



SCHOOL of
PUBLIC POLICY

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

Preliminary Syllabus

June 5–16, 2023

Instructors

Douglas J. Besharov
Douglas M. Call

Guest Instructors

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 Court of Auditors, European Investment Bank, European Parliamentary Research Service, EuroStat, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

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

Classroom and classroom procedures

The main classroom for the course will be on the St. Thomas campus of Sciences Po in the 7th arrondissement (1 Place St Thomas d’Aquin). (The closest metro stop is Rue de Bac.) We will meet at the Sciences Po classroom from June 5–8 and again on Tuesday, June 13. We will be in Brussels on June 9 and Luxembourg on June 12; the final three days of the course (June 14–16), we will meet at the OECD (2 Rue André Pascal; in the 16th arrondissement).

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.

Housing

The University of Maryland has reserved a block of dorm rooms at the Fondation des Etats-Unis (15 Boulevard Jourdan) at Cite Universitaire at a total cost of 600 Euros per student. Students who are currently undergraduate students are required to stay at FEU. Students who are currently graduate students may choose to stay at FEU, but may also opt to find their own housing in Paris. If students choose the latter option, they must provide the instructors with the location of where they will be staying.

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. Students, however, may select other topics for their policy analyses that better fit their areas of interest. Project descriptions will be due to the instructors on ***Thursday, June 15 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 twenty pages of text (double spaced), not counting appendixes and should also include executive summaries.

Draft papers will be due on ***Friday, July 28.***

Final papers will be submitted via email to the instructors by ***Friday, August 25.***

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 5. Introduction to the course, and the contribution of policy analysis and evaluation to planning and decision making.

Note: This class will meet at Sciences Po from 9:00–13:00.

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 6. Policy analysis: Problem specification and option identification.

Note: This class will meet at Sciences Po.

Morning session (9:00-13:00)

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).

Afternoon session (14:00-16:30): External Validity in Program Evaluation conference

Julia Litell, “The Logic of Generalization from Systematic Reviews to Policy and Practice” (paper summary) (4 pages)

Burt Barnow and Sanjey Pandey, “How Mixed-Methods Research Can Improve the Policy Relevance of Impact Evaluations,” (paper summary) (3 pages).

Wednesday, June 7. Causal validity, the counterfactual, and randomized experiments.

Guest instructors: 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 Sciences Po from 9:00–13:00.

Douglas J. Besharov, *Threats to Causal Validity* (College Park, MD: University of Maryland School of Public Policy, Welfare Reform Academy, 2023) (11 pages).

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

Thursday, June 8. Other methods for identifying the counterfactual.

Guest instructors: David Myers, president, AIR; and David Seidenfeld, vice president for international research and evaluation, AIR.

Note: This class will meet at Sciences Po from 9:00–13:00.

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

Brussels

Friday, June 9. Site visits to European Parliamentary Research Service and the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs, and Inclusion.

Morning session (10:00–12:00) (Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs, and Inclusion, Rue Joseph II 27, Brussels)

Host: Loukas Stemitsiotis, Chair, Regulatory Scrutiny Board, European Commission.

European Commission, *Employment and Social Developments in Europe* (Brussels: European Commission, 2022) (8 pages)

European Commission, *Adequate Minimum Income Ensuring Active Inclusion* (Brussels: European Commission, 2022) (2 pages)

Joshua Cova, *The EU Directive on Fair and Adequate Minimum Wages: Low-pay Work, Collective Bargaining and the Prospects for Income Growth* (Berlin: Hertie School Jacques Delore Center, 2022) (8 pages).

European Commission, *The Future of Social Protection and of the Welfare State in the EU* (Brussels: European Commission, 2022) (4 pages).

Afternoon session I (14:00–15:00) (European Commission, Rue de Loi 200)

Host: Ana Carla Pereira, Cabinet Expert, Cabinet of Nicolas Schmit, Commissioner for Jobs & Social Rights.

Afternoon session II (15:45–17:15) (European Parliamentary Research Service, Square de Meeus 8)

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

European Parliamentary Research Service, *Proposal for a Council Recommendation on Adequate Minimum Income* (Brussels: European Parliamentary Research Service, 2022) (8 pages).

Note: After our meetings in Brussels, students are free to return to Paris or spend their weekend elsewhere (as long as they are in Luxembourg by Monday morning.)

Luxembourg

Monday, June 12. Site visits to European Investment Bank and European Court of Auditors

Morning session (10:30–12:30) (European Court of Auditors, 5 rue Erasme, Luxembourg)

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

Reading to come

Afternoon session (13:30–15:00) (European Investment Bank, 2-6 Rue Albert Wehrer)

Host: Emily Sinnott, Head of Policy and Strategy Division, European Investment Bank

European Investment Bank, *Measuring the EIB Group's Impacts: Methods and Studies* (Luxembourg: European Investment Bank, 2021), 3–37 (34 pages).

Paris

Tuesday, June 13. Data collection and assessment; performance evaluations.

Guest instructors: Stefano Scarpetta, director, Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, OECD; and Anu Rangarajan, senior vice president, Mathematica Policy Research

Note: This class will meet at Sciences Po from 9:00–15:00.

Stefano Scarpetta, “Bold Action is Vital to Support Living Standards of the Most Vulnerable,” in *OECD Employment Outlook 2022* (Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2022) (5 pages).

Douglas J. Besharov, *Collecting and Assessing Data* (College Park, MD: University of Maryland School of Public Policy, Welfare Reform Academy, 2023) (18 pages).

Wednesday, June 14. Policy Analysis: Developing criteria, options assessment, and recommendations.

Note: This class will meet at the OECD from 9:00–13:00.

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).

Thursday, June 15. Generalizability, statistical conclusion validity, and policy conclusion validity.

Guest instructor: Bastiaan de Laat, head, In-Depth Evaluation unit, OECD.

Note: This class will meet at the OECD from 9:00–13:00.

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/concval.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 16. Cross-study analyses.

Guest instructor: Stefane Carcillo, head, Jobs and Income Division, Directorate for Employment, Labour, and Social Affairs, OECD.

Note: This class will meet at the OECD from 9:00–13:00.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Income Support for Jobseekers: Trade-offs and Current Reforms* (Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2023) (13 pages).

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)

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Friday, July 28. Draft policy analyses/briefs are due

Friday, August 25. Final policy analyses/briefs are due