NRC 381: Policy Analysis Case Study

1. Writing and oral presentations are essential components of the learning process and your professional performance when you leave UK. The purpose of the Policy Analysis Case Study is to assign you to a natural resource policy topic which you will research, analyze the consequences, and present recommendations for improvements. This will involve both written activities and an oral presentation in class.

2. The teams and topics are:

- Mr. Adams and Mr. Bradley: Wildlife Reintroduction in Kentucky
- Ms. Banks, Mr. Leffew and Ms. Gulley: National Wildlife Refuge System
- Ms. Cooke and Mr. A. Jones: Kentucky Agricultural Water Quality Program
- Mr. Baggerman and Mr. Wayne: KY Fish and Wildlife Education Program
- Ms. Steffe: Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Ms. E. Jones and Ms. Henke: Prescribed Fire on Public Lands
- Ms. Sheffel and Mr. Kuhlman: Invasive Species Management Program
- Ms. Galbraith and Ms. Quire: Hemlock Woolly Adelgid
- Ms. Belcher and Ms. Chambers: Environmental Justice
- Mr. Wedeking and Mr. White: Wetland Reserve Program
- Messrs. Creager, Ransom & Hull: Superfund in Kentucky

4. The Policy Analysis Case Study will consist of a sequenced set of research assignments involving background on the issue, agency implementation, analysis of impacts and consequences, recommendations for alternatives or changes. These assignments will be submitted in the form of a memorandum from the students to Dr. Infanger. The final product of the research will be a final memo and an oral presentation in class on April 18, 24, or 26. The sequence of presentations will be determined by lottery or volunteering.

5. There are 325 points possible for the Policy Analysis Case Study and each partner receives the same grade for each assigned element:

- Research Memo #1: Issue Background and Situation (25 points)
- Research Memo #2: Primary and Secondary Information (35 points)
- Research Memo #3: Analysis of Impacts and Consequences (50 points)
- Research Memo #4: Conclusions and Recommendations (25 points)
- Research Memo #5: Final draft memo and PPT (25 points)
- Oral Presentation (85 points)
- Collaborative Evaluation of Presentations (15 points)
- Revised Memorandum and PPT (65) (due May 2)

In grading each research memorandum the following criteria will be applied:

- Careful and complete completion of the assigned task;
- Evidence of original research and creative thought;
- Application of appropriate concepts and logical organization;
- Appropriate written format, style, and mechanics.

In grading the oral presentation, the following criteria will be applied:
--Clear articulation of the policy topic and historical evolution;
--Logical and careful analysis of the consequences and impacts of the policy topic;
--Sensible evaluation of the performance based on appropriate evidence and clear criteria;
--Thoughtful recommendations based on the analysis;
--Oral and visual presentation skill and ability to respond to questions.

The oral presentations will be evaluated by classmates, an outside panel, and Dr. Infanger. The final points will be a weighted average of these scores (.20 + .40 + .40 = 1.00).

6. Details for each of the research memoranda are:

NRC 381 – Research Memorandum #1 (25 points)

You are now working on the “policy analysis” portion of NRC 381. The first step in your background research is to summarize the basic information about your case study issue or policy and the agency or department that is in analyzing your issue/topic in the Case Study assignment, you need to put things into perspective by explaining the basic background and evolution for your issue/topic. Your task in this assignment is to prepare a “briefing memo” that will tell your reader a story about your policy issue/topic. What is the essential information your reader needs to understand in order to have a little “background” on the issue/topic so they can appreciate why it is important enough to be the focus of your policy analysis? Thus, you will need to address questions such as:

(1) What is your natural resource policy issue and why is it important?
(2) What is the historical setting and evolution for your topic?
(3) What are the important objectives or goals in your particular issue/topic and have they changed over time; and
(4) What agency, department, or commission is involved in implementing a program or formulating policy? (Give a little background on agency mission, budget, organization, etc.).

You are developing a “briefing memo”. In this memo you are telling your reader a story about your Case Study topic. What is the essential information your reader needs to know to have a minimal understanding of the issue and the agency’s role? The language of the memo is conversational. This is not a term paper or journal article so there are no citations, no footnotes. If you refer to a publication or web site, just discuss it and include the title or URL in the paragraph. Remember: You are distilling essential information from your research.

Your memo should be directed to “Dr. Infanger.” You should assume I know very little about your topic. Maybe I am a visiting professor from Germany, so you are “briefing me” about this situation. What is it that I need to know about this agency and topic?

To simulate the real world, create an environmental consulting firm and develop some letterhead for the stationery you use for each Research Memorandum. Your firm will have a name, address, and logo.

Assignment instructions:

1. Of course this is a partnership product – partner’s names appear on a single memo. Your memo is a briefing document that will bring your reader up-to-speed about the issue/policy and the agency involved in your Case Study topic. This will entail some research and investigation. Your writing will necessarily be concise and focused since you have a length limit on your memo.
2. All research assignments are to be the product of your own thinking and preparation. Each partner gets the same numerical grade for this assignment. Your memorandum is to be directed to Dr. Infanger, and must be professionally composed on the letterhead of your simulated consulting business. Sign or initial your memo. For this assignment you are limited to one page, single-spaced, twelve point font.

3. **This assignment is worth 25 points and is due Thursday, April 3.**

4. If you want to send me a rough draft of your memo before the due date, I will be happy to read & respond if I am in the office and have enough time. But you can’t be sending me something Thursday morning that is due Thursday at 11:00. As you know, I have an 8:00 class! But I’ll try to be helpful, if I can.

**NRC 381 – Research Memorandum #2 (35 points)**

The second stage in your briefing memo is to prepare a summary of the information available. You will have to research and review both primary information and secondary information sources from the internet.

Your primary information may include a personal visit or site inspection or tour. You should search for agency reports or program enrollment, monitoring, or evaluation reports which contain “raw data” for your analysis. But you must conduct at least two personal interviews with someone connected to your issue and report on this in your memo. This is greatly enhance your research and your credibility. One person should be agency person and one person should be a participant or party affected by the policy/program. For example, if your topic was the Conservation Reserve Program, I would want you to interview a USDA agency bureaucrat (i.e., someone from the Farm Service Agency or the NRCS) and a program participant (i.e., a landowner actually enrolled in the CRP). These do not have to be face-to-face interviews. Use the telephone, track down a good contact, and interview them. Caution: Plan your interview questions so you don’t waste their time. Tell them you are doing some required research for a class a UK and need some primary information from someone close to the issue-at-hand.

Your secondary information may come from a variety of sources, many of which will be on WWW. Search for news articles or other media stories (e.g., NPR radio programs?). Definitely search for other evaluation literature. Use GOOGLE SCHOLAR to search for academic articles. Search out the websites of special interest groups and document their positions, opinions, recommendations (but don’t forget ‘bias’).

Again, the language of the memo is conversational. This is not a term paper or journal article so there are no citations, no footnotes. If you refer to a publication or web site, just discuss it and include the title or URL in the paragraph. Remember: You are distilling essential information from your research. As is the case will all your research memoranda, direct your memo to to “Dr. Infanger” assuming I know very little about your topic so you are “briefing me” about this situation. What is it that I need to know about this natural resource issue?

**Assignment instructions:**

1. Of course this is a partnership product – partner’s names appear on a single memo. Your memo is a briefing document that will bring your reader up-to-speed about the issue you’re working on
and the evolution of that issue. This will entail some research and investigation. Your writing will necessarily be concise and focused since you have a length limit on your memo.

2. Based on the comments you received on Research Memo #1, you should distill, condense, reduce your issue background and agency information to one-half page. This will be your opening paragraph of this second-stage version of your memo. Your summary of primary and secondary information should not take more than 1.5 pages.

2. All research assignments are to be the product of your own thinking and preparation. Each partner gets the same numerical grade for this assignment. Your memorandum is to be directed to ‘Dr. Infanger’, and must be professionally composed on the letterhead of your simulated consulting business. Sign or initial your memo. For this assignment you are limited to two pages, single-spaced, twelve point font.

3. This assignment is worth 35 points and is due Tuesday, April 4.

4. If you want to send me a rough draft of your memo before the due date, I will be happy to read & respond if I am in the office and have enough time. But you can’t be sending me something Thursday morning that is due Thursday at 11:00. As you know, I have an 8:00 class! But I’ll try to be helpful, if I can.