

Public Policy 200A: Senior Seminar

Wednesdays 2:15-4:05 PM

Building 300, Room 303 on the Main Quad

Fall 2011

Koichiro Ito (koichiro.ito@stanford.edu)

Office: SIEPR 227

Office hours: By Appointment

Course description

In this course, you will analyze a policy-related question or problem using the skills and knowledge you have obtained in the public policy curriculum. Your topic and method of analysis will be chosen by you in consultation with the instructor. At different stages in the research process, you will present your research through written work and oral presentations and receive feedback. The course culminates with a paper and presentation of your research. You will also present and critically discuss the work of others. These course components are designed to not only give you the opportunity to apply what you've learned as a public policy major, but also improve your analytical, research, writing and communication skills.

Is this course for you?

This course is primarily designed for honors students who write an honors thesis. If you are not an honors student, please talk to me to discuss if this course is really good for you or not. This course could be very demanding and could not worth your time if you do not intend to write a research paper with high quality, equivalent to the quality of an honors thesis. Also, note that the grading criteria will be the same for honors and non-honors students. The public policy program offers alternative seminars for undergraduate students: Public Policy 200B and Public Policy 200C, in which small student teams analyze real world policy problems faced by Bay Area government agencies, and produce a report for use by the client. These courses have been quite popular by previous students, so you might want to think about which course works better for you.

Assignments and grading

Attendance and participation (10%)

Since this class is a seminar, your attendance and participation are crucial even when you are not presenting. You are not only expected to be on time to class and meetings, but also to contribute to discussion. If you must miss a class, please notify me ahead of time.

There is no exam for this course. Instead, you are asked to hand in several assignments. The followings are brief descriptions of the assignments. I will post detailed descriptions for each assignment in Coursework.

(Assignment 1) Research topic work sheet (5%)

We will have the first individual meetings on Oct 5 to talk about your paper topics. Please fill out the research topic work sheet and bring two hard copies to your individual meeting. The research topic work sheet is designed to help you to think about your research question and your approach to answer the question.

(Assignment 2) Research proposal and discussion (10%)

We will have short presentations of your research proposals on Oct 12 and Oct 19. You will lead a discussion regarding your proposal during class. You are not expected to have everything figured out at this point. These discussions are intended to introduce your research project and get suggestions for advancing and improving it.

You will be asked to hand in two documents:

- 2-3 double-spaced pages of your research proposal
- 1-page summary of your research proposal to lead class discussion

(Assignment 3) Assigned readings work sheet (5%)

On October 26, I will give a short lecture about how to write an empirical research paper. I will post a few readings for the class. These readings are short but very helpful for academic writing. The readings will be uploaded in “materials” in Coursework. You will be asked to hand in one-page assigned readings work sheet in class.

(Assignment 4) Data/method/results work sheet (5%)

On November 2, we will have the second individual meetings, where we will talk about updates of your paper, particularly focusing on data, method, and preliminary results. I ask you to fill out a “data/method/results work sheet” and bring its hard copy to your individual meeting.

(Assignment 5) Draft of the first half of your research paper and an outline for the rest of it (10%)

In the draft of the first half of your paper, introduce and motivate your research question, briefly describe related literature, and explain your data and method of analysis. Your outline should be a one page description or list of steps you will need to take to finish the paper. This description should be as detailed as possible – that is, more than stating that you need to run your regressions. I will meet with you individually to discuss your draft and outline.

Your draft should be 6-10 pages in text (not including tables, figures and references) with 12 point font size and double-spaced. Include your tables, figures, and references in the end of your paper. This is what researchers do for their working paper versions.

If you are doing a *qualitative analysis*, you must have at least one full page in which you discuss your preliminary results (e.g., list of costs and benefits, application of criteria to a policy option).

If you are doing a *quantitative analysis*, you need to attach some descriptive statistics from your data

(e.g., means and standard deviations of dependent and independent variables, plots of the dependent variable with each independent variable). For papers with regression analysis, explain why you include *each* variable in your model, and what the expected effect is (positive, negative, null). If you cannot come up with a convincing reason for including a variable in your model, it probably should not be in it (avoid data mining). Papers should be kept as concise as possible. For those writing an honors thesis who have a complete draft, you may hand that in instead of a draft of the first half of the paper with an outline.

(Assignment 6) Peer review – 1-2 pages of “referee report” for your partner (5%)

Proofread your partner’s draft and write a 1-2 page “referee report” that gives substantive comments on the draft.

(Assignment 7) Presentation of your research (10%)

In your PowerPoint (or PDF) presentation, introduce your research question, describe your data and method of analysis, and present and interpret some of your results. Anytime before your class presentation, please have a practice presentation with your partner.

(Assignment 8) Final research paper + Proof of Writing Center Consultation (40%)

In your paper, you must provide a clear, well-supported, and well-written analysis of your research question. You need to introduce and motivate your research question, discuss (briefly) related literature, describe your data and methodology, and present and interpret your results.

Your final paper should be 10-12 pages in text (not including tables, figures and references) with 12 point font size and double-spaced. Include your tables, figures, and references in the end of your paper. This is what researchers do for their working paper versions.

You will be also asked to meet with a consultant at the Hume Writing Center about your final paper draft and provide written proof of your consultation.

Methodology and Data

You are free to choose your method of analysis. However, note that in previous years, many students found that quantitative analysis (regression analysis) is very useful to provide strong evidence on their research question and makes them easier to construct a convincing argument in a short paper. So, I recommend that you include quantitative analysis if your research question allows you to do so. If you use qualitative analysis, please clearly describe what hypotheses you have and how your data can be used to test the hypotheses by your method.

How can you contact me?

I would be happy to talk to you whenever you have a concern or question about your paper or course materials. We will have three individual meetings during this course. Please do not hesitate to bring any questions or concerns to the meetings. Besides the individual meetings, the best way to contact me is to

send me an email. I will try to answer your email no later than 24 hours.

Helpful Resources

Help acquiring data: Social Science Data and Software, Social Sciences Resource Center
1st floor of Green Library's Bing Wing
(<https://www.stanford.edu/group/ssds/cgi-bin/drupal/content/data-services>)

Help with quantitative and qualitative analysis software (e.g., SPSS, Stata, SAS): Social Science Data and Software, Social Sciences Resource Center
1st floor of Green Library's Bing Wing
(<https://www.stanford.edu/group/ssds/cgi-bin/drupal/content/software-services>)

Data analysis/statistics help: Department of Statistics Consulting (free consulting service during drop-in hours)
Sequoia Hall, Room 220
(<http://www-stat.stanford.edu/consulting>)

Oral communication help: Oral Communication Program, Center for Teaching and Learning
Meyer Library, Suite 123, and Sweet Hall, 4th floor
(<http://ctl.stanford.edu/speaking/oralcomm.html>)

Writing help: Hume Writing Center
Margaret Jacks Hall (Bldg 460, Room 20) (http://ual.stanford.edu/ARS/help_writing/WritingProject.html)

Honor Code:

Attach a signed copy of the Honor Code to your paper
(<http://www.stanford.edu/dept/vpsa/judicialaffairs/guiding/pdf/honorcode.pdf>).

Note that plagiarism violates the Honor code (for more information on plagiarism, see <http://www.stanford.edu/dept/vpsa/judicialaffairs/students/plagiarism.sources.htm>).

Students with disabilities

"Students with documented disabilities: Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC) located within the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). SDRC staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an *Accommodation Letter* for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the SDRC as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: [723-1066](tel:723-1066), [723-1067](tel:723-1067) TTY)." (Source: Stanford's Office of the Registrar)

Class Schedule

Detailed description of each assignment will be posted in Coursework.

Date	Agenda	Assignment
Sep 28	Introduction - Introduction of the course - Is this course for you? - How to prepare for your research proposal	
Oct 5	Individual Meetings about paper topics (Location: SIEPR 227)	<u>Research topic work sheet</u> - Bring a hard copy to your meeting
Oct 12	Presentation of Research Proposals #1	<u>Research proposal & its summary</u> - Due by 5 pm the day before presentations
Oct 19	Presentation of Research Proposals #2	
Oct 26	Writing skills: How to write an empirical paper? - Guidelines for the structure of empirical papers - Grading criteria for your final paper	<u>Assigned readings work sheet</u> - Bring a hard copy to class
Nov 2	Individual Meetings about data/method/results (Location: SIEPR 227)	<u>Data/method/results work sheet</u> - Bring a hard copy to your meeting
Nov 9	Presentation skills: How to present your paper? (Tentative: can be another lecture about writing if students ask for it)	Nov 8: <u>Paper draft</u> due by 5 pm Nov 14: <u>Referee report</u> due by 5 pm
Nov 16	Individual Meetings about paper drafts (Location: SIEPR 227)	<u>Practice presentations</u> - Practice presentations with your partner - Anytime before your presentations
Nov 23	NO CLASS – Thanksgiving break	
Nov 30	Final Presentations #1	<u>Presentation slides</u> - Due by 5 pm the day before presentations
Dec 7	Final Presentations #2	
Dec 14		<u>Final paper & Proof of Writing Center Consultation</u> - Due by 5 pm