



GOVT 444: Crafting Responses to Global Policy Challenges

Spring 2024 (January 16 - May 8)

Mondays, 4:30 - 7:10pm, Horizon Hall 4016

Office Hours Mondays and Wednesdays 2:00 - 4:00pm and by appointment

Office Hours Signup [Link](#)

18 April 2024 Draft

Syllabus will be updated as details regarding guest speakers and the field trip to Washington, DC, are confirmed

Modifications Are Noted at End of Syllabus

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Course Description

During the spring 2024 three-credit (GOVT 444) offering of the IR Policy Task Force, students apply case study analysis as well as content area expertise developed in the fall semester to researching and crafting responses to a policy challenge of their own choosing.

The spring IRTF offering introduces students to:

- research and writing strategies for crafting effective policy papers
- presentation strategies for delivering effective policy briefs
- leading policy briefs in the fields of international relations, comparative politics, American politics, healthcare, international development, and the environment

Proficiency in policy analysis and writing will be developed through weekly policy labs as well as scaffolded assignments that culminate in a final policy paper, poster presentation, and oral policy brief.

Course Learning Outcomes

By the close of this course:

1. Students will identify the core components of persuasive policy analysis.
2. Students will apply the core components of persuasive policy analysis and craft their own written policy response to a pressing global or local challenge.
3. Students will present their policy response both in a poster session and through a 5-minute oral policy brief.

Enrollment

Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Registrar calendar: <https://registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/>

Course Texts

- Pennock, Andrew. *The CQ Press Writing Guide for Public Policy*. CQ Press, 2018. (Available digitally through the GMU library)
- Course Reading Packet (Available through the course site Blackboard Reading Packet link)

Instructor-Student Communication

I will respond to emails within 48 hours. If I will be away from email for more than one day, I will post an announcement on the Blackboard course homepage.

Before sending an email with a class logistics question, do see if your question is addressed in one of the following (available on your Blackboard course menu):

1. Syllabus
2. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
3. Blackboard tutorials
4. Blackboard Q&A, and
5. Technology Requirements

Mason EMAIL

- Mason requires that university email be used for all course communication. I will be sending messages to your Mason email and you are responsible for making sure you have access to these messages.
- Please include GOVT 444 in your email subject heading to alert course instructors that your message relates to our class. Please sign your email with your full name.

Course Logistics

This course will meet in person and use Blackboard to facilitate learning outside of class sessions. In a typical week:

- you will read about 100-150 pages
- complete short policy evaluation assignments
- prepare for and participate in seminar discussions

You can anticipate devoting 10 hours or more to coursework each week.

To Access Blackboard

1. Go to <https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu>
2. Login using your NETID and password.
3. Select on the “Courses” tab.
4. Select **GOVT 444: Crafting Policy Responses to Local and Global Challenges (Spring 2024)** under course listings

Technical Help

- If you have difficulty with accessing Blackboard, please contact the ITS Support Center at support@gmu.edu or 703.993.8870.
- If you have trouble with using the features in Blackboard, email courses@gmu.edu.

Course Requirements

The following requirements are designed to promote an optimal learning environment. This syllabus is a contract. Your continued enrollment in this class constitutes your acceptance of these requirements.

1. Students are required to read the syllabus.
2. Students are expected to complete assigned readings. Students should anticipate approximately 100-150 pages of reading every week.
3. Students will complete weekly writing assignments. Assignments are detailed in the *Grading, Assignment Description, and Deadlines* section below. **Students will submit writing assignments digitally, through BlackBoard.**
4. Students will deliver poster presentations of their policy papers.

5. Accommodation for missed or late assignments may be granted only following office hours discussion with the instructor. Students can schedule office hours appointments through the instructor's [MS Bookings](#) link. An accommodation may be extended only if students have proper documentation that can be verified. If you anticipate you will have a conflict due to medical / health care, religious holidays or travel, please inform me the first week of class. In the absence of proper documentation, late work will be assessed a 1/3 of total grade penalty for each day the assignment is late.

Student Responsibilities

Honor Code: Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code. The GMU Honor Code states: "Cheating and attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing of academic work and related materials constitute Honor Code violations. To maintain an academic community according to these standards, students and faculty members must report all alleged violations to the Honor Committee." Students are encouraged to read the full Honor Code: <https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/> and to remain vigilant against any violation of the Code in their own work. Any cases of academic dishonesty in this course will be pursued according to the guidelines detailed in the University Catalog.

Time Conflict: George Mason University is committed to creating a welcoming, respectful and inclusive educational environment that values diversity. Students should review the syllabus at the beginning of the term to determine if there are any conflicts between class time and religious observance. It is the student's responsibility to inform the instructor of these conflicts within the first week of the semester. <https://ulife.gmu.edu/religious-holiday-calendar/>.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester. See: <https://ds.gmu.edu/>

Student Services

Counselling and Psychological Services: The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance. See <https://caps.gmu.edu>.

Grading, Assignment Description, and Deadlines

Assignment	Points	Description	Deadline
Policy Problem Description	25	Building on your fall 2023 proposal, draft a revised statement of the policy problem and the problem's underlying causal drivers (2000 words)	February 12
Discussion of Policy Solutions & Recommendation	90	Present and evaluate solutions (both existing and novel that address the causal drivers identified in the policy problem description (2000 words)	April 1
Visuals	15	Finalize and submit the visuals used in the policy paper	April 8
First Full Draft of Policy Paper		Compile full draft of policy paper, adding an Executive Summary, Introduction, and Conclusion to your existing sections (15-20 pages)	April 13
Peer Reviews	10	Provide 1-page peer reviews of two colleagues' draft policy papers	April 15
Policy Labs	30	In class participation	Weekly
Poster Presentation	30	Research Poster Presentation	April 29

Assignment	Points	Description	Deadline
Final Policy Paper	100	Using instructor and peer feedback, compile the final draft of your policy paper	May 6

Grading Scale

A+: 294-300	A: 276-293	A-: 270-275
B+: 264-269	B: 246-264	B-: 240-246
C+: 234-240	C: 216-234	C-: 210-216
D: 180-209	F: 0 - 179	

Class total scores are rounded to the nearest whole number. A score of 269.49 rounds to 269, a B+. A score of 269.50 rounds to 270, an A-.

Weekly Schedule

A Note On Seminar Meeting Structure

Seminars that include both *methods* and *policy case* readings will be divided into three parts:

- discussion of the methods readings
- discussion of policy case readings
- lab in which participants respond to instructor provided simulation related to policy case readings

Week 1 (January 22): Spring Semester Overview and Introduction to Writing Policy

- Course Overview
- Methods Readings
 - GMU Writing Center, “White Papers.”
 - Luciana Herman (Harvard Kennedy School), “Policy Memos.”
 - Pennock, Ch. 1, “Audience and Audience-Centered Writing in Public Policy,” pp. 3-12.
- Policy Study: Pedestrian Safety
 - [“Why Are So Many Pedestrians Dying in the U.S.?” The New York Times – The Daily](#), January 4, 2024. (24 Minute Podcast)

Week 2 (January 29): Migration Policy Briefs

- Methods Reading
 - Pennock, Ch. 2, “Generating and Organizing Your Argument,” pp. 13-36.
- Policy Institution–The United Nations
 - Mona Lena Krook and Jacqui True, “Rethinking the Life Cycles of International Norms: The United Nations and the Global Promotion of Gender Equality,” *European Journal of International Relations* 18, no. 1 (March 1, 2012): 103–27, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066110380963>. (24 Pages)
- Policy Case Readings
 - “Who’s Paying The Price?” (Medical Justice, September 2022), <https://medicaljustice.org.uk/research/whos-paying-the-price/>. (27 pages)
 - Felipe González Morales, “Report on Means to Address the Human Rights Impact of Pushbacks of Migrants on Land and at Sea” (UN Human Rights Council, May 12, 2021), <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G21/106/33/PDF/G2110633.pdf?OpenElement>. (20 pages)
 - Kay James et al., “An Agenda for American Immigration Reform” (The Heritage Foundation, February 20, 2019), <https://www.heritage.org/immigration/report/agenda-american-immigration-reform>. (16 pages)

Week 3 (February 5): Ukraine Policy Briefs

- **Methods Readings**
 - Pennock, Ch. 8, “The Issue Brief,” pp. 137-154.
- **Policy Institution—Think Tanks**
 - Donald E. Abelson, “Old World, New World: The Evolution and Influence of Foreign Affairs Think-Tanks,” *International Affairs* 90, no. 1 (2014): 125–42.
- **Policy Case Readings**
 - Steven Pifer, “For a Secure and Stable Europe, Put Ukraine on a Definitive Path to NATO” (Brookings, December 13, 2023), <https://policycommons.net/artifacts/11210857/for-a-secure-and-stable-europe-put-ukraine-on-a-definitive-path-to-nato/12094329/>. (15 pages)
 - Stephen Van Evra, “To Prevent War and Secure Ukraine, Make Ukraine Neutral” (Center for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, February 19, 2022), <https://www.proquest.com/policyfile/docview/2644821542/2070C05026E84230PQ/11>. (8 pages)
 - Justin Logan and Joshua Shifrinson, “Don’t Let Ukraine Join NATO,” *Foreign Affairs*, July 7, 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/dont-let-ukraine-join-nato>. (10 pages)

Week 4 (February 12): LGBT Policy Briefs

- **Methods Readings**
 - Pennock, Ch. 9, “Policy History,” pp. 155-174.
- **Policy Institution—International Non-Governmental Institutions (INGOs)**
 - Amanda M. Murdie and David R. Davis, “Shaming and Blaming: Using Events Data to Assess the Impact of Human Rights INGOs1,” *International Studies Quarterly* 56, no. 1 (March 1, 2012): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.111/j.1468-2478.2011.00694.x>.
- **Policy Case Readings**
 - Omar G. Encarnación, “The Troubled Rise of Gay Rights Diplomacy,” *Current History* 115, no. 777 (2016): 17–22.
 - Phil Crehan et al., “Transforming US Foreign Policy To Ensure Dignity and Rights for LGBTI People” (Center for American Progress, November 2020), <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/content/uploads/2020/11/13081454/LGBTQI-Foreign-Policy.pdf>. (22 pages)
 - Ryan Thoreson, “‘I Just Try to Make It Home Safe’” (Human Rights Watch, November 18, 2021), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/11/18/i-just-try-make-it-home-safe/violence-and-human-rights-transgender-people-united>. (58 pages-skim)

Week 5 (February 19): Drug Epidemic Policy Briefs

- **Methods Readings**
 - Pennock, Ch. 3, “Improving Your Writing: Sentences and Words,” pp. 37-54.
- **Policy Institution—Congressional Research Service**
 - Ida A Brudnick, “The Congressional Research Service and the American Legislative Process” (Congressional Research Service, April 12, 2011), <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/RL33471.pdf>. (8 pages)
- **Policy Case Reading**
 - Jeneen Interlandi and Damon Winter, “48 Million Americans Live With Addiction. Here’s How to Get Them Help That Works.,” *The New York Times*, December 13, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/13/opinion/addiction-policy-treatment-opioid.html>. (50 pages, including about 10 pages of pictures)
 - Jennifer L Doleac and Anita Mukherjee, “The Moral Hazard of Lifesaving Innovations: Naloxone Access, Opioid Abuse, and Crime” (IZA Institute of Labor Economics, April 2018), <https://docs.iza.org/dp11489.pdf>. (30 pages)
 - Johnathan H Duff et al., “Consumption of Prescription Opioids for Pain: A Comparison of Opioid Use in the United States and Other Countries” (Congressional Research Service, June 2, 2021). (39 pages)
- **Guest Speaker**
 - Professor Robert McGrath, Schar School of Policy and Government

Week 6 (February 26): Gun Violence Policy Briefs

- **Methods Readings**
 - Pennock, Ch. 4, “Writing Well: Paragraphs and Sections,” pp. 55-74.

- **Policy Institution–Activist Networks**

- Blake Hounshell, “He’s a 25-Year-Old Gun Control Activist. Now He’s Heading to Congress.” *The New York Times*, November 23, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/22/us/politics/maxwell-frost-congress-florida.html>.
- Myah Ward, “How Gun Safety Advocates Won over Biden,” *POLITICO*, September 22, 2023, <https://www.politico.com/news/2023/09/22/how-gun-safety-advocates-won-over-biden-00117751>.

- **Policy Case Readings**

- “At the Forefront of Gun Safety: Removing Illegal Guns” (Everytown Research & Policy, November 16, 2022), <https://everytownresearch.org/report/at-the-forefront-of-gun-safety-removing-illegal-guns/>. (34 pages)
- John Malcolm and Amy Swearer, “Mental Illness, Firearms, And Violence” (The Heritage Foundation, January 31, 2019), <https://www.heritage.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/LM-239.pdf>. (10 pages)
- Arindrajit Dube, Oeindrila Dube, and Omar García-Ponce, “Cross-Border Spillover: U.S. Gun Laws and Violence in Mexico,” *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 3 (August 2013): 397–417, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S003055413000178>.
- Mike McIntire, “The Guns Were Said to Be Destroyed. Instead, They Were Reborn,” *The New York Times*, December 10, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/10/us/guns-disposal-recycling.html>. (14 pages)

Spring Break Week (March 4): No Class Meeting

Week 7 (March 11): Foreign Interference and Disinformation

- **Methods Readings**

- Pennock, Ch. 5, “Visually Communicating: On Creating and Writing About Tables,” pp. 75-92.
- Eugene Bardach, *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving* (New York: Chatham House Publishers, Seven Bridges Press, 2000), Part I (46 pages).

- **Guest Speaker**

- [Nina Jankowicz](#), Vice President, Centre for Information Resilience, will speak on “Foreign Interference, Disinformation, and AI in a Year of Elections and Conflict”

- **Policy Case Readings**

- Nina Jankowicz, “The West Has Gotten Savvier about Russian Disinformation. Will That Help Ukraine?,” *Washington Post*, January 23, 2022.
- Nina Jankowicz and Tom Southern, “The War-Weary West,” *Foreign Affairs*, May 4, 2023.

Week 8 (March 18): The Conflict in Sudan

- **Methods Readings**

- Pennock, Ch. 6, “Visually Communicating: On Creating and Writing about Graphs and Other Figures,” pp. 93-112.

- **Policy Case Readings**

- “‘An Epidemic of Coups’ in Africa? Issues for Congress, CRS Insight” (Congressional Research Service, United States Congress, February 11, 2022). (4 pages)
- Tessa Knight and Lujan Alsedeg, “Sudan’s Precarious Information Environment and the Fight for Democracy” (Atlantic Council, August 8, 2023). (25 pages)
- Samuel Ramani, “Russia’s New Power Projection Tactics in Africa,” in *Russia in Africa: Resurgent Great Power or Bellicose Pretender?*, ed. Samuel Ramani (Oxford University Press, 2023) (33 pages).
- “Sudan’s Calamitous Civil War: A Chance to Draw Back from the Abyss” (International Crisis Group, January 9, 2024). (16 pages).

Week 9 (March 25): The Israel-Hamas War in Global Context Policy Briefs

- **Methods Readings**

- Pennock, Ch. 7, “Putting It All Together: Creating Professional-Quality Work,” pp. 117-132.

- **Policy Institution–The United States Institute of Peace**

- Explore the “About USIP” webpage: <https://www.usip.org/about>

- **Policy Case Readings**

- Jim Zanotti and Jeremy Sharp, “Israel and Hamas Conflict In Brief: Overview, U.S. Policy, and Options for Congress” (Congressional Research Service, January 11, 2024), <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R47828>. (15 pages)
 - * Michael Robbins et al., “How the Israel-Hamas War in Gaza Is Changing Arab Views,” Foreign Affairs, December 14, 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/middle-east/how-israel-hamas-war-gaza-changing-arab-views>. (14 pages)
- Mary Speck et al., “Israel-Hamas War Divides Latin America Along Partisan Lines” (United States Institute for Peace, November 8, 2023), <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/11/israel-hamas-war-divides-latin-america-along-partisan-lines>. (5 pages)
- Hesham Youssef, “Six Dilemmas Facing Egypt” (United States Institute for Peace, January 18, 2024), <https://www.usip.org/publications/2024/01/six-dilemmas-facing-egypt>. (6 pages)
- Mark Leonard, “China’s Game in Gaza,” Foreign Affairs, January 8, 2024, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/chinas-game-gaza>. (7 pages)
- “Americans’ Views of the Israel-Hamas War” (Pew Research Center, December 8, 2023), <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2023/12/08/americans-views-of-the-israel-hamas-war/>. (Skim for content)
- “Americans’ Views of Both Israel, Palestinian Authority Down” (Gallup, March 4, 2024), <https://news.gallup.com/poll/611375/americans-views-israel-palestinian-authority-down.aspx>.
- “Genocide in Gaza, Dimensions of an Unfolding Catastrophe: John J. Mearsheimer in conversation with Lisa Wedeen and Bassam Haddad” (Jadaliyya, January 8, 2024), <https://www.youtube.com/live/OqxeqfgPzVc?si=OZsfq7L1U6rBfW8f>

Week 10 (April 1): State Collapse in Haiti

- **Methods Readings**
 - Pennock, Ch. 13, “Writing for Nontraditional Formats: Email and Social Media ,” pp. 235-246.
- **Policy Case Readings—Student Choice**
 - “Haiti’s Gangs: Can a Foreign Mission Break Their Stranglehold?” (Crisis Group, January 5, 2024). (23 pages)
 - “Will a New Government Halt Haiti’s Nosedive?” (Crisis Group, March 21, 2024). (8 pages)
 - Robbie Gramer, “How the World Failed Haiti,” Foreign Policy, March 28, 2024. (5 pages)
- **Guest Speaker**
 - [Dr. Olga Oliker](#), Crisis Group Program Director, Europe and Central Asia

Week 11 (April 12 USIP Field Trip)

In place of our scheduled April 8 class, we will be visiting the United States Institute of Peace on Friday, April 12. [Gavin Helf, Ph.D.](#), will be our host. Dr. Helf is USIP’s senior Central Asia Expert. Prior to joining USIP, Dr. Helf served as a senior democracy and governance advisor with USAID.

Week 12 (April 15): Peer Reviews of Draft Policy Papers

- **Methods Readings**
 - Resources on how to conduct peer reviews (Instructor provided)
- **Policy Case Readings**
 - Read two draft policy papers of your IRTF colleagues.
- **Assignment**
 - Provide 1-page peer reviews of two colleagues’ draft policy papers

Week 13 (April 22): Individual Feedback on Draft Policy Papers

- **Extended In Person Office Hours, Monday, April 22, 1-7pm**
 - In place of class, I will be holding extended office hours during which we can discuss questions you may have on my written feedback on your draft policy papers.

Week 14 (April 29): Oral Presentations: Policy Paper Briefs

- Presentations of Policy Briefs

May 6—Final Drafts of Policy Papers Are Due

Syllabus Draft Modification Notes

2024-01-23 Modification

- Updated assignment dates

2024-01-30 Modification

- Added Week 7, March 11 guest speaker and associated readings

2024-02-22 Modification

- Combined policy evaluation criteria and policy solutions assignment into one assignment
- Added Bardach, *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*, to Week 7 readings
- Added readings to Week 8, Sudan

2024-03-18 Modification

- Combined policy discussion and recommendations into one assignment
- Moved the The Israel-Hamas War discussion to week 9

2024-04-18 Modification

- Added extended office hours for Week 13