Policy Studies

The School of Social Sciences

Director
Donald Ostdiek

Degree Offered: B.A.

This interdisciplinary major focuses on policy issues that are of public interest. Students in policy studies evaluate and analyze both the determinants and the effects of policy decisions, gaining an understanding of the policy-making process and acquiring an intellectual base for policy-making skills. The course of study addresses theoretical issues as well as applied and prescriptive policy questions.

Students may take policy studies only as a second major. It complements majors in any university department. For instance, engineering or science majors who are contemplating careers in business or government can investigate how technical innovations or regulations are adopted and implemented as matters of public policy, and humanities majors can explore career options where language skills are particularly valuable.

Students are encouraged to investigate research opportunities with Rice faculty. Students may also elect to participate in the Washington Semester Program at American University, which includes both course work and an internship within the federal government. See the policy studies director for more information.

Degree Requirements for B.A. in Policy Studies

For general university requirements, see Graduation Requirements (pages 16–18). Students may take the policy studies major only as a second major (their first major cannot also be in an interdepartmental program). The major contains 11 courses divided into the following elements: a basic curriculum, an area curriculum, and a research requirement.

The policy studies basic curriculum introduces students to the basic concepts and tools needed to understand and study policy, regardless of the policy area they choose to focus on. The four courses ensure that all policy studies majors have a common professional vocabulary and conceptual frame of reference. The policy studies area curriculum provides specialized training that builds on students’ work in the basic curriculum.

Students are required to take 6 courses from one of the following areas of specialization:
- Environmental policy
- Government policy and management
- Healthcare management
- International affairs
- Law and justice
- Business policy and management
- Urban and social change

Policy studies students must also engage in a research project in their area of interest. In consultation with the policy studies director, each student must select a research seminar or complete an approved research project through independent study or other credit. The Policy Studies Research Seminar (SOSC 400) also counts for this requirement.
4 Basic Curriculum Courses
POLI 338/SOSC 301 Policy Analysis
ECON 211 or 212 Principles of Economics I or II
POLI 337 Public Policy and Bureaucracy or SOSC 300 Social Science and Public Policy or POLI 436 Politics of Regulation
1 advanced analysis or methods course approved by the policy studies director

6 Area Curriculum Courses
6 courses from one of the following seven groups:

Core Courses (Choose at least 3)

1. Environmental Policy
ECON 480 Environmental and Energy Economics I
POLI 331 Environmental Politics and Policy
SOCI 367 Environmental Sociology
ENVI 306 Global Environmental Law and Sustainable Development
ENVI 406 Introduction to Environmental Law
HIST 330 U.S. Environmental History

2. Government Policy and Management
ECON 436 Government Regulation of Business
ECON 461 Urban Economics
ECON 483 Public Finance
POLI 300 Federalism and Intergovernmental Politics
POLI 301 State Politics
POLI 332/432 Urban Politics
POLI 436 Politics of Regulation
ANTH 344 City/Culture
ECON 438 Economics of the Law
ECON 480 Environmental and Energy Economics I
HIST 337 Gender and Politics in the West
POLI 330 Minority Politics
POLI 331 Environmental Politics and Policy
POLI 335 Political Environment of Business
POLI 458 Property Rights and Privatization
ENVI 406 Introduction to Environmental Law
HIST 468 Women and the Welfare State
SOSC 330 Healthcare Reform in the 50 States
SOSC 430 The Shaping of Health Policy in the United States
SOCI 308 Houston: The Sociology of a City
SOCI 331 Politics and Society in Texas
SOCI 370 Sociology of Education
SOCI 350 Sociological Approaches to Poverty
SOCI 399 Immigration and Public Health
SOCI 411 Social Change
SOCI 441 Minorities in the Schooling Process

3. Healthcare Policy and Management
(Choose 6)
ANTH 381 Medical Anthropology
ANTH 386 Human Nutrition
ANTH 388 Life Cycle: A Biocultural View
HEAL 212 Consumer Health
HEAL 350 Understanding Cancer
HEAL 407 Epidemiology
HEAL 410 Program Development in Health Education
PHIL 315 Ethics, Medicine, and Public Policy
RELI 462/463 Medical Ethics and American Values I and II
SOSC 330 Healthcare Reform in the 50 States
SOSC 420 Healthcare: Competition and Managed Care
SOSC 430 The Shaping of Health Policy in the United States
SOCI 334 Sociology of the Family
SOCI 345 Sociology of Medicine
SOCI 399 Immigration and Public Health
SOCI 433 Sociology of the Life Cycle: Death and Dying
SPAN 307/308 The Language of Healthcare

Core Courses (Choose at least 2)

4. International Affairs
ECON 420 International Economics
POLI 372 American Foreign Policy
POLI 376 International Political Economy
POLI 378 The Politics of American National Security Policy
POLI 462 Comparative Public Policy

Electives (Choose up to 4)
ANTH 360 Modernity and Social Space
ECON 430 Comparative Economic Systems
ECON 451 Political Economy of Latin America
HIST 232 The Making of Modern Africa
HIST 353 The Cold War
HIST 394 War in the Modern World
HIST 464 Foreign Policy of Nixon and Kissinger
HIST 469 US–Latin America Relation
POLI 354 Latin American Politics
POLI 355 Government and Politics of the Middle East
POLI 356 Politics of Latin American Economic Development
POLI 360 West European Democracies
POLI 361 Comparative Post-Communist Systems
POLI 373 International Conflict
POLI 376 International Political Economy
POLI 464 Political Economy of Development

5. Law and Justice (Choose 6)
ANTH 326 Anthropology of Law
ANTH 419 Law and Society
ECON 438/439 Economics of the Law I and II
ENVI 406 Introduction to Environmental Law
HIST 297/298 American Legal History I and II
PHIL 307 Social and Political Philosophy
PHIL 316 Philosophy of Law
POLI 321 American Constitutional Law
POLI 458 Property Rights and Privatization
SOCI 321 Criminology

Core Courses (Choose at least 3)

6. Business Policy and Management
ECON 436 Government Regulation of Business
ECON 445 Managerial Economics
ECON 435 Industrial Organization
POLI 335 Political Environment of Business
POLI 336 Politics of Regulation
PSYC 231 Industrial and Organizational Psychology

Electives (Choose up to 3)
ACCO 305 Introduction to Accounting
ECON 355 Money and Banking
ECON 370 Microeconomic Theory
ECON 375 Macroeconomic Theory
ECON 415 Human Resources, Wages, and Welfare
ECON 420 International Economics
ECON 421 International Finance
ECON 448 Corporation Finance
HIST 331 Labor in America
POLI 376 International Political Economy
POLI 458 Property Rights and Privatization
POLI 464 Political Economy of Development
7. Urban and Social Change

ANTH 344 City/Culture
ANTH 360 Modernity and Social Space
ARCH 311 Houston Architecture
ARCH 313 Sustainable Architecture
ARCH 321 Economics of the Built Environment
ARCH 346 19th- and 20th-Century Architectural History
ARCH 351 Social Issues and Architecture
ARCH 455 Housing and Urban Programs
ECON 461 Urban Economics
ECON 480 Environmental Economics
HIST 377 The Ancient City

HIST 429 Technologies of Nationalism
HART 325 Art and Architecture in the Middle East
PHIL 307 Social and Political Philosophy
SOCI 301 Social Inequality
SOCI 308 Houston: The Sociology of a City
SOCI 309 Race and Ethnic Relations
SOCI 310 Urban Sociology
SOCI 313 Demography
SOCI 411 Social Change
POLI 332 Urban Politics
POLI 438 Race and Public Policy
POLI 441 Common Property Resources