

PPD 561B: Policy Analysis Practicum
Price School of Public Policy
University of Southern California

Instructors

Professor Dan Mazmanian
Office: RGL 201A
Office hours: By appointment
Phone: 213-740-2323
Email: mazmania@usc.edu

Professor Juliet Musso
Office: RGL 307 when in LA
Office hours: By appointment
Call/text: 415-316-8292
email: musso@usc.edu

Teaching Assistant

Anthony Orlando
Bedrosian Center
By appointment
570-582-6018
aorlando@usc.edu

Course Description and Objectives

This is the second part of the two-semester capstone course for the Master of Public Policy (MPP) degree. The Practicum reinforces and integrates, through application, the skills developed in the MPP program, while providing policy analytic service to a community organization, firm, or public official who is facing a policy dilemma or challenge. This experience requires students to confront the complexities of conducting rigorous policy analytic research under political and organizational constraints. It also provides opportunities to practice professional skills in client relations and team management.

In PPD 561A, the students were assigned to one of a set of projects organized by the instructors, and were responsible for project scoping and preparation of a project proposal approved by the client. PPD 561B (3 units) involves research, analysis, and production of the final report, communication materials, and a client briefing. Section B is divided into alternating weekly group meetings (held with the instructors if needed) and workshop-format class sessions. Student groups will work independently of the instructor but will be expected to meet as a group or with the client as necessary. Only if necessary will the instructors intervene to direct research.

The course requires students to apply the theoretical frameworks and technical skills learned in the program to analyze complex policy problems that require both technical expertise and political and organizational reasoning. The specific objectives are:

- *Professional practice in policy analysis.* Conduct research and policy analysis for a client, and produce a professional report. Students will apply the analytic skills necessary to fulfill the project requirements described in the research prospectus. Students will produce a well written and analytically sound report based on rigorous research.
- *Professional relations and team management.* Polish the interpersonal skills to interact productively in complex organizational environments. Students will continue to manage teamwork and promote a constructive consulting relationship with the client. They will maintain regular contact with the client to address issues related to communication of findings and changes in the organizational and political environment within which the client operates. Students will continue to collaborate to get the work done in an efficacious and fair manner.
- *Tradecraft.* Apply and polish skills required for effective practice, including professional writing and briefing. Students will write the final report iteratively, producing intermediate products and drafts. In addition, students will be required to give a briefing to the client and invited guests. The briefing and final report should have high production values.

Course Requirements

1. *Participation in class workshops and group meetings.* The class will meet on the dates identified in the syllabus and students are expected to attend. In addition, all groups *must* establish and adhere to a regular group meeting schedule.
2. *Individual memos.* Students will prepare three individual memos that together constitute 25 percent of the grade:
 - *Memo 1 (~2 pages):* Summary of initial findings from individual research. (Not a progress report, but interpretation of data and/or analysis).
 - *Memo 2 (~ 5 pages):* An advance section of the draft report. This might include a report section or subsection, draft of the communications briefer; or a draft of associated appendices or support materials such as a case study report or methodological appendix.
 - *Memo 3 (~2 pp):* Satisfies the USC requirement for a cumulative experience in the finals week. It will be a two-page memo that (a) summarizes your assessment of the client presentation and (b) provides a reflection on what you learned through the practicum experience.
3. *Final report.* The team members will collaborate in the iterative production of a professional report to the client. The grade is based on a first draft and the final report. Students should break the report into sections to write in advance (e.g., problem definition, organizational context, alternatives, etc). Each member of the group must write an identified portion of the final report.
4. *Short communications briefer.* Part of the final report expectation will be a four-page single-spaced communications “briefer” that synthesizes the report in a reader-friendly and professional manner, with excellent graphic elements.
5. *Briefings.* Groups will produce a final briefing for the client, which must be completed prior to the last scheduled day for the class to meet. The briefing must employ PowerPoint presentation software. There will be two formal briefings in the class: a progress briefing that will provide a preview of the slide design, and a dry run of the final client briefings that will be video captured and available for the group to review. At both briefings, students must submit three hard copy prints of presentation slides. PowerPoint print-out should be in “notes” format (3 slides per page, two-sided if possible).
6. *Peer review.* Each individual in the group will be evaluated by fellow group members using the same criteria that were employed in PPD 561A.
7. *Collaboration and professionalism in research, analysis, and writing.* Students are expected to meet regularly as a group, and to arrange meetings as required at the convenience of the client. Once the client has approved the prospectus, the team will work collaboratively to complete research, conduct analysis, and write the report. If a student does not work effectively in a team, violates academic integrity standards, or otherwise does not perform as a professional collaborator, the instructors reserve the right to remove the student from the team, assign replacement work of comparable weight, and/or replace the group grade with an individual grade.

8. *Faculty and TA consultation.* Throughout the process, the instructors and TA will be available to troubleshoot issues, whether analytic or political. We are also available to review advance rough drafts of report sections. As one of the instructors is currently in residence in Sacramento, groups should schedule in-person meetings well in advance. Each faculty member will be in Los Angeles at least every other week. In addition, the instructors are on-call for teleconferencing and video-conference and encourage students to make appointments as needed to consult on their projects.

Table 1: Grade weight by assignment

Assignment	Length	Due date	Percent of Grade
Memo 1: Initial findings	2 p. single.	Feb. 12	10
Memo 2: Draft report section	5 pp. single	Mar 12	10
Group draft report	20 pp. single.	April 2	15
Formal briefings			15
Progress Briefing	5 minutes	Feb. 22	
Client Briefing Dry Run	20 minutes	April 12	
Peer review (individual)		May 8	5
Final staff report (group)	~30 pp. single.	May 7	30
Short issue “briefer”(group)	4 pp. fold-over	May 7	10
Memo 3: Client briefing and reflections	2 pp.	May 8	5
			100%

Form and style: All reports must be single spaced, and page lengths do not include appendices and other attachments. Page length is exclusive of visual elements, references, and appendices. Assignments should be written in plain, concise prose, as described in Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*. The client also will have the opportunity to provide expectations with regard to form and style.

Submission policies. All assignments must be submitted to the class Blackboard site using Turnitin at the end of the date identified in the syllabus (e.g, Sunday midnight). Please submit the documents in Word format, using the following naming protocols:

- Individual progress reports and peer reviews: lastname_progress_date.
- Group assignments (draft and final reports; briefers; PowerPoint slides): groupname_assignment (e.g., “LAUSD_draft_report). Unless there are extenuating circumstances, late assignments will be graded down 10 percent for each day late. Please inform the teaching assistant in advance if you must miss a deadline.

Syllabus revision. The instructors will regularly assess progress and elicit student feedback regarding the course. If necessary, they will revise the syllabus to make it more suitable.

Academic integrity: Students should maintain strict adherence to standards of academic integrity, as described in SCampus (<http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS>). In particular, the University recommends strict sanctions for plagiarism, defined below:

11.11 Plagiarism

- A. The submission of material authored by another person but represented as the student's own work, whether that material is paraphrased or copied in verbatim or near-verbatim form.
- B. The submission of material subjected to editorial revision by another person that results in substantive changes in content or major alteration of writing style.
- C. Improper acknowledgment of sources in essays or papers.

Note: Culpability is not diminished when plagiarism occurs in drafts that are not the final version. Also, if any material is prepared or submitted by another person on the student's behalf, the student is expected to proofread the results and is responsible for all particulars of the final draft.

Source: SCampus University Governance;

<http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/governance/gov05.html>

We discourage over-reliance on material found on the World Wide Web, and all such material must be fully documented with regard to author as well as URL. If you have any questions about academic integrity or citation standards, please ask in advance.

Academic accommodations. Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open early 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

The human subjects compliance and review process. Students are expected to pursue their research honestly and in compliance with the university's codes regarding human subject protections. The University Park Institutional Review Board is the review and compliance body formed to protect human subjects in biomedical and social science. It is empowered to review all research proposals, funded or not, which are conducted by the faculty, staff, graduate or undergraduate students which involve the use of human subjects. Human subject means a living individual about whom an investigator conducting research obtains (a) data through intervention or interaction with the individual; or (b) identifiable private information. See the full description of the IRB at <http://www.usc.edu/admin/provost/irb/>.

Project teams that collect primary data about human subjects (e.g., collection of personal information through interviewing, focus groups, or surveys) that is considered to be human subjects research will need to file appropriate paperwork with the USC Institutional Review Board. This will be discussed in more detail in class. More information on Institutional Review Board review procedures may be accessed at the federal Health and Human Services website. Several chapters from the Institutional Review Board Guidebook posted there may be of specific interest, including chapter 3, 'Basic IRB Review' accessed at http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/irb/irb_chapter3.htm.

Recommended Readings

The primary purposes behind the Policy Practicum are 1) to understand the role of the consultant, as well as its inherent limitations; and 2) to understand the wide variety of assignments that a consultant may encounter in practice and the methods available to policy analysts. Suggested readings explore the various methodological approaches available to the policy analyst, including quantitative and qualitative analysis and program evaluation. Suggested readings draw on these sources primarily:

Bickman, Leonard and Debra J. Rog (editors), 2008. *The SAGE Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Block, Peter, 2011. *Flawless Consulting: A Guide to Getting Your Expertise Used*. 3rd ed. Austin: Learning Concepts.

Creswell, John W., 2013. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Frankfort-Nachmias, Chava, David Nachmias, and Jack DeWaard, 2014. *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*. 8th ed. New York: Worth Publishers.

Golembiewski, Robert T. (editor), 2000. *Handbook of Organizational Consultation*. 2nd ed. New York: Marcel Dekker.

Lippitt, Gordon L. and Ronald Lippitt, 1994. *The Consulting Process in Action*. 2nd ed. San Diego: University Associates.

Miles, Matthew B., A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, 2013. *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Miller, Delbert C. and Neil J. Salkind (editors), 2002. *Handbook of Research Design and Social Measurement*. 6th ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Syer, John and Christopher Connolly, 1996. *How Teamwork Works: The Dynamics of Effective Team Development*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Yin, Robert K., 2013. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. 5th ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Suggested readings address specific methods by chapter:

Anderson, James	“Policy Impact, Evaluation, and Change”
Creswell and Maietta	“Qualitative Research”
Creswell, John	“Quantitative Methods”
Creswell, John	“The Purpose Statement”
Creswell, John W.	“Research design : qualitative & quantitative approaches”
Golembiewski, Robert	“Applying Action Research to Public Sector Problems”
Golembiewski, Robert	“The Interview as a Consulting Tool”
Golembiewski, Robert	“The Production of Usable Knowledge”
Lippitt	“Action Research and Evaluation in the Consulting Process”
Lippitt	“Phases in Consulting”
Miles and Huberman	“Ethical Issues in Analysis”

Miller and Salkind	“A Rationale for Applied Sociology as Relates to Policy-Making”
Miller and Salkind	“Basic Guide for the Design of a Social Research Proposal”
Nachmias and Nachmias	“Qualitative Research”
Nachmias and Nachmias	“Questionnaire Construction”
Nachmias and Nachmias	“Writing Research Reports”
Nachmias, Chava.	“Research methods in the social sciences”
Syer and Connolly	“Speaking Skills”
Yin, Robert K.	“Case study research : design and methods”

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1. Course overview and expectations Jan. 11

- Overview of class
- Presentation on data visualization
- Small group meetings

Weeks 2-3 Meeting in Team and with Instructor

- Teams meet at least once individually
- Teams meet at least once with instructor

Week 4 Progress Workshop Feb. 1

- Five-minute formal progress report with PowerPoint slides
- Team meetings if time permits

Week 5-6 Meetings in Team and With Instructor

- Teams meet at least once individually
- Teams meet at least once with instructor

Memo 1, Initial Research Findings, Due to Turnitin Sunday, February 12

Week 7 Data Visualization Workshop Feb. 22

- Teams develop provisional consult with data visualization checklist
- Consultation with data experts on Price faculty

Week 8-9 Meetings in Team and With Instructor

- Teams meet at least once individually
- Teams meet at least once with instructor

Memo 2, Draft of Report Section Due to Turnitin, Sunday, March 12

SPRING RECESS MAR 12-19

Week 10 Progress Workshop Mar. 22

- Teams share visual elements of data analysis
- Trouble shooting;

Week 11-12 Meetings in Team and With Instructor

- Teams meet at least once individually
- Teams meet at least once with instructor

Draft Report Due to Turnitin Sunday, April 2

Week 13 Dry Run Briefings

Apr. 12

- Group briefings with video capture; groups will be slotted into blocks.
- Biller award and exhibit nominations made April 19 based on drafts and dry run briefings

PowerPoint drafts due at time of presentation

Week 14-15 Client Briefings

- Teams meet with instructor as needed
- Teams required to brief client prior to end of semester

Biller Award Judging Panel, May 1, 2:30 – 4:30, RGL 308
Capstone Celebration: Biller Symposium, May 11, Noon to 2 PM

Due during Finals Week:

Final Report and Briefer Due May 7
Peer Reviews Due May 8
Client Briefing and Reflections Memo Due May 8