PUBLIC POLICY ANALYSIS

IE University
Professor: **GUILLERMO TORAL**

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Academic year: 22-23
Degree course: THIRD
Semester: 1º
Category: COMPULSORY
Number of credits: 6.0
Language: English

PREREQUISITES

There are no formal prerequisites to take this course. However, students are expected to have a basic understanding of statistics and data analysis, for instance as acquired through the course *Probability and statistics* in the PPLE program.

SUBJECT DESCRIPTION

Our world is full of challenges for policymakers: climate change, education, healthcare, poverty, inequality, transportation or corruption are only some of the many issues which policymakers (and society at large) struggle with. How should we think through public policy challenges? What are the best ways to design effective policy solutions that improve citizen welfare and promote development? How can we assess whether a given public policy solution had its intended effects and is worth investing in?

This course provides an introduction to the theories, methods, and tools of public policy analysis. Throughout the semester, students will build skills for analyzing public policy problems, evaluating the success of public policy solutions, and suggesting improvements to them. Sessions combine lectures on different aspects of public policy making and evaluation, case studies on public policy challenges (on issues as diverse as education, social assistance, or governance), and labs on public policy data analysis with an emphasis on causal inference and impact evaluation.

Through an examination of fundamental issues of public policy analysis, this class will build students' ability to leverage the concepts, theories, and methods of the social sciences to think through complex social problems and to propose solutions for them. The skills we build in this class will be useful for those seeking careers in sectors where analyzing complex social problems and devising solutions for them is valuable, be it in business, government, international organizations, or research.

OBJECTIVES AND SKILLS

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

1. Reflect critically about the process of designing, implementing, and evaluating public policies, with reference to both theoretical and applied debates in the field.

2. Apply key concepts and theories of political science, philosophy, law, and economics to debates about public policy

3. Analyze scholarly and policy arguments about the effectiveness of alternative public policies, pointing to potential weaknesses and critical assumptions.

4. Explain the rationale and requirements of the most important empirical designs for evaluating the impact of public policies.

5. Use data analysis tools in R to diagnose public policy problems and evaluate the impact of specific public policy solutions.

6. Present effective public policy arguments leveraging clear writing, rigorous data analysis, and compelling graphs.

METHODOLOGY

Learning in this course will advance through lectures, in-class discussions, in-class and at-home individual exercises, required readings, preparation for quizzes and exams, and group work on an applied public policy analysis project.

Teaching methodology	Weighting	Estimated time a student should dedicate to prepare for and participate in
Lectures	33.33 %	50 hours
Discussions	6.67 %	10 hours
Exercises	26.67 %	40 hours
Group work	16.67 %	25 hours
Other individual studying	16.67 %	25 hours
TOTAL	100.0 %	150 hours

PROGRAM

SESSION 1 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Introduction to the course's rationale, objectives, and requirements.

SESSIONS 2 - 3 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

The process of policymaking

Data lab: Installing R and RStudio, and introduction to the basics of working with R

Book Chapters: Public policy analysis: An integrated approach -- Chapter 2

SESSIONS 4 - 5 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

The process of policy analysis

Data lab: Finding, cleaning, and manipulating data

Book Chapters: A practical guide for policy analysis -- Part I

SESSIONS 6 - 7 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Identifying and structuring policy problems and solutions

Data lab: Visualizing data

Book Chapters: A practical guide for policy analysis -- Part I

SESSIONS 8 - 9 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

 Planning and assessing policy implementation

 Data lab: Correlation versus causation

Book Chapters: Thinking Clearly with Data: A Guide to Quantitative Reasoning and Analysis --
Chapters 2 and 3

SESSIONS 10 - 11 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

 Monitoring policy outputs and outcomes

 Data lab: Regression for describing and predicting

Book Chapters: Thinking Clearly with Data: A Guide to Quantitative Reasoning and Analysis --
Chapters 5 and 6

SESSIONS 12 - 13 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

 Overview of causal inference for public policy

 Data lab: Regression for measuring impacts

Book Chapters: Thinking Clearly with Data: A Guide to Quantitative Reasoning and Analysis --
Chapters 9 and 10

SESSION 14 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

 Review session for the mid-term

SESSION 15 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

 Mid-term exam

SESSIONS 16 - 17 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

 Evaluating policies with experiments

 Data lab: Randomized control trials

Book Chapters: Thinking Clearly with Data: A Guide to Quantitative Reasoning and Analysis --
Chapter 11

SESSIONS 18 - 19 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

 Evaluating policies with instruments

 Data lab: Instrumental variables

Book Chapters: Thinking Clearly with Data: A Guide to Quantitative Reasoning and Analysis --
Chapter 11

SESSIONS 20 - 21 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

 Evaluating public policies with discontinuities

 Data lab: Regression discontinuity designs

Book Chapters: Thinking Clearly with Data: A Guide to Quantitative Reasoning and Analysis --

Chapter 12

SESSIONS 22 - 23 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Evaluating public policies with trends

Data lab: Difference-in-differences

Book Chapters: Thinking Clearly with Data: A Guide to Quantitative Reasoning and Analysis --
Chapter 13

SESSIONS 24 - 25 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Communicating policy analyses

Data lab: Policy reports with R Markdown

Book Chapters: Contemporary policy analysis -- Chapter 6

SESSIONS 26 - 27 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Presentations and discussions of final projects

SESSIONS 28 - 29 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Review session and conclusions

SESSION 30 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Final exam

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Compulsory

 - Eugene S. Bardach and Eric M. Patashnik. (2019). *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving.* 6th edition. CQ Press. ISBN 1506368883 (Printed)

 - Ethan Bueno de Mesquita and Anthony Fowler. (2021). *Thinking Clearly with Data: A Guide to Quantitative Reasoning and Analysis.* Princeton University Press. ISBN 9780691214368 (Printed)

Recommended

 - William N. Dunn. (2018). *Public Policy Analysis: An Integrated Approach.* 6th. Routledge. ISBN 1138743844 (Digital)

 - Michael Mintrom. (2011). *Contemporary Policy Analisys.* Oxford University Press. ISBN 0199730962 (Digital)

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Students final grade will be a function of their performance in (i) a final exam (30% of the grade), (ii) a midterm exam (15% of the grade), (iii) a group public policy analysis project (20% of the grade); (iv) individual exercises (25% of the grade), and (v) in-class participation (10% of the grade).

Mn each of these components will be provided in the first session of the semester and before the corresponding deadlines.

The midterm and final exams will be held on sessions 15 and 30, respectively.

Criteria	Percentage	Comments
Final Exam	30 %	Final exam
Class Participation	10 %	Participation in class discussions
Final project	20 %	Group project (including presentation and final report)
Midterm exam	15 %	Midterm exam
Individual exercises	25 %	Individual exercises (including quizzes, in-class and at-home exercises)

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Each student has four attempts over two consecutive academic years to pass this course.

Students are required to obtain the minimum grade of 5 required to pass the course. Students whose grade in the Final Exam (or the largest assignment) is below 5 will fail the course. The rule applies to whichever assignment carries the greatest weight to the final grade. Dates and location of the final exam will be posted in advance and will not be changed.

Students must attend at least 70% of the sessions. Students who do not comply with the 70% attendance rule will receive a 0.0 on their first and second attempts and go directly to the third one (they will need to enroll in this course again the following academic year).

Students who are in the third or fourth attempt must contact the professor during the first two weeks of the course.

ATTENDANCE

In-person attendance is mandatory at IE University, as it is an essential factor of IE's learning methodology. While we do closely monitor attendance in each course, we also consider our students responsible for their own agenda and commitments, as adult university students. With that in mind, each student may miss up to 30% of the sessions within a given course and still maintain the possibility of passing that given course. This 30% "buffer" is to be used for any absences, such as: illnesses, personal emergencies, commitments, official/governmental matters, business and/or medical appointments, family situations, etc. Students should manage their various needs, and situations that may arise, within that 30% buffer. If a student is absent to more than the allowed 30% of the sessions (regardless of the reason), s/he will obtain a 0.0 grade for that course in both the ordinary and extraordinary calls of the current academic year, and s/he will have to retake the course during the following academic year.

Please pay close attention to your attendance. The program strongly encourages attending 100% of the sessions as it will improve your learning outcomes, it will increase the class performance and it will benefit your participation grade. Noncompliance with deadlines for Non-Classroom Learning activities or assignments will result in an absence for the session.

Extreme cases involving emergencies such as: extended hospitalizations, accidents, serious illnesses and other cases of force majeure, are to be consulted with the Program Management for assessment of the situation and corresponding documentation, in order to support and guide each student optimally.

RETAKE POLICY

Any student whose weighted final grade is below 5 will be required to sit for the retake exam to pass the course (except those not complying with the attendance rules, whom are banned from this possibility).

Grading for retakes will be subject to the following rules:

- The retakes will consist of a comprehensive exam or equivalent assignment. The grade will depend only on the performance on this exam; continuous evaluation over the semester will not be taken into account.

- Dates and location of the retakes will be posted in advance and will not be changed.

- The exam/assignment will be designed bearing in mind that the passing grade is 5 and the maximum grade that can be attained is 8 out of 10.

PLAGIARISM / ACADEMIC HONESTY

Plagiarism is the dishonest act of presenting another person's ideas, texts or words as your own. This includes in order of seriousness of the offense:

- providing faulty sources;

- copy-pasting material from your own past assignments (self-plagiarism) without the instructor's permission;

- copy-pasting material from external sources even while citing them;

- using verbatim translations from sources in other languages without citing them;

- copy-pasting material from external sources without citing them;

- buying or commissioning essays from other parties.

IEU students must contact the professor if they don't know whether the use of a document constitutes plagiarism. For help with your academic writing, contact the Writing Center (writingcenter@faculty.ie.edu). All written assignments must be submitted through Turn-it-in, which produces a similarity report and detects cases of plagiarism. Professors are required to check each student's academic work in order to guarantee its originality. If the originality of the academic work is not clear, the professor will contact the student in order to clarify any doubts. Students using external tutorial support should report it to the professor and the Program from the moment they began receiving this support. In the event that the meeting with the student fails to clarify the originality of the academic work, the professor will inform the Program Director about the case, who will then decide whether to bring the case forward to the Academic Review Panel. Very high similarity scores will be automatically flagged and forwarded to the Academic Review Panel. Plagiarism constitutes a very serious offense and may carry penalties ranging from getting a zero for the assignment to expulsion from the university depending on the severity of the case and the number of times the student has committed plagiarism in the past.

PROFESSOR BIO

Professor: **GUILLERMO TORAL**

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[Guillermo Toral](#) is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the IE School of Global and Public Affairs, and a Faculty Affiliate at MIT GOV/LAB. He obtained his PhD in Political Science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 2020, and an MPhil in Comparative Government at the University of Oxford (with distinction) in 2011. Prior to joining IE, Guillermo worked as Assistant Professor at Vanderbilt University. Before doing his PhD, he spent several years working on human development policy and programs at the World Bank, in Washington DC and across Latin America.

Guillermo works in the fields of comparative politics and political economy, with a regional focus on Latin America and a substantive focus on issues of development, governance, and corruption. His research focuses on relationships among state actors (politicians, bureaucrats, and anti-corruption agents) and how they shape public service delivery and human development. In his work, Guillermo uses big administrative datasets, surveys, and extensive qualitative fieldwork to shed light on dynamics of government accountability. His dissertation (now book project) received the 2021 Harold D. Lasswell Award for the best dissertation on public policy from the American Political Science Association.

OTHER INFORMATION
OFFICE HOURS

Students who want to meet me for office hours should sign up using this link: https://calendly.com/guillermo-toral/office-hours. If the available slots do not work for them, students should feel free to email me for an alternative meeting time.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND EMAIL POLICY

Students should feel free to email me with any questions at gtoral@faculty.ie.edu. I typically respond to emails within 2 working days. Students are also welcome to come talk to me in person immediately before or after class.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

I am committed to making this course a safe and productive learning environment for all students, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, country of origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, abilities, or religion. I see people's diverse backgrounds and worldviews not merely as differences to tolerate but as valuable assets to recognize and celebrate. When in the classroom, I expect students to treat each other with kindness, openness, and respect.

Any student who feels they need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should email me as soon as possible to discuss their needs.

CODE OF CONDUCT IN CLASS

1.   Be on time. Students arriving more than 5 minutes late will be marked as "Absent". Only students that notify in advance in writing that they will be late for a specific session may be granted an exception (at the discretion of the professor).

2.   If applicable, bring your name card and strictly follow the seating chart. It helps faculty members and fellow students learn your names.

3.   Do not leave the room during the lecture. Students are not allowed to leave the room during lectures. If a student leaves the room during lectures, he/she will not be allowed to re-enter and, therefore, will be marked as "Absent". Only students that notify that they have a special reason to leave the session early will be granted an exception (at the discretion of the professor).

4.   Do not engage in side conversation. As a sign of respect toward the person presenting the lecture (the teacher as well as fellow students), side conversations are not allowed. If you have a question, raise your hand and ask it. It you do not want to ask it during the lecture, feel free to approach your teacher after class. If a student is disrupting the flow of the lecture, he/she will be asked to leave the classroom and, consequently, will be marked as "Absent".

5.   Use your laptop for course-related purposes only. The use of laptops during lectures must be authorized by the professor. The use of Social Media or accessing any type of content not related to the lecture is penalized. The student will be asked to leave the room and, consequently, will be marked as "Absent".

6.   No cellular phones. IE University implements a "Phone-free Classroom" policy and, therefore, the use of phones, tablets, etc. is forbidden inside the classroom. Failing to abide by this rule entails expulsion from the room and will be counted as one absence.

7.   Escalation policy: 1/3/5. Items 4, 5, and 6 above entail expulsion from the classroom and the consequent marking of the student as "Absent." IE University implements an "escalation policy": The first time a student is asked to leave the room for disciplinary reasons (as per items 4, 5, and 6 above), the student will incur one absence, the second time it will count as three absences, and from the third time onward, any expulsion from the classroom due to disciplinary issues will entail 5 absences.