Strategic Public Policy Consulting (PUB POL 578)
Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy
University of Michigan

Fall Semester, 2023
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 8:30-9:50 AM
1110 Weill Hall

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Tuesdays, 2-3 PM and Thursdays, 10:30-11:30 AM or by appointment
Please sign up for office hours here: https://tinyurl.com/jmofficehours

Course Description
The Ford School of Public Policy's Strategic Public Policy Consulting (SPPC) is a semester-long course offered to students in the Ford School and other UM professional degree programs. The course provides an opportunity for students to conduct a supervised consulting project for a real policy organization. Each year, topics for student projects are jointly developed by the course's faculty director and staff at the external partner organization.

Projects range widely in policy area, methodology, size, and complexity. Decisions about the scope of each project and the research questions they address will be made jointly by the students, the client, and the instructor. Methodologies will depend on the specific questions studied. They may include literature reviews, archival research, legal analysis, case studies, email/ telephone/ face-to-face interviews, analysis of census data, budget modeling, GIS analysis, and SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis.

Each student should plan to devote approximately 10 hours per week to the project, on average, over the course of the semester. All projects culminate in the production of a final report and an oral presentation to the partner. We will not meet regularly as a class; rather, students will meet during that time with the instructor, client, or teammates.

Course Objectives
- Gain hands-on experience applying policy tools to help an external partner
- Learn to organize, plan, and carry-out a long-term group project

● Enhance writing and oral presentation skills via a final presentation and paper

Team Project Assignments
During the first week of class, I will assign each student to one project for the entire semester. Team assignments will be based on a combination of student preferences and the need to construct well-balanced project teams.

Grading and Evaluation
Grades will be based on the following components
- Communication, participation, & organization (individual): 20%
- Initial project plan (team): 10%
- Mid-semester check-in (team): 10%
- Written final report (team): 30%
- Lightning talk presentation (team): 30%

Participation, Communication, and Organization (individual)
Participation
You will be working in small groups (3-5 students) and meeting regularly with both me and your client organization representative(s). Regular participation in these meetings is key to your project team's success. I expect all members of the team to participate in all meetings and be punctual, unless otherwise arranged. Failure to show up for meetings will affect your individual grade and may affect your group's grades by affecting the quality of the final products. Absences may be excused (in advance, via email) due to UM-related activities, job interviews, or illness. However, you will still be expected to meet all expectations for the course.

Communication
Research projects seldom work perfectly as planned. I understand this, and your clients should understand this as well. That said, communication with me and your clients about the status of your project is critical. We all expect to be kept abreast of how the project is progressing, any obstacles you are facing, and any issues that require help. We are here to advise and guide you but can only do so if we are kept in the loop. I expect that you will communicate regularly with your fellow project team members, me, and your client and respond in a timely manner to emails and other modes of outreach. I also expect that you will voice any concerns you have about the project in a constructive way so that they can be addressed early, before bigger problems arise.

Organization
Collaborative research projects require a great deal of project management, time management, and record-keeping. I expect that you will show up to meetings prepared to discuss the topics for each day, having completed any work that was outlined from the previous meeting, and that you (as a team) will keep notes of meetings (or meeting outcomes) so that the projects can move forward without having to revisit the same discussions repeatedly. We will have a mid-semester check in to review how the overall project is progressing, but I expect each team member to keep on top of their own

assignments throughout the semester and to help their fellow team members as needed.

<u>Initial Project Plan (group)</u>
Details of the project plan assignment are on Canvas. As a team, in coordination with your client representative, you will come up with an initial project plan, review it with a "premortem" analysis, and revise the plan according. This revised plan will be due the third week of classes (submitted on Canvas).

<u>Mid-term check-in (group)</u>
The mid-term check-in (submitted on Canvas) is a one-page assessment of how your team's project is progressing in comparison to your original project plan. It is also an opportunity to change project goals if the team has faced major obstacles.

<u>Written final report (group)</u>
The final report is a written product that you will be presenting to your clients. The exact format and nature of the report will depend on what the client has asked for, so it will look different for each group. I will evaluate the reports based on the strength of the content (i.e.., the results of the research and analysis), the clarity of the writing, and the use of graphics or visual images to aid in understanding the substantive content.

<u>Oral presentation (group)</u>
As a group, you will give oral presentations to your clients and/or key stakeholders. The length and format of these presentations will be determined in consultation with your client. You will also present a "lightning talk" version of your presentation in class on the last day of class (more details on Canvas). Your oral presentation grade will be based on my assessment of your lightning talk and your client's assessment of your client/stakeholder presentation.

SPPC
Class Schedule and Outline

<u>Week 1 (Aug 29, 31)</u>
- Class on Aug 29:
    - Introductions to course and each other
    - Discuss client proposals
- Class on Aug 31
    - Select project teams and have initial team meetings
    - Talk about how to construct project plan
- Set up initial meetings with clients

<u>Week 2 (Sept 5, 7)</u>
- Conduct CliftonStrengths assessments and discuss them in class

- - ○ Instructions and codes for completing the assessment will be distributed via email
    ○ [Casey Sullens](#) from the Graduate Career Services Team will walk us through the results of the assessment and lead discussions
      - On Sept 5 we will talk about individual strengths
      - On Sept 7 will talk about working in teams
  - Meet with clients/Jeff, figure out details of research plan
  - Readings
    ○ ["What is Project Planning? (Plus, 7 steps to write a successful project plan),"](#) by Julia Martins
    ○ ["SMART Goals: A How To Guide"](#)
  - Write initial draft of team project plan, incorporating at least one SMART goal into your plan

Week 3 (Sept 12, 14)
  - Read at least one of the following articles on how to conduct a premortem analysis
    ○ ["Performing a Project Pretmortem,"](#) by Gary Klein
    ○ ["How to Conduct a Project Premortem,"](#) by Julia Martins
    ○ ["Premortem Analysis: Anticipate Failure to Achieve Success,"](#) by Colin Bates
    ○ [Chapters 23 & 24](#) from *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, by Daniel Kahnemen (2011)
  - Conduct "premortem analysis"
  - Revise project plan, get it approved by client, turn in project plan and premortem by end of week (Friday at 5pm ET)

Week 4 (Sept 19, 21)
  - Review material on writing professional reports
  - Work on projects with (at least) weekly check-ins with Jeff and client

Weeks 5-7 (Sept 26-28; Oct 3-5; Oct 10-12)
  - Work on projects with (at least) weekly check-ins with Jeff and client
  - Note: Jeff will not be available during class time on Thurs, Sept 28

Week 8 (Oct 17, 19)
  - On Thurs, Oct 19, we will have a writing workshop with Alex Ralph
  - Fall Break is Oct 16-17, adjust weekly check-ins with Jeff and clients as needed
  - Mid-semester Check-in due by end of week (1 page assessment of how plan is progressing), adjust project plan as needed

Week 9 (Oct 24, 26)
  - Work on projects with (at least) weekly check-ins with Jeff and client

Week 10 (Oct 31, Nov 2)
  - Review material on presentations

- Work on projects with (at least) weekly check-ins with Jeff and client

Week 11 (Nov 7, 9)
- Election Day is Nov 7, so adjust weekly check-ins with Jeff and clients as needed

Week 12 (Nov 14, 16)
- Work on projects with (at least) weekly check-ins with Jeff and client

Week 13 (Nov 21, 23)
- Thanksgiving break is Nov 22-24, adjust weekly check-ins with Jeff and clients as needed

Week 14 (Nov 28, 30)
- Final touches on written reports, prepare oral presentations

Week 15 (Dec 5, 7)
- Lightning talk presentations on December 7th (everyone will meet for full 80 minutes that day)
- Complete teaching evaluations
- Wrap up

Final Reports Due to Jeff on Dec 14th by 5:00pm.
Due dates for final reports and presentations to clients TBD based on client needs.

Ford School Inclusivity Statement: Members of the Ford School community represent a rich variety of backgrounds and perspectives. We are committed to providing an atmosphere for learning that respects diversity. While working together to build this community we ask all members to:

- share their unique experiences, values and beliefs
- be open to the views of others
- honor the uniqueness of their colleagues
- appreciate the opportunity that we have to learn from each other in this community
- value one another's opinions and communicate in a respectful manner
- keep confidential discussions that the community has of a personal (or professional) nature
- use this opportunity together to discuss ways in which we can create an inclusive environment in Ford classes and across the UM community

Ford School Public Health Protection Policy: In order to participate in any in-person aspects of this course--including meeting with other students to study or work on a team project--you must follow all the public health safety measures and policies put in place

by the State of Michigan, Washtenaw County, the University of Michigan, and the Ford School. Up to date information on U-M policies can be found here. It is expected that you will protect and enhance the health of everyone in the Ford School community by staying home and following self-isolation guidelines if you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19

Student Mental Health and Wellbeing: The University of Michigan is committed to advancing the mental health and wellbeing of its students. We acknowledge that a variety of issues, both those relating to the pandemic and other issues such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, and depression, can directly impact students' academic performance and overall wellbeing. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services are available.

You may access the Ford School's embedded counselor Paige Ziegler (contact information TBD) and/or counselors and urgent services at Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) and/or University Health Service (UHS). Students may also use the Crisis Text Line (text '4UMICH' to 741741) to be connected to a trained crisis volunteer. You can find additional resources both on and off campus through the University Health Service and through CAPS.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The University of Michigan recognizes disability as an integral part of diversity and is committed to creating an inclusive and equitable educational environment for students with disabilities. Students who are experiencing a disability-related barrier should contact Services for Students with Disabilities https://ssd.umich.edu/; 734-763-3000 or ssdoffice@umich.edu). For students who are connected with SSD, accommodation requests can be made in Accommodate. If you have any questions or concerns please contact your SSD Coordinator or visit SSD's Current Student webpage. SSD considers aspects of the course design, course learning objects and the individual academic and course barriers experienced by the student. Further conversation with SSD, instructors, and the student may be warranted to ensure an accessible course experience.

Academic Integrity: The Ford School academic community, like all communities, functions best when its members treat one another with honesty, fairness, respect, and trust. We hold all members of our community to high standards of scholarship and integrity. To accomplish its mission of providing an optimal educational environment and developing leaders of society, the Ford School promotes the assumption of personal responsibility and integrity and prohibits all forms of academic dishonesty, plagiarism and misconduct. Academic dishonesty may be understood as any action or attempted action that may result in creating an unfair academic advantage for oneself or an unfair academic advantage or disadvantage for any other member or members of the academic community. Plagiarism involves representing the words, ideas, or work of others as one's own in writing or presentations, and failing to give full and proper credit to the original source. Conduct, without regard to motive, that violates the academic integrity and ethical standards will result in serious consequences and disciplinary

action. The Ford School's policy of academic integrity can be found in the [MPP](#) [BA](#), and [PhD Program](#) handbooks. Additional information regarding academic dishonesty, plagiarism and misconduct and their consequences is available [here](#).

Use of Technology: Students should follow instructions from their instructor as to acceptable use of technology in the classroom, including laptops, in each course. All course materials (including slides, assignments, handouts, pre-recorded lectures or recordings of class) are to be considered confidential material and are not to be shared in full or part with anyone outside of the course participants. Likewise, your own personal recording (audio or video) of your classes or office hour sessions is allowed only with the express written permission of your instructor. If you wish to post course materials or photographs/videos of classmates or your instructor to third-party sites (e.g. social media), you must first have informed consent. ***Without explicit permission from the instructor and in some cases your classmates, the public distribution or posting of any photos, audio/video recordings or pre-recordings from class, discussion section or office hours, even if you have permission to record, is not allowed and could be considered academic misconduct.***

Please review additional information and policies regarding [academic expectations and resources](#) at the Ford School of Public Policy.