



SCHOOL of  
PUBLIC POLICY

## Applied Policy Analysis

Preliminary Syllabus

*Spring Break 2026*

### ***Instructors***

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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 concepts to assess policy effectiveness* (including causal validity; generalizability; statistical conclusion validity; and programmatic and policy conclusion validity);
- *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. 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, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Students will prepare a policy brief/analysis on a topic of their own choosing. Topics may be selected from the subjects of the on-site meetings or from students' areas of interest.

### **Classroom and classroom procedures**

Our classes will take place in multiple locations. More details can be found in the class schedule below.

*Paris.* For the first two days, the class will meet in a conference room at the hotel where we will be staying (Hotel Trocadero La Tour on 5bis Rue Massenet, 75016 Paris, France). The following two days will be at the chateau of the OECD (2 Rue Andre Pascal).

*Luxembourg.* We will meet in conference rooms at the European Court of Auditors and the European Investment Bank (EIB). (The hotel is the Grand Cravat on 29, boulevard F.D. Roosevelt.) Lunch will be provided by the EIB.

*Brussels.* For the first day in Brussels, we will meet in conference rooms at the European Parliament and the European Commission. The second day, we will meet in a conference room at the hotel. (The hotel is the Courtyard by Marriott on 32 Rue Joseph II.)

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**

During the course, the class will stay at the hotels mentioned above (in double rooms). Breakfast will be provided at each of the hotels.

### **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). Many of our visits will be related to employment and social welfare protections (dealing with issues such as an aging workforce, the digitalization of work processes, the growth of platform work, and the "gig" economy) and

policy solutions for addressing these issues. Students, however, may select other topics for their policy analyses that better fit their areas of interest.

**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.

Drafts of the papers will be due April 15.

The final papers will be due May 15.

*Note:* All assignments will be submitted via email. We ask that you copy both professors on your email and use the following naming convention for *both* the subject line of the email and the name of the document: Paris\_26\_[name of assignment]\_[Your Last Name] (example: Paris\_26\_Final Paper\_Smith). When submitting your exercises via email, please make sure to copy both instructors.

### **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 Schedule

*Note:* Times and topics are subject to change. The instructors will provide students with daily updates/reminders.

## *Paris*

**Saturday, March 14. Introduction to the course, and the contribution of policy analysis and evaluation to planning and decision making.**

*Note:* This class will take place from 3:00–5:00 at the Hotel Trocadero La Tour in the Aiglon Room. Students should plan to arrive in Paris no later than the morning or early afternoon.

### **Readings**

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).

**Sunday, March 15. Policy analysis: Problem specification and option identification.**

*Note:* This class will take place from 9:00–1:00 at the Hotel Trocadero La Tour in the Aiglon Room.

### **Readings**

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).

**Monday, March 16. Policy Analysis: Developing criteria, options assessment, and recommendations.**

*Note:* This class will meet at the OECD tentatively from 9:00–4:00. The times may shift depending on the availability of OECD analysts.

### **Readings**

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).

### **Tuesday, March 17. Assessing the quality of evidence for effectiveness.**

*Note:* This class will meet at the OECD from 9:00–1:00. The times may shift depending on the availability of OECD analysts. In the afternoon/evening, students will travel by train to Luxembourg.

### **Readings**

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), 28–53 (26 pages).

Patricia J. Rogers and Michael Woolcock, “Chapter 4.3: Process and Implementation Evaluation Methods” in *Oxford Handbook of Program Design and Implementation Evaluation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023) (21 pages).

## ***Luxembourg***

### **Wednesday, March 18. Site visits to European Investment Bank and European Court of Auditors.**

*Note:* We will meet at the European Court of Auditors in the morning; lunch will be provided at the European Investment Bank, followed by a meeting.

### **Thursday, March 19. Travel day to Brussels**

*Note:* This day is open for students to travel from Luxembourg to Brussels.

## ***Brussels***

**Friday, March 20. Site visits to European Parliamentary Research Service and the European Commission.**

*Note:* Details for time and location will be forthcoming.

**Saturday, March 21. Data collection and assessment; performance evaluations; course wrap-up.**

*Note:* This class will be held from 9:00–1:00 at a meeting room in the hotel.

### **Readings**

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

Celeste Lumrow and Kevin C. Hong, “Chapter 5.1: Conducting Performance Evaluations” in *Oxford Handbook of Program Design and Implementation Evaluation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023) (24 pages).

**The course officially concludes after this class finishes; the program has paid for hotel rooms in Brussels through Sunday morning.**