

PPA 8903
Seminar in Public Policy
Spring Semester 2006
Thursdays, 6:00 – 8:50 PM
Mississippi State, MS

Dr. Joe Adams

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- TEXTS:**
- Bardach, Eugene. (2005) *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving, Second Edition* (paperback) Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, (ISBN: 1568029233).
- Collins, Jim (2005) *Good to Great and the Social Sectors: A Monograph to Accompany Good to Great: Why Business Thinking is Not the Answer*. Collins, (ISBN: 0977326403)
- McCool, Daniel C., ed., (1995) *Public Policy Theories, Models, and Concepts: An Anthology*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Publishers, (ISBN: 0-13-737867-X).

OBJECTIVES:

- To familiarize you with some of the leading theories regarding the development of public policy in the United States;
- To develop your skills in analyzing public policies;
- To develop your skills in writing and presenting policy analyses, proposals, and recommendations that are logical, clear, succinct, and reasonable.

COURSE OVERVIEW:

This is the course where we get to solve all the world's problems!

There are professionals who actually make a living providing policymakers and other audiences with analyses, recommendations, and alternatives. Policy analysts work in a wide range of organizations, including think tanks, government agencies, as well as lobbying and other advocacy organizations. Good work in this field requires clarity, mastery of relevant data, and the ability to weave together social, economic, and political analyses. These professionals sometimes assist policymakers in drafting legislation, regulations, implementation plans, and other instruments of policy to make changes in social, environmental, or economic conditions. They deal with a great deal of ambiguity, uncertainty, and mountains of data. The challenges they face include making sense of relevant data, defining alternative courses of action, and developing credible, sensible policy proposals for policymakers to consider. Few succeed immediately. Success is sometimes ephemeral, knowing that you contributed to crafting a bill, or becoming the 'go-to' person for a particular kind of advice. Solving all the world's problems takes time.

To do their jobs well, policy analysts have to explain their work in a way that their audiences understand. Clarity is essential to success. You will be expected to write, and rewrite, your papers to make them clear and succinct. You will receive and provide editorial assistance in developing your papers.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Written Work

In addition to the assigned readings, you will be required to choose an area of public policy to analyze and provide policy recommendations, preferably in your area of professional expertise or in an area that you intend to enter. Your written work will consist of the following (1) the identification of a problem outlined in a memorandum, (2) a midterm examination where you apply the lessons from your readings and/or research to your chosen policy area, (3) a research proposal presented in a memorandum format, and finally (4) a white paper of approximately 20-30 pages containing policy research that supports specific policy recommendations.

Expectations Regarding Participation

You will be expected to conduct independent research for a white paper. For almost any policy area you might consider, in addition to the usual academic literature, there is probably a report on it that has been written by the U.S. General Accounting Office or the Congressional Research Service. Other useful sources are the Urban Institute, the Cato Institute, the Brookings Institution, the National Conference of State Legislatures and the National Governor's Association (see my website for other useful links). The National Association of Budget Officers (NACUBO) and other specialized entities also provide good information and background to major issues as well as their own policy recommendations. You should familiarize yourself with these resources, especially those that are dominant in your policy area. Class discussion will be informed by the texts and the research that you do on your chosen policy area. Sharing ideas is central to the success of the seminar. Active participation is part of your grade.

Editorial Work

In most professional environments in the public policy arena, individuals work collaboratively with other professionals. They are asked to comment on, review, edit, fact check, and proofread the work of colleagues. You will be assigned this responsibility as part of this course. You will be expected to make helpful remarks, suggestions for improvements, recommend changes, and other revisions. Doing this in a collegial, professional manner is an art form. Those who do it well are highly valued. Those who do it poorly are avoided or even shunned. Your editorial comments will be graded.

Presentations

Presentation skills are essential for effective policy analysts. We will practice this art in class as you present your white papers. Each student will be responsible for making a ten to fifteen minute presentation to the class of their white paper. Group projects are encouraged.

Your final paper is due May 11, 2006, to be delivered to me via email at jadams@sig.msstate.edu in either Word or WordPerfect format, along with any PowerPoint, spreadsheets, graphs or other material you may have developed.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE:

- January 19: Orientation & Course Overview**
Description of your interests and professional objectives
- January 26: Required Reading:**
Bardach, Part I: The Eightfold Path
McCool, Sections 1-3
Recommended Reading
Lewis G. Irwin (2003), *The Policy Analyst's Handbook*, Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2003 (On Reserve).
Deborah Stone (1997) *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company (On Reserve)
- February 2: Student Presentations - First Memorandum for White Paper Due**
- February 9: Required Reading:**
Bardach, Part II: Gathering Data for Policy Research
McCool, Sections 4-5
Recommended Reading
Eugene Bardach (1984) *The Implementation Game: What Happens After a Bill Becomes a Law* Cambridge, Mass.; MIT Press.
Bruce Bueno de Mesquita (1985) *Forecasting Political Events: The Future of Hong Kong*. New Haven, Yale University Press (On Reserve)
- February 16: Required Reading:**
Bardach, Part III: Smart (Best) Practices Research
McCool, Section 6
- February 23: Midterm Exam – Essay**
- March 2: Research Strategies:**
Recommended Reading
Erwin Hargrove, (1975) *The Missing Link: The Study of the Implementation of Social Policy*, Washington: The Urban Institute.
Richard F. Elmore, "(1980) Backward mapping: implementation research and policy decisions, *Political Science Quarterly*, 94(4), pp. 601-616.
- March 9: Student Presentations - Second Memorandum for White Paper Due**
- March 23: Political and Institutional Questions: Required Reading: WebCT**
- March 30: Political Agenda Setting: Required Reading –WebCT**
- April 6: Service Delivery Options: Strategic Planning and Good Work
Required Reading: Collins (2005)
Recommended Reading:**
Jim Collins (2001) *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and others Don't*, New York: Harper Collins. (On Reserve)
Howard Gardner, et. al. (2001) *Good Work*, New York: Basic Books
Jeffrey Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky (1984) *Implementation* Berkeley: University of California Press. (On Reserve)
- April 13: Privatization Models: Required Reading –WebCT**
- April 20: Briefing: Draft of White Paper/Submission for editorial review**
- April 27: Editorial Review Presentations**
- May 4: Final Presentations (time limited)**
- May 11: Final White Paper Due**
- GRADING: Memoranda (20%),
Midterm (30%)
White Paper (30%)
Editorial Comments and Participation (20%)**