

MPA 802: Approaches to Policy Analysis
School of Policy Studies
Queen's University
Winter 2022

Instructor: Eugene Lang, Adjunct Professor, School of Policy Studies

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Office hours: Thursdays, 12:00--2:00 p.m.

Office: Rm 317, Robert Sutherland Hall (RSH)

Class Location: RSH 334

Course Objectives

The basic aim of the course is to learn policy analysis by doing policy analysis. Students will be organized in groups of five-six. Each group will be tasked to work on a particular policy problem of their choosing (approved in consultation with the instructor). This project will take the form of a Memorandum to Cabinet (MC), the main instrument required for policy, program and legislative approval in the federal government. The course will build off the foundational elements of policy analysis taught in MPA 810 (Policy Challenges).

Central to the course is the iterative process of developing and refining the analysis and arguments through briefings, class discussion and critique (i.e. the process is itself core to the analysis). Students will therefore be making brief presentations each week on the various dimensions of policy analysis required in a Memorandum to Cabinet and receive constructive feedback from both the instructor and their colleagues.

Students will gain experience in:

- Researching, shaping, writing and presenting a **Memorandum to Cabinet** and its various component parts
- Identifying a key problem/issue which needs resolution through policy
- Using fact/evidence-based research
- Developing effective policy argumentation
- Writing policy documents in a clear, concise and precise fashion conducive to executive level decision-making
 - Conducting effective oral briefings on all aspects of the MC
- Identifying realistic, implementable policy options that mitigate the policy problem
- Identifying financial implications of recommendations, including impact on the government's fiscal framework
- Identifying risks and proposing risk mitigation measures
- Articulating expected results and how they will be measured (key indicators)

- Preparing a **Strategic Communications Plan**
- Preparing an **Implementation plan** with stages of delivery and expected results

Ninety five percent of your grade is based on the team's performance, with 5% based on your group's assessment of your individual performance as a member of the group.

Memoranda to Cabinet (Templates):

Students will use the model outlined in the federal Government Templates and Drafters Guide for MCs:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/services/publications/memoranda-cabinet/drafters-guide-documents.html>

These templates provide the directives for the preparation of:

- 1) The Ministerial Recommendations /MR (maximum six-seven single spaced, legal size pages) to which will be attached a cover page (1 page)
- 2) The three "annexes" (Parliamentary, Communications and Implementation Plans, 2 pages each)

Preparing the MC requires extensive policy research and analysis, cost estimation, sensitivity to political dynamics, implications for the government's fiscal framework and policy/legislative agenda. The MC needs to be written in a clear, concise and persuasive manner, free of jargon, such that non-experts (i.e. Ministers) can grasp its analysis and recommendations.

Students who wish to present a MC in an area of provincial or territorial jurisdiction can do so and will use, for the purpose of this exercise, the Federal Government Templates.

Course Format

Students, in consultation with the instructor, will be required to select one policy problem/issue of relevance to a particular Ministry (or a combination of Ministries). The course format is a mix of foundational lectures from the instructor on various aspects of policy analysis, supplemented by required and optional readings; regular presentations by students on their team's progress at various stages of the project; and constructive feedback from the class and the instructor on those presentations. The goal with this approach is to simulate to some degree the iterative process of policy work that occurs inside government.

Communication with the instructor

Students are encouraged to communicate with me individually or as a team whenever they have a question, need guidance or wish to discuss a particular aspect of their

project and deliverables. You can e-mail me at Eugenelang4@gmail.com or set up an appointment on campus or set up a conference call.

Required Readings

Leslie A. Pal, *Beyond Policy Analysis* (copies of which are in the Queen's bookstore)

Government of Canada, Privy Council Office, *A Drafter's Guide to Cabinet Documents: Drafting Cabinet Documents*

<http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/index.asp?lang=eng&page=information&sub=publications&doc=mc/guide-eng.htm#IV.1>

Recommended Readings

David L. Weimar and Aidan R. Vining, *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice*, New Jersey, Prentice Hall (in Queen's library or available for purchase online)

Chapter 7, "Correcting market and government failures: Generic policies"

Chapter 8, "Landing on your feet: How to confront policy problems"

Chapter 9, "Benefit-Cost Analysis"

Chapter 10, "Thinking Strategically About Adoption and Implementation"

Michael Mintrom, *Contemporary Policy Analysis*, Oxford University Press, 2012

Evaluation

Grading Breakdown:

- Problem Definition –a two page brief worth **30% of final grade**, to be submitted February 13 for grading
- Ministerial Recommendation – **35% of final grade**, to be submitted March 12 for grading
- Implementation and Communications Plans—**30% of final grade**, to be submitted April 2 for grading
- Group evaluation—**5% of final grade**

Course Schedule

January 9

Description of and goals for the course. Initial meeting of the groups.

Lecture: *What is policy analysis and what makes a good policy analyst?*

January 16

Lecture: *Problem Definition and Research*

Lecture: *The Memorandum to Cabinet Instrument*

January 23

Lecture: *Theory and the Role of Ideas in Policy Analysis*

Lecture: *Policy and Money*

January 30

Group Presentations begin on Problem/Definition brief

Groups 1-4 present a 15 minute Powerpoint on their Problem/Definition and receive feedback from instructor and colleagues.

February 6

Groups 5-8 present a 15 minute Powerpoint on their Problem/Definition and receive feedback from instructor and colleagues.

February 13

Lecture: *Instrument Choice*

Lecture: *Policy Implementation*

February 18-21--Reading Week—no class

February 27

Group Presentations begin on Ministerial Recommendations assignment.

Groups 5-8 present 15 minute Powerpoint on draft Ministerial Recommendations and receive feedback from instructor and colleagues.

March 5

Groups 1-4 present 15 minute Powerpoint on draft Ministerial Recommendations and receive feedback from instructor and colleagues.

March 12

Lecture: *Policy Communications*

Lecture: *Stakeholder Engagement*

March 19

Groups 1-4 present 15 minute Powerpoint on draft Communications, Parliamentary and Implementation Plans and receive feedback from instructor and colleagues.

March 26

Groups 5-8 present 15 minute Powerpoint on draft Communications, Parliamentary and Implementation Plans and receive feedback from instructor and colleagues.

April 2

Guest speaker