



SCHOOL of
PUBLIC POLICY

Applied Policy Analysis and Program Evaluation: Real-World Decision Making

Syllabus

Summer 2022

Instructors

Douglas J. Besharov
Douglas M. Call

Guest Instructors

Neil Gilbert
David Myers
Anu Rangarajan
Stefano Scarpetta
David Seidenfeld

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; and
- *Make real-world recommendations* using an explanatory decision-making matrix

The course will include discussion seminars with leading academics and practitioners. Some of these seminars will be conducted on-site in Paris, Brussels, and Luxembourg with senior officials at the European Commission, European Parliamentary Research Service, European Court of Auditors, European Investment Bank, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Students will prepare a policy brief/analysis, selecting a topic from the broader subject areas of “The Future of Work” and of social welfare protections. To help students become better acquainted with these topics, they will be the subject of the on-site meetings.

Interested students will also have the opportunity to apply for post-course internships with two offices at the OECD: (1) the Directorate for Employment, Labour, and Social Affairs and (2) the Economics Department. If there is a suitable project in which the student can be effectively involved, the internship can be offered. The internships generally last for two-to-three months (to be worked out between the student and the OECD and the student would be paid (about 700 Euros per month). Students who are interested in this opportunity should inform the course instructors at the time they apply for the program. The course instructors will then provide them the necessary information to apply.

Classroom procedures

All students are expected to come to class prepared, having read and digested the readings. (Supplemental readings are optional.) If some unavoidable circumstance prevents you from being prepared, please inform the instructors. If you have not done so before class begins, we will assume that you are affirming that you are fully prepared to participate in that day’s class discussion.

Assignments

For their final papers, students will prepare a policy analysis/brief. All other assignments in the course are for the purpose of assisting students in the process of completing their policy analyses/briefs.

Initial topic selection and description. Students will select topics and briefly describe the scope of the topic (usually two paragraphs long). The underlying broad subject matter of the course will be “The Future of Work” (and dealing with issues such as an aging workforce, the digitalization of work processes, the growth of platform work, and the “gig” economy) and social

welfare protections, and policy solutions for addressing these issues. Students will be briefed on these topics during visits at the OECD, European Parliamentary Research Service, European Commission, European Court of Auditors, and European Investment Bank. Project descriptions will be due to the instructors on **Thursday, June 22 by 5:00 p.m.**

Final paper. As the final product for the course, students will prepare policy analyses/briefs, using one of the templates discussed in the course. The final papers should be a minimum of fifteen pages of text (single spaced), not counting appendixes and should also include executive summaries.

Draft papers will be due on **Friday, July 29.**

Final papers will be submitted via email to the instructors by **Friday, August 26.**

Grading

Initial project description	10%
Class participation	25%
Draft paper	20%
Final paper	45%

All late assignments will received a deduction of *one-third* a letter grade for each day that the assignment is late, unless permission granted by the instructor.

Required texts and assigned readings

Rachel Meltzer and Alex Schwartz, *Policy Analysis as Problem Solving: A Flexible and Evidence-Based Framework* (New York: Routledge, 2019). ISBN: 978-1-138-63017-8

Additional assigned readings are available on Canvas (elms.umd.edu).

CLASS MEETINGS AND TOPICS

Paris

Monday, June 13. Introduction to the course, and the contribution of policy analysis and evaluation to planning and decision making.

Note: This class will meet at the Fondation des Etats-Unis (15 boulevard Jourdan) from 9:00–1:00.

Douglas J. Besharov, *Program Evaluation: What is It? Why is It Important? And How Should It be Used?* (College Park, MD: Welfare Reform Academy, 2022) (5 pages)

Rachel Meltzer and Alex Schwartz, “Chapter 1: What is Policy Analysis? Mainstream and Alternative Perspectives,” *Policy Analysis as Problem Solving: A Flexible and Evidence-Based Framework* (New York: Routledge, 2019): 15–33 (19 pages).

Tuesday, June 14. Causal validity, the counterfactual, and randomized experiments.

Guest instructors: Isabell Koske, deputy director, Economics Department, OECD; David Myers, president, American Institutes of Research (AIR); and David Seidenfeld, vice president for international research and evaluation, AIR.

Note: This class will meet at the OECD (2 rue Andre Pascal). Class will begin at 10:00 AM, but students should arrive at 9:30 AM to allow enough time to pass through security. Class will end around 3:30 PM.

Douglas J. Besharov, *Threats to Causal Validity* (College Park, MD: University of Maryland School of Public Policy, Welfare Reform Academy, January 2022) (11 pages).

Rachel Glennerster and Kudzai Takavarasha, *Running Randomized Evaluations: A Practical Guide* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 44-53 (10 pages).

Wednesday, June 15. Other methods for identifying the counterfactual.

Guest instructors: Bastiaan de Laat, head, In-Depth Evaluation unit, OECD; and David Seidenfeld, AIR.

Note: This class will meet at the OECD. Class will begin at 10:00 AM, but students should arrive at 9:30 AM to allow enough time to pass through security. Class will end around 6:00 PM.

Rachel Glennerster and Kudzai Takavarasha, *Running Randomized Evaluations: A Practical Guide* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 28-43 (15 pages).

Thursday, June 16. Policy analysis: Problem specification and option identification.

Guest instructor: Stefano Scarpetta, director, Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, OECD. In addition, several senior analysts from various OECD projects will speak to the class.

Note: This class will meet at the OECD. Class will begin at 10:00 AM, but students should arrive at 9:30 AM to allow enough time to pass through security. Class will end around 6:00 PM.

Rachel Meltzer and Alex Schwartz, “Chapter 2: Defining the Problem and Setting the Stage,” *Policy Analysis as Problem Solving: A Flexible and Evidence-Based Framework* (New York: Routledge, 2019): 37–61 (25 pages).

Rachel Meltzer and Alex Schwartz, “Chapter 3: Devising Alternative Policy Options,” *Policy Analysis as Problem Solving: A Flexible and Evidence-Based Framework* (New York: Routledge, 2019): 65–101 (37 pages).

Stefano Scarpetta, “Editorial: Seizing the Moment to Build a More Inclusive Labour Market” in *Employment Outlook 2021* (Paris: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2021) (4 pages).

Brussels

Friday, June 17. Site visits to European Parliamentary Research Service and Regulatory Scrutiny Board.

Note: For both the morning and afternoon sessions, students should arrive 30 minutes early to allow enough time to pass through security.

Morning session (10:30–12:30) (European Parliamentary Research Service, Square de Meeus 8, B-1050.)

Host: Wolfgang Hiller, Director for Impact Assessment and European Added Value, European Parliamentary Research Service.

European Parliamentary Research Service, *Improving the Working Conditions of Platform Workers* (Brussels: European Parliamentary Research Service, February 2022) (7 pages).

Niombo Lomba, Lenka Jančová and Meenakshi Fernandes, *Digital Transformation: Cost of Non-Europe* (Brussels: European Parliamentary Research Service, January 2022) (7 pages), i–iii (3 pages).

Afternoon session (14:00–16:00) (Regulatory Scrutiny Board, 200 Rue de la Loi, Brussels)

Host: Rytis Martikonis, Chair, Regulatory Scrutiny Board, European Commission.

European Commission, *Better Regulation Toolbox 2021* (Brussels: European Commission, 2021), 65–80, 111–119 (25 pages).

Luxembourg

Monday, June 20. Site visits to European Court of Auditors and European Investment Bank.

Note: For both the morning and afternoon sessions, students should arrive 30 minutes early to allow enough time to pass through security.

Morning session (11:30–13:30) (European Court of Auditors, 5 rue Erasme, Luxembourg)

Host: Martin Weber, director, European Court of Auditors.

European Court of Auditors, *Support to Mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE)* (Luxembourg: European Court of Auditors, March 2022) (9 pages).

European Court of Auditors, *ESF Support to Combat Long-Term Unemployment: Measures Need to be Better Targeted, Tailored and Monitored* (Luxembourg: European Court of Auditors, 2021), 4–6 (3 pages).

Afternoon session (15:00–17:00) (European Investment Bank, 2-6 Rue Albert Wehrer)

Host: Georg Weiers, Senior Economist, European Investment Bank

European Investment Bank, *Results Measurement (ReM) Framework Methodology* (Luxembourg: European Investment Bank, September 2017) (16 pages).

Paris

Tuesday, June 21. Cross-study analyses.

Note: This class will meet at FEU from 9:00–1:00.

Douglas J. Besharov, *Cross-Study Analyses* (College Park, MD: University of Maryland School of Public Policy, Welfare Reform Academy, 2016) (15 pages).

Ginny Brunton, Claire Stansfield, Jenny Caird, and James Thomas, “Chapter 5: Finding Relevant Studies” in *Introduction to Systematic Reviews*, eds. David Gough, Sandy Oliver, and James Thomas (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2017) (26 pages).

Birte Snilstveit, Raag Bhatia, Kristen Rankin, and Beryl Leach, *3IE Evidence Gap Maps: A Starting Point for Strategic Evidence Production and Use* (Washington, DC: International Initiative for Impact Evaluation, 2017) (10 pages).

Wednesday, June 22. Data collection and assessment; performance evaluations.

Guest instructor: Anu Rangarajan, senior vice president, Mathematica Policy Research

Note: This class will meet at FEU from 9:00–1:00.

Douglas J. Besharov, *Collecting and Assessing Data* (College Park, MD: University of Maryland School of Public Policy, Welfare Reform Academy, 2017) (18 pages).

Thursday, June 23. Generalizability, statistical conclusion validity, and policy conclusion validity.

Guest instructor: Neil Gilbert, professor, University of California, Berkeley

Note: This class will meet at FEU from 9:00–1:00.

Douglas J. Besharov, *Generalizability* (College Park, MD: University of Maryland School of Public Policy, Welfare Reform Academy, 2022) (7 pages).

William Trochim, “Conclusion Validity,”
<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/coneval.php> (2 pages).

William Trochim, “Threats to Conclusion Validity,” (4 pages).

William Trochim, “Improving Conclusion Validity,” (2 pages).

William Trochim, “Statistical Power,” (5 pages).

Friday, June 24. Policy Analysis: Developing criteria, options assessment, and recommendations.

Note: This class will meet at FEU from 9:00–1:00.

Rachel Meltzer and Alex Schwartz, “Chapter 4: Objectives and Criteria,” *Policy Analysis as Problem Solving: A Flexible and Evidence-Based Framework* (New York: Routledge, 2019): 105–138 (34 pages).

Rachel Meltzer and Alex Schwartz, “Chapter 6: Analysis and Making Recommendations,” *Policy Analysis as Problem Solving: A Flexible and Evidence-Based Framework* (New York: Routledge, 2019): 189–227 (39 pages).

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Friday, July 29. Draft policy analyses/briefs are due

Friday, August 26. Final policy analyses/briefs are due