PADP 8680: Advanced Policy Analysis
Assignment notes for Initial Sketch of Project Idea
(2-3 pages, double-spaced)
Submit on course @eLearning page on January 28th by 6:30pm

For this assignment you will briefly and succinctly describe the research project you wish to undertake as part of the course, from one of the following three options. For any option, you will choose a hypothetical audience for this report (e.g. a lawmaker, agency head, executive director of an advocacy organization) so that your analytic report can also be tailored to the specific practical and political implications of the policy tool and its use.

Option 1: Choose a particular policy tool and write a detailed research report about what is known regarding the policy tool's development, implementation, and outcomes in a given area of public policy (social policy, environmental policy, economic policy, etc.). You will choose a specific area of public policy because the practicalities and politics of a policy tool vary widely across policy domains. The feasibility, efficiency, and perceived fairness of a voucher in housing policy is distinct from, for example, the use of a voucher in K-12 education policy. While your analysis will inevitably draw from other lessons learned in other areas of public policy, I expect you to develop a thorough knowledge and understanding of your chosen policy tool specific to your policy domain of choice.

Option 2: Design and propose a policy intervention that address a current public policy problem. For this opt2ion, you will write a proposal that describes how a given policy tool could be used to address a current public policy program. You will identify a specific tool and describe how the tool will address the problem at hand. This includes the nature and cause(s) of the problem, the goal(s) of the proposed policy tool, relevant institutional and political constraints, modifications and design features to fit the specific implementation context, and the logic of how your policy tool will address the problem. As an example, please refer to this proposal from Resources For The Future, an NGO that specializes in environmental economics, the describes the design of community flood insurance:
http://www.rff.org/research/publications/proposed-design-community-flood-insurance

Option 3: Student-initiated project that serves your academic or career aims. I am open to suggestions from you about other kinds of projects that might better serve your needs. Ideas include: (a) a current project underway that might be adapted to fit the content and aims of this course; (b) an academic research project related to policy analysis (e.g., intended for an academic journal or conference); or (c) a research grant proposal that relates to the content of the course.

If you choose Option 1 or Option 2, your initial sketch of your project idea should contain:

1. The policy issue you are examining and the specific policy tool you will analyze. Tell the reader not only the topic of your report, but also the general problem on which you fill focus. Indicate one or more key questions that will motivate your project. These questions

will evolve as you develop your report, but doing your best to identify specific questions will help focus your work going forward.

2. Rationale for the tool you have chosen. As best you are able (given the fact that we will cover this material as the course unfolds), provide an argument for why the tool you have chose is [option 1] used to address a given problem or [option 2] will address the problem that you have identified.

3. What is your case (or cases), and what type of case is it? Representative of the tool at large? Uniquely designed and/or implemented within the policy sector? A rare application of the tool in this policy sector (e.g., vouchers are common in education and housing, but perhaps rare in science and technology policy?).

4. Describe what groundwork (if any) you have already done in this area.
   a. Literature that you know well or are at least familiar with: What do these literatures say about your policy problem and/or tool?
   b. Previous work in this area: Do you have previous experience working in the area that you are examining? Applied experience actually working on or with the policy tool?
   c. Other groundwork: What other sources give you insight into the problem at hand?

5. Puzzles and issues yet to resolve. What are your biggest questions at this stage about how to do this project? What puzzles you the most about how to create a viable report?

If you are doing an Option 3 project, the contents of your sketch will vary, depending on the nature of the project. But, at a minimum, you will need to explain what the project focus is, what aspects of policy analysis you will explore, how you will carry it out, and what resources you will be drawing on to complete the project. It will also help to briefly discuss what you already know about the project topic, and how you know it.