Introduction to Planning, Public Policy, and Health Policy

Fall 2012
Edward J. Bloustein School, Online

Registration by Special Permission Only for Nontraditional Students
EC 10:762/832:101 (PLANNING & PUBLIC POLICY / PUBLIC HEALTH)
LOCATION: eCOLLEGE.RUTGERS.EDU

Instructor:
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Office Hours: by appointment only

Planning: the act or process of making or carrying out plans; specifically: the establishment of goals, policies, and procedures for a social or economic unit <city planning> <business planning>.

Policy: prudence or wisdom in the management of affairs; a definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives and in light of given conditions to guide and determine present and future decisions; a high-level overall plan embracing the general goals and acceptable procedures especially of a governmental body.

Health: the condition of being sound in body, mind, or spirit; especially: freedom from physical disease or pain b: the general condition of the body <in poor health> <enjoys good health> flourishing condition: well-being.

[All three definitions source to Merriam-Webster.com]

Course Overview:

This online course offers a non-technical introductory level overview of the overlapping fields of public health, public policy, and urban and regional planning. Through a series of readings and video talks from Bloustein School professors, along with moderated threaded discussions of relevant policy topics across of number of different policymaking areas, students are engaged with substantive policy issues, as well as how these issues and fields intersect in terms of planning for our society’s current and future well-being future. In addition, through insights and examples about the creation, execution, and evaluation of policy decisions in these complementary areas, this course introduces students to common policy formation and decision-making processes.

Online courses at Rutgers can be offered either on Sakai or through eCollege. For logistical reasons, this course is offered through eCollege and if you are unfamiliar with this platform, I urge you to review the eCollege “SOT,” i.e., the Student Orientation Tutorial, which is on your eCollege.Rutgers.edu homepage, prior to starting the course.
Note About Registration: This online section of the Bloustein School’s introductory course is intended only for nontraditional students as that category is defined by the University College Community, see: http://ucc.rutgers.edu/about-ucc/nontraditional-students.

Course Objectives and Certification for Satisfaction of SAS Core Curriculum Requirements:

After completing this course, you will understand:

(a) the core subject matter and issues of the fields of planning, public policy, and public health and how they intersect; and

(b) methods of analyzing planning, public policy, and health policy issues, including analysis and evaluation from the perspective of the six key factors that drive public policy formation:

1. science
2. elected officials and their staff
3. other stakeholders, such as business, media, not-for-profits, and the public
4. money, i.e., costs and benefits
5. ethics and morality
6. practicality, i.e., time and flexibility.

(c) the application of these factors to planning and public health decisions.

In addition, successful completion of this course satisfies three of the 28 SAS Core Curriculum Learning Goals. Under Goal “h,” which is a background “social and historical analysis goal,” you will “be able to understand the bases and development of human and societal endeavors across time and place.” Successfully achieving Goal “h” will aid in satisfying Goals “m” and “n,” both of which are “social analysis goals.” With the satisfaction of Goal “m” you will be “able to understanding different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems, and other forms of social organization;” with the satisfaction of Goal “n” you will be “able to apply concepts about human and social behavior to particular questions or situations.”

Course Requirements and Structure:

The key elements of the course are simple and direct: You must fully and timely participate in 14 weeks of on-line learning activities from September 4th through December 12, 2012. A critical issue with any course is assuring timely progress, and we have done our best to balance your class participation schedule to accommodate your real-life scheduling demands. Through the course, the on-line sessions are opened on Tuesday morning of each week of the course and remain open through the following late Monday night. Because there is a sequence and pacing to learning, the sessions must be completed on schedule.

There are two kinds of “weeks.” Most are professor-driven, in which you’ll view a video of an interview with a Bloustein faculty member about their research, the content of which forms the subject matter for that week. In addition, each guest professor has assigned some companion readings to complement her or his interview. At the end of each of those 11 weeks is a 10 or 20 question multiple-choice quiz, which overall is worth 5 course points.
Threaded Discussions

The second kind of week is a threaded discussion, in which you will participate in a week-long moderated discussion. By “participate,” we mean that during those four weeks (i.e., for a week at a time every third week during the semester), on a daily basis you should consider the policy issue being debated and express your thoughts in the ongoing forum by logging in, checking the discussion, and contributing. Your contribution may be directly relevant to the question at hand, or it may suggest an “out-of-the-box” approach to a policy solution, or it may point in a seemingly unrelated but surprisingly productive direction. Much like legislative policy debates, if you present a good and efficient policy approach, your fellow participants will support you; if you present something silly and pointless, you’ll get the opposite reaction. In a lot of ways, it’s an expression of democracy.

As noted, there will be four threaded discussion weeks over the semester. For each, the discussion will start on the topic stated in the syllabus, and will then be guided by me. While the threaded discussion will begin with a given question, I may take the discussion in different directions, depending on the students’ interests, and students are encouraged to introduce relevant external material that will drive the conversation in unpredicted but productive directions.

Each of the three threaded discussion assignments will raise an issue question and provide a pro and con set of resources, typically videos or short readings. Your task for that week is to review the issue and given resources, contemplate the policy question at the heart of the issue, understand your own reasoning, understand the implications of your perspective, and then take and support a position. You’ll then generate a concise statement of your position on that issue and, in your group’s Discussion Forum, express that opinion. Engage with your forum on the merits of each other’s positions; argue in favor of your own and those with whom you agree; argue against those with whom you disagree. You may refer to material in or from outside the course (with proper citation, so others can check it). And of course all discussion must be respectful, especially disagreement.

Grading:

There are twelve multiple choice quizzes and the four threaded discussion forums, each of which is worth five course points, and there is a short final paper due worth twenty points. The scoring is as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
12 \text{ M/C quizzes} \times 5 \text{ pts.} & = 60 \text{ pts.} \\
3 \text{ Threaded Discuss} \times 5 \text{ pts.} & = 15 \text{ pts.} \\
1 \text{ Essay Topic} \times 10 \text{ pts} & = 10 \text{ pts.} \\
1 \text{ Final Essay} \times 15 \text{ pts.} & = 15 \text{ pts.} \\
\text{Total} & = 100 \text{ pts.}
\end{align*}
\]

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1 Because there are about thirty students in this class, I have randomly assigned students to one of two discussion groups so that group size is limited to about 15 students per group. The groups are named Group Alpha and Group Beta.
For purposes of the threaded discussions, the grading rubric is as follows:

- 5=excellent and sustained, well-developed and well-expressed contribution across the entire week-long forum that advances, productively contradicts, or indicates a potentially informing new direction with regard to the research question;
- 4=very good, original thought along the lines of a 5 score, but not quite there, i.e., a bit more to go or only a partial excellent effort;
- 3=good/average/compliance; you got by, and that’s o.k., but not much original thought;
- 2=you just got barely got by with the minimum participation, or “faux” participation;
- 1=barely getting by, and so the course score of one is a gift, because it should probably be a zero;
- 0=there’s obviously a problem and you should contact me.

Note: The discussion forums are graded on both a combination of quantity and quality. The forums are a discussion, so repeated posting is needed to keep the conversation moving (it is also the only way I can really be sure that you and your colleagues are engaging the topic), but the hope is that each post is of high quality. A quality post adds to the discussion; either by providing evidence that supports what you or others have said, provides a counter-point to other peoples ideas, or moves the conversation in new directions.

Final Essay: The topic of the final paper is as follows:

From the news, select one policy issue about which government is in motion (i.e., about which there is either having a public conversation, or government officeholders are formally debating, etc.), and use that issue to illustrate how "public policy," "health policy," and "urban planning and development policy" are related. Use supporting examples from the course materials, as well as outside the course, to demonstrate how these fields intersect. Be sure to cite all sources properly.

The rules for the final essay are as follows:

To ensure that your essay is an appropriate topic must be approved by the instructor. The approval of the final essay topic is worth 10% of the final course grade, should be two typed pages, not including references; 1” margins all around; 12 point, Times New Roman font, with double spacing. The paper must be delivered in Word document format in your eCollege course Dropbox not later than Monday night, November 12th, 2012 at 11:59 pm.

The final paper is worth 15% of the final course grade, should be ten typed pages, not including references; 1” margins all around; 12 point, Times New Roman font, with double spacing. The paper must be delivered in Word document format in your eCollege course Dropbox not later than Monday night, December 10, 2012 at 11:59 pm.

The course points will be added up and course grades will be assigned as follows:
Points:

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<th>Points Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>90 - 100</td>
<td>A</td>
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<td>85 - 89</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<td>80 - 84</td>
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<td>65 - 69</td>
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<td>65 or lower</td>
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**Academic Misconduct**

Academic misconduct includes cheating, plagiarism, failure to cite sources, fabrication and falsification, stealing ideas, and deliberate slanting of research designs to achieve a pre-conceived result. Penalties for misconduct can range from failing an assignment, exam, or a course, to suspension or dismissal from the university.
Course Calendar

→ Week One: Beginning Tuesday, 9/4/12: Introduction to Planning, Public Policy and Health: Professor Marc Weiner and Professor Michael Greenberg

a. Video: How public health, geography, history, transportation, economic development, and information analysis and presentation work together to increase our understanding of how the world works and how to formulate policy:
   http://www.flixxy.com/200-countries-200-years-4-minutes.htm.

b. Readings:
   1. Polsby, Chapter 4 “On the Distinctiveness of the American Political System.”
   2. Kingdon, Chapter 2 “Describing the Comparisons.”


d. Video Lecture: Overview of The Six Critical Factors that Drive Public Policy Formation (Greenberg).

e. Quiz (5 points).

→ Week Two: Beginning Tuesday, 9/11/12: Overview of Public Health: Professor Dona Schneider

a. Lecture, voice over PowerPoint: Planning, Policy and Health: A Quick History.

b. Quiz (5 points).


d. Readings:

e. Quiz (5 points).

→ Week Three: Beginning Tuesday, 9/18/12: Land Use and the American City: Professor Frank Popper

a. Readings:

a. Video Lecture: Shrinking and Subtracting Cities.

b. Quiz (5 points).

→ Week Four: Beginning Tuesday, 9/25/12: Threaded Discussion, (5 points): Public Health: Motor Vehicle Safety, Policy Question: Seatbelts? Child Car Seats?

Discussion Assignment (see pages 3-4 for Threaded Discussion expectations and grading criteria):
Professor Steven Levitt, co-author of Freakonomics, argues that, in keeping children safe in a motor vehicle, seat-belts are cheaper and just as safe the more expensive and more difficult to use child car seat:

http://www.ted.com/talks/steven_levitt_on_child_carseats.html

Ray LaHood, Secretary of Transportation responds to that argument:


Question: Are mandatory child car seat requirements good public health policy?

→ Week Five: Beginning Tuesday, 10/2/12: Planning for People: Professor Anton Nelessen

Planning, Visioning, and Community Design:
  a. Video Lecture, Introduction and Overview - Professor Nelessen and Weiner
  c. Video Lecture, Part 2: The Vision.
  e. Video Lecture, Part 4: The Seven Policies.
  g. Quiz (5 points).

→ Week Six: Beginning Tuesday, 10/9/12: Threaded Discussion, (5 points): Land Use/Design: Implications of Policy: Cultural/Demographic Impact of Policies Promoting Gentrification

Discussion Assignment (see pages 3-4 for Threaded Discussion expectations and grading criteria):

What happens when gay white homebuyers move into a working-class black neighborhood as happened in Asbury Park and the Plainfields? As the new residents restore the beautiful but rundown homes, black homeowners must fight to hold onto their community and heritage. The inevitable clashes expose prejudice and self-interest on both sides, as well as the common dream to have a home to call your own:

http://www.pbs.org/pov/flagwars/index.php

But…

http://www.pbs.org/pov/flagwars/video_talkingback1.php

Questions: What is gentrification? What are the pros and cons of gentrification expressed in the videos? What is your opinion on gentrification?
Week Seven: Beginning Tuesday, 10/16/12: Planning for Sustainability: Professor Clint Andrews

a. Readings:

b. Video Lecture: Sustainability and Green Building.

c. Quiz (5 points).

Week Eight: Beginning Tuesday, 2/28/12: Community Development & Social Policy: Professor Roland Anglin

a. Reading:


c. Quiz (5 points).

Week Nine: Beginning Tuesday, 10/30/12: Threaded Discussion, (5 points): Sustainability: Societal Level Sustainable Food Production vs. Industrial Food Production.

Discussion Assignment (see pages 3-4 for Threaded Discussion expectations and grading criteria):

Sustainable Farming? Really? For the entire population of the world?

Video (Pro Sustainable Farming):

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KxTfQpv8xGA

But consider the advantages – and reality – of industrial farming:


Question: What are the trade-offs between sustainable farming and industrial farming practices?

Week 10: Beginning Tuesday, 11/6/12: Environmental and Economic Policy: Professor Joseph Seneca

a. Readings:
   1. The Environmental Literacy Council – “Externalities.”

b. Video Lecture: The Environment, the Economy, and Externalities.

c. Quiz (5 points).

Final Papers Topics in Dropbox by the end of the day November 12, 2012
Week Eleven: Beginning Tuesday, 11/13/12: Planning for New Jersey: Land Use Land Policy and Affordable Housing Policy: Professor Stuart Meck

b. Quiz (5 points).
d. Quiz (5 points).

Week Twelve: Beginning Tuesday, 11/20/12: Mental Health Policy: Professor Daune Thomas

a. Readings:
   1. Minority Populations and Health: Chapter 5 - Mental Health
b. Video Lecture: Mental Health Policy
c. Quiz (5 points).

Week Thirteen: Beginning Tuesday, 11/27/12: Land Use and Public Health: Professor Amelia Greiner

a. Readings:
   1. Galanter (1978) – Land Use: Public Health is the Bottom Line
b. Video Lecture: Land Use and Public Health
c. Quiz (5 points).

Week Fourteen: Beginning Tuesday, 12/4/12: Resources at the BLOUSTEIN SCHOOL: Professor Marc Weiner and Undergraduate Student Coordinator Christina Miller

b. Video Lecture: Decentralized Authority and Local Public Policy Preferences Revisited (Weiner).
c. Essay Question (20 points).

Final Papers Due in Dropbox by the end of the day December 10, 2012