

Leiden University | Political Science
Master in Political Science: Conflict and Cooperation & International Organisation
Research Master in Political Science & Public Administration

Advanced Academic and Professional Skills

Semester 1, Block 2, 5 ECTS, Level 500, Course Code: 6444AAPS

Monday, October 31 – December 19, 2016

Lectures

October 31, 11:00-13:00, GORL 01

December 5, 11:00-13:00, STEEN E004

Workgroups

Group 1: Monday, 11:00-13:00

Group 2: Monday, 13:00-15:00

Group 3: Monday, 11:00-13:00

Rooms: See online [Timetable](#)

Instructors

Rebekah Tromble

Office: 5B07 | Office Hours by appointment
r.k.tromble@fsw.leidenuniv.nl

Michael F. Meffert

Office: 5B11 | Office Hours by appointment
m.f.meffert@fsw.leidenuniv.nl

Objectives

The aims of this course are to (1) improve students' ability to develop thoughtful, interesting, and well-designed research projects, and (2) improve students' skills in persuasively presenting the ideas behind, as well as the findings resulting from, their research.

Content

The course is divided into two parts, brought together by students' work on the core course assignment—a policy report.

Research Design and Writing

In this component of the course, students will work with their instructors and classmates to develop compelling research questions built around specific policy issues, devise sound schemes for understanding and assessing these issues, and provide policy recommendations for these issues.

Presenting

In the presentation component of the course, participants will acquire the skills required to give a talk in front of a critical audience. Each participant will give a presentation, followed by a group discussion of the contents of that presentation.

Methods of Instruction

This course will consist of traditional lectures, pre-recorded video lectures, seminars, and in-class group assignments. Pre-recorded *video lectures* will be used in weeks 3, 4, and 5. In each case, students are expected to watch the video lecture before attending the class session. The video lectures will introduce that week's main themes and will also guide students in the completion of that week's assignment. During the class meetings in these same weeks, students will engage in *in-*

class group assignments. The main function of these assignments is to provide students with adequate time and opportunity to prepare their **Policy Presentations** and **Policy Reports**.

Course Requirements

Course grades will be based on several short written assignments, the final policy paper, and final group presentation.

Requirement	Due Date (2016)	Submission	Evaluation
Policy Topic Pitch			
- Topic (and optional video)	Nov. 6, 17:00	Blackboard	Not graded
- Presentation (live or video)	Nov. 7	In-class	10%
Assignments (three components)			
- Issue description	Nov. 14, 11:00	Blackboard AND In-class	5%
- Concepts and explanatory map	Nov. 21, 11:00	Blackboard AND In-class	5%
- Evaluation table	Nov. 28, 11:00	Blackboard AND In-class	5%
Policy Presentation			
- First presentation	Dec. 12	In-class	Not graded
- Second presentation	Dec. 19	In-class	25%
Policy Report (two components)			
- Draft of individual section(s), with annotated bibliography	Dec. 9, 17:00	Blackboard	20%
- Final (combined) document	Dec. 22, 17:00	Blackboard	30%
- Self-Assessment	Dec. 22, 17:00	Blackboard	Not graded

Deadlines and Penalties

Assignment and paper deadlines are final and late submissions are not accepted. Properly documented emergencies and **in advance** requested and permitted extensions are exempt from this rule.

Class Attendance

Class attendance is mandatory. Students who miss more than one class unexcused will automatically fail the course. Properly documented emergencies and **in advance** requested and permitted absences are exempt from this rule.

If you have a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability that may impact on your ability to carry out the assigned course work, please contact the staff in the Institute of Political Science. All information and documentation of disability is confidential.

Plagiarism

All students need to be acquainted with Leiden University's rules regarding plagiarism. A paper or presentation suspected of containing plagiarism will be immediately forwarded to the Exam Committee of the Institute of Political Science. This committee will determine whether it is indeed a case of plagiarism and act accordingly (sanctions may follow). For information regarding plagiarism, please consult the following websites: <http://media.leidenuniv.nl/legacy/plagiarism.pdf>, http://wps.prenhall.com/hss_understand_plagiarism_1

Important note: Plagiarism occurs in both of the following situations:

- Quoting work from other (and outside) sources without attribution;
- Copying the work of other students when completing individual assignments.

Detailed Description of Course Requirements

Policy Topic Pitch (10%)

In Week 2 (November 7) students will try—with either a short, self-recorded video clip (played in class) or an in-class presentation—to convince members of their workgroup to form a group that will adopt and analyze their policy issue. As such, students will need to be as persuasive as possible, providing a clear and compelling case for the importance of their policy issue, as well as its suitability for the group policy report. Students are free to select (almost) any policy issue they want for the pitch. The only requirement is that the issue be relevant to political science broadly conceived. If in doubt, please consult with your course instructor.

Students may choose between submitting a self-recorded video pitch that will be played during class or giving a “live” in-class pitch. In both cases, pitches must be **NO LONGER than 2 minutes**. Pitches that run over the time limit will be disqualified. In-class pitches may incorporate visual aids (though a visual aid is not required) but must not incorporate Power Point, Prezi, or any other form of presentation software.

Although students should strive to make the strongest pitches possible in terms of both style and substance, ***pitches will be graded based on content alone***. The pitches must contain very concise statements of the following five elements:

1. A statement and brief overview of the policy issue/puzzle/topic
2. A clear expression of your research question
3. An explanation of why the issue and research question are important/urgent
4. A statement of who you propose to “represent” in the policy paper (e.g., a consortium of small and medium-sized enterprises [SMEs], a multi-national corporation, an NGO or think tank with a particular interest/agenda)
5. A statement of the policy report’s intended audience (e.g., Dutch MPs, the US State Department, the EU Commission, the World Health Organization)

Here are some *sample* policy issues:

- A- Present the results of a policy report as a specially appointed economic advisor to European Commission President Jean-Claud Juncker recommending specific policy actions regarding the European Sovereign Debt Crisis in Europe.
- B- Present as a strategist for a multinational corporation (e.g., Royal Dutch Shell) advising a shareholder’s committee on the political ramifications for establishing a subsidiary firm in Russia.
- C- Present a policy report as an environmental NGO advocate advising the United Nations on solutions to current global environmental challenges.

Submissions: All students must submit a ***short title for their pitch*** that clearly identifies the chosen policy issue via ***Blackboard by 17:00, Sunday, November 6***. Students who choose to use an (optional) video pitch must also submit the ***video clip*** via Blackboard by this deadline.

Assignments (15%)

This course is structured around active class participation and group work. For weeks 3, 4, and 5, students are required to come to class having completed the required assignment. These assignments form the basis for group work.

Issue Description (5%)

For Week 3 (November 14) students are required to come to class having prepared an “Issue Description” related to their group’s policy issue. The Issue Description identifies, defines, and elaborates the nature of the policy problem being discussed. This includes the following components:

- The background of the policy issue (the history of the issue, its causes, who is affected, past policies and their outcomes)
- The current status of the issue (the current extent and impact of the issue, who is affected, the current policy and its successes and failures)

This assignment is to be completed individually, that is, without consulting other students, and should be no more than 350 words in length. Students must submit the assignment via **Blackboard by 11:00, November 14** AND come to class with **two hard copies** (one for the instructor and one to work with in groups).

Concepts and Explanatory Map (5%)

For Week 4 (November 21) students are required to come to class having written a short text broken down into two components:

- Concepts: Identify concepts that are key to your group’s policy issue and that have multiple and competing definitions. Students are required to identify **at least two** concepts and to list their competing definitions.
- Explanatory Map: Map out the casual story underlying your group’s policy issue. This will require thinking about the causes and their effect(s) and following the example of the Explanatory Map provided in this week’s video lecture.

This assignment is to be completed individually, that is, without consulting other students, and should be no more than two pages in length (including the Explanatory Map). Students must submit the assignment via **Blackboard by 11:00, November 21** AND come to class with **two hard copies** (one for the instructor and one to work with in groups).

Evaluation Table (5%)

For Week 5 (November 28) students must come to class with a table comprising the following elements:

- Policy Options: The first column of the table must list **at least three** policy options that could be applied to problem/issue adopted by your group.
- Evaluation Criteria: The second column should offer **at least five** criteria that will be used to judge the various policy options. Each criterion should also have a proposed weighting that reflects the importance you believe it should carry during evaluation (e.g., Criterion #1, “Monetary Cost,” is worth up to 5 points, while Criterion #2, “Ease of Implementation” is worth up to 10 points).
- Points Awarded: The third column must list the number of points you suggest giving each policy option for each criterion.
- Reasoning: The final column should include very brief notes about the reasoning you used to award the points.

This assignment must be completed individually. Students must submit the assignment via **Blackboard by 11:00, November 28** AND come to class with **two hard copies** (one for the instructor and one to work with in groups).

Policy Presentation (25%)

In Weeks 7 (December 12) and 8 (December 19) students will present their policy report to the class (in their workgroup). Presentations must be no more than 12 min. in length (timing is important!) and each member of the group must speak. The objective for this assignment is to present your group’s policy issue and specific policy recommendations in a compelling and convincing manner. As such, both content and style matter.

Presentations must be structured like a policy report. As such, students should:

1. Identify a policy issue/problem
2. Provide background details about the problem and briefly explain why the issue matters
3. Describe existing policies
4. Detail policy options as well as their advantages (pros) and disadvantages (cons)
5. Provide specific policy advice with justification.

Presentations will be graded on both content and presentation style (how the content is presented). Two specific requirements need to be noted: (1) Students must imagine that they are pitching a policy report to a specific group of decision-makers, agency bureaucrats, regulators, etc. Imagine that the class is that specific audience and be sure to make this clear. (2) Students need to also imagine that they are advocating a specific position as a representative of some group or organization. Again, this needs to be made clear. You are advocating a position and are trying to get us to make certain policy decisions. Be convincing, accurate, succinct, brief, and compelling.

There are **two rounds of presentations** (first round in Week 7, December 12, and second round in Week 8, December 19). In the first round, groups present in their workgroup and receive feedback from the instructor and their peers. Students use this feedback in order to adjust, revise, and improve their presentations for the second round of presentations. Final marks for the presentation will be based on the content and style of the presentation, as well as how well the students managed to incorporate feedback into the presentation.

Policy Report (50%)

Policy Report Draft with Annotated Bibliography (20%)

Each student is required to submit a draft of the section(s) of the final policy report for which s/he is responsible, along with an annotated bibliography. This assignment must be completed individually. However, it must be clear that all sections necessary for the group's full proposal have been accounted for in the individual drafts submitted.

There is no prescribed length for the individual section(s) submitted at this time, but each student should keep the full length of the final policy report in mind. (e.g., a draft introduction for what will eventually be a 12-15 page report should not be 3 pages long. One page or less should be the aim.)

The annotated bibliography must comprise **5 sources** (journal articles, books, and/or book chapters) that relate to your group's policy issue. The objective is to find literature that has ***also tried to explain what you seek to explain***. Students must select literature published in peer-reviewed journals or books. Each bibliography "entry" should consist of 5 components: (1) full citation of the article or book; (2) a few sentences detailing the research question posed in the article/book; (3) the data and method employed to analyze the research question; (4) the author's ***main argument***, and (5) the author's main ***findings***.

Drafts with annotated bibliography must be submitted via Blackboard by ***Friday at 17:00, December 9, 2016***.

Final Policy Report (30%)

Student groups will write one joint policy report of **12-15 pages (double-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, and standard margins on A4 paper) to be submitted via Turnitin on Blackboard by 17:00 on Thursday, December 22, 2016**. Policy reports must be properly formatted (see "How to Write a Policy Report" at the end of the syllabus) and referenced (see guidelines in the American Political Science Association's Style Manual <http://www.apsanet.org/Portals/54/APSA%20Files/publications/APSASStyleManual2006.pdf>). The page limit excludes the Executive Summary and References sections of the report.

Only one student needs to submit the full report for a group. However, every student must individually submit a one-page statement that gives an overview of what s/he believes s/he contributed to the group. This statement must also be submitted by 17:00 on Thursday, December 22. **You will not receive your final course grade until this self-assessment has been submitted.**

Note for Research Masters students: The policy reports submitted by students enrolled in the Research Master program must include a data analysis. This need not be quantitative data; nor need it be original data. But the conclusions of the policy report must be supported by an original, structured, and systematic analysis of some form of quantitative or qualitative data. As such, Research Masters students may submit reports that are **up to 20 pages** in length.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1 (October 31), Joint Lecture: Understanding Research Objectives

Description: Students learn about selecting research topics, formulating sound research questions and how to pitch research ideas to peers, colleagues, and a critical audience.

Week 2 (November 7), Workgroups: Pitch Week

Description: Drawing on Week 1's content, students submit their self-recorded video pitches of their individual research topics and research questions on Blackboard and subsequently watch and rate the video pitches in their workgroup. Groups of approximately four students will be formed based upon the most convincing presentations. May the best pitch win!

Week 3 (November 14), Workgroups: Putting things in context

Description: This week students learn how to research, organize, write, and understand the differences between (1) a "background" section in a policy report, (2) an academic literature review, and (3) an annotated bibliography.

Assignment Due:

- Issue Description
 - o Watch video lecture before completing this assignment.
 - o Submit via Blackboard and bring two printed copies to class.
- See "Required Reading" just below.

Required Reading:

When reading these selections, students should identify the research question, the data and method employed to investigate the question, and the main conclusions reached. These will be ungraded but will be checked in class.

- o Walter, Barbara F. 1997. "The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement." *International Organization* 51 (3): 335–364. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2703607>
- o Pollack, Kenneth M., and Barbara F. Walter. 2015. "Escaping the Civil War Trap in the Middle East." *The Washington Quarterly* 38 (2): 29–46. Available at: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0163660X.2015.1064708>

Recommended Reading:

Examples of literature review include:

- Knopf, Jeffrey W. 2006. "Doing a Literature Review." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 39 (1): 127-132. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20451692>
- Van der Meer, Toni G.L.A., Dave Gelders, and Sabine Rotthier. 2014. "e-Democracy: Exploring the Current Stage of e-Government." *Journal of Information Policy* 4: 489-506 Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/jinfopoli.4.2014.0489>

- Kraig, Michael R. 1999. "Nuclear Deterrence in the Developing World: A Game-Theoretic Treatment." *Journal of Peace Research* 36 (2): 141-167 Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/424667>
- Gwartney-Gibbs, Patricia A., and Denise H. Lach. 1991. "Sex Differences in Attitudes toward Nuclear War." *Journal of Peace Research* 28 (2): 161-174. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/424386>.

Most annotated bibliographies can be found in books. An example in an article is:

- Boscia, Teri. 2002. "The United States' Vietnam War: A selective annotated bibliography." *Reference Services Review* 30 (2): 160-168. Available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/00907320210428714>

Week 4 (November 21), Workgroups: Conceptualization & Explanation

Description: Students learn research design fundamentals and how they apply specifically to the questions of explanation and conceptualization. This entails the transformation of concepts into variables or indicators and defining sound research concepts as well as creating explanatory maps.

Assignment Due:

- Concepts and explanatory map
 - o Watch two video lectures before completing this assignment.
 - o Submit via Blackboard and bring two printed copies to class.

Week 5 (November 28), Workgroups: Analysis and Evaluation

Description: Students learn the basics of research analysis and evaluation. This involves developing a framework for evaluating competing theories, explanations, and policy solutions.

Assignment Due:

- Evaluation Table
 - o Watch video lecture before completing this assignment.
 - o Submit via Blackboard and bring two printed copies to class.

Week 6 (December 5), Joint Lecture: Presentation Skills & Research Ethics

Description: In this week, all students attend a two-part lecture: the first on written and oral presentation skills and the second on the question of research ethics.

Assignment Due:

- Policy report drafts with annotated bibliographies, submitted via Blackboard by **17:00 on Friday, December 9.**

Week 7 (December 12), Workgroups: In-class presentation (round 1)

Description: In their workgroups, students present, as a group, their policy reports to the class and receive feedback from instructors and peers.

Week 8 (December 19), Workgroups: In-class presentation (round 2)

Description: In groups, students present a revised and final version of their policy presentation.

Assignment Due:

- (One) final joint policy report and individual self-assessments, submitted via **Blackboard by 17:00 on Thursday, December 22.**

How to Write a Policy Report

Note: Much of the following is derived (copied) from:

http://www.rhsupplies.org/fileadmin/user_upload/toolkit/B_Advocacy_for_RHS/Guidelines_for_Writing_a_Policy_Brief.pdf

See also:

- How to Write a Policy Report:
http://www.idrc.ca/EN/Resources/Tools_and_Training/Documents/how-to-write-a-policy-brief.pdf
- The Policy Brief: Instructions:
http://sobek.colorado.edu/~salucci/teaching/teaching_portfolio/assets/Policy_Brief_instructions.pdf

Unlike a term/research paper, a policy report requires the presentation of succinct considerations of policy options for a specific audience (e.g., government officials, IO technocrats, shareholders ...). The report must be thorough but concise because the members of the audience have limited time and focus. Academics might pour over theoretical details and long literature reviews, but the audience of the policy report needs a succinct, compelling, easy-to-understand and digest consideration of a specific policy issue or puzzle. The only way to learn how to write a policy report is to read a lot of them. These think tanks all issue policy reports (as well as other types of policy documents).

- Bruegel Institute, <http://www.bruegel.org/>
- Clingendael Institute, <http://www.clingendael.nl/>
- SWP, <http://www.swp-berlin.org/>
- European Policy Centre, <http://www.epc.eu/>

And here is a **List of EU think tanks in Europe**, <http://www.eu.thinktankdirectory.org/>

Components of a Policy Report

There is no “one way” to write a policy report. This becomes apparent when you look at the reports published by the think tanks listed above. However, for this assignment it is prudent to include the following specific components.

1. Executive Summary

Like an abstract or overview in an academic paper. Approximately 200 words. It appears on the cover page and is separate from the main text. The executive summary provides a full overview of your policy report. Try to stress: (1) the issue/puzzle, (2) limits of existing options, (3) your specific recommendation(s), and (4) the innovation of these recommendations.

Important: Because you do not write a real policy report, please indicate in an additional sentence (1) who you are representing and (2) who your intended audience is.**

2. Introduction

The introduction should stimulate the interest of the reader. The introduction states very clearly the specific policy issue or puzzle you will address. Try to phrase the topic as a question or puzzle that can be answered or solved. This is similar to a research question, but with a specific policy focus. Consider the “who cares” questions—i.e., make it clear why the audience should care about your issue.

- **What role** can the {any political, social, religious organization of your choice} play in enhancing the {political/economic/social} status of {any disadvantaged group of your choice}?
- **Should** {any organization/government of your choice} provide humanitarian assistance

- to people in the {any war zone/natural disaster situation of your choice}?
- **How should** {any country or region of your choice} respond to the investment interest of {any multinational corporation or financial institution of your choice}?
 - **Who should** take the responsibility for {fixing any development problem of your choice}?
 - **When should** {any country/organization of your choice} decide to intervene in {any development problem/crisis of your choice}?

3. Background

This section provides background information related to your policy issue / puzzle. Include only the essential facts that your audience needs to know in order to understand the context. Assume that you have been hired to filter through the reams of information on behalf of a very busy client (your audience). Be clear, succinct, precise, and comprehensive.

4. Overview of existing policies

This summarizes what has been done about the problem, puzzle, issue thus far. There might be overlap between 3 and 4.

5. Statement of your position on the issue / your organization's position

This section should provide a short (just a few sentences) overview of your specific position on the issue.

6. Overview of policy options

Provides an overview of the possible policy options for solving / addressing your issue. Which actions can be taken? What are their advantages and disadvantages? What are the pros and cons of the different policy options? This listing of pros and cons can be formatted as a table or bullet points. Remember, the idea is clarity and brevity.

7. Your policy recommendation(s)

After listing the pros and cons, you will need to recommend one option / combination of options that is best. In some instances (depending on your employer / audience) this might require going against your own personal preferences. This is the nature of the job!