Policy Process and Program Evaluation
BCPP 480
Fall 2017

Course Section:	**BCPP 480-001**
Meeting Time:	**M/W 9:05-10:20 am**
Meeting Place:	**Baker Center 204**

FACULTY CONTACT INFORMATION:

Professor: Katie Cahill
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I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course presents the major tools required to understand and conduct research in the field of public policy analysis and program evaluation. This course will teach students how to comprehensively define problems, realistically frame policy choices, design sound research to analyze potential solutions and attendant outcomes, collect necessary data, and present results in a clear and concise format.

This course aims to provide students with the skills necessary for them to succeed in public policy, public service, and related careers. These careers require critical thinking, analytic approaches, and strong communication skills. Many specialists also need modern quantitative methodologies and technical proficiencies to critically evaluate policy choices, implementation, and outcomes. The objective of this course is to make participants more effective users of advanced techniques in analyzing public policies problems and to give diagnostics about policy proposals. The interaction between statistics, policy analysis and decision making will be highlighted.

Students will be actively involved with computer exercises in this course using the Stata econometrics program, available in through the analysis server, as well as QGIS, available to download online free of charge. Throughout the course, students will work through a series of mini-projects designed to provide experience working with the techniques discussed in class. The instructions for these projects and the data required for their

implementation are posted on the course Canvas site. In addition to these exercises, students will develop his or her own project proposal as described below.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course provides an introduction to experiments, surveys, interval regression, geographic information systems, and programming with emphasis on skills related to gathering, managing, processing, presenting, and interpreting data. Students will develop skills using statistical software for hands-on research projects. Students will be able to identify and analyze public policy using a range of tools. Students will learn to communicate the results of applied policy research work in writing.

III. LEARNING GOALS

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- o Communicate effectively through writing
- o Think and read critically
- o Problem solve using an integrated, interdisciplinary, and research-based approach
- o Recognize and articulate opposing viewpoints
- o Be a self-motivated learner

IV. TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

We want to be your instructors. For us, teaching is not a box to be checked or an unwelcome duty. Instead, we view teaching as an opportunity; a chance to impart knowledge and a way to share our passion for learning. It is our opinion that knowledge is a way to engage in the world. As your instructors, we want to help you accumulate the information and tools you need to be successful and active participants in society.

Our goal is to help you become intentional learners. An intentional learner sees connections, makes decisions based on a range of knowledge, and integrates classroom skills into their everyday life. In this course, we will provide the structure and opportunities for you to become an intentional learner. We will work with you to synthesize information and identify key concepts. During class, we will use various formats to explore different sides of issues and we will work together to develop your communication, critical thinking, and interpersonal skills.

As a warning, we want to help you learn the information, but we will not hand it to you on a silver platter. We will require you to work hard. We will require you to stretch your mind and be open to alternate viewpoints. The best way to earn a high mark in this course is to engage. Engaging means study, read, question, pay attention, and do the work. Most importantly, our office hours are for you, so make use of them. In return for your investment, we will be timely in providing feedback, organized, available, and enthusiastic. We look forward to getting started.

V. TEXTS/MATERIALS/RESOURCES FOR THE COURSE

- o Statistical Software Packages: All students will need access to Microsoft Excel and a statistical software package. In class we will use Stata, but several other packages (R, SAS, EViews) are widely used as well. If you are

familiar with another software package you are encouraged to use it. All this software is available for free to UTK students.

- o Additional Readings: Additional readings will be posted to Canvas the week prior to the course in which it is assigned. We also will be using statistical packages with online help documentation. Links will be provided in class or on Canvas.
- o Course Webpage: The course website is available on Canvas. The site will be used for sharing problem sets, additional readings and other important course materials.

VI. GRADING

- o **Final Reflection Paper (5%)**
  - Due: Wednesday, December 13, by 5 pm EST
  - Description: The reflection paper is an opportunity to demonstrate that students have been reading, preparing for class, and actively engaged in the material. The reflection paper should be used to articulate ideas and methods that a student found interesting during the course and how the course material will be used in the future. The reflection paper should not exceed 1,000 words in length (12 pt. font, 1" margins, double-spaced).
- o **Final Research Prospectus (30%)**
  - Due: Monday, December 11, by 5 pm EST
  - Description: The research prospectus is the capstone of the applied portion of the course. A research prospectus is a preliminary plan for conducting a study. This plan will be the framework for a student's thesis project required for the minor. Each student will turn in a brief overview of their policy issue, research question, description of the data and method proposed, and anticipated challenges. The prospectus is not to exceed 5,000 words in length (12 pt. font, 1" margins, double-spaced, including figures, tables). Details will be discussed frequently in class.
- o **Annotated Bibliography/Data Plan (15%)**
  - Due: Monday, November 27, by 5 pm EST
  - Description: An annotated bibliography is an organizing tool that is helpful when working on a research project. An effective annotated bibliography is used to compile research sources in one location and provide the researcher with quick access to the information contained in each source. For this assignment, students will find 10 relevant sources (e.g. academic, government, or non-governmental) of research, data, or policy related to his or her planned prospectus. The student will provide a complete citation of the source using APA format and a brief description (e.g. no more than 200 words for each citation). The description should cover the highlights of the material, its relationship to other sources, and potential uses. Details will be discussed frequently in class.
- o **Module Mini-Projects (30%)**
  - Due: varies—please check course schedule
  - Description: Mini-projects will be assigned at the end of each learning module. The projects serve primarily to provide students with an opportunity to concretely demonstrate the use of techniques in the course and to reinforce the concepts learned in class. The project description will be posted to Canvas. Mini-projects may be completed in groups of up to three students, though each student should produce their

own version, and will be graded for completeness, effort and correctness (in that order).
- ○ **Attendance and Participation (20%)**
  - Due: every class meeting
  - Description: Students are expected to have read the assigned materials before class, contribute to discussions, and listen to each other and the professor. There will be several in class labs throughout the semester which will factor into the participation grade. Students who are distracted by outside technology during class will (at a minimum) have class participation points docked.

VII.   **HOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN THIS CLASS:** Class attendance is not mandatory, but the most successful students tend to attend class frequently and **read the assigned materials in advance**. Successful completion and review of the problem sets is highly correlated with students' final grades. Students who demonstrate an understanding (as opposed to a memorization) of the material presented in class tend to receive the highest course grades. This type of understanding is fostered by teaching the materials to other students.

VIII.   **FINAL GRADE**

Your course grade will be determined as follows

A:	93-100		C:	72-77
A-:	90-92		C-:	70-71
B+:	88-89		D+:	68-69
B:	82-87		D:	62-67
B-:	80-81		D-:	60-61
C+:	78-79		F:	Below

IX.   **UNIVERSITY POLICIES:** Each student should have read and signed the Honor statement regarding academic integrity in Hilltopics. Punishments for violating the Honor code range from suspension to receiving a failing grade for the course.

X.   **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES POLICY:** Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss specific needs. Please contact the Office of Disability Services at 865-974-6087 in Dunford Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

XI.   **DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY STATEMENT:** The Public Policy Analytics minor supports an inclusive learning environment where diverse perspectives are recognized and seen as a source of strength. This course places a priority on thoughtfulness, respect, and intellectual rigor. BCPP 480 will present a variety of diverse perspectives within the scholarship of public policy and public administration. Materials and activities will be presented in a way that is respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture, among others. It is the intent of this course that students from all backgrounds and perspectives be well served and that students with differing needs are supported both in and out of class. Feedback on this effort is welcome, including ways to make this course more effective for you personally, or for other students or student groups.

XII. COURSE OUTLINE

Date	Topic	Instructor	Materials	In-Class Deliverable
Wed, Aug. 23	Course Introduction	KC-SH	Lecture Slides (in class)	Index Card Information Individual one-on-one Mtgs. (sign-up)
Mon, Aug. 28	Public Policy Process & Policy Analysis	KC	Lecture Slides (in class) Public Policy Readings (2)	Discussion Worksheet Public Policy Defined Handout
Wed, Aug. 30	Benefit-Cost	SH	Reading (1)	
Mon, Sept. 04	No Class! (Labor Day)		Reading (1)	2-week Course Evaluation
Wed, Sept. 06	Benefit-Cost	SH		
Mon, Sept. 11	Epistemology of Social Science & Research Design	KC	Lecture Slides (in class) Social Science Readings (2)	Discussion Worksheet
Wed, Sept. 13	Scientific Method and Theory	KC	Lecture Slides (in class) Theory Reading (1)	Discussion Worksheet Individual one-on-one Mtgs. (this week)
Module #1	**Experiments**			
Mon, Sept. 18	Hypotheses, Concept Definition, Operationalization, and Population/Sample	KC	Lecture Slides/Podcast (flip) Experiments Reading (1)	Education Experiments Discussion Worksheet
Wed, Sept. 20	Random Assignment, Treatment, Control and Experimental Groups	KC	Lecture Slides/Podcast (flip) CQ Press Readings (3—groups assigned)	Experiments Worksheet
Mon, Sept. 25	Quasi-Experiments, Non-Random Assignment, Field Experiments and Challenges	KC	Lecture Slides/Podcast (flip) Experiment Readings (2)	Welfare Experiments Discussion Worksheet
Wed, Sept. 27	Analyzing Treatment Effects, Issues of Replicability and Generalizability	KC	Lecture Slides/Podcast (flip) CQ Press Readings (3—groups assigned)	STAR Data/Experiments Worksheet Module 1 Mini-Project Due, Fri. Sept. 29
Module #2	**Survey Methods**			
Mon, Oct. 02	Overview of Survey Methods	KC	Lecture Slides/Podcast (flip) Survey Readings (2)	Health Surveys Discussion Worksheet
Wed, Oct. 04	Question and Questionnaire Design/Sensitive Topic Surveys	KC	Lecture Slides/Podcast (flip) CQ Press Readings (3—groups assigned)	iPoll Databank Survey Exercise
Mon, Oct. 09	Sample Design, Sampling Error and Survey Modes/Delivery	KC	Lecture Slides/Podcast (flip) Survey Readings (2)	World Values Survey Exercise Qualtrics Worksheet
Wed, Oct. 11	Analyzing and Interpreting Data, Weighting Procedures	KC	Lecture Slides/Podcast (flip) CQ Press Readings (3—groups assigned)	Demographic Health Survey Exercise Module 2 Mini-Project Due, Fri. Oct. 13

Module #3	Regression Analysis			
Mon, Oct. 16	Regression Review	KC	Lecture Slides/Podcast (flip) Review of stata software/coding	Regression Worksheet Midterm Course Evaluation
Wed, Oct. 18	Binary Variables	KC	Lecture Slides/Podcast (flip)	Regression Worksheet
Mon, Oct. 23	Categorical Variables	SH		
Wed, Oct. 25	Multinomial Logit and Ordered Probits	SH		Module 3 Mini-Project Due, Fri. Oct. 15
Module #4	Programming			
Mon, Oct. 30	Introduction to Python and the IDE	SH	Introduction to Python	Python and Juypter Installs
Wed, Nov. 01	Loops & If/then statements	SH		
Mon, Nov. 06	Data storage and manipulation	SH	NumPy and Pandas	
Wed, Nov. 08	Scraping data	SH		Module 4 Mini-Project Due, Fri. Nov. 10
Module #5	GIS			
Mon, Nov. 13	Installing QGIS & Data types	SH		QGIS Installs
Wed, Nov. 15	Creating Maps	SH		
Mon, Nov. 20	Creating Spatial Data	SH		
Wed, Nov. 22	Automating Tasks	SH		Module 6 Mini-Project Due, Fri. Nov. 24
	Course Wrap Up			
Mon, Nov. 27	Prospectus Workshop	KC-SH		Annotated Bib/Data Plan Due
Wed, Nov. 29	Prospectus Workshop	KC-SH		
Mon, Dec. 04	Final Class	KC-SH		
Mon, Dec. 11				Final Prospectus Due
Wed, Dec. 13				Reflection Paper Due

All course materials, deadlines, assignments, etc. are subject to change at the discretion of the course instructors.