



SCHOOL of
PUBLIC POLICY

For-Credit Spring Break Graduate Course

Applied Policy Analysis and Program Evaluation

March 14-21, 2026
Paris, Brussels, and Luxembourg



The [University of Maryland School of Public Policy](#) will offer an in-person, for-credit international graduate course where students will learn the tools of policy analysis and program evaluation. Classroom instruction will be provided by course instructors and guest faculty---complemented by meetings with senior officials of the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD]).

Classes will be held from March 14-21, 2026 beginning in Paris, France (at the OECD and other Paris locations) followed by Luxembourg (at the European Investment Bank and European Court of Auditors) and Brussels (at the European Commission and European Parliamentary Research Service).

This course is a three-credit, stand-alone course for doctoral, master's level, and advanced undergraduate students studying social policy-related subjects such as economics, education, international development, political science/governance, public administration, public health, public policy, social welfare, sociology, and urban planning. Mid-career professionals may also take the course.

Course Summary

For sound policy making, governments, multinational organizations, NGOs, and funders need to make informed assessments of the strengths and weakness of programs. Hence, program evaluation is an essential element of their work. And this, in turn, creates a demand for staff able to apply the tools of systematic policy analysis and program evaluation.

The course seeks to advance the knowledge and careers of participants by helping them understand and apply those tools. Students will learn how to:

- *Conduct policy analyses in different political environments* (including defining the problem, identifying and assessing options, and making recommendations)
- *Apply evaluation methodologies to assess program effectiveness* (including qualitative, pre/post, interrupted time series, comparison group, and econometric studies as well as randomized control trials and natural experiments)
- *Summarize and synthesize research and evaluations* (including literature reviews, systematic reviews, and meta-evaluations)
- *Consider political and cost factors, as well as social and ethical considerations*
- *Make real-world recommendations* using an explanatory decision-making matrix

In addition to course instruction, the class will also visit specialized units of transnational organizations that conduct policy analyses and program evaluations---including the European Commission and the European Parliament (in Brussels); the European Court of Auditors and the European Investment Bank (in Luxembourg); and the OECD (in Paris). Students will meet with senior officials of these organizations to discuss and compare their approaches.

A preliminary syllabus will be available on the [course web page](#).

The course will culminate in the preparation of a policy brief/analysis. Students will select topics of interest to the OECD, the European Commission, or, with the instructors' permission, themselves. Likely topic areas include the future of social safety net programs---and the response to economic and social changes and long-term trends in work and income inequality. Possible final papers could cover aging and pensions, education, employment and the labor market, the environment, families and children, health, housing, migration, and social welfare generally.

Final policy briefs/analyses will be due May 15, 2026.

Classes will be in English.

Faculty

The faculty will be:

- [Douglas J. Besharov](#), Professor, University of Maryland, College Park (Program Director); and
- [Douglas M. Call](#), Lecturer, University of Maryland, College Park

Course Schedule and Facilities

Prior to the leaving for Paris, we will hold an online meeting to discuss the course syllabus and other arrangements. The course will meet daily while in Europe beginning on the evening of March 14.

As mentioned above, final policy briefs/analyses will be due on May 15, after students leave Paris.

Eligibility

The course is open to all potential students, including individuals enrolled in accredited graduate and undergraduate programs as well as professionals who are seeking additional training and education. Students who are not enrolled at the University of Maryland are eligible to enroll in the program.

Students who are currently enrolled in a graduate program must be in good academic and judicial standing and must not have any registration blocks. The minimum GPA for this program is 3.0 (unless otherwise approved by the program director).

Professional and non-credit students must have, at the minimum, a bachelor's degree or equivalent experience.

Course Credit

Students will receive three credits from the University of Maryland upon successful completion of the course. Non-UMD students should confirm the transferability of credits with their home academic departments.

Application Deadline

Applications will be accepted through September 30, 2025.

Because space is limited, early application is encouraged. Students will be accepted on a rolling basis.

Application

Prospective students can apply for the program [here](#). Students who are not currently enrolled at the University of Maryland will also need to apply to UMD through the Graduate School. (Please contact [Professor Call](#) for instructions.)

Accommodations

The program will arrange accommodations for students at hotels in Paris, Luxembourg, and Brussels.

Additional Information

Further information regarding the course format, travel, and other course logistics will soon be available on the [course web page](#).

Contact

For any specific questions regarding the course, please contact [Professor Call](#).