

Course Title:       **Policy Analysis and Decision Making**  
Course:             PAD 5365                             Semester: Spring 2026  
CRN:                22858                                     Tuesdays: (Hybrid) 6 to 8:50 p.m.  
  
Instructor:         Carlos Olmedo, PhD  
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                              915-204-8128  
Office hours:       By appointment

## **Course Objectives**

This class is intended for graduate students with an interest in public policy, public administration or an interdisciplinary background. The course covers some of the theoretical, philosophical, democratic, and research foundations of policy analysis, and how this background shapes the analyst or administrator, including: 1) the tools used to assess policy; 2) ethical and moral considerations; and 3) the role of the citizen, organized factions and government as it relates to policies subject for consideration, and who participates in the problem definition and policy implementation. The objective is to make students more aware of the self-bias formed by the very methods, theories and frameworks used in the decision making process.

The course also introduces students to some widely used methods available to the policy analyst. Topics include how to apply: 1) basic techniques of economics and sampling for comparative and trend analysis; 2) survey development to assess a local policy issue; and 3) cost-benefit analysis (CBA) to evaluate the present value of a social equity-based project. This will help students expand their use of both theory and data analytics to critically assess and conduct public policy research.

## **Course Requirements**

Students are responsible for materials covered in class and are required to complete all assigned readings, actively participate in class discussions and complete all assignments by the due date. Required readings represent only a sample of the important readings in the field. Students are expected to explore further scholarship for class discussions and written assignments. Late assignments will be downgraded unless a valid reason is provided. Grading is based on each student's contribution to the course and quality work in the following areas:

### Participation in-class (8%)

Students will rotate responsibility for organizing and leading classroom discussions from selected readings. Leaders are expected to provide the rest of the class with a relevant overview, including theoretical tensions between authors, and prepare questions to stimulate discussion. Students are expected to participate each week and to conduct discussion in a way that is respectful. Since classes will be interactive, make sure you have access to the respective week's readings for reference – print outs or on your laptop. Please switch your cell phone to vibrate or turn it off prior to the start of the class and bring a laptop for in-class work.

### Participation Blackboard (24%)

Six discussion posts to questions covering the weekly content or tension between authors. Posts should be **between 100 and 150 words**.

### Assignment briefs (28%)

Three assignment posts to questions covering the weekly content or tension between authors. Word count is provided in each instruction.

### Assignment Dataset 1 (10%)

Apply common techniques in sampling and economic methods.

### Assignment Dataset 2 (15%)

Apply CBA techniques to evaluate pre-K education and write a memo of the summary findings.

### Survey presentation (15%)

Present findings, implications and recommendations to a local policy class survey (**15-20 minutes**).

## **Technology and Communication**

Course content is delivered via **Blackboard** with active use of **e-mail**, **discussion board** and **Zoom**. The **Stata** software will be used to analyze a class survey – the University provides a free student license through its software portal below. Log in with your UTEP credentials, download and install the application, and call the UTEP Helpdesk to activate the license and for technical issues. < [www.utep.edu/technologysupport/servicecatalog/soft\\_allsoftware.html](http://www.utep.edu/technologysupport/servicecatalog/soft_allsoftware.html) >

The best way to contact me is via **e-mail**. I will try to respond within 24 hours of receipt, but if it involves anything that is time sensitive feel free to call or text me. I will be available after class and by **appointment** (e-mail or text me to coordinate time).

## **Class Recordings and Netiquette**

This is a hybrid in-person and online class. Any virtual session may be recorded via **Zoom**. The use of recordings complies with the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and UTEP's acceptable-use policy.

Please keep in mind the following netiquette (network etiquette) guidelines when participating and posting online. Failure to observe them may result in disciplinary action.

- All communication must be professional and respectful, and reflect polite consideration of other's ideas. When responding to someone's posting, address the idea(s) not the person.
- The goal of the course readings is to encourage different views and to critically assess in a manner that expands and improves class discussion. Harassing, inappropriate, political, or heated rhetoric to simply provoke a response from classmates will not be tolerated.
- Class recordings and postings are considered private and confidential. They are intended solely for class participants and not for public broadcast or dissemination.

## **Students with Disabilities**

UTEP provides academic accommodations for students with disabilities to provide equal opportunities in their studies. Students must register with the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at 915-747-5148 ([cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu)) for consideration. Please communicate with CASS and, if you feel comfortable, notify me as soon as possible if you require accommodations so that you do not fall behind (e.g., more time to submit work).

## **Scholastic Dishonesty Policy**

Students are expected to respect the University's standards on academic dishonesty. You owe it to yourself, your fellow students, and the institution to maintain the highest standards of integrity and ethical behavior. A discussion of academic integrity, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, as well as helpful information on citations, note taking, and paraphrasing, can be found at the Office of Community Standards web page. Any suspected violations will be reported to this office. < [www.utep.edu/student-affairs/standards/](http://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/standards/) >

## **Drop and Incomplete Grade Policy**

I will not drop you from the course. If you feel you are unable to successfully complete the course, please let me know and initiate the drop process with the Registrar's Office before the drop deadline to receive a grade of "W" withdrawal. You risk failing the course if you do not take this step. You can request an "I" incomplete under justified circumstances if you have completed at least half of the course requirements. Consult with me immediately to discuss your situation. If granted, we will establish a contract with deadlines of work to be completed.

## **Syllabus Disclaimer**

The syllabus provides an outline of what will be covered in this course. It is subject to change in case of extenuating circumstances and according to the instructional needs and interests of the class as the topics progress. Any changes will be announced in class.

## **Textbook and Readings**

All selected readings will be available in **Blackboard**, no book(s) required.

## **Course Outline**

**Week 1 & 2: Introductions and Concepts of the Social Sciences**

**Week 3: Field of Public Policy**

**Week 4: Philosophical Traditions and Contemporary Theories of Democracy**

**Week 5: Theories of the Social Sciences**

**Week 6: Perspectives for the Policy Analyst**

**Week 7 & 8: Policy Frameworks and Institutionalism**

**Week 9: SPRING BREAK**

**Week 10 & 11: Economic and Sampling Techniques**

**Week 12: Survey Design**

**Week 13 & 14: Cost-Benefit Analysis**

**Week 15 & 16: Survey Analysis**