**HS302f: Policy Analysis and Design in the Developing World**  
M2 Meets Tuesdays 9 am -12 pm

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**Course Overview and Objectives:**

This course will provide an overview of the tools of policy analysis and policy design.

The course topics are:

1. Defining policy problems with causal analysis.
2. Analyzing issue framing and political feasibility.
3. Measurement for policy knowledge and as a tool of control.
4. Program evaluation with cost-benefit analysis, experiments and surveys.
5. Analyzing policy instruments: rules, incentives,
7. Policy design at the grassroots.

The learning objectives are:

1. Introduce quantitative and qualitative methods of gathering information for policymaking.
2. Encourage you to articulate the assumptions about human behavior and cause-and-effect mechanisms that underlie mainstream policy analysis, and begin to compare these with what we know about the developing world. We’ll pay special attention to understanding the rational choice and microeconomic paradigms.
3. Inspire you to question concepts of policy success and articulate your own standards.
4. Instill confidence that you can use your knowledge to constructively analyze existing programs and design innovative policy solutions.

**Requirements and Grading:**

**Class Sessions**

1. **Come to class the first session with a topic that you will use throughout the semester as a sort of test case or laboratory specimen for applying each week’s readings. This will be the topic for your final paper.** It could be something you’re exploring for a thesis, could be some aspect of your volunteer, activist, or paid work,
could be something else. I will ask everyone to think aloud about your topic during our introductions in the first session.

2. Do the readings and come prepared to discuss how you have applied them to your policy topic. In every session, we will discuss the readings by exploring how you can use them to analyze your policy topic, and by collaborating to build on each other’s ideas.

3. Attendance—should be perfect unless you have a medical problem or an emergency. If you have to miss a class or leave early/come late, please let me know in advance. Frequent lateness and unexcused absences will be noted in a reduction of your participation grade.

4. Please let me know if you need any special accommodations for a disability or other life circumstances that might interfere with your attendance, class participation or meeting deadlines. You can learn about the process for documenting disabilities and requesting accommodations through Mary Brooks, Heller School’s disabilities coordinator (maryeliz@brandeis.edu).

5. Devices: You are welcome to bring your laptops and tablets for note-taking and referring to readings if you don’t use hard copies. Any other use (Web surfing and e-mail) is the height of rudeness. If I get an inkling that anyone is doing anything but referring to assigned texts and note taking, I’ll put an end to in-class device use for everyone. Please keep your phones turned off and tucked away. (Exception: if you have some kind of family emergency and need to be accessible, you may keep your phone on vibrate, but please tell me before class.)

Written Assignments:

One final paper 10 pages maximum due May 6 by 5 pm.

Final Project: A detailed outline is provided at the end of the syllabus. Here’s a quick summary: Each student will select a policy topic on the first day of class and we will build towards the final paper with specific applications of each week’s readings to your topic. The syllabus provides a “Guide for Class Preparation” each week to help you apply the readings to your policy topic and construct the building blocks for your final paper. These interim exercises are not written assignments, but you will have a much easier time doing your final paper if you make written notes during the term.

Course grades will be based on your final papers and the quality of class participation. Percentages below are approximate—As you’ll find out in the readings, I’m not a believer in numerical precision for assessing human beings or social processes (such as learning and contribution to collective life).

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<td>Participation</td>
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Note on class participation

Class discussion is a collaborative exercise. You can participate in several ways:

1) Helping to explain and clarify the points of readings.
2) Asking questions that help all of us clarify what we don’t understand.
3) Helping classmates by rephrasing their questions or statements to illuminate something that might not be clear.
4) Helping to advance the discussion by asking critical questions in a constructive way or by suggesting alternative interpretations of the issue we are discussing.
5) Being aware of sharing the “air time” and not hogging the microphone. Holding forth with long speeches is not conducive to good discussion. Be succinct. Use details sparingly, only enough to illustrate your point as it relates to the discussion.

Reading Materials:

We will be reading substantial chunks of Poor Economics so I encourage you to purchase a copy. There will be a copy on reserve, but I can’t copy the entire book to put on Latte without violating copyright laws. It is a relatively inexpensive paperback and something that you probably want in your personal libraries.

Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo, Poor Economics (Public Affairs, 2011)

Other materials are all available either on line or through the Brandeis library subscription databases.

Statement on Integrity

First, professional integrity is broader than academic integrity. In contrast to the prevailing norms in academia about researchers being “objective” and “unbiased,” I believe we do and ought to have moral commitments. Each of us believes certain things are morally right or wrong, and we organize our work and careers to act on our moral principles. In the policy world, we all aspire to use policy analysis and policy reform to make the world a better place, but each of us must think deeply about what we mean by “better.” Most important, we should not be hired guns. In deciding whether to accept a job or to work on a policy project, we should first question the goals and premises of the work and ask whether they accord with our own best judgments. We should always be guided by our moral principles and continually ask ourselves how the work we are doing accords with them. Of course, anyone in public life will face “the problem of dirty hands,” as the philosopher Michael Walzer called it. We will have to make compromises with our moral principles, presumably because we think a particular compromise is the best outcome we can obtain under the circumstances. But, as my friend and colleague Judy Layzer put it to her students, “the point is to be aware when you are making compromises, not talk yourself into believing that you’re doing the right thing when you really know you’re compromising.” In short, it is not only permissible but desirable to have moral and ideological commitments and to let them inform your work.
Second, I’m a believer in cooperation. The prevailing norms in academia and the standard Heller template on academic integrity forbid collaboration with others except when explicitly allowed by the instructor. “Each student is expected to turn in work completed independently, except when assignments specifically authorize collaborative effort” (Heller School template on academic integrity, 2015). That rule reflects the profoundly individualistic political culture of contemporary U.S. and is out of sync with the more group-based and cooperative cultures of the rest of the world, especially the developing world. I encourage you to cooperate and collaborate, to discuss, argue, critique, and help each other develop your ideas. As in the standard university template, I expect you to write your own papers, but you don’t have to quote every word or phrase you heard from someone else; it’s enough to acknowledge someone in a note with a phrase such as, “I would like to thank so-and-so [or my study group, or my classmates] for suggesting this idea to me.” Of course you will put the idea in your own words and develop it.

Third, academics tend to overuse quotations. The standard university warnings on academic honesty put the fear of God in students about being accused of plagiarism: “[Y]ou must use footnotes and quotation marks to indicate the sources of any phrases, sentences, paragraphs or ideas found in published volumes, on the internet, or created by another student” (Heller School template on academic integrity, 2015). Such dire language leads students to rely way too heavily on direct quotations. You do not need to quote words, phrases, or ideas in common usage. And as a matter of good writing and good thinking, it’s best to put as much as possible in your own words. In my view, there are only four situations when you should directly quote someone else’s words:

1) If someone coined an original phrase or term, put it in quotes, attribute it to them, and be sure to define it or express it in other words. If it’s a new and unique usage, your readers won’t know what it means unless you tell them. Putting it in your own words is the best way to find out whether you really understand what the author meant. If you have a hard time expressing the phrase (or a longer idea) in your own words, that’s often an indication that the author didn’t really know or wasn’t clear about what he or she meant. Sometimes this simple process of restating something in your own words can generate an important debate or critique.

2) Use long quotations only if the author’s prose absolutely “turns your spine to jelly.” That phrase and the rule come from Mr. Chester Mattson, my 10th grade Ancient History teacher, who gave me not only this and the next rule, but also the very idea that I could develop my own rules for quotation.

3) Quote a piece of text, such as a law, document or speech, if you want to discuss and analyze the actual words of the text. In that situation, you are laying the text on a table like a laboratory specimen for dissection. (Thank you, Mr. Mattson, for this rule, too.) This rule covers all those extensive quotations in ethnographic research and discourse analysis.
4) Quote someone’s words if you think what they said or wrote is so crazy, outrageous, or beyond the pale that your audience might not believe the person actually used those words unless you quote them. (Donald Trump comes to mind.) In that case, you are using quotations rather like evidence in court, placing the person’s words before a judge.

Finally, although most journals and academic publishers ask you to use in-text citation styles, my own view (Stone 2015) is that the APA style (American Psychology Association 2010), the Chicago style (Turabian 2010), and the MLA style (Modern Language Association, 2008) all interfere with narrative flow, if you see (Panek 1998) what I mean. One cannot write well using in-text citations. I encourage you to use endnotes or footnotes instead. I always compose with endnotes and then convert my references to my publisher’s required style once the piece has been accepted, but following my first principle of integrity above, I try to persuade publishers to let me use the endnote system by arguing that it makes for better prose.
**HS302f: Policy Analysis and Design in the Developing World**

**Topics, Readings and Exercises:**

**Week 1 Tuesday March 15: Defining a Policy Problem with Causal Analysis**

*Case Study: Analyzing the causes of poverty and development outcomes*


World Bank, *Equity and Development*, World Development Report 2006: overview and introduction (pp. 18-24); section on “Global inequalities in power” (pp. 66-68); intro to Part II “Why Does Equity Matter” (pp. 73-75); and chapter 4, section on “Income inequality and poverty reduction” (pp. 84-88); chap 6 “Equity, Institutions and the Development Process” (pp. 107-109 only).

*Guide for class preparation: As a way of taking notes on the readings, write down for yourself what causal factors each one identifies as the source or mechanism for causing the problem. Some (especially Banerjee and Duflo), explore multiple hypotheses for causal mechanisms.*

Next, using your own topic or case that you will follow through the module, reflect on two or three causal theories about the problem. The purpose of this exercise is not to provide evidence for or against the arguments, rather, to understand and present different causal arguments and show how they attribute “blame” to different sources.

**Week 2 Tuesday March 22: Defining a Policy Problem: Issue Framing and Political Feasibility**


Case Studies: Two examples of reframing an issue for political feasibility


Guide for Class Preparation

Analyze issue framing in your topic/policy issue using the concepts presented in the readings. First, identify two or three of the main political actors or stakeholders in your topic. Then ask, how do these actors use various narrative stories, causal stories and overarching frames to define an issue and gain adherents for their preferred policy choice?

Week 3 Tuesday March 29: Getting the Data: Measurement for Policy Knowledge and as Tools of Control

Deborah Stone, Policy Paradox, 3rd ed., chap. 8 “Numbers,” excerpts (on Latte)

Charles Wheelan, Introduction to Public Policy (W.W. Norton 2011), chap. 5, pp. 143-54 only (sections on Measuring Social Welfare, Indicators, Indices, and Human Development Index)

Deborah Stone, Policy Paradox, chap. 4 “Welfare” excerpts (pp. 85-99)

Gabriella Y. Carolini, “Framing Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Needs Among Female-Headed Households in Periurban Maputo, Mozambique,” American Journal of Public Health vol. 102, no. 2 (2012), pp. 256-61. Carolina explores the reliability of statistical data on water and sanitation by in-depth interviews to get at more textured understanding than the categorical data provide.

Morten Jerven, Poor Numbers: How We Are Misled by African Development Statistics and What to Do About It (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), chap. 1 “What Do We Know About Income and Growth in Africa?” pp. 8-32. Read pp. 8-16 and 29-32; skim the section in between on “Survey of National Income Evidence.” (Jerven explores the reliability of standard national income data by digging into how they are collected and categorized.)
Guide for Class Preparation

Here’s the key lesson of this week: a good place to begin any analysis is to question the assumptions and concepts on which the data are based.

Here are two ways you can apply the readings to your topic:

Option 1: Select an important measurement in your policy topic and make notes about how the measure (or indicator or index) is conceptualized: In what ways does it accurately capture the phenomenon it is supposed to measure and in what ways does it not? Also consider whatever you know or can find out about how the data for this measure are collected and where there might be sources of distortion or inaccuracy.

Option 2: Select an important measurement or indicator in your policy topic and analyze how it exerts power and how it is or might be used as a tool for controlling people’s behavior.

Week 4 Tuesday April 5: Program Evaluation: Cost Benefit Analysis, Experiments, and Surveys

Note: cost-benefit analysis can be used to evaluate policy options prospectively in order to decide between them, as well as to evaluate programs retrospectively to see whether they delivered “bang for the buck.”

Charles Wheelan, *Introduction to Public Policy*, chap. 12 “Cost-Benefit Analysis,” pp. 405-426 and 434 (begin at section 12.7 on cost-effectiveness analysis). Note: this is not the entire chapter; skip sections 12.4, 12.5 and 12.6); and chap. 13 “Program Evaluation,” pp. 444-470. Skip all the case studies (they aren’t relevant to development). Skim the sections on statistical techniques—presumably you learn to do this stuff in other courses, so use Wheelan’s chapter more as a “toolkit” you can keep in your closet if you get a job doing program evaluation. Wheelan also provides very useful kit of “problem detectors” for evaluating evaluation studies.

Cost-Benefit Analysis:

Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo, *Poor Economics*, pp. 32-33 (cost of iron supplements compared with labor productivity gains); pp. 41-50 (cost of medical interventions compared with health improvements)

You have already read these sections. Re-read them now as —examples of cost-benefit analysis and use Banerjee’s and Duflo’s analyses, as well as readings by me and Kelman, to think critically about the analyses. Are there other things that should be taken into account in trying to solve the problem at hand? How and why do poor people’s cost-benefit calculations differ from the policy experts’ calculations?

Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo, *Poor Economics* (Public Affairs, 2011), review pp. 57-8; and chap. 7 (microfinance), pp. 157-81; and chap. 9 (entrepreneurship) pp. 205-34

Guide for Class Preparation

**Week 5 Tuesday April 12: Analyzing the core tools of policy: rules and incentives**

The standard approach to policy analysis looks at the outcomes of policy decisions or reform programs to decide 1) whether to proceed with a particular policy alternative (prospective analysis); or 2) what impact a program has had and whether it has been successful. However, as a matter of policy design, it is important to examine the mechanisms by which a policy or program is supposed to produce the intended outcomes. This week and next, we look at four main policy “instruments”: rules, incentives, rights and empowerment.


Case studies:

Using financial incentives to motivate personal decisions: Why don’t poor people eat better and get better health care? Can and should we use material incentives to motivate people to make better decisions?


Using financial incentives to motivate political leaders: What are the impacts of economic sanctions on development and are sanctions ethical?


Using rules to change people’s behavior: How do rules work in practice and what are some of the intended consequences?

Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo, Poor Economics, chap. 5 “Pat Sudarno’s Big Family, pp. 103-129. Pay special attention to the author’s imaginative concept of the family as a set of rules and norms.


“Managing Migration,” Economist Sept. 26, 2015, p. 44.

NYT article?

Assignment: All policy tools make some assumptions about what motivates people and how they will react to new incentives or rules (or other kinds of policies). Much of Banerjee and Duflo’s work is an attempt to understand why poor people don’t think and behave the way policy analysts expect them to think and behave. Select one specific rule or incentive in your policy topic. Analyze it using the following questions as stimuli:

1) Whose behavior is it meant to change, and what behavior exactly?
2) What are the underlying assumptions about human motivation (or the motivation of the targets of this policy)?
3) How well do these assumptions accord with what is known about the targets?
4) Do see built-in reasons why the rule or incentive should work well or not so well?
5) Do you see perverse incentives built into the policy?

Note that all rules have built-in incentives, implicitly if not explicitly, and all incentives must be administered through rules. It will probably help you to think of your rule or incentive as primarily one or the other and then analyze the “other side of the coin” as part of your discussion.

**Week 6 Tuesday April 19: Analyzing the Core Tools of Policy: Changing power relationships through rights and empowerment programs**

Cornwall, A., & Nyamu-Musembi, C. (2004). Putting the ‘rights-based approach’ to development into perspective. *Third World Quarterly, 25*(8), 1415-1437. This article uses a discourse analysis (analyzing the meanings of language in texts) to assess how well a policy works—or can possibly work—in practice.

Tom Zwart, “Using Local Culture to Further the Implementation of International Human Rights: The Receptor Approach,” *Human Rights Quarterly* vol. 34 (2012), pp. 546-569. Excerpt only: 547-48; 549-564 (sections II-V); the remainder of the article is optional.


**Week 7 Tuesday May 3: Policy Design from the Bottom Up**


Both chapters describe ways that poor people themselves design and manage institutions to help improve their lives—risk management institutions (chap. 6) and savings and investment institutions (chap. 8). Both chapters also suggest how development experts have designed aid institutions based on these grassroots institutions, as well as on the psychology of poor people’s behavior as their informants explained it to them through surveys, interviews, and informal conversations.

We will devote most of the class to discussing your final projects and giving you help and feedback for the projects due May 6. Come to class with a draft of your papers and one question or problem you’d like help with from the rest of the class.

**Final Project: Due May 6th by 5 pm.**

Choose a very specific, well-defined policy problem in a particular locale that you’d like to address. Read up on what is known about this problem and how the people whose behavior you want to change think about the issue. Building on the the work you do for each class session, write a short policy analysis and design. Your paper should address the following questions:

1) Define the nature of the problem (What goal is not being met? Whose goal is it? Are there multiple stakeholders with different goals?)
2) Identify the main theories or ideas about the causes of the problem, including individual behavior(s) and structural or systemic problems (including rules, norms, incentives, lack of opportunities, lack of knowledge)

3) Identify how one or at most two of the major stakeholders frame the issue in order to gather political support for their preferred policy solution.

4) What is the most important measure of your policy problem or alternatively, what is the major indicator of success? Discuss the most important problem with how this measure is conceptualized and the reliability of the data on which it is based.

You may choose one of questions 5, 6, or 7 to focus on.

5) Analyze the how incentives are used to change behavior in this policy area, and whether there are problems with perverse incentives.

6) If rights or empowerment strategies are used in your policy area, discuss one specific right or type of power and the most significant issue in implementing it.

7) Discuss one major evaluation of a program in your policy topic, and briefly analyze its strengths and weaknesses.

Everyone should do questions 8 and 9:

8) Suggest an innovation or reform that builds on the above knowledge and tell why you think it might achieve the policy outcome you seek.

9) Consider possible ways of framing your innovation to make it more politically feasible (i.e. persuasive and acceptable to the people whose behavior you expect to change, not only the targets of your policy but perhaps also leaders and funders who must approve and support your idea).

Format: double-spaced, 12 inch font, 1-inch margins, and 10 pages absolute maximum including references. Note that if you fudge on any of these formatting requirements, for example, by using 1 ½ spacing, I will reformat your paper to the specifications and read only 10 pages and grade you on that much.