

Policy Memorandum
Graduate Program in Public Policy
Institute for Public Policy Studies

Topic Proposal
Academic Year 2009-2010
Version: February 19, 2009

Please consult Eugene Bardach's *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*, 2nd ed. (Congressional Quarterly Press, 2005) to complete your topic proposal.

“ . . . you have to get beneath the rhetoric to define a problem that is analytically manageable and that makes sense in light of the political and institutional means available for mitigating it.”

Eugene Bardach, *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis*, pgs. 1-2.

“A common philosophical as well as practical question is ‘What private troubles warrant definition as public problems and thereby legitimately raise claims for amelioration by public resources?’”

Eugene Bardach, *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis*, pg. 4.

“Your problem definition should not include an implicit solution introduced by semantic carelessness.” Eugene Bardach, *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis*, pg. 7.

Your topic proposal should be 5 pages with the following 6 sections:

Problem definition

- What is your problem definition? See Bardach pgs. 1-2.
- Is your problem defined in terms of deficits and excesses? If yes, explain. If no, explain. See Bardach pg. 3.
- What is the market failure of your problem? If there is no market failure, what is the situation that warrants definition as a public problem? See Bardach pgs. 4-5.
- How will your problem include a quantitative feature? See Bardach pg. 5.
- Is your problem diagnostic? If so, are you sure you want to define your problem in this manner? See Bardach pg. 6.
- Did you define your solution into the “problem”? If yes, redefine the problem and iterate! See Bardach pgs. 7-10.
- Do you have a causal claim? If so, is it “real”? Explain. See Bardach pgs. 7-8.

Methods

- Describe how you plan to find the information on which your Policy Memo is based. Include a list of possible professionals to interview, databases to explore, websites to visit, books to read, legislative history to review, and peer-reviewed journals to digest.

Proposed Solutions

- Write a brief review of the spectrum of solutions proposed by you and/or by others. With a few sentences on each of the ideas, establish the overall landscape of the debate, citing at least one proposal reflecting “conservative” and “liberal” ends of the political spectrum, plus at least two that may seem more moderate in approach.
- Who are the stakeholders?

Issue Analysis

- How do you plan to analyze/iterate the issue?
- How is your “analysis” different from your “research”?
- What will be your approach to the CBA?
- What contribution will your analysis make to the current policy debate?

Strategic Recommendations

- Do you have a preliminary idea of what you think will be the best recommendation? If so, why?

Weaknesses and Limitations

- What do you think will be the weaknesses of or limitations to this project? For example, will you have access to all of the data that you may need? Do you think your strategic recommendations will be realistic and politically feasible?

Please include a cover page for your topic proposal that includes the following information:

- your name
- your email address
- your phone number
- your mailing address
- your expected date of graduation
- your preference for advisor; please note that not all requests can be granted because assigning advisors will also be dependent on faculty availability and your topic selection; please list both 1st and 2nd choices
- Please list the following courses and note when you completed (or will complete) each course (quarter and year) and the grade you received in each.
 - PPOL 4100 (American Policy System)
 - PPOL 4200 (Microeconomics)
 - PPOL 4300 (Quantitative Analysis)
 - PPOL 4400 (Analytical and Critical Skills)
 - PPOL 4500 (Cost-Benefit Analysis)
 - PPOL 4600 (Regulatory Policy)
 - PPOL 4700 (Public Management and Budgeting)