PLCY 1802: ENGAGED RESEARCH / ENGAGED PUBLICS
The Science and Craft of Applied Policy Research

SPRING 2016
Fridays 3:00-5:30pm

CIT 227 (Brown University Campus)

INSTRUCTORS:
Diana Graizbord, PhD Candidate in Sociology: diana_graizbord@brown.edu
Office Hours: Location and Time TBD
Jamie McPike, PhD Candidate in Sociology: jamie_mcpike@brown.edu
Office Hours: Location and Time TBD

TEACHING ASSISTANT:
Isabel DeBre: isabel_debre@brown.edu
Office Hours: Location and Time TBD

PARTNER:
City of Providence, Office of Innovation
Nicole Pollock, Chief Innovation Officer: npollock@providenceri.com

---

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Policy problems are complex. Policy analysis and design is both a science and a craft. Increasingly, policymakers have begun to acknowledge that effective policy research requires not only multiple methods of inquiry, but also interdisciplinary teams of social science researchers, citizens, designers, scientists, artists, consultants, and engineers, among other experts. Generating innovative policy solutions, from this approach, is not a straightforward, linear scientific process, but instead a creative, collaborative, and engaged activity that requires not only iterative and dynamic research methods, but also storytelling, design, and other creative processes.

In Providence, for example, former Mayor Angel Taveras assembled one of the nation's first interdisciplinary "policy innovation teams" to understand and address issues of child literacy development in the city. Providence's current Mayor (Jorge Elorza) has

prioritized the "innovation team" approach and, almost immediately after he was sworn into office in January 2015, appointed the city's first Chief Innovation Officer, Nicole Pollock. Nicole and her team are tasked with expanding the work and effectiveness of the city's Office of Innovation, and they use their wide range of experience and expertise to conduct research on and generate innovative solutions to pressing local policy issues.

In this class, we seek to replicate these new and creative policymaking spaces, but on a smaller scale by providing students with the opportunity to work in interdisciplinary teams to investigate an important policy issue in Providence. In partnership with the City of Providence Office of Innovation, students will conduct research on a current policy issue in the city, practice and reflect on various applied qualitative policy research methods, and craft effective and compelling policy narratives that will be presented to publics within and outside of the university setting. At its core, this course is a research methods course in which students learn to conduct research that is not driven primarily by a scholarly question (as one would find in a more traditional social science research methods course), but rather by a policy problem, issue, or question. In this sense, the course resembles a practicum where students learn and use research methods and practices adopted by policy analysts, consultants, and applied researchers.

Because the findings from applied policy research will inevitably be presented to various audiences with the hope of guiding policy change and action, students in the course will examine and reflect upon the unique set of challenges that comes with communicating one's findings. As scholars interested in producing research that is meaningful and impactful, we must learn not only to conduct ethical, rigorous research, but also be reflexive about our position as researchers and the ways in which issues, people, and groups are represented through our work. Students in this course will be responsible for presenting a unique perspective on a pressing policy issue, and must adopt reflexive research practices to assess how one's experiences and expertise shape the policy narratives produced.

COURSE ENROLLMENT & SIZE

This course is designed for juniors and seniors. Sophomores with relevant experience and a serious interest in the class must speak with the instructors and may obtain an override. Course enrollment is limited to 20 students.

This course is truly interdisciplinary and should be of interest to any student interested in practicing applied policy research and/or thinking critically about how we can begin to understand and create solutions for pressing urban policy issues. Students from any of the social sciences, STEM, and arts and humanities are welcome. Students with experience in research methods, storytelling, documentary techniques, or other forms of creative public engagement are especially welcome. It is recommended that students have previously taken "Investigating Modes of Social Change" or a social science research methods course prior to enrollment, but this is not required. Substantive courses in public policy, urban studies, sociology, political science, and anthropology are also recommended, but not required.

COURSE DESIGN

This class will meet once a week. In the first half of the class, seminar-style discussions will be paired with active-learning exercises to stimulate critical analysis and engaged discussion of theoretical and methodological readings for the course. Students will learn how to collaboratively investigate policy issues through reading and discussing theoretical, empirical, and methodological work (from policy studies, urban studies, and sociology), and by conducting hands-on field research exercises. Field research exercises will draw on qualitative research techniques used primarily by scholars of the social sciences and humanities, but increasingly adopted by policymakers and consultants to inform policy solutions. A portion of time will also be dedicated to group presentations and discussions of exemplary stories and storytelling practices.

The second half of each class will be structured as a policy research lab, with interdisciplinary teams working collaboratively on their particular issue area. This portion of each class will be devoted primarily to brainstorming, conducting qualitative field research in the city (e.g., shadowing, participant observation, in-depth interviews, etc.), and refining, editing, and producing a final policy narrative. While the majority of this time will be devoted to intra-group collaboration, time will also be allotted for broader class discussions on current research findings, research issues and/or challenges, and exploration of potential overlaps in groups' research.

Periodically throughout the semester, guest speakers with a range of expertise will facilitate "master classes" that will provide real-world perspectives on applied policy research and multimedia storytelling. These "master classes" allow students the opportunity to learn technical skills and to workshop their policy research techniques and policy narratives with experienced researchers, policy professionals, and/or storytellers.

The use of technology in this course will be highly reflexive and should be considered secondary to practicing engaged, ethical research. However, students are encouraged to explore and use various media to understand and present their research findings. For this reason, staff from Academic Technology at Brown will come to the class and present the menu of technologies and resources available to students. Each group will be given access to one iPad (to share) for collecting audio, photo, and video data as well as some basic audio recording equipment. Students will be able to check-out other technological equipment (at the IT service desk in the CIT building and depending on Academic Technology availability) as needed to collect data and complete their final course project. A comprehensive list of relevant resources on the use of various technologies for storytelling will also be collected under a "Resources" page on the course website. No prior technological knowledge is necessary, but skills in audio editing, blogging, and/or digital storytelling are welcome.

INTERDISCIPLINARY APPLIED POLICY RESEARCH GROUPS

After the first class session students are required to complete an online survey that will be used, by the instructors and the TA, to form interdisciplinary applied policy research groups. The survey will include questions on research and media skills, creative interests, disciplinary background, and relevant experience. Instructors will rely solely on the survey responses to assemble groups that represent a diversity of skills and interests. There are two reasons for this approach to group formation: first the instructors strongly believe that effective, critical, and creative work comes from collaboration and diversity. Second, this technique of group formation emulates real-world policy research settings by bringing together teams of researchers and problem solvers with different backgrounds, interests, and ways of approaching, understanding, and engaging the social world.

COURSE GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Students will learn about, practice, and reflect upon various applied qualitative research methods to investigate, understand, and inform policymaking.
  ● Students will review methodological readings and case studies that demonstrate a range of policy research techniques, including participant observation, interviews, oral history, and visual methods, among other methods.
  ● Through field work, interactive exercises, and hands-on workshops, students will practice a range of applied policy research methods to investigate a contemporary policy issue in Providence.

Students will learn to conduct collaborative, iterative applied policy research that replicates the practices of prominent policy groups, policy innovation teams, and think tanks.

- Students will work in interdisciplinary teams of 4-5 to collaboratively investigate a pressing local policy issue for the City of Providence.
- Students will foster meaningful and effective client relations with the City of Providence through regular interactions and scheduled feedback sessions with city staff.
- Students will be responsible for uploading data to an online platform to share and discuss research findings and conduct iterative data coding and analysis.
- Students will update their group members each week on current research findings, research problems, questions, and the development of the group's policy narrative.

Students will critically examine and reflect on their role as policy researchers and the politics of policy knowledge production, more broadly.

- Through weekly journal assignments, students will reflect on their role and positionality as policy researchers, their group's approach and methods of conducting policy research, and any relevant issues or reflections they encounter in conducting engaged policy research.

Students will learn how to effectively communicate policy narratives to diverse audiences.

- Students will learn about and experiment with different storytelling media (e.g., op-eds, policy briefs, audio storytelling, photo essays, op-docs, podcasts, etc.) under the guidance of a range of professionals/practitioners.
- Students will present exemplar stories and analyze the elements of successful storytelling.
- Students will create compelling, creative policy narratives that are legible to audiences both within and outside of the academy.
- Students will present the findings of their research to their community partners in online and public forums.

ASSESSMENT

There are three major graded assignments upon which student assessment will be based: a final group policy narrative--based on months of rigorous data collection and analysis--that will be presented to the City of Providence Office of Innovation and

various audiences at Brown University; a reflexive, individual work log/journal that is regularly updated throughout the semester; and a group storytelling presentation.

Policy Research & Final Presentation of Policy Narrative: Teams will be assessed on the quality of the policy research and analysis conducted in the course and on the quality of the final presentation. Assessment will be based on the group research design, fieldwork practices, the data analysis processes, and on the group's ability to craft a compelling and well-researched policy narrative (5-10 minutes in total). Each group member is responsible for collecting field data on a weekly basis and updating their data to an online platform, which will serve as both an online repository for their data, but also a data analysis tool. Students will also be responsible for providing periodic feedback to the City of Providence on research findings and development of policy narratives. *Guidelines for the final project will be provided by Week 4 of the course.*

Individual work log/journal: Alongside the final group project, each student will produce an individual work-log/journal. This is a space to individually reflect on the research process and group work, to document specific tasks completed within the group, and to experiment with concepts and theory. Instructors will periodically collect, read, and provide feedback on the work log/journals. The work log/journal is a space for both self-assessment (by helping students reflect on where they are on their research path) and for the instructors to ensure that students are effectively engaging with the course materials and course processes. *Guidelines for the work log/journal will be provided by Week 3 of the course.*

Group Storytelling Presentation: Beginning in Week 3 of the course, each group will be responsible for finding and presenting an exemplary story (e.g., podcast, op-doc, digital or multimedia story, etc.) and for facilitating a short (15 minutes) in-class discussion on this story. Each group will present only once, and these presentations will help students to critique and assess a variety of storytelling techniques. *Guidelines for the group storytelling presentation will be provided by Week 3 of the course, and, at this time, groups will be asked to sign-up for their presentation date.*

Short In/Out of Class Assignments: In addition to the three major graded assignments described above, students will be asked to complete a variety of in and out of class assignments based on assigned readings and workshops. These can include storyboard drafts, interview transcripts, field notes, experimental op-ed writing, and memoing. These are considered essential building-blocks of the research process and final presentation.

Participation & Class Citizenship: Active, engaged participation is essential for this course. The collaborative nature of the class requires that all students, the instructors, and the teaching assistant cultivate and foster a culture of committed citizenship.

COURSE SCHEDULE

(Week 1) January 29, 2016 - Introduction

> **Module 1:   Mapping the Policy Problem**
> *In this module students will be introduced to background texts to gain an understanding of the kinds of social, political, and economic issues that shape the policy topic at hand. Students will use this theoretical framework to inform an analysis of recent news articles and existing data from Providence, which will enable them to better identify relevant actors, organizations, and interests related to the policy topic. The objective of this module is to introduce students to licensing processes in the city and begin to develop a critical sensibility to understanding this issues. During this module students will meet with their interdisciplinary policy research groups and prepare a plan for group work and accountability for the semester.*

(Week 2) February 5, 2016 - Mapping the Problem Space

Required Materials for Review:
- ● **READ:**
    - ○ PROJO, "Providence License Board Member Criticizes Handling of Complaints"
    - ○ WPRI, "Providence Licensing Board Member Suing the City"
    - ○ WPRI, "Leadership Shakeup at the Providence Board of Licenses"
    - ○ Harris, Johanna, "Board of Licenses Year in Review: 2015"
    - ○ PROJO, "City board to Consider Voiding Shark Bar Licenses"
    - ○ Chron.com What are the benefits of business for the local economy?
    - ○ Chron.com How Important are small businesses to local economies?
    - ○ Smith & Larner. 2009. "Public Policy as a Concept and a Field (or Fields) of Study"
    - ○ The Atlantic, "Before You can Write a Good Plot, You Need to Write a Good Place"
    - ○ Gieryn, Thomas. 2000. "A Space for Place in Sociology"

Recommended Materials for Review:
- **READ:**
  - City of Providence Board of Licenses, "<u>License Applications</u>"
  - City of Providence Board of Licenses, "<u>Miscellaneous License Requirements</u>"
  - City of Providence Department of Economic Development, "<u>10 Steps to Starting your Business in Providence</u>"
  - Providence Plan "<u>Neighborhood Profiles</u>" or "<u>Providence 2010 Census Viewer</u>" (for demographic data by neighborhood)

Assignments:
- **Complete student entry/group formation survey questionnaire <u>before 9am on Wednesday, February 3, 2016</u>. Please note: on-time completion of the survey is a prerequisite for entry into the course.**
- Complete the "<u>Brown University/CITI Education Program in the Protection of Human Research Participants</u>" and email the completion certificate to the instructors before the next class.

Module 2:   The Practice of Applied Qualitative Policy Research

In this module students will be introduced to qualitative applied policy research methods--ethnographic observation, shadowing, interviews, field notes, and process mapping--begin to practice these methods, and learn to critically reflect on the politics and ethics of conducting engaged qualitative research in a community setting. Students will be asked to examine and reflect upon the ways in which their disciplinary and personal background shape how they know, understand, and experience social problems. The objectives of this module are to introduce students to various qualitative methods they can use in their policy research and to foster effective and reflexive interdisciplinary team research.

(Week 3) February 11, 2016 (RECOMMENDED) - Nicole Pollock, City of Providence Office of Innovation, "Disrupting Government: Building Systems that Support Meaningful Change in the Public Sector", McKinney Conference Room, Watson Institute, 12-1pm

(Week 3) February 12, 2016 - Applied and Engaged Research Methods: Part 1 (Ethnographic Observation, Shadowing, and Field Notes) & **Client Meeting**

Required Materials for Review:
- **READ:**

- ○ Jerolmak, Colin (2013). "Feeding the Pigeons" in *The Global Pigeon* p. 23-37.
- ○ Hoang, Kimberly (2015). "New Hierarchies of Global Men" in *Dealing in Desire* p. 18-19; 53-60; 67-77.
- ○ Emerson, Robert, et al. (1995). *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. [Chapter 1 & 2]
- O City of Providence Board of Licenses, "License Applications"
- O City of Providence Board of Licenses, "Miscellaneous License Requirements"
- O City of Providence Department of Economic Development, "10 Steps to Starting your Business in Providence"
- ○ City of Providence, "License Types"
- **LISTEN:**
  - ○ Transom.org - "Story Dissection: Dead Animal Man" (for tips on taking audio field notes)

Recommended Materials for Review:
- **LISTEN:**
  - ○ City of Providence, Board of Licenses Audio Meeting Minutes

Assignments:
- Complete ethnographic field exercise using written and/or audio field notes (see guidelines provided for more information) and upload to the Evernote shared notebook entitled "PLCY 1802: Exploratory Fieldwork." **(due 2/11 by 5pm)**
- Based on your preliminary field notes and a review of the City of Providence licensing data, draft three to five questions for the client meeting with Nicole Pollock that would help you to better understand the policy issue and problem space. Upload these questions to the appropriate "Discussion" link on canvas. **(due 2/11 by 5pm)**

(Week 4) February 19, 2016 - WITNESS.ORG Workshop
PLEASE NOTE: CLASS WILL END at 6PM ON THIS DATE.

Required Materials for Review:
- **READ:**
  - ○ Caldwell, Gillian. 2005. "Using Video for Advocacy" in Video for Change: A Guide to Advocacy and Activism Gregory et al., p. 1-19
  - ○ Witness.org - Video as Evidence & Ethical Guidelines
  - ○ Witness.org - "Can 114 Videos Tell One Story about Forced Evictions in Rio" (Part 1 and Part 2)

Assignments:

- Complete ethnographic field exercise using written and/or audio field notes (see guidelines provided for more information) and upload to the Evernote shared notebook entitled "PLCY 1802: Exploratory Fieldwork."
- Create a private notebook in Evernote and title it with "Your Name (Journal)" [e.g., "Jamie McPike (Journal)"]. Share this notebook only with Diana and Jamie.
    - Complete at least one work log/journal entry (based on guidelines provided) and upload to your personal notebook before class.

(Week 5) February 26, 2016 - Interviewing, Oral History, and the Ingredients of a Good Story: "Master Class" with Professor Ann Fessler, RISD
Required Materials for Review:
- **READ:**
    - Weiss, Robert Stuart. 1995. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interviews*. New York: Free Press. [Chapters 4 & 5]
    - Transom.org - "On Interviewing" and "The Basics"
    - Crafting Stories - "Alex Blumberg on Conducting a Good Interview"
    - Transom.org - "Before the First Question"
    - Annfessler.com - "About" and "Creative Work"
- **LISTEN:**
    - HowSound - "Interviewing with Your Skeptical Brain"
    - HowSound - "Love is a Battlefield" (on pre-interviews and interview prep.)

Assignment:
- Complete ethnographic field exercise using written and/or audio field notes (see guidelines on course website for more information) and upload to course website.
- Complete at least one work log/journal entry (based on guidelines provided) and upload to your personal folder on the course website.

(Week 6) March 4, 2016 - Applied and Engaged Research Methods: Part 2 (Data Analysis Techniques)

Required Materials for Review:
- **READ:**
    - Ritchie and Spencer. "Qualitative Data Analysis for Applied Policy Research"
    - [Additional readings on data analysis TBD]

Assignments:

- Complete at least one field interview (see guidelines on course website for more information), transcribe relevant quotes and notes from the interview, and upload the audio and relevant quotes to the course website.
- Complete at least one work log/journal entry (based on guidelines provided) and upload to your personal folder on the course website.

> **Module 3:   The Tension Between Complexity and Simplification in Policy Work**
> *In this module students will examine the tension between the complexity that characterizes policy issues and the tendency (or need) to simplify issues to create policy solutions. Through discussions with policy actors and critical readings, students will critically examine the various kinds of data collected about particular issue areas, how this data influences the definition of policy problems, and how the definition of a policy problem is used to develop particular kinds of knowledge and policy solutions. Students will investigate not only the politics of policy storytelling, but also the politics of policy response in an effort to understand how the stories they create can shape particular kinds of public and/or policy responses.*

(Week 7) March 11, 2016 - Revisiting the Problem Space & Client Update with Nicole Pollock
Required References for Review:
- **READ:**
  - Donmoyer. 2012. "Two Very Different Worlds: The Cultures of Policymaking and Qualitative Research" Qualitative Inquiry
  - [Additional readings on policy complexity and simplification TBD]
- **LISTEN:**
  - HowSound - "Barf Draft with an iPhone"

Assignment:
- Following the instructions provided in HowSound's "Barf Draft" podcast, record your own "barf draft" and upload it to the course website.
- Upload at least one form of data collected on your policy area during the week (e.g., field notes, photos, interview transcriptions, audio collected, analysis of data, etc.) and upload to the course website.
- Complete at least one work log/journal entry (based on guidelines provided) and upload to your personal folder on the course website.

(Week 8) March 18, 2016 - Effective Storyboarding: "Master Class" with Alex Braunstein & Isabel DeBre
Required Materials for Review:

- Abel, Jessica. 2015. *On the Wire: The Storytelling Secrets of the New Masters of Radio.* p. 52-59; 66-68; 112-114.
- Madden, Matt. 2005. *99 Ways to Tell a Story* [Excerpts TBD by Isabel DeBre]
- **LISTEN:**
    - HowSound - "Love is a Battlefield"

Assignments: TBD by Alex Braunstein and Isabel DeBre

(Week 9) March 25, 2016 - The Sociology of Stories and Storytelling
Required Materials for Review:
- **READ:**
    - Mills, C. Wright. 1959. The Sociological Imagination Chapters: 1-8,10 & Appendix & Afterword (for background and context)
    - Tilly, Charles, 1999. "The Trouble with Stories"
    - Tilly, Charles, 2008 Excerpts from *Credit & Blame*
    - Mattson, Greggor, 2007. *City and Community*. "Urban Ethnography's 'Saloon Problem' and Its Challenge to Public Sociology"
    - Alpine, Megan. 2015. *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* "Crafting Feel-Good Multiculturalism in This American Life"
- **LISTEN:**
    - This American Life - Episode 416 "Iraq After Us"
- **WATCH:**
    - Adiche, Chimamanda. "The Danger of a Single Story"

Recommended Materials for Review:
- **READ:**
    - "Gordon Park's Harlem Argument"
    - Cunningham, Vinson. *The New Yorker*. "Humans of New York and the Cavalier Consumption of Others"

Assignments:
- Upload at least one form of data collected on your policy area during the week (e.g., field notes, photos, interview transcriptions, audio collected, analysis of data, etc.) and upload to the course website.
- Complete at least one work log/journal entry (based on guidelines provided) and upload to your personal folder on the course website.

Module 4:   Modes & Media for Engaging Publics and Effective Storytelling
In this module students will explore a variety of ways in which policy research can be conveyed to the public. Each week is devoted to an in-depth and hands-on master class where expert storytellers will assist students in editing, refining, and producing their unique policy narrative. Through dedicated lab time, each group will be able to

> *explore their storytelling methodology and reflect on the effectiveness of their particular approach in representing their policy perspective.*

(Week 10) April 8, 2016 - "Master Class" Topic and Speaker TBD

Assignments:
- Upload at least one form of data collected on your policy area during the week (e.g., field notes, photos, interview transcriptions, audio collected, analysis of data, etc.) and upload to the course website.
- Complete at least one work log/journal entry (based on guidelines provided) and upload to your personal folder on the course website.

(Week 11) April 15, 2016 - "Master Class" Topic and Speaker TBD & Client Update with Nicole Pollock
Assignments:
- Upload at least one form of data collected on your policy area during the week (e.g., field notes, photos, interview transcriptions, audio collected, analysis of data, etc.) and upload to the course website.
- Complete at least one work log/journal entry (based on guidelines provided) and upload to your personal folder on the course website.

(Week 12) April 22, 2016 - "Master Class" Topic and Speaker TBD
Assignments:
- Upload at least one form of data collected on your policy area during the week (e.g., field notes, photos, interview transcriptions, audio collected, analysis of data, etc.) and upload to the course website.
- Complete at least one work log/journal entry (based on guidelines provided) and upload to your personal folder on the course website.

> **Module 5:   Public Presentation of Research Findings**
> *The course concludes with students applying the multimedia techniques they learned in previous weeks to develop a unique presentation of their research findings to various audiences both within and outside of the university setting. Presentations will focus on fostering community engagement, feedback, and active discussion on each group's specific policy narrative and the policy issue more broadly.*

(Week 12) April 29, 2016 - In-Class Workshop and Presentation Preparation

(Week 13) May 6, 2016 - Public Presentation of Findings and Feedback