I. Course Description

This course will provide students with the analytical tools necessary to evaluate competing points of view, using empirical techniques, logic, and statistical inference. Case studies will be drawn from the current legislative and regulatory environment and will provide the MPP student with opportunities to construct a course of action, based on the use of logically consistent arguments and on the persuasive use of facts and empirical data. Students in this course will also learn how to distinguish speculation, theory, fact, and opinion, how to identify the validity, ideological content or irrationality of data, how to identify the intentional obfuscation of issues, and how to evaluate one’s own prejudices and vulnerability to argument not based on evidence.

II. Requirements

This is a graduate course that places heavy emphasis on students’ participation to class discussions. Class attendance is mandatory. Repeated absences may result in a failing participation grade.

The final grade is based on your class participation and your timely and successful completion of assignments. Your grade is determined as follows:

- **Class Participation: 20%**. This grade will be determined by the students’ attendance and participation in class discussion. During discussion sessions, students will be called randomly to answer questions of relevance to the class topics. Students should come prepared to class by having completed the assigned readings for the week. I strongly encourage every student to participate actively in class; however, should you feel uncomfortable about speaking in front of your fellow classmates, you can email me questions and comments before each class. That will count toward your participation grade in the same way as in-class interaction. We’ll have a class blog either on Blackboard or on Facebook. If you send me comments and questions to post on the blog, those will count as participation as well.

- **Take-home Critique Paper: 20%**. This assignment will test students on the application of the knowledge they have learnt in class. Students will have to critique a policy brief by detecting biases and flaws in its various components. I will make the policy brief available on the starting day of the assignment. Students will put together their critiques in a consolidated document. You are required to deliver both a hard and an electronic copy (only PDF or MS Word files). **Schedule: due in class on October 5. NO LATE DELIVERY.**

- **Clipping Thesis: 30%**. The final project will consist in a clipping thesis assignments. Students will select a policy topic and submit it to me for approval, at least 10 days before the deadline of the assignment. Once their topic has been approved, students will analyze the coverage of such policy topic. By coverage, I mean the representation by the media and the analysis by think tanks, policy institutions, etc, as well as leaders’ declaration. Students must uncover the features of such coverage by utilizing the analytical skills they have learnt.
in class. This includes detecting biases, framing, narratives, use of data, etc. Students will have to provide both a hard and an electronic copy of their assignment. I will provide more details about the final project in class.

**Schedule**: due in class on November 16. NO LATE DELIVERY.

- **Final Exam**: 30%. I will provide details on the final exam later in the semester. Please check BlackBoard for more information. **Schedule**: Saturday November 19, 6:00 pm - 7:50 pm, Sturm Hall 380. (provisory schedule).

### III. Readings

Readings will be available on Blackboard: [http://blackboard.du.edu/](http://blackboard.du.edu/). Additional readings may be assigned on a weekly basis, so please check Blackboard and your email frequently for updates.

The following books are required for class:


### IV. Schedule

**Class meets Wednesdays, 5pm to 7:50 pm**

**DATES TO REMEMBER:**

- **Wednesday, September 14**: class begins
- **Wednesday, October 5**: Critique Paper due in class
- **Wednesday, November 16**: Clipping Thesis due in class
- **Saturday, November 19**: final exam, Sturm Hall 380, 6pm-7:50pm

Presentation handouts in PDF format will be available for download on Blackboard the day of your class. Please print them before class. Do not take notes from my slides, since you have them available for download.

### V. Detailed Schedule

**Week #1 (September 14): Introduction to critical analysis**

No Readings - Please take notes

**Week #2 (September 21): Biases I - Media & Frames**


Week #3 (September 28): Biases II - Narratives & Symbols


Week #4 (October 5): Beyond “Regular” Bias

REMEMBER: Critique Paper due in class

1. The Thinker’s Guide to Fallacies: The Art of Mental Trickery and Manipulation


Week #5 (October 12): Bad Data, Bad Policy

1. Just Plain Data Analysis: Gary M. Klass, Interpreting Data (Blackboard)


Week #6 (October 19): Bad Data Applications


Week #7 (October 26): Group Think / Consensus


Week #8 (November 2): Good Research and Policy Analysis

1. Charles Ragin, Constructing Social Research, Ch. 3: The Process of Social Research

2. Bardach, Part I, pp. 1-64 and OPTIONAL Part II and III pp. 65-110

Week #9 (November 9): Why We Fail


Week #10 (November 16): How do we apply all this policy analysis?

REMEMBER: Clipping Thesis due in class


SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 19: FINAL EXAM IN STURM HALL 380, 6PM-7:50PM

Please check Blackboard for details.

VI. Things You Need to Know / Policies

Academic Honesty: You are required to comply with the University’s honesty policy regarding cheating and the use of copyrighted materials. The student honor code can be found at: http://www.du.edu/facsen/honor_code.html.

Lateness/Courtesy: Please arrive on time. If you arrive late, please make sure you do not disrupt class activities.

Preparedness: You should be prompt and prepared for class discussion. I am expecting you to complete the reading assignments before class time.

Make-Up Policy: No make-ups. I have given you all important deadlines in advance, so please clear your social calendars. It is your responsibility to modify your schedule to attend class and to complete your work on time. The only exceptions for this policy are about medical or family emergencies.

Absences: All students are required to attend all classes. I will excuse students for emergencies and sickness on case-by-case basis. More than one unexcused absence will cause a reduction of participation grade.
Use of Technology: Please turn off your cell phones to avoid distracting your classmates. Use of laptop computers is allowed for class-related tasks. If you use your cell phone or your computer in class for non class-related tasks, I will ask you to leave the room.