

## **PUBLIC AFFAIRS 150 HONORS SEMINAR**

Tuesdays and Thursdays 1-2:15, 611 Administration

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### Course Objectives

This second introductory course for the Public Affairs Scholars Program is designed to:

build your knowledge about some serious policy challenges facing the United States and the world;

allow you to compare the perspectives and methods used in the various social sciences and other disciplines that are related to public affairs; and

help you develop skills for public policy analysis.

In the first half of the semester, we will focus on recent changes to social, economic, and political institutions, and on how policy analysis can be brought to bear on some problems that are especially challenging for the Baltimore area. In the second half of the semester, we will continue the exploration of policy analysis and institutions, but broaden our perspective to the global level.

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## Expectations, Assignments, and Grades

After reading through this syllabus, you will see that this class is demanding—but I also expect that you will find it to be interesting and fun. You will have a good experience if you come to class prepared, having completed and thought about the readings, and being ready to discuss important questions. Before each class, make some brief notes with your tentative answers to the thought questions that follow each day's required reading in this syllabus. You may also want to jot down some additional questions that you would like the class to discuss. Regularly reading about topical issues in the Washington Post will also help you prepare.

During most weeks of the course, you will prepare a short writing assignment. Your answer should be about 2 double-spaced and typed pages. On up to three occasions, you will have an opportunity to revise for a better grade if you do not receive an A on the original.

The final writing assignment is a policy analysis. This policy analysis is the only assignment for which I expect you to read beyond the assigned readings listed below. You should pick a significant policy issue or problem that is at least minimally related to your service project or site, and propose a response to this issue or problem. Present your proposal in the form of a memo to someone in real life who has some ability to adopt or implement your proposal. Your memo needs to define the issue, lay out your proposed response, identify major obstacles to the implementation of your solution, and recommend a specific course of action. Provide statistical data to put the issue in context and to support your recommendations. Cite major sources. The length should be about five double-spaced and typed pages.

Much of the previous paragraph is copied from the application for the Truman Scholarship, at: <http://www.truman.gov/>, which you should consider competing for in your junior year. I have posted on the web some advice on plagiarism, at: <http://research.umbc.edu/~meyers/plag.htm>. Please read through this advice. You may also find helpful my page with research hints, at: <http://research.umbc.edu/~meyers/reshints.htm>.

You will be continuing your service projects through this semester under the coordination of Delana Boatright. We will periodically discuss your service experiences in connection to the issues raised in class. In addition, four special class sessions beyond our regular TTh times will be devoted to more personal service reflections.

Final grades will be calculated using the following percentages for each grading category:

40%—service, class attendance and discussion.

50%—writing assignments

20%—final policy analysis

I do not “grade on a curve.” My dream as a professor is that each student earns an A because of excellent performance. If you find you are not at that level, I especially encourage you to discuss with me how you could improve.

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### Readings to purchase at the bookstore

Alan Ehrenhalt, 1996. The Lost City: The Forgotten Virtues of Community in America. N.Y.: Basic Books.

Marion Orr, 1999. Black Social Capital: The Politics of School Reform in Baltimore, 1986-1998. Lawrence: University of Kansas.

Eugene Bardach, 2000. A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis. N.Y.: Chatham House.

The other readings are either handouts, web pages, or on reserve at the library in both hard-copy and electronic formats. The electronic reserves can be accessed from the library reserves web page, at: <http://www.umbc.edu/ereserves/> with the case-sensitive password <redacted>. The web pages can be reached via the links embedded in this syllabus, at: <http://research.umbc.edu/~meyers/pub150h.htm>.

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### Class Schedule

1/28 Initial appraisals of public affairs in America

Vaclav Havel, 1990. “New Year’s Address to the Nation,” at: [http://www.hrad.cz/president/Havel/speeches/index\\_uk.html](http://www.hrad.cz/president/Havel/speeches/index_uk.html)

Havel’s speech, which you read over winter break, is a lucid description of the core issues facing Czechoslovak society at the turning point of its “velvet revolution.” The speech was influential in part because Havel had for years dissented against a regime that most citizens hated. Imagine that you, like Havel did in his country, have the full attention of your country’s citizens, but in your case for a speech on American society. What would you say?

1/30 The communitarian vision

Ehrenhalt, chapters 1-3

Ehrenhalt previews his argument about the “implicit bargain” on pp. 2-3 (unnumbered) of the book. The concluding sentence he asks is “Would we ever want to do that again?” Would you, and why or why not?

On p. 8, Ehrenhalt mentions the popular “Question Authority” bumper sticker. Which authorities do you now question, and to what extent? Are there any authorities that you truly respect, including those related to your service site?

2/4 Economic class; substance abuse policy

Ehrenhalt, chapters 9-11

David Byrd, 1999. “Last Call for Alcohol?,” National Journal, December 18, pp. 3604-3608.

United States Sentencing Commission, 2002. Report to the Congress: Cocaine and Federal Sentencing Policy, “Executive Summary,” May, [http://www.ussc.gov/r\\_congress/02crack/execsumm.pdf](http://www.ussc.gov/r_congress/02crack/execsumm.pdf)

Writing assignment: On pp. 74-6, Ehrenhalt describes the cultural importance of alcohol during the '50s. The National Journal article describes a nascent movement to regulate alcohol five decades later. Would you support any of the proposed methods of regulation?

2/6 11 Religion and “faith-based organizations”

Ehrenhalt, chapters 4-5

Working Group on Human Needs and Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, 2002. Finding Common Ground. January, at: <http://www.working-group.org/report.pdf>

On p. 123, Ehrenhalt reports on Father Lynch sharing report card contents with other families, “so that parents would know they could be held accountable semi-publicly for the children’s poor performance.” What role, if any, should such “shaming”—whether carried out by a religious authority or by others—play in our society?

Writing assignment, due 2/11: After reading selectively through the “Finding Common Ground” report, what is your general reaction to the report, and more specifically, to

Recommendations 28 and 29? Should there be a “faith element” in organizations with goals like those of your service site?

2/13 Race and ethnicity

Ehrenhalt, chapters 6-8

Elizabeth M. Grieco and Rachel C. Cassidy, 2001. “Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin,” U.S. Bureau of the Census, March, at:  
<http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/c2kbr01-1.pdf>  
Census table on “Difference in Population by Race and Hispanic or Latino Origin for the United States, 1990-2000,” at:  
<http://www.census.gov/population/cen2000/phc-t1/tab04.pdf>

Ethnic conflict is a central feature of American history. Natives were subjected to genocide, and waves of immigration during the 19<sup>th</sup> century led to discrimination by old immigrants against the new. Immigration rates were relatively low during most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but over the past two decades increased markedly. Among the political issues related to recent immigration is the movement to require that public schools replace “bilingual education” with English-only instruction. Yet the most important divide within America has always been between blacks and whites, through periods of slavery, civil war, legal repression, and the civil rights movement. That divide is now represented in debates over policies like affirmative action and racial profiling.

Given this context, consider the report from the Census Bureau. The report describes how the 2000 Census collected data on racial and ethnic self-identifications. At the bottom of page 1 of the report is the slogan “Helping You Make Informed Decisions.” To what extent are the categories used by the Census Bureau, and the data based on these categories, useful for understanding the nature of American society? For making public policy?

2/14 *Special service-learning reflection session on “diversity.” What differences in social background have you perceived at your service site? How have you dealt with them?*

2/18 Economic transformations and social mobility

C. Eugene Steuerle, Edward M. Gramlich, Hugh Hecl, and Demetra Smith Nightingale, 1998. “Economic Transformations,” from The Government We Deserve. Washington: Urban Institute, pp. 11-34.

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2001. “Poverty Rates Fell in 2000 as Unemployment Reached 31-year Low,” at: <http://www.cbpp.org/9-25-01pov.htm>;

and “Recent Census Data Significantly Understate The Increase in Income Disparities,” at: <http://www.cbpp.org/9-21-01pov.htm>

Robert Rector and Rea Hederman, 1999. “Income Inequality: How Census Data Misrepresent Income Distribution,” Heritage Foundation, September 29, at: <http://www.heritage.org/library/cda/cda99-07.html>

Writing assignment: The two web readings analyze Census data on income disparities (focus in the Heritage reading on pp. 1-8 and 17-18). Do they add anything to your understanding of class in America? Which observation in one of the reports seems most important to you, and why does it?

2/20 Introduction to policy analysis

Bardach, pp. xi-46

As you read through the first part of Bardach, make some notes on how you might use his advice on policy analysis techniques to modify the web page you developed in last semester’s class.

2/25 Data collection; family structure as a policy problem

Bardach, pp. 47-70

Isabel V. Sawhill, 1999. “Families at Risk,” from Henry J. Aaron and Robert D. Reischauer, eds. Setting National Priorities: The 2000 Election and Beyond. D.C.: Brookings, pp. 97-135.

On pp. 104-5 of Sawhill’s chapter is a table of child well-being indicators. Which three of these indicators are most important to you? Why?

Sawhill’s chapter is data rich; it relies on many empirical studies. Yet she would be the first to argue that social scientists need to learn much more about the causes and consequences of family structure. What specific question in this policy area do you think we most need to answer?

2/27 The policy toolbag; promoting marriage?

Bardach, pp. 71-95.

Wade F. Horn, 2000, "Wedding Bell Blues: Marriage and Welfare Reform," 19: Summer, pp. 39-42, at:

<http://www.brookings.org/dybdocroot/press/REVIEW/summer2001/horn.htm>

The American Prospect, issue on "The Politics of Family," 13: April 8, 2002, browse articles under "Features" at:

<http://www.prospect.org/print/V13/7/index.html>

Writing assignment: Work in a group of two or three students. Construct an outcomes matrix, as described on pp. 35-37 of Bardach, regarding policies to promote marriage and parenting while married. As columns, you should include at least three evaluative criteria. Restrict the number of matrix rows to the three alternatives that you consider most worthy of consideration. You may want to review the list in part III of Bardach to identify a policy alternative that was unmentioned in the readings. For each cell in the matrix, guess the likely outcome of the alternative in relation to the relevant evaluative criteria.

#### 3/4 Social capital and political change

Ehrenhalt, chapters 12-13

Orr, chapters 1-4

In the first four chapters of his book, Orr uses concepts from social capital and regime theory to describe the development of Baltimore's schools. On p. 73, Orr quotes an appraisal of the Baltimore City schools, "The system is simply a disaster." He then details the comparatively low MSPAP, SAT, and graduation results, and concludes on p. 74 with a harsh assessment of the management and employees of the system.

To what extent does Orr's approach differ from that of Ehrenhalt's? Does his description make you reconsider any of the positions you took in our previous class discussions on racial identity and economic class?

#### 3/6 Interactions between policy designs and institutional capacities

Orr, 5-7

Jonathan Crane, 1998. "Building on Success," in Crane, editor, Social Programs That Work. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, pp. 1-15; and George Farkas, "Reading One-to-One: An Intensive Program Serving a Great Many Students While Still Achieving Large Effects," in Crane, pp. 75-109.

Chapters 5-7 cover cases of site-based management, efforts to improve neighborhood schools, and volunteer assistance from the corporate community. Are there any common explanations for each initiative's limited progress?

Writing assignment: Assume for the sake of argument that fewer children have a caring adult at home, especially in the afternoon, and that this retards their educational progress. Assume further that Reading One-to-One is an effective program worthy of expansion in Baltimore City. Keeping in mind what you know about the city, look through the list in Appendix A of Bardach on "things government do" (also known as "tools"). Pick one or more tools that you think could be used to help Reading One-to-One (or a modification of this approach) succeed at a large scale in Baltimore. Describe how this could be this case.

### 3/11 Organizational improvement

Orr, chapters 8-10

Maryland State Department of Education, "School Reconstitution," at:  
<http://www.msde.state.md.us/Reconstitution/index.htm>

How can public schools best be held accountable for their performance? To what extent does this question miss the mark? That is, should the policy debate on education be redirected towards other, more significant questions?

### 3/13 A broader perspective on policy analysis

Handout: Igor S. Mayer, C. Els van Daalen, Pieter W.G. Bots, 2001.  
"Perspectives on policy analyses; a framework for understanding and design."  
Paper presented at the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management conference, November 1.

The reading by Mayer, et. al., written by some Dutch academics, provides a complicated but very useful synthesis of important ideas about policy analysis and policy making. Look at Figure 2 (p. 11). The work of Farkas is a good example of the "rational style" of policy analysis. Can you think of how the "interactive style" might be applied to better understand Baltimore's educational challenges?

*3/14 Special service-learning reflection session on "organizational capacity and public participation." What role could you play, if any, in improving organizational capacity and/or public participation at your service site?*

3/18, 20 Crime

David Finkelhor and Richard Ormrod, 2001, "Homicides of Children and Youth," Juvenile Justice Bulletin, U.S. Department of Justice, October.

Baltimore City web sites--CitiStat, at:  
<http://www.baltimorecity.gov/news/citistat/index.html>; and  
Baltimore City Police Department, at:  
<http://www.baltimorecity.gov/government/police/index.html>

We just learned about efforts to make Baltimore "The City That Reads." Mayor O'Malley was elected because of widespread concern that instead Baltimore is "The City That Bleeds." What do you think about O'Malley's approach to crime?

David Byrd, 2000. "Making Dad Matter," National Journal, April 15, pp. 1196-1200.

Stuart Taylor, 2000. "The Issue Politicians Are Ignoring: 2 Million Prisoners," National Journal, October 21, pp. 3299-3300.

Writing assignment, due 3/20: Considering the policy alternatives mentioned in these articles, which ONE alternative seems most desirable to you? Write a persuasive argument for this alternative; you may modify the alternative if you wish, or if you feel strongly that an unmentioned alternative would be better, you may advocate that. Try to draw on some material covered earlier in the semester, and remember to address the most significant challenge to your preferred alternative.

### *Spring Break*

#### 4/1 Health and care rationing

William B. Schwartz, 1998. Life Without Disease. Berkeley: University of California Press, "The Birth and Growth of Big Medicine," "Medical Progress in the Near Term: 2000-2020," and "A Strategy for More Equitable Rationing," pp. 7-30, 65-80, and 104-113.

Schwartz suggests that the increasing costs of providing higher-quality health care should be limited by rationing care. He proposes that the most expensive procedures be limited to those who would benefit the most. Think about how you would calculate "benefits." In particular, would you agree to the following: give a preference to "young ill" over the "elderly ill" by crediting the "years of quality life" after a successful medical intervention? You might find it useful to refer back to Bardach's discussion of evaluative criteria.

Also due: A one-paragraph description of your proposed topic for the final policy analysis. Use Bardach, pp. 97-102 as a reference.

#### 4/3 Social institutions, health and happiness

Robert E. Lane, 2000. The Loss of Happiness in Market Democracies. “Unhappiness in Our Time,” “Companionship or Income,” and “Materialism in Market Democracies,” New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 13-35; 77-98, and 141-158.

Lane strongly argues that materialist cultural values promote unhappiness, contrary to the assumptions of most economists. Since this is a very sophisticated work, make some notes that summarize the concepts he uses (i.e., beyond the summary on p. 146) and the kinds of studies he cites. What questions do you have about his logic and his methods?

#### 4/8 Mental health policy

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, “Public Policy Home Page,” <http://www.nami.org/policy.htm>

Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, <http://www.bazelon.org/welcome.html>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, <http://www.samhsa.gov/>

Elizabeth Daigneau, 2002. “Criminal Hospital,” Governing, September, pp. 55-58. <http://www.governing.com/9mental.pdf>

Writing assignment: Work in a group of two or three. Read selectively through the web pages. Imagine that an influential Member of Congress would like to say something about mental health policy, and wants you to brief her on it. Write a memo that summarizes what you believe to be the most important policy issues. To the extent you believe it is relevant, include Lane’s analysis in your briefing.

#### 4/10 Global disparities

Handouts of selected tables from World Bank, 2000. “Selected World Development Indicators” World Development Report, 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty, at: <http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/wdrpoverty/report/index.htm>

World Bank, 2001. Hear Our Voices: The Poor on Poverty. Watch this video, on reserve at the library.

Imagine you were going to talk with someone featured in this video. Many people in these countries know some things about the U.S., and particularly about its wealth, its popular culture, and its military power. Their appraisals of the US. often mix admiration with revulsion. Yet many people in poorer countries are curious to learn more about the U.S.; sometimes what they do learn astonishes them. What would you want these people to know about the U.S.?

I assume you may also want to know more about the lives of people who live in Brazil or Malawi. What would you like to ask them?

4/11 *Special service-learning reflection session on “disparities.” To what extent are disparities a significant feature in your service site? By participating in service, are you changing these disparities? If not, does that mean your service is insignificant?*

4/15 Debt relief and corruption

Carole J. L. Collins, Zie Gariyo, and Tony Burdon, 2001. "Jubilee 2000: Citizen Action Across the North-South Divide," from Michael Edwards and John Gaventa, Global Citizen Action. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, pp. 135-148.

William Easterly, 2001. “Governments Can Kill Growth,” and “Corruption and Growth,” from The Elusive Quest for Growth, MIT Press, pp. 217-252.

Go back to Bardach’s list of evaluative criteria. Pick three from this list (or others of your own) that are most important to you when thinking about these readings. How would you rank-order these criteria, and why?

4/17 Health care for the world’s poor

World Health Organization, 2001. Macroeconomics and Health: Investing in Health for Economic Development. “Executive Summary,” pp. 1-20, at: [http://www3.who.int/whosis/cmh/cmh\\_report/e/pdf/001-020.pdf](http://www3.who.int/whosis/cmh/cmh_report/e/pdf/001-020.pdf)

Writing assignment: Imagine that you’ve been hired to market the findings of the WHO report to the American public. This will be a tough sell; polling reports that only 1 in 5 Americans believe that improving living conditions in poor countries should be a priority. Again, refer back to Bardach—in this case, the N.Y. taxi driver. How could you convince such skeptics of the merits of the WHO proposal, including spending U.S. tax dollars for this purpose?

4/22, 24 Political models of policy change

John E. McDonough, 2000. Experiencing Politics. Berkeley: University of California Press. "Punctuated Equilibrium and the Fate of Hospital Rate Setting" and "Agendas and Children's Health Care," pp. 199-284.

Assuming that you want to promote change, a fundamental issue is the extent to which a desirable change is politically feasible. McDonough's chapters present two models for understanding political change, illustrating these models with stories from his legislative experience. What's the most important lesson you can draw from these chapters?

Paul Light, 2000. "Government's Greatest Achievements of the Past Half Century," Brookings Institution Reform Brief," November, at: <http://www.brookings.edu/comm/reformwatch/rw02/rw2.htm>

Writing assignment, due 4/24: Consider the second-to-last paragraph from Light's article, which questions the future ability of the American political system to address serious policy challenges. Think back to the policy challenges we have discussed this semester, and to related theories about policy analysis and policy change (e.g., Bardach, Ehrenhalt, Orr). To what extent do you think Light's concern is warranted? (If you desire, you might incorporate your evaluation of Light's methodology into this answer) If it is warranted, what would you propose to help increase our society's ability to deal with policy challenges?

4/29, 5/1 Environmental sustainability and local land use

Edward O. Wilson, 2002. The Future of Life. N.Y.: Knopf, "The Bottleneck," and "The Solution," pp. 22-41 and 149-189 (notes on pp. 194-5 and 206-211)

The potential for nuclear war had varied impacts on the United States from the 1950s to the 1980s. One was that some people developed a fatalistic attitude about the inevitability of nuclear catastrophe, which was perhaps best expressed in Stanley Kubrick's movie *Dr. Strangelove*. Pessimistic projections of environmental conditions might reasonably inspire a similar fatalism. In contrast, though Wilson argues that the "future of life" is threatened by the growth of human population and consumption, he then suggests that there is a technically feasible agenda for restoring the balance between human activity and ecosystems. The language in his final paragraph expresses optimism about the adoption of this agenda. To what extent is this optimism warranted?

MD Office of Smart Growth, at: <http://www.smartgrowth.state.md.us/>

Chesapeake Bay Foundation, at: [http://www.savethebay.cbf.org/stratgic%20plan/long\\_range\\_strategic\\_plan.htm](http://www.savethebay.cbf.org/stratgic%20plan/long_range_strategic_plan.htm)

Writing assignment, due 5/1: Consider the slogan "Think Globally, Act Locally." If Wilson's diagnosis is correct, this slogan implies that policy in Maryland should be

focusing on, among other things, how land is used in the state. Read through the handout news articles, and scan through two web sites: that of the Office of Smart Growth and a strategic plan from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. Is the state doing enough? If not, what would you propose that Maryland should do regarding land use?

## 5/6, 8 Global warming and our automobile nation

Program on International Policy Attitudes, 2001. Polling data on global warming, at: [http://www.americans-world.org/digest/global\\_issues/global\\_warming/gw\\_summary.cfm](http://www.americans-world.org/digest/global_issues/global_warming/gw_summary.cfm)

Clive Crook, 2002. "Bush Broke His Promise on Global Warming," National Journal, March 2, pp. 595-6.

Peter H. Stone, 2002. "Running on All Cylinders," National Journal, April 6, pp. 998-999.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Climate Change Assessment reflected a strong consensus among earth scientists that a substantial increase in the earth's surface temperature is inevitable. Uncertainty remains about the magnitude and timing of this increase and about its positive and negative effects—indeed, including how the possible effects should be classified as positive or negative (consider how preferences vary about warm vs. cold winters). Nevertheless, most scientists predict major environmental changes that are quite worrisome, such as the expansion of tropical communicable diseases into now-temperate climates. Consequently, many scientists argue that society should honor a "precautionary principle"—taking action now to reduce the probability of having to deal with dire problems in the future. Put simply, this would mean substantial reductions in carbon dioxide emissions over the next several decades.

Review the polling data on global warming issues and the two brief articles. Are there elements of Bardach's approach that can help you analyze what you've read? To the extent that Bardach's approach has limited utility, what other ideas or techniques might help you understand our society's current approach to global warming?

Paul Hawken, Amory Lovins, and L. Hunter Lovins, 1999. Natural Capitalism (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company), "The Next Industrial Revolution," "Reinventing the Wheels: Hypercars and Neighborhoods," pp. 1-47.

Ian. W. H. Parry, 2001. "Are Gasoline Taxes in Britain Too High?," Resources for the Future, April, at: <http://www.rff.org/~parry/Transport/ukgastax.pdf> . For an illustration of economic policy analysis written for professionals, quickly scan the followup to this piece: Parry and Kenneth A. Small, 2002. "Does Britain or the United States Have the Right Gasoline Tax?," Resources for the Future, at: [http://www.rff.org/~parry/Papers/2001/gas\\_tax.pdf](http://www.rff.org/~parry/Papers/2001/gas_tax.pdf)

Writing assignment, due 5/8: The reading by Hawkin, Lovins, and Lovins argues that technological and social innovations can be a potentially strong contributor to the resolution of environmental problems, and in this case, those created by automobiles. The Parry article uses economic logic to calculate an “optimal” level of the gasoline tax. Compare the assumptions and perspectives of these authors—where do they agree, and where do they disagree? What elements in these approaches do you find most attractive?

5/9 *Summary service-learning reflection session. What are the two most important things you have learned from service throughout the year?*

5/13 Summary discussion

Return to the question for the first class. Has your speech changed at all? What facts, ideas, or techniques covered in this course might have caused you to change your speech?

5/20 Final Assignment Due