

PUBLIC POLICY (PPOL)

PPOL 4100 American Public Policy System (4 Credits)

The American Policy Agenda, which is required for MPP students, will provide an intensive overview of the development of American public policy in the 20th century, with special emphasis on the interconnection between the values of the public and private sectors. Through the lens of a useful descriptive model, graduate students will learn concepts of the role of government have evolved from: the (1) constitutional period, wherein political society was thought to be a rational device for the protection of property and liberty and prosperity was equivalent to the free management of affairs; to the (2) administrative period, wherein powerful regulatory agencies were created to control concentrations of corporate power and the idea developed that the market does not always reflect the social good; to the (3) bureaucratic period, wherein the stock market collapse of 1929 and the Great Depression reversed key ideas of limited government inherent in the constitution and, beginning with the New Deal, social engineering in the "public interest" defined virtually every problem as "national;" to the (4) social welfare period, wherein government became the source of vast entitlements and benefits and interest groups came to dominate the policy debate; to the (5) current period of stalemate, gridlock, and reconsideration, wherein big government is a given, along with a utilitarian social contract defined as that which provides the most efficiency, the most productivity, and the most consumption for the most people.

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 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 4300 Quantitative Analysis-Pub Pol (4 Credits)

This course will provide the MPP student with the tools of mathematical analysis needed for the advanced study of public policy issues and evaluation of alternatives. Topics will include descriptive statistics, probability, sampling, estimation, inference and hypothesis testing, variable analysis and correlation, regression theory, reliability and validity, and prediction and simulation. Students needing review of college-level algebra will be referred to appropriate tutorials. The overall learning objective of this course is to help students recognize and apply basic statistical concepts to Public Policy and, more in general, Social Science analysis. Students will learn how to use statistical software to: build datasets, describe data in a visual and analytical fashion, perform statistical tests, and construct basic statistical inference models. Students will also learn how to report their analytical findings for Public Policy analysis.

PPOL 4350 The Policy Lab (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 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 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 4501 Great Issues Forum (2 Credits)

Intensive Great Issues Forums provide cutting edge opportunities to study emerging issues, like innovation and technology, antitrust, privacy, health care, education, fiscal policy, national security, economic growth, ethics, and metropolitan dynamics. We maintain close affiliations with leading think tanks, such as the Brookings Institution and the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C., and with important political figures and policy-makers. The Great Issues Forums are unique short courses devoted to a single policy issue and taught by a nationally-recognized authority in the area. These courses will occur on a periodic basis, with at least two forums to be offered each academic quarter. Participation in these courses is required for graduate students in the MPP program. Each course will be taught on an intensive workshop basis, over the course of two or more days, for example, all-day sessions on Friday and Saturday. Specific topics will be determined by the immediacy of the policy issue and its relevancy to the curriculum of the MPP.

PPOL 4502 Issues Forum II (2 Credits)

Intensive Great Issues Forums provide cutting edge opportunities to study emerging issues, like innovation and technology, antitrust, privacy, health care, education, fiscal policy, national security, economic growth, ethics, and metropolitan dynamics. We maintain close affiliations with leading think tanks, such as the Brookings Institution and the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C., and with important political figures and policy-makers. The Great Issues Forums are unique short courses devoted to a single policy issue and taught by a nationally-recognized authority in the area. These courses will occur on a periodic basis, with at least two forums to be offered each academic quarter. Participation in these courses is required for graduate students in the MPP program. Each course will be taught on an intensive workshop basis, over the course of two or more days, for example, all-day sessions on Friday and Saturday. Specific topics will be determined by the immediacy of the policy issue and its relevancy to the curriculum of the MPP.

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 Regulatory Policy (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 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 Tpcs in Public Policy (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 dysfunctions 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 4950 Policy Memorandum (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.