

Archer Center Independent Study and Research



Course Information
PA 833
Independent Study and Research

Summer 2026
Tuesday or Thursday, 6:30 to 8:30 PM

Professor Contact Information

Instructor of Record: Email Address:	Dr. Derek O'Leary derek.o'leary@utdallas.edu
Lecturer (Health I): Email Address:	Dr. Phillip Jordan Phillip.Jordan@utdallas.edu
Lecturer (Health II): Email Address:	Dr. Linda Elam Linda.Elam@utdallas.edu
Lecturer (Education): Email Address:	Dr. Katherine McElroy Katherine.McElroy@utdallas.edu
Lecturer (National Security and International Relations): Email Address:	Dr. Steven Park Steven.Park@utdallas.edu
Lecturer (Domestic policy): Email Address:	Dr. David Gonzalez Rice David.GonzalezRice@utdallas.edu

We enthusiastically encourage you to meet with the faculty throughout the semester. All faculty are available to meet by appointment, either individually or with a group of students, to discuss the course as well as your academic and career development. You are welcome to meet with the faculty who teach other policy groups, too. Please reach out to faculty by email to schedule a time to meet virtually or in-person.

Note: Please use only your University of Texas Dallas account to email Archer Center faculty.

Course Description

You will participate in a policy group led by a faculty member. While expanding your research and writing skillset, engaging with knowledge resources in D.C., and meeting with experts in your policy area, you will develop a policy research project that advances your academic and professional goals. By the end of the semester, you will complete a research paper that encapsulates your findings and deliver a presentation of your policy recommendations to experts in your field.

Each week, you will meet with your policy group and professor. You may have additional 1:1 meetings with your professor as you develop and workshop your project. In addition to developing your research project, you will provide constructive feedback to your policy group colleagues on their projects throughout the semester. The faculty is here to support your success in the course as well as your larger academic and professional goals.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the semester, you will be able to:

- Identify and make use of relevant knowledge resources across Washington, D.C.
- Analyze a significant federal policy challenge and effectively express through written

- and verbal communication your recommendations for addressing the policy challenge
- Apply your policy research to your academic and professional pathway

Calendar of Sessions and Assignments

Your policy group will meet once each week:

- The **Education, National Security and International Relations**, and **Domestic policy** groups will meet on Tuesday from 6:30 to 8:30 PM.
- The **Health policy** groups will meet on Thursday from 6:30 to 8:30 PM.

All course materials are freely available online via the links below and through the class [eLearning](#) site.

Week 1: Defining Policy Problems	
Ed/NS&IR/DP	June 2, 6:30 to 8:30 PM
Health I and II	June 4, 6:30 to 8:30 PM
Reading	<p>Read Eugene Bardach and Eric Patashnik, A Practical Guide to Policy Analysis (5th ed.), pgs. 1-12 (“Step One: Define the Problem”).</p> <p><i>Further reading:</i></p> <p>Health Policy groups: CDC’s Policy Analytical Framework</p>
Assignment	By 11:59 PM the day before your session, submit on eLearning a one-to-two sentence draft definition of the policy problem you plan to address in your research project.

Week 2: The Policy Ecosystem—Legislative	
Ed/NS&IR/DP	June 9, 6:30 to 8:30 PM
Health I and II	June 11, 6:30 to 8:30 PM
Reading	<p>Identify the congressional committee (or committees) with jurisdiction over your policy issue and then review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent legislation that addresses the issue • Recent reports related to the issue • Recent hearings related to the issue • Committee members who are especially engaged with the issue <p>Read Bardach and Patashnik, <i>Practical Guide</i>, pgs. 12-18 (“Step Two: Assemble Some Evidence”).</p> <p><i>Supplemental reference texts:</i></p>

	<p>Congressional Quarterly, How Congress Works, 5th Edition (Washington, D.C.: C.Q. Press, 2013).</p> <p>U.S. Senate Committee on the Budget, The Congressional Budget Process. 117th Congress, 2nd Session, 2022. Committee Print, S. Prt. 117-23.</p>
Assignment	By 11:59 PM the day before your session, submit your completed research plan worksheet on eLearning.

Week 3: The Policy Ecosystem—Executive

Ed/NS&IR/DP	June 16, 6:30 to 8:30 PM
Health I and II	June 18, 6:30 to 8:30 PM
Reading	<p>For the agency (or agencies) with jurisdiction over your policy issue, locate and examine the relevant parts of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the public law authorizing the agency • the agency’s most recent strategic plan • the agency’s most recently published organizational chart • the agency’s FY 2027 congressional budget justification • any relevant recent rulemaking on the policy issue by the agency. <p>Read Bardach and Patashnik, <i>Practical Guide</i>, pgs. 18-27 (“Step Three: Construct the Alternatives”).</p> <p><i>Further reading:</i></p> <p>“Loper Bright Enterprises v. Raimondo and the Future of Agency Interpretations of Law” (Congressional Research Service, 2024).</p> <p>National Security and International Relations policy group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Security Strategy of the United States of America (Washington, DC: The White House, 2025). • Auerswald, David P. “The Evolution of the NSC Process.” In <i>The National Security Enterprise: Navigating the Labyrinth</i>, Second Edition, edited by Roger Z. George and Harvey Rishikof, 32-56. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2017.
Assignment	Begin drafting your policy research paper. Consider reaching out to your professor to schedule a meeting as needed.

Week 4: Evidence and Persuasion

Ed/NS&IR/DP	June 23, 6:30 to 8:30 PM
Health I and II	June 25, 6:30 to 8:30 PM
Reading	

	<p>Read Bardach and Patashnik, <i>Practical Guide</i>, pgs. 27-46 (“Step Four: Select the Criteria”).</p> <p><i>Further reading:</i></p> <p>King, Gary, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba, <i>Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research</i> (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994): Chapter Three: “Causality and Causal Inference.”</p> <p>Jonathan A. Schwabish, “An Economist’s Guide to Visualizing Data,” <i>Journal of Economic Perspectives</i> 28, No. 1 (Winter 2014): 209-234.</p> <p>Health Policy groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health policy groups: Kansagra, S. M., & Farley, T. A. (2011). “Public Health Research: Lost in Translation or Speaking the Wrong Language?” <i>American Journal of Public Health</i>, 101(12), 2203–2206. • Dorfman, L., & Krasnow, I. D. (2014). “Public Health and Media Advocacy.” <i>Annual Review of Public Health</i>, 35. <p>National Security and International Relations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walt, Stephen M. “The Relationship Between Theory and Policy in International Relations.” <i>Annual Review of Political Science</i> 8 (2005): 23-48.
Assignment	Continue drafting your policy research paper. Consider reaching out to your professor to schedule a meeting as needed.

Week 5: Workshopping papers	
Ed/NS&IR/DP	June 30, 6:30 to 8:30 PM
Health I and II	July 2, 6:30 to 8:30 PM
Reading	Read Bardach and Patashnik, <i>Practical Guide</i> , pgs. 46-70 (“Step Five: Project the Outcomes and Step Six: Confront the Trade-Offs”).
Assignment	By 11:59 PM the day before your session, submit on eLearning your draft research paper. In class, you will exchange papers and provide peer feedback to two fellows.

Week 6: Refining Recommendations	
Ed/NS&IR/DP	July 7, 6:30 to 8:30 PM
Health I and II	July 9, 6:30 to 8:30 PM
Reading	

	<p>Read Bardach and Patashnik, <i>Practical Guide</i>, pgs. 71-72 (“Step Seven: Stop, Focus, Narrow, Deepen, Decide!”).</p> <p>Plain Writing Checklist (National Archives).</p> <p><i>Further reading:</i></p> <p>George Orwell, “Politics and the English Language” (Horizon, 1946)</p> <p>STEM Style Guide (Stanford)</p>
Assignment	<p>Prepare to deliver a two-to-three-minute brief of your policy recommendations. You will deliver this during class and receive constructive feedback from your policy group.</p>

Week 7: Presenting to Policy Experts

Ed/NS&IR/DP	July 14, 6:30 to 8:30 PM
Health I and II	July 16, 6:30 to 8:30 PM
Reading	<p>Read Bardach and Patashnik, <i>Practical Guide</i>, pgs. 72-82 (“Step Eight: Tell Your Story”).</p> <p>“How to be a ruthless editor” (Toastmasters International)</p>
Assignment	<p>By 12 PM the day of your session, submit on eLearning your presentation materials (slides and one-page handout). Practice your presentation out loud several times, including at least one dry run with another fellow.</p> <p>By 11:59 PM on Sunday the 19th, submit your final paper on eLearning.</p>

Week 8: Advancing your Policy Research and Career

Ed/NS&IR/DP	July 21, 6:30 to 8:30 PM
Health I and II	July 23, 6:30 to 8:30 PM
Reading	
Assignment	<p>By 11:59 PM the day before your session, submit on eLearning your short (one-to-two page) research reflection and translation plan.</p>

Policy research paper

Specifications:

- No more than 10 pages, excluding the title page, and any appendices
- Accurate MLA, APA, or Chicago style citation
- 12-pt font, double-spaced, 1” margins

Organization:

Title Page: Your name and affiliation, title of the paper, date, and abstract

Overview: What is the policy challenge and why is it important to address it?

Problem Statement, Background, and Methodology: What is the policy challenge? Who is impacted by this issue and what is at stake? How has government attempted to address the policy challenge and to what extent have these efforts been successful? What research approach do you take to analyzing this challenge and making recommendations?

Analysis, Evidence, and Policy Options: What are the leading options for addressing the policy problem? What are the costs and benefits of these options, and for whom? What governmental policy actors are responsible for the implementation and enforcement of the options? What political and other obstacles could impede these options? Provide evidence and original analysis to support your findings.

Recommendations: Which solution do you recommend and why? Specifically, what should be done, by whom, and on what timeline? What realistic challenges could emerge?

Appendix: You may include additional material (such as data visualization) that supports your analysis and recommendations.

Works Cited

Presentation

Specifications:

- Ten minute presentation before your group and a small panel of policy experts
- Accompanied by no more than 10 slides
- Supported by a one-pager that includes your analysis and recommendations, distributed to your policy group and panel

Grading Policy

Points	Requirement
25	Preparation, attendance, participation, and support of other fellows
10	Draft and peer workshop
40	Policy research paper
25	Presentation (including presentation materials)

Final grades will be reported to your home UT System institution by July 31, and posted in accordance with their respective grade submission deadlines.

Note: UT System campuses vary in their use of the +/- grading scale. Grades for students enrolled at campuses that do not follow this system will be reported as follows: A (90-100), B (80-89), C (70-79), D (60-69), F (59 or lower).

Attendance

We expect you to arrive on time and ready to participate fully in class. If you are unable to attend class or may be delayed due to personal or professional circumstances beyond your control, please inform your professor as soon as possible prior to class.

You are expected to attend all class sessions and participate fully in class. If you are unable to attend a session, it is your responsibility to give advance notice as soon as possible. Excused absences are limited generally to personal illness, an emergency related to an immediate family member, or a religious holiday. Your internship, voluntary attendance at professional events, and personal travel are not considered excuses to miss class.

Each unexcused absence will reduce your final course grade by 5-points (e.g. if you earn a 94 but have one unexcused absence, you will receive an 89; if you have two unexcused absences, I will record an 84; and so on).

Course Policies

Classroom Citizenship

All students and faculty must adhere to the Guiding Principles for Archer Fellows.

1. Archer Fellows represent not only themselves, but their home institutions, the Archer Center, the UT System, and the State of Texas.
2. The Archer Center expects all Archer Fellows to abide by the highest standards of conduct, demonstrating the utmost integrity, character, respect, and professionalism.
3. The Archer Center is committed to ensuring an enriching cohort and learning environment by selecting students with varying interests, fields of study, and political perspectives.
4. The Archer Center is committed to bringing together students who value constructive and respectful dialogue among individuals and groups with varying ideas.
5. Archer Fellows are expected to respect varying political, personal, and religious beliefs within the cohort and throughout the program.
6. As an educational program, the Archer Center sees all aspects of the Archer Fellowship experience as an opportunity for learning, from the application and internship search process to the academic, networking, professional, and fellowship opportunities provided throughout the semester.
7. The Archer Center and Archer Fellows have a shared commitment to open, honest, and timely communication.

Class Recordings

Unless the AccessAbility Resource Center has approved the student to record the instruction, students are expressly prohibited from recording any part of this course. Recordings may not be published, reproduced, or shared with those not in the class, or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved AccessAbility Resource Center accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

Reporting Sexual Misconduct and Sharing Confidential Information

Students considering sharing personal information in email or in person should be aware that all University staff, faculty, teaching assistants/associates, and graduate/research assistants are required by UT Dallas policy to report information about sexual misconduct to the UT Dallas Title IX Coordinator. Per university policy, Sexual Misconduct Policy - [UTDBP3102](#), faculty have been informed that they must identify the student to the UT Dallas Title IX Coordinator. Students who wish to have confidential discussions of incidents related to sexual harassment or sexual misconduct should contact the following confidential resources, including, but not limited to:

1. the Student Counseling Center (972-883-2575 or the 24/7 Crisis Hotline at 972-UTD-TALK or 972-883-8255),
2. a health care provider in the Student Health Center (972-883-2747),
3. a clergyperson (or other legally recognized religious advisor) of their choice, or
4. an off-campus resource (e.g., a rape crisis center, doctor, psychologist).

Students who are sexually assaulted, harassed, or are victims of sexual misconduct, domestic violence, or stalking, are encouraged to directly report these incidents to the Title IX Coordinator by making a [report](#) online or by calling the Title IX Coordinator at 972-883-2306. Students may also contact the [UTD Police Department \(UTDPD\)](#) for emergency assistance; criminal reporting and investigation; information or assistance regarding protective orders or forensic sexual assault exams; or to request a police escort. In case of emergency, call 911. For non-emergency situations, students can reach the UT Dallas Police Department by calling 972-883-2222. For more information about available support and resources, students can visit the [Office of Institutional Compliance \(Support Services & Resources\)](#) webpage.

Pregnancy and Parenting

UT Dallas is committed to providing support and resources for pregnant and parenting students, faculty, and staff in accordance with Title IX, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Texas Education Code Section 51.982, and other applicable federal and state laws. Pregnant and parenting students are encouraged to complete the [Pregnant and Parenting Self-Identification Form](#) located on the [Office of Institutional Compliance's website](#). Submitting this form allows for a coordinated University effort to help facilitate support for pregnant and parenting students, such as early registration for parenting students and accommodations for pregnant students. For more information about the services and resources available to pregnant and parenting students, visit the [Pregnant & Parenting Resources page](#) and the [Student Pregnancy and Parenting Nondiscrimination Policy](#).

Nondiscrimination

UT Dallas prohibits all forms of discrimination (including harassment) based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, national origin, disability, genetic information, or veteran status. UT Dallas further prohibits all forms of sex-based discrimination (including sex-based harassment). Students who believe they have been discriminated against or harassed in violation of University policy, or who believe that someone else has been discriminated against or harassed, are encouraged to directly report these incidents to the Office of Institution Compliance by making a [report](#) online or by calling the Office of Institution Compliance at 972-883-2306. For more information, see the University's [Nondiscrimination Policy](#) and [Sexual Misconduct Policy](#). For additional information about available support and resources, see the Office of [Institutional Compliance \(Support Services & Resources\)](#) webpage.

Technical Support

If you experience any issues with your UT Dallas account, contact the UT Dallas [Office of Information Technology Help Desk](#) or call 972-883-2911.

UT Dallas provides eLearning technical support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week through [UTD eLearning Helpdesk](#). The services include a toll-free telephone number, 1-866-588-3192, for immediate assistance, Educational Technology Services (eLearning) is available by [email](#) to request services. They also have an online chat service.

Student Conduct and Discipline

The University of Texas System [Regents' Rule 50101](#) and UT Dallas have rules and regulations for the orderly and efficient conduct of their business. It is the responsibility of each student and each student organization to be knowledgeable about the rules and regulations which govern student conduct and activities. General information on student conduct and discipline is contained in the Student Complaints Resources within the online [UT Dallas Undergraduate Catalog](#), and the [Graduate Catalog](#).

UT Dallas administers student discipline within the procedures of recognized and established due process. Procedures are defined and described in the ([Student Code of Conduct, UTDSP5003](#)). Copies of these rules and regulations are available to students in the Office of Community Standards and Conduct, where staff members are available to assist students in interpreting the rules and regulations (SSB 4.400, 972-883-6330) and online at [their webpage](#).

A student at the University neither loses their rights nor escapes the responsibilities of citizenship. He or she is expected to obey federal, state, and local laws as well as the Regents' Rules, university regulations, and administrative rules. Students are subject to discipline for violating its standards of conduct whether such conduct takes place on or off campus, or whether civil or criminal penalties are also imposed for such conduct.

Social Media Use

The [Student Code of Conduct](#) includes behaviors conducted via any digital platform. Students may not use any digital platform to seek or provide unauthorized assistance for any assignment done for academic credit. Students may not use any digital platform to

impersonate or represent any person other than themselves. Please consult with your instructor regarding authorized assistance.

Academic Integrity

The faculty expects from its students a high-level of responsibility and academic honesty. Because the value of an academic degree depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student for that degree, it is imperative that a student demonstrates a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work. Additional information is provided within their website.

Academic Dishonesty: Academic dishonesty can occur in relation to any type of work submitted for academic credit or as a requirement for a class. It can include individual work or a group project. Academic dishonesty includes plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, and collaboration/collusion. In order to avoid academic dishonesty, it is important for students to fully understand the expectations of their professors. This is best accomplished through asking clarifying questions if an individual does not completely understand the requirements of an assignment.

Additional information related to academic dishonesty and tips on how to avoid dishonesty may be found [on their website](#).

Military-Affiliated Students

At the University of Texas at Dallas, we are committed to supporting our military and veteran students and their spouses and dependents as they pursue their academic goals. Recognizing the unique challenges faced by those who have served, we strive to create a welcoming and supportive environment. Please contact your instructor if you are on active duty, called to serve, or if any aspect of your current or past military service, or your family situation, makes it challenging to meet the course requirements or affects your academic progress. Your instructor is committed to supporting you and will work with you to address any complications.

The Military and Veteran Center ([MVC](#)) offers a range of resources and referrals to campus and community partners, ensuring that our military and veteran students can access the assistance they need. Whether it is academic advising, financial aid, or personal support, the MVC is dedicated to helping our students succeed and thrive in their educational journey.

Student Grievance Procedures

Procedures for student grievances are found in the university policy [UTDSP5005](#). In attempting to resolve any student grievance regarding disputes over grades, application of degree plan, graduation/degree program requirements, and thesis/and dissertation committee, adviser actions and/or decisions, evaluations, and/or other fulfillments of academic responsibility, it is the obligation of the student first to make a serious effort to resolve the matter with the instructor, supervisor, administrator, or committee with whom the grievance originated.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The University of Texas at Dallas is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. The syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. If you are

seeking classroom accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (2008), you are required to register with the [AccessAbility Resource Center \(ARC\)](#), located in the Administration Building, Suite 2.224. They can be reached by [email](#), calling 972-883-2098, or at their [website](#). To receive academic accommodations for this class, please register and request services by completing the Request for Services form with the proper documentation and meeting with the Director of ARC at the beginning of the semester.

Religious Holy Days

UT Dallas will excuse a student from class or other required activities, including examinations and travel time, for the observance of a religious holy day for a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property tax under Section 11.20, of the *Texas Tax Code*. Students are encouraged to notify the instructor or activity sponsor as soon as possible regarding the absence, preferably in advance of the assignment.

Excused students will be allowed to take missed exams or complete assignments within a reasonable time after the absence: a period equal to the length of the absence, up to a maximum of one week. A student who notifies the instructor and completes any missed exam or assignment may not be penalized for the absence. A student who fails to complete the exam or assignment within the prescribed period may receive a failing grade for that exam or assignment.

If a student or an instructor disagrees about the nature of the absence [i.e., for the purpose of observing a religious holy day] or if there is similar disagreement about whether the student has been given a reasonable time to complete any missed assignments or examinations, either the student or the instructor may request a ruling from the school's vice or associate dean, who serve as the President's designees for these rules. The vice or associate deans must take into account the legislative intent of *Texas Education Code* 51.911(b), and the student and instructor will abide by the decision of the vice or associate dean.

This information is also included in the online UT Dallas [Undergraduate Catalog](#), and the [Graduate Catalog](#).