 870-899.999 points
- B: 830-869.999 points
- B-:800-829.999 points
- C+: 770-799.999 points
- C: 730-769.999 points
- C-: 700-729.999 points
- D+: 670-699.999 points
- D: 600-669.999 points
- F: Less than 600 points

Grad students (enrolled in 5242)
Those enrolled in 5242 will be responsible for preparing an additional research paper, which is expected to be a thorough policy analysis of a topic closely related to the student’s thesis or dissertation topic. This will be graded as follows:

- Research Proposal: 50 points (due Sept. 25)
- Rough Draft: 100 points (due November 13)
- Final draft: 250 points (due December 12)

Thus grad student grades will be out of 1410 points, and will be awarded on a percentage basis:
- A: More than 93%
- A-: 90-92.9999%
- B+: 87-89.9999%
- B: 83-86.9999%
- B-:80-82.9999%
- C+: 77-79.9999%
- C: 73-76.999%
- C-: 70-72.9999%
- D+: 67-69.9999 points
- D: 60-66.9999 points
- F: Less than 600 points

Course Outline:
*Note: All assignments are due at 10:00 AM except, obviously, presentations, which will be given in class. The reason for this policy is that the professor reads your assignments when preparing class, and needs some time to do so.
Unit 1: What is policy analysis?

1. Class 1: Sept 4: Class introduction
   - **Reading:** D. T. Campbell (1969), Bardach and Patashnik (2016), introduction & appendix A.
   - **Assignment 1:** Small assignment 1: handed in *during* class
2. Class 2: Sept 6: Evidence-based policy making introduction
   - **Reading:** Drèze (2018), Pasachoff (2018), Bardach and Patashnik (2016) (p. 1-82)
   - **Assignment 2:** Memo 1: due before class on Sept. 6: Compare & contrast the perspectives on evidence-based policy-making presented in today’s readings.
3. Class 3: Sept 11: Project selection
   - **Assignment 3:** Small assignment 2: Rank ordering of projects handed in *before* class.
   - **Reading:** Project description documents (listed on the assignment sheet)
   - **Reading:** National Center for Environmental Economics (2010), chp. 2.
   - **Assignment 4:** Memo 2: due 1 hour before class on Sept.13. How was evidence used in your group’s chosen project?

Unit 2: Research Design

5. Class 5: Sept 18. Research design overview
   - **Reading:** Cox (2015); Meyfroidt (2015),
   - **Assignment 5:** Small Assignment 3: handed in *during* class
6. Class 6: Sept 20 Introduction to Randomized Control Trials
   - **Reading** Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (No Date); Carroll (2018), Deaton and Cartwright (2018)
7. Class 7: Sept. 25 Examples of RCTs
   - **Assignment 6: part 1.** Presentations of examples of RCTs
   - **Grad Assignment 1: Project Proposal due**
8. Class 8: Sept 27 Introduction to Quasi/natural experiments
   - **Assignment 7:** Memo 3: How would you design a RCT to assess your topic area? What is the advantage of this approach? The disadvantage?
   - **Reading** Donald T Campbell and Stanley (1963); Ferraro and Hanauer (2014); Shadish (2010)
9. Class 9: Oct. 2 Examples of quasi/natural experiments
   - **Assignment 6: part 2.** Presentations of examples of quasi/natural experiments
10. Class 10: Oct 4: guest lecture: Greg Knopff, Senate Analyst, Senate Counsel, Research, and Fiscal Analysis, Minnesota State Senate
    - **Assignment 8:** Memo 4: How would you use quasi/natural experiments to assess your topic area?
11. Class 11: Oct 9: guest lecture: David Kirchner, Principal Evaluator, and Caitlin Badger, Senior Program Evaluation Specialist, Office of the Legislative Auditor, Minnesota
    - **Assignment 9:** Small assignment 4: handed in *during* class
   - Assignment 10: Memo 5: Compare & contrast the approaches to policy analysis taken by our 3 guest speakers. Why are they different?
   - Reading on process tracing: Wauters and Beach (2018), Collier (2011), Doyle (1892), on case study research D. T. Campbell (1975); Flyvbjerg (2006)
   - Ilene Alexander will conduct a midterm evaluation of the class during class time.
   - Reading Ioannidis (2005); Schoenfeld and Ioannidis (2013)
   - Assignment 11 Memo 6: How would you use process tracing or case studies in your topic?
   - Assignment 12: Small assignment 5: teammates survey due before class
   - Assignment 13: Team presentations of proposed research
   - Assignment 14: Proposed research papers due.

Unit 3: Data collection
17. Class 17: Oct 30 Overview of data collection
   - Reading: Bardach and Patashnik (2016), 83-112
   - Assignment 15: Small assignment 6: teammates survey due before class
18. Class 18: Nov 1 Research Ethics
   - Reading Pacheco-Vega and Parizeau (2018); The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1979)
   - Assignment 16: Small assignment 7: hand in during class
19. Class 19: Nov 6 Surveys, interviews & focus groups: Guest lecture by TA, Adrienne Strubb
   - Reading Bernard (2011), Chp. 8 & 9
20. Class 20: November 8. Data collection plan presentations
   - Assignment 17: Data collection plan presentations
   - Assignment 18: Data collection plan writeups

Unit 4: Cost Benefit Analysis
   - Reading: Discounting, National Center for Environmental Economics (2010), Chp. 6; Noe (2018); Robinson (2018); Shapiro (2018b)
   - Grad Assignment due: Rough Draft
   - Assignment 19: Small assignment 8: Teammates survey due before class
   - Reading: National Center for Environmental Economics (2010), Chps. 7 & 8
   - Assignment 20: Small assignment 9: handed in during class
23. Class 23: Nov 20: Cost benefit analysis 3: work on projects

*No class November 22 (Thanksgiving)*
24. Class 24: Nov 27 Cost benefit analysis 4: putting it together
   - Reading: National Center for Environmental Economics (2010), Chps. 10, 11, and appendix B.

25. Class 25: Nov 29 Presentations of cost benefit analyses
   - Assignment 21: Cost benefit analysis presentations
   - Assignment 22: Cost benefit Analysis papers due

Unit 5: Wrap-up
26. Class 26: Dec 4 Some problems with policy analysis
   - Reading: Gamoran (2018); Shore and Wright (2015) Shapiro (2018a)
   - Assignment 23: small assignment 10: Teammates survey. Due before class.

27. Class 27: Dec 6 Work on final projects
28. Class 28: Dec 11: Final class
   - Assignment 24: Final presentations
   - Assignment 25: small assignment 11: Teammates survey (due Dec. 12th at 11:59 PM)
   - Final Project (written) due Dec. 12th at 11:59 PM.
   - Grad final assignment due Dec. 12th at 11:59 PM.

Reading List with full citations:


