HARVARD KENNEDY SCHOOL
DEV-250 Second Year Policy Analysis Seminar
Course Syllabus for 2023-2024

Thursdays, 3pm-4:15 pm

This syllabus is subject to change. A final version of the syllabus will be posted by the first day of class.

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Note: Section assignments for **DEV-250** will be given to you at the beginning of the semester, based on your submissions on initial topic selection**.**

1. Course Description

The **DEV-250 "Second Year Policy Analysis,"** the capstone product of the MPA/ID program, is a course designed to help you further develop your professional skills as a development practitioner and to help you think about how theory and evidence can be used for policy design and implementation.

The main output is the SYPA report itself, which calls for the application of the theoretical and empirical techniques acquired in other courses (e.g. microeconomics, macroeconomics, management, politics, etc.) to an actual development problem. The report is written for a specific client (a government, agency, NGO, etc.) and involves the diagnosis of a problem, the formulation of a policy proposal, the assessment of political support and the development of a feasible implementation plan. This requires that you identify an issue or challenge, develop the conceptual and empirical basis for recommended action, and then present your analysis and recommendations in a written document.

The *process* of analysis itself, as well as the effective communication of the analysis to others, is an important part of the skill-building process (and your grade). Thus, in addition to the final product, you will be required to:

- Submit intermediate products throughout the process designed to further the analysis and gain feedback from others
- Effectively communicate your results through oral presentations and a self-standing "policy brief" or equivalent product

Clients: While the report must be written for a real client, you are not required to have an actual relationship with them. This is for two reasons: (1) not all clients on truly interesting development questions will be available and interested; and (2) clients' interests may not be aligned with the primary purpose of the SYPA, which is to define a problem and use techniques from the overall MPA/ID Program. Having a real relationship with your client is fine provided that this does not lead to a product that is inconsistent with the SYPA goals.

Resources: Several resources are available to help you develop your SYPA report:

- The *DEV-250Y seminar* will allow you to interact with section leaders and other MPA/ID students with similar interests. You will be assigned to one of three sections based on your likely SYPA topic, which you will provide immediately prior to the beginning of the semester. Section meetings are designed to coach you through the steps of preparing the SYPA and to develop your professional skills as a policy adviser. Section leaders advise individual students about both the substance and process of the SYPA. Support and insights from fellow MPA/ID classmates are especially important and are formally incorporated into the process.

- Each student will also have a faculty adviser, drawn from the HKS faculty, who has specialized expertise in at least some of the issues associated with his or her SYPA.[1] The most helpful advisers are those with enough interest in you and/or your project to actively assist you in developing a valuable SYPA. We strongly encourage you to discuss your topic with faculty members who might be interested in serving as an adviser as soon as possible. If you are still considering several possibilities, consult potential advisers about ways to define a topic. By **Thursday, September 21, 2023 (tbc)**, every student must have found an adviser. (This is an HKS-wide deadline, since advisers will be allocated for both MPAIDs and MPPs.) Those who have not done so will be assigned one as part of a school-wide process, but it is far better to find a good fit on your own than to be assigned.

Students should note that it is their responsibility to meet regularly with their section

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[1] In rare circumstances, faculty members from other schools can be recruited to be advisers, but permission to use non-HKS-affiliated faculty is required from your section leader: it is given *only* if the faculty member indicates a sufficient interest in the SYPA topic to volunteer their services.

leader and adviser. In the fall semester, the key output is the SYPA outline. Adviser confirmation to the section leaders are required on these outlines, as they constitute a contract between the student, the adviser and the section leader.

The first full SYPA draft is due at the beginning of the spring semester. The rest of the spring semester is devoted to revisions, making oral presentations, submitting a final SYPA and preparing a policy brief.

2. Objectives of the SYPA Experience

The SYPA experience provides an environment for building and expanding a number of critical, professional competencies, including:

- Identifying and conceptualizing an important development problem;
- Interpreting how a problem is related to potential processes of change;
- Applying technical approaches to analyze these challenges, using tools from economics, political analysis and diagnostic approaches to implementation;
- Using effective empirical techniques—quantitative and/or qualitative;
- Assessing the political supportability and authorizing environment for policy alternatives;
- Preparing practical recommendations for action by key decision-makers;
- Developing effective communication through both written work and oral presentations;
- Providing constructive feedback to colleagues on all of the above.

The combination of seminars, relationships with the adviser and the section leader, and interactions with other students, form the crux of the SYPA experience and present you with an opportunity to build these competencies.

For most, the SYPA will be an unfamiliar experience. Note that the SYPA is:

- **Not a slightly longer term paper**. Students who try to do it during a few intense weeks in February always find that they have misjudged the quantity of work. They produce an inferior product and are at a high risk of failing.
- **Not a research report**. Students who have modeled their SYPA on research articles have also been disappointed in their final grade. While strong research is a necessary *input*, the SYPA is essentially concerned with *using* the research findings for practical policy recommendations.
- **Not just a methodological exercise**. Students who carry out elaborate technical analyses are sometimes surprised to find that they need to deal with the practical implications of messy policy situations involving stakeholders with diverse and conflicting interests.

What, then, is the SYPA? The SYPA **is an analysis in which you frame a development problem conceptually, use analytic tools to generate a better**

understanding of the problem and of the options available for dealing with it, and provide recommendations and implementation advice tailored to the needs of decision-makers. Good SYPAs provide *conceptual, analytic, and empirical support* for the recommended actions, as well as clear analysis on how the problem (and your recommendations) relate to drivers of change and interact with political processes. Good SYPAs provide an assessment of implementation capacity and give a realistic framework for the implementation of the recommendations.

The SYPA is designed to be a contribution to general knowledge, in addition to providing advice to a policy maker. At the end of the process it will be made publicly available, online, via the HKS library system.

Students can work either as individuals or as pairs. If you work as a pair you will both receive the same grade (unless there are large differences in the participation part of the grade).

3. Enrollment

All second-year students in the MPA/ID Program must enroll in DEV-250. The course is worth 6 credits. Successful completion of the SYPA is a prerequisite for graduation from the MPA/ID Program. This course is restricted to MPA/ID students.

4. Course Design

There will be three sections of DEV-250. We will try to group students with similar interests as well as to balance the size of the sections.

The course is structured to take students through a sequence of intermediate steps for policy analysis, including:
- defining a policy question
- literature review and conceptualization
- alternative empirical strategies
- political analysis
- analysis of implementation
- making effective presentations
- targeting policy briefs to alternative stakeholder narratives

The meetings of DEV-250 will take several forms:

- **Plenary class meetings**. A small number of classes will bring together the entire MPA/ID second year class to introduce and discuss a topic.

- **Section meetings**. Section meetings will be used to take you through the various phases of the work, from initial problem definition to the policy brief, using a mixture of small group work, presentations, discussions and feedback. Giving feedback to others is an important professional skill, and this will be integrated into the course in the section meetings.

- **Individual meetings with section leaders and advisers**. You should work with your section leader and your adviser to clarify your topic, develop strategies for collecting and analyzing data, and examine the implications of your analyses and recommendations. You bear responsibility for arranging meetings.

The course is designed to take students through the various components of preparing and delivering a professional policy paper. However, there may also be somewhat more fluidity than a standard course in order to accommodate periods of intensive presentation, group work, and faculty travel.

Within each section, students will often be organized into smaller groups—typically 3-5 people—working on closely related themes. This will allow interactions within these groups, including informal presentations and feedback. Learning how to give critical, constructive feedback (in a safe environment) is a valuable professional skill.

5. Human subjects

If a SYPA involves research or use of data involving human subjects, this needs to be assessed and approved by Harvard's Committee on Human Subjects (CUHS) **before** the research is undertaken. Screening for whether your work involves human subjects will be done early in the fall semester and managed by section leaders. Expert interviews do not count as human subjects but still require approval by section leaders of an oral consent form. Anders Jensen is the point person for human subjects for the course.

6. Deadlines

The SYPA is organized around six deadlines. These deadlines are fixed, so do allow enough time to complete all assignments:

DATE	DELIVERABLE
Sunday, August 27, 2023	Initial topic selection
Thursday, September 21, 2023	Submission of adviser preference
Monday, November 13, 2023	SYPA outline
Sunday, January 28, 2024	First draft of SYPA
Monday, March 11, 2024	Final draft of SYPA
Sunday, April 7, 2024	Policy brief

- **Topic selection:** you will provide an initial description of your topic, in one or two paragraphs in a Qualtrics survey. Your assignment to a DEV-250 section will be based on this. While few students have a fully specified topic at this point, the overwhelming majority of past students have written SYPAs on some aspect of the initially identified topic. Reallocations between sections may occur as topics evolve, subject to keeping roughly equal section sizes.

- **Adviser selection:** this is the date when all advisers are assigned. This is a school-wide process that goes beyond MPA/IDs—we strongly encourage you to meet with advisers early to get a good match.

- **SYPA outline:** this is essentially a contract between you, your adviser and your section leader, covering the substance of your SYPA. It should include the conceptualization of the policy or institutional reform problem, your initial literature review, your methodology and your planned analysis of your SYPA. It may be necessary to redraft the outline before all parties concur in its design, but it is vital that this agreement be completed before the end of the semester so that you can work on an agreed plan during the winter break. Advisers must sign off on the outline, either literally or by email.

- **First SYPA draft:** this is the basis for (a) making a presentation to the members of your section and (b) getting feedback from your adviser and section leader. The better developed your first draft, the higher the quality of feedback you will get from both those sources. We *strongly* recommend that you prepare a first draft that is a complete product.

- **Final SYPA:** due **March 11, 2024**, immediately after the start of the Spring Break (you are free to turn it in earlier). This date is intended to keep your Spring Break free for other activities while offering you the first weekend of the break to apply last minute finishing touches to your work if needed.

- **Policy Brief:** this is a self-standing product, in which you will write a sharp, four page brief that is both positioned strategically to interact with the positions of the various stakeholders, and is highly accessible and engaging. You may choose different vehicles, such as a website, in discussion with your Section Leader.

The way to get the most from this process is to take these deadlines seriously, in substance and timing, so you do not have to play "catch up" just to survive. **Getting behind is the most common problem for students working on SYPAs**. It is easier to work on immediate course demands than to work on the intermediate products in the fall semester. It is critical to define a feasible topic as soon as possible so you can make realistic plans.

In addition to these deadlines that relate to the substance of your SYPA, **all** students will need to prepare a submission to section leaders for Human Subjects Review, by **October 12, 2023**. Section leaders will determine whether you have human subject issues. If your research does not involve human subjects, the process ends there. If it does involve human subjects, then you will need to make a formal submission to Harvard's Committee on the Use of Human Subjects in Research (CUHS). Clearance by CUHS is required before undertaking any research involving human subjects. You will also be required to have completed the human subjects training and to have received a CITI (or equivalent) certification. If you anticipate human subjects issues, it is recommended you start discussing these earlier than this deadline.

Major assignments should be turned in electronically by midnight on the due date (unless otherwise indicated in the syllabus or your section leader). Other section assignments are due electronically at midnight the day before the section. Late submissions will affect your grade. The final SYPA will also be submitted electronically, with Section Leaders and Advisers letting students know if they also need a hard copy.

7. Grading

DEV-250 is worth 6 credits and will be graded on the usual HKS grade distribution. **Writing an acceptable SYPA (B- or better) is a pre-requisite for graduation.** Grades will be based on the quality of your final SYPA, as jointly assessed by your adviser and section leader, and on your submissions and presentations in the preparation of the SYPA, participation in classes and section meetings, and the policy brief. The grading breakdown is as follows:

Assignment	Percentage of course grade
Final SYPA:	50%
SYPA Outline:	15%
Draft SYPA:	15%
Policy brief:	10%
Class Participation/Assignments:	10%

The grades for the final SYPA and policy brief will be based exclusively on the written products. Grades for the SYPA outline and the draft SYPA will be based both on these written products and class presentations.

The class participation element will be based on the quality of your contribution to class discussions, and completion of the other intermediate assignments.

Late SYPAs (those turned in after the March 11th deadline) will be automatically penalized two grades (e.g., from B+ to B-).

Final papers that your adviser and section leader consider unacceptable (below B-) will be returned for further revision and such revised SYPAs cannot receive a final grade higher than B.

8. Joint degree students

The requirements, timing and grading for joint degree students will be the same as for other students, with two qualifications:
- Students undertaking a joint HKS/HBS degree will have an HBS adviser as well as an HKS adviser.
- Students at other schools may not be able to join class sessions in the Spring Semester, depending on their location. All deadlines for written assignments remain the same and we will expect you to make a presentation by video conference (whether or not the rest of the class is on campus.). We encourage you to make special efforts to stay in touch with section leaders and advisers throughout this semester.

9. Course Policies

Please take into consideration the course policies noted below. Students should reach out to their section leaders with any questions regarding these policies.

- **Academic Integrity:** Students are always welcome to work together and discuss class materials, course concepts, and assignments to help gain a better understanding of the materials. However, any assignment submitted for this course is presumed to be your own original work (or that of a student pair if applicable). If and when you use words or ideas written by others, please make sure to cite these appropriately, and to indicate other students with whom you have collaborated. More information about Harvard's policies on academic integrity may be found in the Student Handbook and by referring to the [HKS Academic Code](#).

- **Generative AI for Coursework:** You are encouraged to spend some of your time at HKS learning to use Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) to work more productively and learn more effectively. While doing so, you should ensure you are following these guidelines from the HKS Committee on Generative AI, listed below.
    - It is generally acceptable to use generative AI for finding information and for solidifying your knowledge of the course content. For instance, it is fine to use AI-powered web search and to have "conversations" with tools like ChatGPT to help you explore ideas, refine your thinking, identify examples, and better understand the course material. However, unless otherwise specified, it is a violation of the HKS Academic Code to incorporate into your coursework text produced predominantly by generative AI — similar to copying from a book or article. For example, it would be inappropriate to simply rewrite a draft generated by AI.
    - Generative AI can produce false or misleading information. You are ultimately responsible for the accuracy of any work you submit.
    - Given the range of learning goals at HKS, individual instructors may create course-specific policies that differ from these general guidelines. If you have any doubt about whether a specific use of generative AI is permitted for an assignment or course, you should discuss it with your instructor prior to using it.

10. Accessibility & Accommodations for Student Learning

Harvard University values inclusive excellence and providing equal educational opportunities for all students. Our goal is to remove barriers for disabled students related to inaccessible elements of instruction or design in this course. If reasonable accommodations are necessary to provide access, please contact the local disability coordinator, Melissa Wojciechowski St. John (melissa_wojciechowski@hks.harvard.edu). She is the [Senior Director of Student Services](#) in the HKS Office of Student Services. Accommodations do not alter fundamental requirements of the course and are not retroactive. Students should request accommodations as early as possible, since they may take time to implement. Students should notify Melissa at any time during the semester if adjustments to their communicated accommodation plan are needed.

DETAILED CLASS SCHEDULE
(While deadlines are fixed, specific meeting schedules may vary by section, to accommodate travel, group composition etc.)

Fall Semester schedule

Date	Class Type	Description	Deliverable Due
8/27/2023 (Sunday)			**DEADLINE: INITIAL TOPIC SELECTION**
Thurs, 8/31/2023	Section Meeting	*Sharing and exploration of Initial Problem Selection:* Students will present their initial ideas and provide feedback to others.	Come to class ready to discuss your initial ideas!
Thurs, 9/7/2023	Section Meeting	*Reviewing a SYPA.* We will deconstruct a previous SYPA as a group in relation to the actual grading criteria. Continuation of workouts on initial ideas	Come to class having read the assigned SYPA and filled out your grading sheet.
All Sections – Thurs, 9/14/2023	**Plenary – Wexner 436**	*What is evidence?* This session will discuss how to think about empirical investigation of your policy question, including where complete and decisive evidence is unavailable. It will include quantitative as well as qualitative evidence, and advise on other HKS resources. A visitor from Harvard's Committee on the Use of Human Subjects will explain their review process.	

Fall Semester schedule (continued)

Date	Class Type	Description	Deliverable Due
9/21/2023		This is to be submitted through HKS-wide system (preferably with a mutually agreed deal).	**DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF ADVISOR PREFERENCES**
Thurs, 9/21/2023	Section Meeting	*Conceptualization and existing evidence:* Students will work in small thematic groups (3-5 students), on two tasks (a) initial literature review—that may be partly collective to the extent issues overlap and (b) presentations in small groups on the conceptualization of their SYPA.	Bring your presentation and get ready to discuss!
Thurs, 9/28/2023	Section Meeting	*Empirical Strategy:* Students will present 2-4 slides discussing the type of data that they expect to use (both quantitative and qualitative) and empirical strategy for the data.	Bring your presentation and get ready to discuss!
Thurs, 10/5/2023	Section Meeting	*Bringing political analysis into your SYPA:* Students will bring to class 2-4 slides to present their initial assessment of political issues (large or local) and how they propose to tackle these, for presentation and constructive discussion.	Bring your presentation and get ready to discuss!
10/12/2023		All students must submit their proposal using the standard form to Section Leaders, who will resolve non-human subjects cases and decide if your project is categorized as human subjects research. All students with research involving human subjects will submit to CUHS using the on-line portal and must have completed CITI training.	**DEADLINE FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS SUBMISSION**
Thurs, 10/12/2023	Section Meeting	*Bringing analysis of administrative issues into your SYPA:* Students will bring to class 2-4 slides to present their initial assessment of administrative and other implementation issues and how they propose to tackle these, for presentation and constructive discussion.	Bring your presentation and get ready to discuss!

Fall Semester schedule (continued)

Date	Class Type	Description	Deliverable Due
All Sections - Thurs, 10/19/2023	**Plenary – Wexner 436**	*Presentation on making effective presentations.*	
Thurs, 10/26/2023	Section Meeting	*Presentation in section of hypothesis and challenges in preparation:* A higher stakes presentation, with each student or student pair presenting the case for their policy question, initial hypotheses and approach to their client. It will be in full section, with PowerPoint or equivalent, and role play, and will be over up to three weeks, to allow space for all to present.	Bring your presentation to present + each student will be required to provide written feedback to one assigned process partner.
Thurs, 11/2/2023	Section Meeting	*Presentation in section of hypothesis and challenges in preparation, cont'd*	
Thurs, 11/9/2023	Section Meeting	*Presentation in section of hypothesis and challenges in preparation, cont'd*	
11/13/2023 (Monday)		The SYPA must be agreed on with your advisor and section leader before the end of the semester.	**DEADLINE - SYPA OUTLINE DUE**
Thurs, 11/16/2023	Section Meeting	*Assessing policy alternatives*	
11/23/2023	*No class: Thanksgiving Break*		
Thurs, 11/30/2023	Section Meeting	*Reflection and review of work over the winter break for delivery of first draft!*	

Spring Semester schedule

Date	Class Type	Description	Deliverable Due
1/25/2024	NO MEETING	Extra time to work on draft!	
1/28/2024 (Sunday)		A full draft of the SYPA to be submitted to the Section Leader and Adviser	**DEADLINE FOR DRAFT SYPA**
First weeks of February	Section Meetings (TBD)	*Individual Section Arrangements for the Oral Presentations Using Class and Extra Time:* In order to give students time to present their SYPA recommendations and incorporate feedback, the section leaders will make arrangements for several sessions, using both the normally scheduled Thursday classes and additional class times. The goal is to allow us to complete all presentations by the fourth week of February, giving you a minimum of three weeks, and generally significantly more, to prepare your final SYPA. Presentations will be to the whole section, with other students have assigned roles as stakeholders or to give feedback, unless decided otherwise by your section leader.	**Presentation of Draft SYPA**
3/11/2024 (Monday)		You must send an electronic copy to Carol Finney in the MPA/ID office, and either an electronic or hard copy to section leader and adviser, depending on their preference. Of course, you may turn in your final SYPA earlier than the deadline and take full advantage of the spring break.	**FINAL SYPA DUE BY 4PM!**
4/7/2024 (Sunday)			**SUBMISSION OF POLICY BRIEF**