**Policy Paper Project Description**

Government

Due date 5/29

20% of final grade (out of 100 points)

Policy paper Description[[1]](#footnote-1)

* 2 paragraphs defining the problem be sure to say what criteria you are using (at least 5 parenthetical citations and one graph/chart)
* 3 paragraphs constructing alternatives (Policy options) and predicting outcomes. At least 1 parenthetical citation per paragraph
* 1 paragraph confronting tradeoffs (opportunity cost) and decide on the appropriate option
* Service learning: letter to Politician, petition or other idea to fix

Due dates

* 5/18: Two paragraph description of problem and 5 sources (10 points)
* 5/20 Three paragraph describing alternatives (Policy options) (10 points)
* 5/27 Draft for Peer review
* 5/29 Final Paper due (80 points)
* 6/1 Service learning and reflection due

Requirements

* Title page
* MLA format: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>
* At least six paragraphs and 750 words (about 3 pages)
* Works cited page with at least 5 sources
* 8 parenthetical citations using MLA
* 1 graph or chart showing your problem

**Where do I start?**

**Defining the problem**

* Think of deficit and excess

*There are too many homeless people in the United States*

*There are too many plastic bags in the Pacific Ocean*

* Be Objective
* Quantify if possible
  + *There are 140,000 homeless people in the United States*
* What are your geographic limits of study?
* *World*
* *Country*
* *State*
* *County*
* *District*
* *City*
* *Ecosystem*
* What entity(ies) can solve the problem?
* Federal government
* State government
* Local government
* Citizen action (initiative)
* Interest groups

**Where can I find good evidence?**

* Pew Research: <http://www.pewresearch.org>
* New York Times: <http://www.nytimes.com/>
* Bureau of labor statistics: <http://www.bls.gov>
* US Census: <http://www.census.gov>
* Brookings institution: <http://www.brookings.edu>
* Center for American Progress (liberal): <https://www.americanprogress.org>
* Heritage Foundation (Conservative): <http://www.heritage.org>
* CATO Institute (libertarian): <http://www.cato.org>
* Rand Corporation: <http://www.rand.org>
* Open Government: <https://www.data.gov/open-gov/>

**Select the Criteria:**

*What are examples of criteria?*

1. Efficiency, Cost-benefit analysis
2. Equality, equity, fairness, Justice
3. Freedom, Community and other abstract values

**Construct alternatives (Policy options)**

1. Doing nothing is always an option but what is the opportunity cost of doing nothing. This is your first option.
2. What options are “off the table”
   * Legality
   * Politically acceptable
   * What could go wrong? Think about the free rider problem, externalities and perverse incentives
3. Think about Economics

* Think about externalities and how taxes and regulations work
* Think about the free riders and public goods
* Think about incentives and perverse incentives
* Think about the principle agent problem

1. Look for similar problems that have been solved. Ex How did the government reduce smoking rates?
2. What can Government do?

* Tax: Taxes can go up or down
* Subsidies and grants
* Regulate
* Distribute information
* Change rights

1. Adapted from A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis (Bardach) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)