

Course Syllabus

Advanced Seminar

Fall 2011

Thursdays, 2:00 – 3:50 pm

6 East 16th St, Room 904

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Advanced Seminar guides students through their Professional Decision Report, or PDR. The PDR is a research and analytical report written for a client. The PDR brings students' analytic and professional skills, developed over the course of graduate study, to a problem experienced by a client organization, usually a policy maker or non-profit organization manager. The PDR should exhibit technical and formal skills of analysis as well as an understanding of the political and operational dimensions that condition policy and management responses. It should be written, organized and argued to convince a decision-maker of the wisdom of a particular policy or management decision. It should not be just a description of policy choice options. Undertaking the PDR is also an opportunity to develop or enhance professional relationships, and gain insights around a subject of interest to the student.

The class is organized to assist PDR development in two ways. First, it stages deliverables toward the final product. Second, it provides opportunities for feedback around these deliverables from the instructor and your student colleagues. The emphasis in this class is on coaching, mentoring and group learning, rather than formal instruction.

The first month or so of class will be seminar-style opportunities to discuss broad challenges and opportunities within the PDR process, and then bring these reflections back to the students' early thinking around their own PDRs. These sessions will also be a chance for students to solicit feedback from their peers, and develop informal groups with students pursuing topics in common. After these sessions, class meetings will be replaced by individual meetings with the instructor, with occasional reconvenings for progress reports and student presentations. Individual-faculty meetings will take place during class time.

The major requirements are timely completion of deliverables toward the PDR, and active, constructive engagement with your peers around their own projects. Not only the relationships formed with your PDR client, but those with your peers, will be important professional resources to you over time.

Holidays and Schedule Changes

Please note there is **no class on September 29 and November 24.**

Tuesday, November 22, follows a Thursday schedule. Individual student-faculty meetings will take place on Tues, 11/22.

I will be at a symposium on Thursday, October 13. I will be available Monday – Wednesday of that week (October 10-12) for individual meetings with you.

Readings

The reading load outside of your PDR research is very light. If you do not already own it, you should purchase the Bardach book, *A Practical Guide to Policy Analysis*, for this course.

Other readings on the research and writing process may be assigned during the semester, and will be provided via Blackboard, if so. For those of you interested in improving your methods and approach, you may consider purchasing any of the following recommended texts:

Becker, Howard 1986. *Writing for Social Scientists: how to start and finish your thesis, book or article*. The University of Chicago Press.

Booth, Wayne C. et al. 1995. *The Craft of Research*. University of Chicago press.

Cresswell, John W. 2003. *Research Design: Qualitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Second Edition. Sage Publications

Flower, Linda. 1998. *Problem-Solving Strategies for Writing in College and Community*. Harcourt Brace.

Miller, Jane, 2004. *Chicago Guide to Writing about Numbers: The effective Presentation of Quantitative Information*. University of Chicago Press.

Zerubavel, Eviatar 1999. *The Clockwork Muse: A Practical Guide to Writing Theses, Dissertations, and Books*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Course Requirements & Deliverables

Active participation in seminar-style meetings and class presentations is very important, as is preparation for scheduled meetings with the instructor so that these can be helpful to you. **You must meet at least three times with me during the semester – twice during the month of October, and once once during weeks 12 & 13.** You may find that additional meetings are necessary. As a group, we will use peer review, discussion and feedback sessions to help assist one another through this process. **I strongly encourage you to form peer groups outside of class to assist one another with the PDR process;** I can facilitate this in class.

With regards to deliverables at each stage of the process, I am aware that content may change as your progress in your research and analysis. **Please note that the class is front-loaded with deliverables in order to move you along to developing a quality PDR in a short span of time. The first full draft of the PDR is due November 10 (Week 11).** In effect, your analysis should be completed by this time and the final month or so of the course should be spent on refining and polishing the analysis and written draft.

Please schedule your time and efforts accordingly.

Assignments, whether via email or delivered in class, are due at the start of class time – by 2:00 p.m.

1) Central Policy Issue & Client Pre-Solve: Due in class September 8 (Week 2).

This is a) a brief sentence or two to identify the client, b) the central policy issue the client wants addressed, and c) a pre-solve as outlined in the Schema. You will hand in your schema to me, and present your CPI to the class for discussion and refinement.

2) Project Proposal and Work Plan. Due in class September 15 (Week 3).

This is a description of the client, a formal statement of the problem, and a basic research design. This 3-5 page submission should move beyond the identification of a general issue or topic to the specification of an analytic question or problem, overview of the analytic approach and research methodology, the types of data that will form the basis for the analysis, and a timeline of tasks and estimated completion dates (remember that the first draft of the PDR is due in Week 10/on March 29th).

A copy of this should also go to the client in advance of signing the MOA with them (see below).

3) Client Memorandum of Agreement. Due in class, September 22 (Week 4).

This is 1-2 page memo of agreement formalizing the contract between the student and the client. It should specify mutually agreed upon terms of the relationship (such as formal or regular meeting times, terms of access to data, or schedule of intermediate products). This memo should be worked out in conjunction with the client, who should have the opportunity to review it and request any revisions before it is signed by both parties.

4) Literature Review: Due via email, October 6 (Week 6).

This is a 1-3 page bibliography with a 1-2 sentence summary of each reference. It should clearly be guided by your research objective and problem statement, and demonstrate that you have situated your work within the literature on the specific topic. You should begin the document with a brief paragraph summarizing the main strands of literature on the topic.

E.g., “This literature reflects two modes of thought within community development practice, those scholars and practitioners who argue that community development contributes to urban privatization and gentrification schemes, and those who argue that community development builds needed assets in low-income communities and assists poor households in moving

towards economic self-sufficiency. Typical community development programs include affordable housing production, small business development, job training programs, and community building initiatives. Best practices show that resident participation and ownership is essential to successful community development delivery and to reducing the risk of gentrification and privatization.”

5) Table of Contents: Due via email, October 13 (Week 7).

The table of contents outlines the proposed sections of the PDR, incl. all proposed subsection headings. An accompanying list of tables/figures should be as thorough as possible.

6) Detailed outline (5-10 pages + appendices) of PDR: Due **in my office** October 27 (Week 9).

The detailed outline should identify each section of the report and provide some detail on its content. It should provide a more refined problem statement, spell out key alternatives, and integrate any data analyses. Particular emphasis should be given to the evaluation and comparison of alternatives, as well as recommendations and conclusions. The recommendations should provide a detailed analysis of the pros and cons of each and the reasoning behind the analysis.

7) Complete First Draft of PDR: Due in my office, November 10 (Week 11)

This draft should include all tables and other presentations of data, as well as a clear statement of key findings and recommendations. It should also include a draft of the report’s executive summary.

Individual student-faculty meetings in weeks 12 and 13 will be devoted to going over detailed feedback. You will be required to meet with me during these weeks.

8) Presentations, in class, December 1 and December 8 (Weeks 15-16)

This is a **10 minute presentation** about findings and your major (remaining) questions, followed by up to ten minutes of class discussion and feedback. A few slides may be helpful, but the goal is to permit your peers an opportunity to help you between the first and second drafts. **Keep in mind that with only 10m, you will have to economize significantly on what you can present.** Focus on the CPI and broader policy context, the criteria and alternatives and your recommendation. Provide handouts on methodology and any important background information.

Presentations will be scheduled by me following submission of your PDRs.

9) Completed Final PDR: The final report is due in class on December 15 (Week 17). The report can be submitted to the client *following approval* of the faculty member.

Grading

1. Overall evaluation of written assignments (other than Final PDR) and effort: 30%
2. Class participation, presentations, and preparation for individual meetings: 20%
3. Final PDR: 50%

With advance notice (e.g., email to me), you will receive a 24 hour grace period for any assignment not handed in by the stated deadline. **This is available once during the semester.** This grace period DOES NOT apply to the final PDR.

After that, your grade on any individual assignment will be reduced by one-third (e.g., A to A-, etc.) for every 24 hour period it is late. The rollover time begins at 2pm everyday.

As reflected in the grading policy, all original deadlines must be met, as in any professional situation. It is a Milano institution that missing the 'final' deadline for completion of the PDR will entail a substantial grade penalty. Extensions will only be granted in the event of an extraordinary circumstance beyond the control of the student. **Any request for an extension must be made in writing and approved by the faculty member by Friday, December 2.**

Formatting of assignments

Please take note of when assignments are due via email or in hardcopy, and whether in class or to my office. For all assignments, please make sure that **pages are numbered** and **the author's last name appears in the header or footer**. Make sure for hard copies documents are stapled (strongly preferred) or fastened with a binder clip or paper clip. Font should be legible, i.e., b/w 11 and 13 point. Line spacing should be 1.5 or double spaced. Margins should be b/w 1 and 1.5 inches.

The **Final PDR** should adhere to the above specifications and be designed as a professional quality document. A cover page with all the necessary information (TBD) should be included. Once I have graded the Final PDR, you will make any necessary edits and supply a printed and professionally bound copy to the client. **You should inform the client that they must email me with confirmation that you have supplied the final bound version of the PDR.**

A final note on citations: You must also cite all evidence in your assignments, using a consistent citation format. Citing via footnotes is acceptable (no in-text citations, please), though your PDR must also include a bibliography. If you do not currently use a certain citation style, I recommend the *Chicago Manual of Style*, which has an on-line "quick guide" here:
http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html.

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Assignment Due
1	9/1	Course overview and PDR topic introductions	
2	9/8	Presentation and Critique of CPIs	Readings: Bardach – pp. 1-9; Schema: pp. 1-9 Central Policy Issue and Pre-Solve due in class
3	9/15	Models of successful PDRs	Readings: PDRs (To be distributed) Project Proposal due in class
4	9/22	Basic overview of research methods	Readings: TBD Client memo, due in class
5	9/29	NO CLASS	
6	10/6	Individual student-faculty meetings	Literature review, due via email, by 2pm
7	Mon-Wed, 10/10-12	Individual student-faculty meetings	Table of contents, due via email, by 2pm
8	10/20	Individual student-faculty meetings	
9	10/27	Individual student-faculty meetings	Detailed outline, due in my office, by 2pm
10	11/3	Progress reports and peer discussions	
11	11/10	Individual student-faculty meetings (if needed)	First draft of PDR, due in my office, by 2pm
12	11/17	Individual student-faculty meetings	You must meet with me during Week 12 or 13 to get feedback on your PDR draft.
13	TUES, 11/22	Individual student-faculty meetings	You must meet with me during Week 12 or 13 to get feedback on your PDR draft.
14	11/24	NO CLASS	
15	12/1	Class Presentations	
16	12/8	Class Presentations	
17	12/15	Wrap up and reflections	Final PDR due in class