

# PUBLIC POLICY (PPOL)

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## **PPOL 4200 Microeconomics for Public Pol. (4 Credits)**

Microeconomics for Public Policy Analysis will provide a comprehensive, case-based overview for the MPP student of the consequences of contemporary public policies for individuals, households, and firms. Public policy is often said to consist of the distribution of scarce or valuable resources or benefits through the mechanisms of the public sector. This course will provide the opportunity to gain fluency and expertise in the application of economic analysis to such problems as transfer payments, entitlements, government subsidies, taxation, housing, education, labor, welfare and crime. Issues concerned with exploring the government's role in encouraging innovation, maintaining a growing economy, and budgeting under conditions of "surplus," will be explored using contemporary policy initiatives. Two competing visions of public policy will be examined: the role of economic policy in securing the benefits of "ordered liberty," which accrues to the individual; and (2) the vision of public policy as fundamental to the correction of anomalies in the market and in the distribution of scarce resources, often based on interest group claims of "disparity" and "inequality".

## **PPOL 4225 Economic Policymaking: From Concepts to Practice (4 Credits)**

This course focuses on understanding the policymaking process and the social, political, and economic forces that influence it. We focus on the study of selected examples of policy design, discussing the views, constraints, and motivations of key actors and groups that influence the policy formation process and explore how these results differ from the policy prescriptions in neoclassical economic theory. The course centers on key debates around major government policy decisions and analyzes the alternative paths open to policymakers at the time at which they took those decisions. We will emphasize central questions in macroeconomics, international economics, and development economics through a case-study lens focused on evaluating decisions by assessing the arguments in favor of and against various policy alternatives. Topics covered include global financial and health crises, fiscal deficits, structural adjustment, the role of multilateral organisms, high and runaway inflation, the causes of underdevelopment, economic sanctions, debt limits, the spread of globalization, and the reliability of economic data.

## **PPOL 4250 Hacking for Good (4 Credits)**

The basic structure of the course involves teams of students competing to find the most innovative approach to a common problem. The course is led by faculty member, who will connect students to local experts and policy makers. Students will work together to research, analyze, propose, and present a proposal that addresses some aspect of a pressing societal project. The final product is judged by a panel of local policy makers and other experts. Topic vary from year to year. Examples include such issues as combatting homelessness in Denver, designing more efficient transportation systems, reducing water use in urban areas, reducing Denver's carbon footprint, and the like.

## **PPOL 4350 The Policy Lab: Local/National (4 Credits)**

The Policy Lab is an experiential course designed to introduce students to the policy-making and political environment surrounding a specific area of public policy at the state and national level. In different years, the Policy Lab might cover as a specific area, for example, fiscal policy, education policy, or health policy, and so on. The basic structure of the course is designed to: (1) introduce students to general thematic scholarship and expertise on the policy area being examined, (2) immerse students in the state and/or national policy-making environment through guest lectures and discussions with lawmakers, academics, policy experts, and political practitioners, and (3) connect students to lawmakers, nonprofit organizations, or other advocacy groups working on the specific policy area in order to work on proposing legislation, ballot initiatives, or other frameworks for reform design and implementation. The final product is a professional policy consultant report or the equivalent. The course will be led by faculty members with deep professional expertise in the policy issue being explored.

## **PPOL 4351 The Policy Lab: Comparative/International/Global (4 Credits)**

The Masters in Public Policy Curriculum has two tracks depending on student professional experience and expectations. The first, and long standing, track centers on working professional policy problems centered in a U.S. context. The second track is centered on comparative/international/global policy questions for those students seeking to work in international and/or non-U.S. contexts. Both tracks have a Policy Lab requirement but given the potential diversity of the logical policy questions to be addressed, each has its own Policy Lab designation to help match faculty expertise and student interest to the learning objectives sought of the course. The basic structure of the lab course involves student teams, each working on a different issue for an external client. The course is led by a faculty member who coaches the student teams and stands in as or gathers a panel from the PPOL community to serve as the clients, identifies other experts and policy makers who can be resources for the team, helps students learn how to learn about the issue, provides feedback at critical junctures during the quarter, and assesses the quality of the students' work. The final product is a professional consultants' report.

## **PPOL 4352 Data, Evidence, and Public Policy (2 Credits)**

This two-credit course is aimed at enhancing students' skills in data management, data preparation and manipulation, and graphic visualization using Microsoft Excel and Tableau Prep Builder.

## **PPOL 4353 Policy Writing (2 Credits)**

In this two-credit course, students will develop policy-specific applied writing skills for government and policy settings. Students will learn the key elements, formats, and styles for three categories of policy writing: 1) policy memos; 2) legislative decision briefs; and 3) organizational advocacy briefs, as well as executive summaries.

**PPOL 4400 Introduction to Policy Analysis (4 Credits)**

This course will provide the student with the analytical tools necessary to evaluate competing points of view, using empirical techniques, logic, and statistical inference. Case studies will be drawn from the current legislative and regulatory environment and will provide the MPP student with opportunities to construct a course of action, based on the use of logically consistent arguments and on the persuasive use of facts and empirical data. Students in this course will also learn the history and development of the scientific method, how to distinguish speculation, theory, fact, and opinion, how to identify the validity, ideological content or irrationality of data, how to identify the intentional obfuscation of issues, and how to evaluate one's own prejudices and vulnerability to argument not based on evidence. Students in this course how to identify the validity, ideological content or irrationality of information, how to identify the intentional obfuscation of issues, and how to evaluate one's own prejudices and vulnerability to arguments not based on evidence.

**PPOL 4410 Health Policy (4 Credits)**

This course will examine major health care policy decisions and how each shaped fundamental elements of the U.S. health care system. Course material will explore the questions of why America spends more on health care than other industrial nations, why 8.6 percent of Americans do not have health coverage, and why the location of one's birth or current neighborhood may affect their health. These topics will be explored through the lens of recent and current policy debates, including the Affordable Care Act and other federal health care programs, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the cost and affordability of prescription drugs. In addition to mastering the content in these areas, the course will weave in policy scenarios and exercises meant to mimic decisions federal and state policymakers must make when addressing policy challenges created by the U.S. health care system.

**PPOL 4500 Cost-Benefit Analysis/Pub Pol (4 Credits)**

How do we determine if programs have met their objectives? Increasingly, this is a matter for empirical evaluation. This course will focus on quantitative approaches to program evaluation and on the primary tool available to the policy analyst in the modern organizational framework, cost-benefit analysis. Various issues will be considered, including the "costs" associated with taxes (and tax expenditures), governmental mandates, health and safety regulation, environmental regulation, government "investments," such as those in education, defense, law enforcement, and the regulation of financial industries.

**PPOL 4503 Polling and Elections (2 Credits)**

Polling and Elections addresses the methodology, importance, and limitations of opinion research. Course objectives include understanding the purpose of polling; the impact opinion research has on fundraising, campaigns, and lobbying; the methods to perform opinion research, including both quantitative and qualitative means. Students will learn about survey design, data collection and analysis, and focus group opinion research methods.

**PPOL 4550 International Development Policy (4 Credits)**

This course surveys international development policy. It has two main goals: (1) to build a multi-faceted understanding of what constitutes "development" and (2) to compare and assess different approaches to aiding the success of low- and middle-income countries. We will begin by asking what development is and examining the expansive ways in which it can be defined and measured, looking at these questions from economic, institutional, social, and political angles. We will study macro approaches to industrialization, economic growth, and development over the past half-century, with an emphasis on comparing and contrasting different development strategies. We will then focus on the development and aid business, looking at what the World Bank and other aid agencies do, the successes and failures of traditional approaches to foreign aid, and new thinking and actors in international development policy. We will end by examining how development policy could better address key contemporary challenges, such as the natural resource curse, corruption, and the challenges of building effective and legitimate governance in developing countries.

**PPOL 4600 Regulation and Institutional Analysis (4 Credits)**

This course will provide the MPP student with a solid understanding of the legal basis for policy action, through a case-based examination of executive and legislative authority, judicial policy-making, the expansion of the due process and equal protection clauses of the 14th Amendment, and the expansion of administrative authority under the Administrative Procedure Act. Such issues as affirmative action, government contracting, school finance, antitrust, and substantive due process will be presented utilizing a combination of traditional legal analysis and the cost-benefit approach of the policy specialist.

**PPOL 4655 Negotiating Environmental Conflict and Policy (4 Credits)**

Environmental issues engage multiple stakeholders with differing knowledge sets, beliefs, values, and even worldviews. Science alone is ill-equipped to resolve such complex disputes. Environmental conflicts involve negotiating differences, as do the development and implementation of environmental policies. This course explores both these 'downstream' and 'upstream' arenas. Within the domain of environmental and public policy conflict and policy, it focuses on the range of processes used to address these conflicts and issues, what different processes may have to offer, and the tradeoffs in both process and substance that must be considered. Themes of public involvement, information management & integration, and designing for adaptation will undergird consideration and critique of approaches. Multiple case studies will be explored and compared.

**PPOL 4674 Water Policy (4 Credits)**

Water is a key resource for the sustenance of all life. Under many circumstances, it is scarce, too abundant, and inequitably distributed across groups in society and nature. This diversity of situations produces the conditions for the emergence of conflict among users, hence requiring the design of institutions to facilitate effective management. This makes water governance a complex but urgent issue to tackle. This class examines such institutions in a variety of levels –state, federal, and international- and analyzes how they affect water access and use. Students in the class will also engage in a careful examination of the sources of conflict and cooperation among water stakeholders on a regional and global scale. The main goal of the course is to foster the students' capacity to assess how water-related conflicts can be prevented through the design and implementation of relevant policies.

**PPOL 4700 Public Management & Budgeting (4 Credits)**

This course introduces students to the topic of public management, which includes concepts such as organizational structure, performance management, and strategy development. In addition, the instructor will teach the techniques and concepts of government and non-profit budgeting/financial management. The budgeting process includes program development/implementation, cost and revenue estimation and projection, and budget evaluation. The relationship between public management and budgeting will be explored.

**PPOL 4701 Special Topics in Public Policy (1-4 Credits)**

Various topics in public policy are covered. Topic subjects to change each term as deemed appropriate with local, regional and federal policy issues and regulation changes. Two examples are: "Denver Dynamics" explores the policy options and responses to the challenges of big city governance. Exclusive interactions with major stakeholders in the City and County of Denver are featured, with a view to giving the student an insider's view of power, economic development, political influence and decision-making. "Getting Results Inside the Beltway: Power and policy in Washington, D.C." is a travel course consisting of specially-arranged one-on-one sessions with Washington-based lawmakers, decision-leaders, and policy experts, through which graduate students will gain an understanding of the dysfunctionalities of the current budget process, political polarization, the interest groups that shape the current policy dynamic, the increasing importance of media in shaping policy, the solutions that will be required for the United States to regain fiscal sanity and solvency—and the challenges that will need to be met to preserve American hegemony and redefine national security.

**PPOL 4702 Special Topics in Public Policy Skills (1-4 Credits)**

Various professional skills and competencies are covered in these 1-credit classes. Each student will be required to complete four of these for the MPP degree. The topics are subject to change given student needs. Examples of topics may include: Diversity and Inclusion in Public Policy, Drafting a Policy Memo, Presenting a Policy Position to a Professional Audience, Working in Teams Addressing Complex Issues, Ethics Challenges in Public Policy Choices, and The Practice of Public Policy.

**PPOL 4715 Negotiation Workshop (2 Credits)**

Negotiation is an important skill for most jobs and professions. Whether you are crafting policies or legislation, negotiating agreements, advocating for rights, making arrangements to meet human needs, or implementing programs, the ability to strategically advance your own or your group's interests while working through differences allows efficient and mutually acceptable solutions to be created. Though some may feel negotiation is an art, it is also a skill that can be taught and practiced. In this course you will learn, and have opportunities to practice and improve, analytic skills, communication skills, and forms of preparation and execution. You will leave with new tools to advance your goals and to work with others to create solutions that are "win-win."

**PPOL 4950 Public Policy Capstone (4 Credits)**

The Policy Memorandum research project is designed to provide the MPP student with a capstone experience that will synthesize the knowledge and skills that were acquired during the 60 quarter hours of formal coursework. Included among the skills that students will apply are research, quantitative methods, economic analysis, cost-benefit analysis, budgeting and project management.

**PPOL 4991 Independent Study (1-4 Credits)**

Students will work in collaboration with faculty from the Institute for Public Policy Studies to complete an independent study project.

**PPOL 4995 Independent Research (1-8 Credits)**

The Policy Memorandum research project is designed to provide the MPP student with a capstone experience that will synthesize the knowledge and skills that were acquired during the 60 quarter hours of formal coursework. Included among the skills that students will apply are research, quantitative methods, economic analysis, cost-benefit analysis, budgeting and project management.