

PSCI 3040: INTRO TO PUBLIC POLICY
Course Paper and Interim Assignments, Spring 2007

The goals of this course include 1) to enable students to analyze the process of public policy making in the U.S. so that they can 2) understand the substance of policy in issue areas of concern to them and 3) participate effectively in the policy process when they want to do so. Toward these ends, we learn to analyze policy making in terms of ideas, participants and steps, and apply such analyses in selected issue areas. The course paper is a tool for learning to do this analysis and for demonstrating that ability.

Each student will prepare a paper of 10-12 pages analyzing the policy process and summarizing the substance of U.S. policy in a domestic issue area of his or her choice. Examples of issue areas include the environment, housing and community development, financial regulation, agriculture, health care, education, and energy. The final paper is detailed below, but first, several interim assignments – intended as building blocks toward a final paper of good quality – are explained.

INTERIM ASSIGNMENTS

	<i>Due on:</i>	<i>Weight in final course grade</i>
Policy area proposal	Jan. 18	1%
Library assignment	Jan. 30	1%
Annotated bibliography	Mar. 1	10%
Policy community map	Mar. 22	10%
Roundtable	Various	<u>8%</u>
		30%

Formatting

For all of the assignments that follow, there are some general formatting rules. First, all papers should have one inch (1”) margins all around. If you are working in MS Word, the default settings for the left and right margins are one and a quarter inches (1.25”) while the top and bottom margins are one inch (1”). Be sure that you change those settings to be one inch (1”). In addition, all assignments should have a title page with all of the components required in a title page according to the format that you have chosen (APA or Chicago). Simply centering your name, the date, the title of the paper, and maybe the class on the page is insufficient. Be sure that you understand how to create title pages. The only exception for this requirement is the policy proposal; your name, the date, and the class name in the upper right hand corner will be sufficient. Also, when you have a title page, including the title again (or your name, date, class name, etc) on the first page of text is redundant. The first page of text should just have the beginning of your work and nothing else (except for the header, of course). Failure to follow these formatting rules will result in a reduction to your grade on the assignment.

Policy area proposal

This is a brief statement – at least a paragraph and not more than one page – of the policy area on which you will write your paper. State what the policy area is, a little bit about timely questions in the area, and why you are attracted to study it. Some policy areas are very broad and complex, so it will be necessary to narrow the topic within the area. For example, within environmental policy, you might choose to focus on air quality OR water quality; within health care policy, you might want to know about Medicare, or Medicaid, or children’s health. If you choose a policy area that is predominantly handled at the state level – electric utility regulation, for example – consider narrowing the topic by choosing a particular state. If you do plan to

narrow the topic within a general policy area, identify your focus in your proposal.

Choosing a topic that is MANAGEABLE is crucial at the beginning of a research project, so please feel free to consult with me as you identify and narrow your study. To ensure that you are started on the right track with a manageable project, I may require revision of your topic after looking over your proposal.

Late penalty: For each day late (weekends included), ten (10) points will be subtracted from the score.

Annotated bibliography

An annotated bibliography is a list of secondary sources on some topic with a brief discussion of each. Please begin working on an annotated bibliography of sources that you plan to use for your paper after the third week of the semester. You will begin working on this step after you have chosen a policy area and after the library assignment, which is designed to introduce you to the resources available from Waldo Library and provide you with some techniques that will be helpful in your research.

For this interim assignment, please prepare an annotated bibliography including at least **six** secondary print sources. Print sources include books, articles in scholarly journals, government and think tank reports, and articles in popular periodicals such as newspapers and magazines. Your minimum six print sources must include at least one academic book and three articles from scholarly journals. Up to two of the required scholarly articles may be substituted with reports from research institutes, government agencies, or the *CQ Researcher*. **N.B.:** **Academic books are almost always printed by university presses (hint: if it is not printed by a university press, it probably will not meet the criteria for this assignment). Scholarly journals are those which are peer reviewed and are contributing something to our knowledge base (hint: if the article is fewer than ten pages long, chances are it is a news blurb and will not meet the criteria for this assignment).** The remaining print sources may be additional scholarly articles or reports, or articles from good magazines and newspapers. The definition of what constitutes a “good” magazine or newspaper is subjective and the instructor is the subject, so if you are not sure whether the periodical you are considering is a good one, please feel free to ask. Useful popular periodicals include national newspapers like the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Wall Street Journal* and specialized weekly magazines that focus on Washington happenings like the *CQ Weekly* and *National Journal*. Other good magazines will vary depending upon your issue area, but might include *Scientific American* or other popular science magazines; prominent general business periodicals like *Business Week* or more specialized business publications; *American Prospect*, *Nation*, *National Review*, *Weekly Standard*, and other politically inclined periodicals; and some magazines of general interest such as *The Atlantic Monthly*. These are to be sources upon which you will rely in writing your final paper.

Each entry in the annotated bibliography should have one or two paragraphs summarizing the piece (what is its central question and arguments) and indicating preliminarily how it will be useful for your paper. For example, you might find a piece that helps you identify the actors in the policy community in your area – indicate that in your annotated bibliography. Another piece might be good for conveying how your issue got on the policy agenda; another might be one that you plan to use to identify the technical content of policy in your area. In short – think about how you will use the books, articles and reports that you find. Pay attention to finding material that permits you to cover all required aspects of the paper.

Each entry should begin with the citation for the piece *in proper APA or Chicago Manual*

format, as it will appear in the bibliography of your final paper. This means that you will have to consider documentation format well before the paper is due; this will save you time in writing up the final paper.

Note: Your final paper must include at least the six print sources described above. You may find more sources that you want to use for your final paper after turning in your annotated bibliography. You may use these additional sources and you do **not** have to revise the annotated bib to account for these additional sources. Just be sure to include everything you use for the final paper in the bibliography of that paper.

Late penalty: ten (10) points for each day late, weekends included.

Policy community map

A policy community is the set of public and private actors that are active in a particular policy area. They typically include – at a minimum – legislative committees, public agencies, interest groups and research institutes; these should be represented in your paper. Be sure to include committees from both chambers and at least one research institute in the paper that you hand in. For this assignment, use the Internet as well as your research in print sources to identify the actors in the policy community for your policy area. Major participants in the policy communities of prominent policy areas usually have websites; find those websites. But some important actors may not have a presence on the Internet; include these actors in your map anyway.

Hand in a paper of about three to four pages, in good prose (**not just a list!**), with a brief description of each actor in the policy community. Attach a list of the appropriate websites; this list does not count as part of the three to four pages and does not need to be in APA or Chicago format, though doing so now will reduce the amount of work that you will need to do later for the final paper.

Late penalty: ten (10) points for each day late, weekends included.

Roundtable

A roundtable is a group presentation of the findings in a particular policy area by class members who have chosen that area for their final papers. The roundtable presentation should include the same components that a final paper includes. Groups can decide for themselves just how to present the material; feel free to be creative within the constraint that required components must be clearly covered. If you will need equipment, let me know ahead of time so arrangements can be made. The amount of time allotted to each group will be announced later in the semester after the overall number of presentations has been determined. However, that amount of time is important and the group will need to be sure that they do not go over that time limit.

Be sure to include some visuals – at a minimum, a chart or list of the policy community actors. Other helpful aids might include a list of important dates, or an overview outline of your presentation.

There are a couple of things about group projects that students often find problematic. One difficulty is getting the members of the group together. We will overcome this by using some class time for groups to meet. Follow-up communication outside of class will probably be needed as well, but this can be done with phones and email if in-class preparation time is well-used. A second problem that sometimes crops up is that somebody shirks and fails to contribute a fair share of the work. We will address that problem by having all members in each group do a confidential evaluation of the other members in the group. Each roundtable will receive one

grade, but that will be a starting point from which some points may be deducted from an individual's grade if it is clear that the person did not help much.

FINAL PAPER

Due on: April 10 ***Weight in final course grade:*** 30%

For the final paper, please select a substantive public policy area that interests you – and is approved by me. Write a paper of ten to twelve pages in length that

- introduces the policy area: what is the problem addressed?
- identifies actors in the policy community and discusses their positions: Who are the actors in the policy community? What are the goals of the various actors? What programmatic approaches to achieving goals are advanced? Are there differences among policy advocates regarding goals and methods of achieving them?
- summarizes the development over time of substantive policy in the area. Include discussion of foundational statute(s) if there is one or more. Use the steps of the policy process to organize this historical discussion.
- identifies issues in the area that are currently under discussion.

Format: 10-12 pages in length. Double-spaced. One-inch margins all around. 12-point type. Cover page (does not count toward page total). Works cited or reference page(s) (does not count toward page total).

Documentation: The paper must have proper footnotes and bibliography **or** in-text references and a works cited list. You may use *Chicago Manual* (also called “Turabian”) or APA style. Details of both are easily accessible on the web (from Waldo library’s home page) and in books and library handouts.

Writing: The quality of the writing counts! The paper must be well-structured and well-written; mechanics must be correct. It is not cheating to get colleagues, or the writing center tutors, to read your drafts and provide feedback; it is, rather, advisable and entirely professional. WMU Writing Center: 387-4615, 1071 Moore Hall.

Late penalty: ten (10) points for each day late, weekends included