**URPA 6349: Decision Making and Public Policy**

**Spring 2014**

**Instructor(s):** Dr.Colleen Casey

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**Office Hours:** Fridays, 3:30-5:00 pm or by appointment.

**Section Information: URPA 6349, Section 001**

**Time and Place of Class Meetings:** Wednesdays, 6:00-8:50 pm, UH 25

**Description of Course Content:** This course explores the theoretical, practical, and topical connections between public policy and public administration through a decision-making lens. The objectives of the course are to enable students to identify, critique, and connect the theoretical and meta-theoretical assumptions of decision-making and public policy analysis. Course objectives will be pursued through readings, seminar discussions, and research-based assignments that focus on the intersection between decision-making, public policy, and public administration.

In the first half of the semester, we will explore different cases and topics to understand and evaluate different models and frameworks of public policy analysis. In the second half of the semester, we will focus on individual and organizational decision making approaches from a variety of theoretical perspectives.

Given that this is a doctoral level seminar, we will concern ourselves this semester with the following questions:

1. What are the unique contributions and values of different policy analysis models and frameworks? Specifically, how do the assumptions of the theories and models differ, and what are the key elements of each model?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to researching and “doing” policy analysis in the real world?
3. What are the individual, organizational, social and political limits of decision-making? How can these limitations be addressed to enhance decision-making?
4. Which factors are important to consider in the study and research of decision-making?

The questions above will guide our actions this semester. In order to prepare for the seminar portions of the class, it is imperative that you read all assignments and selected cases or activities PRIOR to class to benefit from class discussion. Overall, the expectation is that an informal atmosphere will prevail in our class discussions. There will be for the most part, no one right answer to questions raised in this course; however, you are responsible for contributing in an informed and scholarly manner. Finally, I intend to keep us as close to schedule as possible, but **I do reserve the right to alter the syllabus** (date and readings) should it be in the best interest of the class.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

\*Clearly communicate a particular policy or decision making issue, both verbally and written;

\*Compare and contrast policy and decision-making frameworks along a continuum of rational to discourse perspectives;

\*Evaluate the strengths and limitations of decision-making frameworks to real world policy issues.

**Required Textbooks and Other Course Materials:**

Lejano, R. (2006). *Frameworks for policy analysis: Merging text and context.* New York, NY: Routledge. 978-0415952767

Nutt, P. (2002). *Why decisions fail*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers. 978-1576751503.

Simon, H. (1997). *Administrative behavior: A study of decision making* (4th edition). New York, NY: Free Press. 0684835827.

Thaler, R. & Sunstein, C. (2008) *Nudge: Improving Decisions about health, wealth, and happiness.* New York, NY: Penguin. 9780143115267.

Other Required Readings Will Be Made Available on Blackboard

**Descriptions of major assignments and examinations:**

1. Discussion Participation through Leading and Facilitating 3 Group Discussions (30%)
2. Mid Term Essay Exam (35%)
3. Final Paper & Presentation (35%)

**Attendance:** Attendance is required. Students will receive 1 free pass, but are still required to notify the professor of their absence. After 1 absence, discussion points will be deducted unless the student can present an acceptable way to make up the missed session.

**Other Requirements:** In addition to the assignments listed above, students will be required to work in small groups on occasion.

**Grading**: Students are expected to keep track of their performance throughout the semester and seek guidance from available sources (including the instructor) if their performance drops below satisfactory levels. Grading is awarded in the following manner:

 Discussion Participation: Leading and Facilitating 3 Class Discussions (30%)

 Mid Term Exam (35%)

 Final Paper & Presentation (35%)

**Scale:**

90-100==A

80-89==B

70-79==C

60-69==D

60 and Below==F

**Outside Expectations**: Students can expect to spend at least an additional 9 hours per week in course-related activities, including reading required materials, completing assignments, participating in discussion forums, small group work, preparing for exams, etc.

**Make-up Exams**: Make-up Exams will not be allowed.

**Grade Grievances**: Any appeal of a grade in this course must follow the procedures and deadlines for grade-related grievances as published in the current graduate catalog.

**Drop Policy:** Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. **Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance**. Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (<http://wweb.uta.edu/ses/fao>).

**Americans with Disabilities Act:** The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

**Academic Integrity:** All students enrolled in this course are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

*I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington’s tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence.*

*I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.*

Instructors may employ the Honor Code as they see fit in their courses, including (but not limited to) having students acknowledge the honor code as part of an examination or requiring students to incorporate the honor code into any work submitted. Per UT System *Regents’ Rule* 50101, §2.2, suspected violations of university’s standards for academic integrity (including the Honor Code) will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student’s suspension or expulsion from the University.

**Student Support Services**:UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to resources@uta.edu, or view the information at [www.uta.edu/resources](http://www.uta.edu/resources).

**Electronic Communication:** UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php>.

**Student Feedback Survey:** At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as lecture, seminar, or laboratory shall be directed to complete a Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student’s feedback enters the SFS database anonymously and is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. UT Arlington’s effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly urged to participate. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>.

**Final Review Week:** A period of five class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week *unless specified in the class syllabus*. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10% or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week. During this week, classes are held as scheduled. In addition, instructors are not required to limit content to topics that have been previously covered; they may introduce new concepts as appropriate.

**Emergency Exit Procedures:** Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit, which is located in the center of the building. Please proceed to the central staircase and exit the building. When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist handicapped individuals.