

University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public Service

7333 Analysis for Decision Making in Public Service

Course Description

This course is intended to provide students with analytical tools that enhance their skills of diagnosing problems and formulating solutions within communities and organizations. The underlying premise is that well prepared community leaders can increase their effectiveness in contributing to the well being of their communities by equipping themselves with these analytical tools. Instruction will focus on evaluating community assets as a balance to assessing community need. Underlying values of social justice and collaborative problem solving provide a benchmark for these activities.

Course Objectives

- Students will gain a working knowledge of analytical tools that help determine effective and equitable solutions to societal problems.
- Students will learn to evaluate organizational and community assets and mobilize them for action.
- Students will gain an understanding of social justice as a desired result of community action.
- Students will demonstrate mastery of techniques that facilitate collaborative approaches to problem solving.
- Students will apply analytical tools in a community setting to address persistent social problems.

Readings

All assigned readings will be available on the course web CT.

Student Evaluation

Student grades for the course will be determined by the quality of your responses to community-based cases that depict typical sets of problems and opportunities. Your knowledge of and ability to apply analytical tools to address these problems will be an important part of this evaluation. Likewise, a take-home, final examination will test your ability to select relevant tools with which to analyze community issues. Class participation, as judged by regular and productive involvement in class discussions and group work, is an important part of the grade, as well.

Individual project on data collection and analysis	15%
Group project on strategic planning and policymaking re LR Zoo	15
Individual project on developing and engaging social capital	15
Individual project on hypothesis testing and research design	15
Individual final examination	30
Class participation	10

Class Schedule

Session 1

Community, strategic analysis, and critical thinking

Our opening session introduces important elements of the course – the various meanings of community, strategic analysis, and critical thinking. We will explore the various definitions of “community” and discuss their importance in framing our work this semester. Strategic analysis will be underpinned by the values of assets mapping and appreciative inquiry. In the context of critical thinking, we will discuss acquiring information and evaluating it to reach a well-justified conclusion.

Session 2

Equity in public service – a Logic Model approach

A quest for equity in public service is among several core values of the Clinton School. We will discuss different forms of equity in the context of community action and public policymaking. Relations between and among public, private, nonprofit, and citizen sectors will provide the test bench for our discussion. Also, we will introduce the Logic Model as a unifying tool and rationale that communicates an underlying set of assumptions and hypotheses and provides a context in which programs may be initiated, monitored, and evaluated.

Session 3

Asking questions, methods of inquiry, and introduction to data (*Handout 1st assignment*)

This session is an introduction to the uses and basic elements of social scientific research in the context of public service. First, we look at common errors in observation and how the application of the scientific method helps us avoid these errors. Next variables, the relationships between variables, and the levels of measurement will be discussed. Last, we will explore some available sources of secondary data, including

the Census Bureau, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Bureau of Justice Statistics and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Session 4

Introduction to data collection, levels of measurement, and descriptive statistics

In this session, we will discuss the collection and description of primary data. We will discuss the logic of sampling and how probability and sample size allow us to make generalizations about a population. We will then begin univariate or descriptive statistics. We will discuss measures of Central tendency and Dispersion and how we can use them to better understand our data and our population. We will then discuss how these descriptive measures are used and presented in the public policy and program arena.

Session 5

Generating resources, inputs, and information; survey construction and analysis (1st assignment due)

Resources come in various forms, both tangible, e.g. human and revenue inputs, and intangible, e.g. levels of political support, opinions and attitudes. This session will provide a general overview of these inputs, with a special emphasis on gauging stakeholder perceptions and preferences. We will start with the different methods of questionnaire administration and the benefits and drawbacks of each. We will then cover the basics of survey construction, and how results can be analyzed for both needs assessment and program evaluation.

Session 6

Strategic planning, goal setting, assets mapping, needs assessments; applying the Logic Model as a template of action (Handout 2nd assignment)

Community-based nonprofits and local governments frequently plan strategically in order to direct their human and physical resources toward end goals that will help them accomplish their missions. If successful, they will build a sense of ownership among their employees, constituents, clients, and community partners. Rose Adams, a long time community activist and leader, will lead our study of strategic planning and demonstrate how to avoid common pitfalls that can stymie the planning effort.

Session 7

Translating planning into action: field research of the Little Rock Zoo

The Little Rock Zoo operates as a city government department and promulgates its strategic plan while interacting with many important stakeholders both inside and outside government. It is the only zoo in the state to be accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. Zoo leadership balances visitor satisfaction with responsibility for the well-being of the animals and networks regularly with other zoos concerning issues such as breeding, exchange, and display. As public administrators, these curators focus both on customer satisfaction and the effectiveness of their programs.

Session 8

The formal policymaking process; from analysis to evaluation

To put zoo operation into perspective and transition to the larger political environment in which it operates, we will study the policymaking process in local government with many references to national and international policy development, as well. Understanding agenda building, creating policy alternatives, decision making, implementation, and evaluation, all in a political environment where scarcity of resources shapes allocation priorities, is vital to public service.

Session 9

Zoo politics; continued field research

Not only does the zoo compete with other departments and programs for revenue allocation, it competes for new development dollars and decisions that will affect greatly its future expanse and operation. The zoo director faces increasing interest in redeveloping War Memorial Park in light of the Arkansas Travelers departure from Ray Winder Field. This dynamic situation, along with global policy issues related to animal species, shapes his policy environment.

Session 10

Identifying and measuring outputs (2nd assignment due) (Handout 3rd assignment)

Outputs are the direct products of program activities and may include types, levels and targets of services to be delivered by a program. An agency, NGO, or citizens group accomplishes its planned activities when it delivers the amount of product and/or service that it intended. As such, measuring outputs helps determine if the process is working, if resources are being used efficiently, and if clients are being reached. Outputs help bridge the gap between operations and outcomes.

Session 11

Civic engagement, social capital, and involving citizens in decision making

We will design strategies to strengthen social capital. By intensifying social networks we will build an empowering environment that encourages individual and collective actions to address issues of public

concern. We will attempt to create or enhance “civic virtue” that takes on the character of trust and reciprocity among groups in the community.

Session 12

Measuring progress through policy and program evaluation; short-term outcomes, hypothesis testing, bivariate statistics (*3rd assignment due*)

This session introduces bivariate statistics and hypothesis testing. Topics covered include contingency tables, testable hypotheses, and Type I versus Type II errors. We will then learn to conduct a chi-square test of independence. We will test different types of hypotheses using z and **student's t** .

Session 13

Measuring progress; intermediate and long-term outcomes, multivariate analysis

Today we will cover how to calculate and interpret the correlation between variables using Pearson's r . We will then discuss the uses and interpretation of regression analysis as a means of measuring long term outcomes or program impacts. This session will include a discussion Experimental and Quasi-experimental research designs as a means of determining causal effects in public programs.

Session 14

Collaborative Advantage as a means of mounting an attack on social problems (*4th assignment due*)

We finish the course with a brief review of multi-organizational partnerships and networks. Collaboration can range from informal agreements to produce a service or advocate for legislative or community change to formal arrangements that involve contracts, tax levies, legal documents, and federal funding. Collaborative advantage takes this partnership development one step further by developing a meta-strategy whose mission and ultimate achievement transcends those of individual partners. Public service increasingly is focused on cluster leadership in which social entrepreneurs work across traditional boundaries between public, corporate, nonprofit, and citizen sectors in an attempt to mount a potent campaign against complex community problems.

Session 15

Field research on homelessness and collaborative solutions (*Handout final examination*)

One of the most pernicious community problems is homelessness because it is complex in its causes and corresponding strategies, defies simple solutions, lacks a sympathetic public, and demands a multi-sector, multi-front approach. Hence, it is ripe for collaborative advantage among the sectors. We will study a current, local case related to long-term planning, emergency, transitional, and permanent housing, job preparation, and health programs for persons who are homeless. We will meet with Jimmy Pritchett, homeless services coordinator for the cities of Little Rock and North Little Rock, who with Dr. Sink has led the implementation of the regional plan to address the issue of homelessness.

Academic Integrity

All work you present to us should be your own. It is fine to study or prepare for class with others, but papers, presentations and assignments should be individual efforts. Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to) adopting or appropriating for one's own use and/or incorporating in one's own work, without acknowledgement, passages, parts of passages, tables, photographs, models, figures, and illustrations from the writings or works of others; thus presenting such as a product of one's own mind. Any student who plagiarizes may be subject to **any or all** of the following sanctions: receiving a zero on the written work, receiving a reduced grade for the course in which the plagiarism occurred, being suspended from registering for one or more semester(s), being required to enroll in a short course on graduate level writing, being required to comply with any other appropriate remedy as proposed by the Associate Dean, and/or being dismissed from UACS.

You should keep digital copies of all written work for this class. I reserve the right to request a digital copy of your work.

Plagiarism on any assignment in this class will at minimum result in an "F" for the assignment. I reserve the right to pursue further disciplinary action if appropriate. I strongly recommend students maintain a record of the preparation of their assignments.

Student Accommodation

It is the policy of UACS to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal and state law. Any student with a disability who needs accommodation, for example in seating placement or in arrangements for examinations, should inform instructors at the beginning of the course.