Course Objectives and Organization: The aim of this half-credit seminar is to provide MPP candidates with intellectual exercises to understand public policy in broad terms in the sense of the ‘sociological imagination’ described by C.W. Mills decades ago. Given the diverse backgrounds of students, the literature reflects an eclectic collection of theoretical and empirical selections. Students will have an opportunity to examine the interconnections between their own professional experiences and public policies of interest.

The readings for the second part of the MPP seminar semester are partially based on the professional and policy interests expressed by students in MPP I. Another purpose of the reading selections is to continue to provide information about theoretical and policy issues highlighted in the MPP I readings. The readings and course discussions / activities are also aimed at strengthening conceptual skills and insights related to understanding, analyzing, and applying policy skills in various public policy arenas.

I will utilize the first part of the course to review a few topics which cut across many policy arenas: poverty, demography, and immigration. I have also chosen the current foreclosure crisis as a topic that can help illustrate the interconnections between public policy, class, and urban space. In the second part of the seminar, students will have an opportunity to select readings and topics in which they have strong professional interests. This will be explained, further, in class.

Course Requirements:

- Class discussions based on reading assignments;
- Interview (and presentation) with an elected or governmental official involved with one’s policy or professional interests; and,
- Two opinion columns (4-5 pages each) that focus on a public or professional issue in one’s area of interest, and that can be shared with local newspapers; the topics can be related to the GAO and research think tank assignments.

Course reading text includes a packet available for purchase at Gnomon copy, and a few additional online readings.
Session 1 (1-16-08): Overview of MPP II and course requirements; reflections about MPP I

Session 2 (1-30): Stages in the Evolution of the U.S. Social Welfare State

Read:
* J. Jennings, “…From the New Deal to the Clinton Administration” (packet)


Session 3 (2-06): U.S. Census as a Key Tool for Understanding and Analyzing Public Policy / Workshop at Tisch Library

Read:

* See/visit the website for the U.S. Census Bureau prior to class: [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)

Session 4 (2-13): Poverty as a Key Public Policy Challenge in U.S. Society

Read:
* S. Nilsen, “Poverty in America: Consequences for Individuals and the Economy,” Testimony before the chairman, Committee on Ways and Means, House of Representatives (US GAO, Jan 24, 2007)


Session 5 (2-20): U.S. Society and Public Policy: Demography and Immigration as Challenges

Read:

Note: see sessions 7 and 8 (selection of 2 GAO reports); and, sessions 9 and 10 (interviewee should be selected)

Session 6 (2-27): Contemporary Public Policy Challenge: Nation’s Foreclosure Crisis.
Read: *J. Carr and L. Kolluri, “Predatory Lending: An Overview” (packet)


Session 7 (3-05): U.S. GAO as a Resource for Understanding and Analyzing Public Policy: Presentation and Discussion of Select GAO Reports I
Read: Students must choose two GAO reports in your areas of policy interests. (Please inform me about your selections by 2-27)

Session 8 (3-12): U.S. GAO as a Resource for Understanding and Analyzing Public Policy: Presentation and Discussion of Select GAO Reports II

Note: see session 11 and 12 (selection of two research reports)

Session 9/10 (3-26 and 4-02): Presentations based on interviews with an elected or government official involved with students’ interest
Read: * P. Eisenger, “City Politics in an Era of Federal Devolution” Urban Affairs Review, Vol. 33, No. 3 (Jan 98) -access online

Session 11 (4-09): Review of select public policies in Massachusetts I
Read: This assignment requires that you access a complete public policy report from any one of the following research think tanks: MassINC; Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center; or, Rappaport Institute. Select a study that reflects your own professional interests and be prepared to discuss in class. (Please inform me of your selection by 3-26).
Session 12 (4-16): Review of select public policies in Massachusetts II

Session 13 (4-23): Presentations and discussions of op-ed columns