PubPol 475: Improving Public Health Through Policy Innovation

Fall, 2015
Monday/Wednesday 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
1220 Weill Hall

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Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description: In this course, students will examine and create innovative policy solutions to pressing and complex public health problems in the United States. After receiving an introduction to the public health system and public policymaking, students will build skills in policy design and analysis through a number of case studies. Students will assess current public health problems, and propose and assess innovative policy solutions using policy analysis frameworks. The course emphasizes content knowledge of public health issues and policies, along with critical thinking, creativity and innovation, policy analysis skills, and written and verbal communication.

Course Objective: The primary purpose of the course is to give students the tools needed to assess the feasibility, potential impact, unintended consequences and legal/ethical ramifications of novel public policy ideas aimed at improving the health of the population.

Course Requirements and Grading: This course requires you to be engaged, fearless in your creativity, but also open to constructive assessments and criticisms of your ideas for policy innovation. You are expected to keep up with the readings, and to come to class with novel yet realistic ideas for how public policy can be used to improve public health.

Course Assignments:
Exam on public health system basics and policy terms 20% 9/30/15

Public Policy Assessment—2 parts:
Memo on public health problem/prior policy 10% 10/21/15
Application of Gostin framework to new policy idea 15% 11/16/15

Reaction Posts on Course Blog (2 posts required) 10% by 11/30/15
Group Project: Policy Innovation Proposal 30% 12/7/15 and
PowerPoint Presentation (20%) 12/9/15
1-pager (10%)

Class Participation (attendance and contributions) 15%

All assignments will be given in writing, with clear instructions. Late work needs to be negotiated before the day the assignment is due, just like you would do on a job. Professor Lantz will almost always be willing to negotiate a new deadline if there is a valid reason for why a deadline cannot be met. However, assignments that are turned in late without prior discussion or approval will be docked one grade step for every day they are late. You would never be late with a work assignment/project without talking to your boss before you missed a deadline. You should not do this in school either.

Methods of Instruction: Our class time together will include some lectures with class discussion. Class will also include a lot of small group discussion of case studies and other materials. In addition, class will include a number of student presentations.

Writing: Good written communication skills are important in every profession. In the policy world, the ability to craft clear and cogent statements regarding problems and their potential policy solutions is essential. During the semester, students will produce written assignments in formats that are commonly used in policy analysis. Because good writing is essential to being effective in the policy world, it is expected that students will put significant time and effort into the written assignments.

Written assignments should reflect deep thinking and significant effort in terms of the writing quality. Expectations include the following: 1) written assignments will be neat and professionally presented; 2) students will not turn in first or second drafts; 3) written assignments will be carefully proof-read and reasonably free of grammatical errors and spelling mistakes; 4) references will be provided in a professional, neat format; and 5) the writing style and approach will fit the format for the assignment. Unless you are an exceptionally gifted and experienced writer, it will be difficult to do well on these assignments if you hand in a first or second draft.

Class Expectations:

- Arrive to class on time. We will start promptly at 11:40 a.m. and end promptly at 1:00 p.m. each day, without a break. Refrain from going in and out of the room during class, unless absolutely necessary.

- Be prepared for class by doing assigned readings AND your own research and reading on the topics of the day. Actively engage in discussions and policy debates in class. Contribute to the learning environment and intellectual level of the course. Challenge yourself and others.

- Be professional and respectful in your remarks and contributions in class. It is perfectly fine to disagree with each other and to have contrary opinions and perspectives. It is inappropriate to personalize differences of opinions, or to engage
in rude, insulting or hostile behavior during our discussions and debates. The goal is to have lively and respectful exchanges.

- The use of laptop computers or iPads for taking notes, checking on the current status of a legislative bill for purposes of discussion, etc. is allowed. **The use of laptops, cell phones or other devices during class for checking e-mail, Instagram or Facebook, sending text messages, reading stuff online, tweeting, shopping, checking out videos on YouTube, or any other activities not related to class is prohibited.**

- It needs to be repeated: During class, you may **not** check your cell phone for messages or send messages/tweets/etc. **Put your phone away.** You may use a laptop, tablet or other device to take notes, but please do not engage in any online activities or e-mail or text communication during class. If use of laptops or devices is abused, they will be banned from class.

- Academic misconduct includes cheating, misrepresenting one’s own work, taking credit for the work of others without acknowledgement and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information. Any form of misconduct will be taken very seriously. Academic dishonestly also includes using something you produced for another class for an assignment in this class without prior permission.

- The most common form of academic misconduct is plagiarism—that is, taking someone else’s words and/or ideas and passing them off as your own. **It is plagiarism to copy passages from a text or to import text or graphics from any website or document into a written assignment and present it as your own without quotations or other means of clearly identifying the and referencing the cited work.** Plagiarism is taken quite seriously at the University of Michigan, and will be dealt with harshly if detected. Consequences could include failing the course or expulsion. **Beware:** Professor Lantz is an expert in detecting plagiarism and accepts no excuses.

- If you are unsure about how to properly reference and quote the sources you use in your writing, please seek out the many resources available to you. In college and on the job, ignorance of the proper way to cite other people’s ideas and words is not an acceptable excuse for plagiarism. So please be careful in how you use information and ideas from other sources, especially information you find on the Internet.

**Prerequisites:** None. If you need to brush up on the American political process and high school civics, check out these websites:

- Congress: [http://www.votesmart.org/resource_govt101_03.php](http://www.votesmart.org/resource_govt101_03.php)
- School House Rock on YouTube: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEJL2Uuv-oQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEJL2Uuv-oQ)
Assigned Readings:

9/9/15  Introduction to Course
Introduction to Public Health System


9/14/15  Introduction to Public Health System


9/16/15  Public Policy: Definitions/Models/Process


9/21/15  Social Construction/Political Framing of Problems and Policies


9/23/15 **Legal Basis for Government Intervention in Public Health**


9/28/15 **Policy Entrepreneurship**


9/30/15 **Exam on Concepts and Terms**

10/5/15 **Case Study 1: Tobacco Control Policy**


10/7/15 Developing and Assessing Public Policy (Gostin Framework)


10/12/15 Case Study 2: Vaccine Policy


10/14/15 Case Studies 1 and 2: Small group exercise


10/19/15 Fall Study Break

10/21/15 Population Health and Health Disparities


**10/26/15**  
**Case Study 3: Public Health Policy Innovation vs. the “Nanny State”**


**10/28/15**  
**Panel Discussion with Policy Entrepreneurs**

**11/2/15**  
**Case Study 4: Obesity Prevention**


Link to 5 Policy Briefs on Childhood Obesity:  
[http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/29/3/suppl/DC2](http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/29/3/suppl/DC2)

**11/4/15**  
**Case Study 4: Obesity Prevention Policy**

**11/9/15**  
**Team Work on Final Projects**

**11/11/15**  
**The Role of Scientific Evidence in Public Policy**

Koh HK, Oppenheimer SC, Massin-Short SB, Emmons KM, and Geller A. Translating


11/16/15  Case Study 5: HIV Prevention


11/18/15  Case Study 5: Continued

11/23/15  Advocating for Policy Change (Guest speaker: Jen Martin, JD)


11/25/15  Thanksgiving Break

11/30/15  Team Work on Final Projects
Social Impact Bonds


12/7/15 Student Presentations of Policy Innovation Idea

12/9/15 Student Presentations of Policy Innovation Idea

If Needed: Final Exam Time will also be used for Student Presentations