

POL 215 Capstone Seminar: The Ethics and Practice of Public Policy  
Spring, 2008

SYLLABUS  
January 14, 2008

**Instructors:**

|                         |  |         |              |
|-------------------------|--|---------|--------------|
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**Class meeting:**

Tuesdays, 7:10pm – 9:00 pm

Monroe (2115 G St.), room B36 and B37 and Corcoran Hall (725 21st St.), room 111

**1. Course Description and Objective:**

Students will work in teams to design and analyze a substantive policy issue and present findings in response to a project scope of work developed by one of the clients and selected by the instructor.

This course is a capstone of your professional education and an introduction into the professional practice of public policy analysis. During this semester, you will draw on the tools and expertise garnered from prior coursework to analyze one or more important public policy problems. On the basis of that analysis, you will then develop recommendations for dealing with those problems to a client official or agency. All projects available for this semester are for real clients, addressing real policy issues. You will be expected to complete the project on time and demonstrating high professional standards.

You can expect to apply and demonstrate skills in problem definition, issue framing, collection of data and information, interviewing, selection and analyses of alternatives, presentation of findings and recommendations, design of implementation tools and administrative procedures and organizations, report writing and oral presentation to policymakers, and appreciation of practical and ethical issues in the content of policy and the process of making and implementing it.

If you are **not** in your final semester of course work towards a Master's Degree, contact Dr. Augustine immediately to discuss whether you have had enough classes and experience to benefit fully from the class and to succeed in it. In this instance, your advisor will have to agree to your enrollment in the course.

**2. Grading and Class Assignments**

Your grade in the course will be based on three assignments.

*A. ASSIGNMENT: Completion of On-Line Test on Protocols for Treatment of Human Subjects (10 percent)*

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Over the past several decades, there has been growing interest and pressures to ensure that researchers treat human subjects in an appropriate and ethical manner. Though much of this concern was originally directed toward medical research, a number of highly-publicized cases in the 1970s and 1980s have led to the development of both guidelines for ethical treatment of human subjects in social science research and a now-mandatory process that universities, think-tanks, and other associations engaged in social science research must follow to ensure that such guidelines are followed. Many of you will encounter what is now commonly referred to as the “IRB process” (where IRB stands for Institutional Review Board) in your professional work, and even when not subject to the IRB process, will still be called upon to act ethically when working with human subjects. To familiarize yourselves with what this is all about, you will each be required to take and pass an on-line test on ethical treatment of human subjects in the social and behavioral sciences, and to meet and discuss issues discovered in the process of taking that test in a class session. Details of how to take and complete the test are posted on the Blackboard website.

## *B. Review and “Mini-Critique” of Past Capstone Projects (10 percent)*

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In order to give you an idea of what other students have accomplished in the capstone, and to exercise your own critical and analytical faculties, each of you will choose one of several past capstone projects that will be posted on the Blackboard website. Read the report as a policy professional who is about to embark on a similar project for another client. Prepare a short review of the study, no more than 3 pages, single-spaced in length.

- a. Summarize the issues and/or problems addressed in the report (no more than half a page).
- b. Is there enough background to orient you to the issue? What else should it have covered?
- c. Does the text establish why the issue is important and why the research is important? Is it clear how the research was intended to help the client to address the issue?
- d. What other strengths and weaknesses struck you as you read it? Describe some key characteristics, rather than attempting to present a comprehensive assessment of the study.

### C. Capstone Project (80 Percent)

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The major assignment will be to work on one of several capstone projects for a client who has requested our expertise. Details of the project are provided below. The project grade will be based on (a) the overall strength and quality of the report (75 percent of project grade, equivalent to 60 percent of class grade); and your individual contribution to the team effort (25 percent of the project grade, equivalent to 20 percent of class grade). The latter grade will be based both on the faculty advisor's assessment and on the evaluation of your contribution to the project from your fellow team members.

### 3. Projects and Project Assignments:

Study teams, each consisting of five to seven students, will each undertake a project for a client that has been selected by the instructors. At the first class meeting, students will have the opportunity to *request* assignment to a specific project. All project assignments will be made by the instructor. Project assignments will be made considering individual students' interests and expertise, as well as the needs of the project. Teams are likely to consist of members with varied backgrounds. Each member will be expected to bring his or her own perspective to the project. Each team will work with a faculty advisor.

Specific subject matter expertise is not required for assignment to any project. In previous semesters, some students have specifically requested projects outside of their area of expertise. Policy and management professionals are expected to be generalists, able to apply their analytical competencies to a wide range of policy, administration, and political problems.

When making your project request, consider not only the subject matter but also the tasks that are involved in the project. Notice that some projects will require more initial work with the client to better define the scope of work; some students appreciate the flexibility that this allows, while other students prefer more detailed work plans.

### 4. Project Process: Design and Execution

Each study team should contact their clients immediately following project assignment to set up a kick-off meeting. Aim to meet with the client during the second or third week of the semester.

Meet as a group prior to the meeting in order to develop a common understanding of the project, and to get a feel for the range of skills and expertise among team members. Use this opportunity to plan for the kick-off meeting. Identify a single team member who will serve as the contact with the client during the semester. In previous capstones, some groups have found it helpful to read and discuss some readings related to the project prior to meeting with the client. Contact your faculty advisor if you need help identifying appropriate materials.

At the kick-off meeting, you should ask the client to elaborate on the policy "problem," provide any needed background on the organization or program, and discuss available data or resources. During this meeting, you should also find out how much the client wishes to participate in project development, and how he/she prefers to be contacted.

Following the initial meeting, you should refine the scope of work, identify the tasks involved, a timetable for their completion, and allocate responsibilities among team members.

The team will collect information, frame and analyze issues, prepare a report, including examples or drafts of any legislative instructions or administrative instruments necessary to implement recommendations, and develop strategy for moving the policy proposal through the appropriate policy making and implementation bodies. At the end of the semester, each team will present its work in written, graphic, and oral forms.

The faculty advisors will be available for consultation throughout the study period. Having to explain and defend decisions to the advisor is a valuable exercise that forces team members to think clearly and thoroughly. The advisor can also help study teams to navigate complex details, identify viable analytical strategies, understand and manage the client's needs, and organize work to make maximum use of study team members' time.

The work will be organized into the following (somewhat overlapping) phases:

1. Problem definition, issue framing, fact-finding on problem and its causes
2. Study design and adjustment to scope of work, if needed
3. Collection and analysis of data and information and identification of policy options.
4. Analysis of data and information to assess alternative policy options or approaches
5. Development of findings and recommendations.
6. Design of implementation strategy.
7. Drafting of the report, including appropriate graphics
8. Review and revision for the final report.
9. "Mock" presentation to the class and a panel of additional instructors
10. Formal presentation to clients

Presentation of the report will be made in a PowerPoint presentation to the client and other experts, sitting as a "jury," to critique both the substance of the work and its presentation. Unless the client requests otherwise, plan for a 15-minute presentation, followed by 45 minutes of question and answer. This presentation should be structured so that each member of the team has a role. Note that this does *not* mean that every member of the team should participate in the initial, 15-minute presentation. On the contrary, switching speakers frequently during a short presentation can be distracting.

## 5. Team Member Evaluation

Near the end of the semester, the instructor will distribute an evaluation form. Every student will be asked to evaluate the other members of his or her team on the basis of the following criteria:

- Attendance at team meetings
- Timely written work
- Quality of contributions
- Leadership
- Problem solving
- Fairness
- Consideration of others' views
- Creativity
- Decisiveness

## 6. Class Schedule

| Week # | Class Meeting on Tuesday...  |  |
|--------|------------------------------|--|
| 1      | January 15                   | <b>Meet as a class on Tuesday, January 15.</b> Introduction and class overview. Students submit project requests.  |
| 2      | January 22                   | No class. Meet as a group and meet with the client, subject to the client's availability. Commence project design, background research, and refinement of scope of work. Meet with faculty advisor as needed.  |
| 3      | January 29                   | <b>Meet as a class on 1/29/08 or 1/30/08 to discuss ethics in social science research.</b> <i>This session will be held jointly with PAD 209. Students should plan to attend on Tuesday, 1/29/08 at 6:00pm or Wednesday, 1/30/08 at 6:00pm. Note that the start time is earlier than usual. Please advise immediately if you are not able to attend one or the other full sessions.</i><br><br><b>Submit certification of successful completion of On-Line Test on Protocols for Treatment of Human Subjects.</b><br><br>Read <i>NYU IRB Guidelines for Capstone Students</i> ; the link is posted on Blackboard.<br><br>During the week, continue project work. |
| 4      | February 5                   | No class. Continue project work, and meet with faculty advisor as needed.<br><br><b>Submit mini-critique of past capstone project.</b>   |
| 6-8    | February 12, 19, 26          | Execute project design. Meet with the instructor as needed. Draft a working outline and make revisions as necessary.   |
|        | Friday, February 29          | <b>Submit a working outline of the project report for review by the faculty advisor</b>  |
| 9, 10  | March 4, 11                  | Schedule a meeting this week with your faculty advisor to receive comments on the working outline and discuss progress.<br><br><i>SPRING BREAK: MONDAY, 3/17/07 TO FRIDAY, 3/22/07</i>   |
| 10-14  | March 25; April 1, 8, 15, 22 | Develop draft report and start planning for the oral presentation for the client<br><br><b>MOCK PRESENTATIONS: Meet as a class on Monday, April 22.</b> An additional date may be set for mock presentations, depending on student availability.<br><br>Schedule a final presentation with the client.<br><br>Meet with the instructor as needed to finalize the report and prepare the oral presentation.<br><br>Note the following dates:<br><br>Designated date for make-up classes: Tuesday, April 29<br>Designated Monday: Wednesday, April 30<br>Final exams: Monday, May 5 – Tuesday, May 13  |

## 7. Projects

Students should view these descriptions as a starting point for each project. Research teams should expect to refine the scope of work in consultation with the client and the faculty advisor.

*Likely* project tasks are included at the end of each description. Research teams will plan actual tasks with the client and the faculty advisor.

|   |    |
|---|----|
| A. Bread for the City .....                             | 8  |
| B. National League of Cities.....                       | 9  |
| C. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) ..... | 10 |
| D. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).....      | 11 |
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| F. DC City Council I.....                               | 16 |
| G. DC City Council II.....                              | 18 |
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### Planning for Future Service Delivery

Bread for the City's mission is to provide vulnerable residents of Washington, DC with comprehensive services including food, clothing, medical care, legal representation and advice, and social services in an atmosphere of dignity and respect. Bread for the City helps clients assess their individual needs and identify appropriate resources upon their first visit.

The Bread for the City Legal Clinic exists to ensure better access to justice for low-income individuals in the District of Columbia by providing free legal representation and advice in the areas of landlord/tenant, family, and disability law. A recent grant received from the Access to Justice Commission will support the creation of a new Community Lawyering Project in Bread for the City's Anacostia Center. The project is designed to respond to the legal needs of the community and engage in policy matters that impact communities east of the Anacostia River.

**Project Objective:** Conduct research to: 1) assess the legal needs of the residents east of the Anacostia River and 2) determine the policy issues that are impacting residents' lives.

**Purpose:** To assess the current substantive area gaps in legal services provided to residents east of the river and establish a legal practice that meets those needs. The findings will be used to focus the scope of the Community Lawyering Project's legal services and assist with addressing the policy matters that are of interest to the community.

**Methodology:** Conduct questionnaires/surveys and conduct informational interviews with various community-based organizations such public housing residential groups, church congregations, and neighborhood and civic organizations.

This research project should have quantitative statistical analysis and qualitative research that provides a holistic assessment of the communities' needs.

**Support to Research Staff:** Bread's Community Lawyer will support the research team by providing assistance with organizing, planning and implementation of the project. The attorney will have access to Bread' organizational history, contact information for interviewees, studies related to the lack of legal services east of the river, and any general questions related to the project.

**Background:** The study will expand on a 2003 study conducted by the District of Columbia Bar Foundation that called on the courts, the bar, legal service providers, legal service funders, and members of the community to work together to develop a sustained and comprehensive approach to bringing equal access to justice for the indigent in our community. However, this study limited its survey to legal services providers and staff. Bread for the City is interested in the opinions of the residents. No one understands the needs of Washington's low- income community better than its residents.

*This project is likely to entail survey design and implementation, interviews, a literature review, document review, data retrieval and presentation, and development of planning documents.*

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### Local Initiatives to Address “Illegal Immigrants”

The newspapers are full of bleak news about some local efforts to identify and exclude "illegal immigrants" and/or to enforce local mores on newcomers, legal or not. We'd like to monitor and report on the range of what locals are doing that is NOT negative and to encourage this line of local effort.

- Identify and assess examples of positive local practice for the City Practice Database, for use in speeches, testimony and publications
- Recommend range of options for local governments, maybe in a sort of "decision memo" that locals could use to review their situation and choose strategies
- Draft Municipal Action Guides and City Practice Briefs that suggest a range of positive approaches to immigrant integration based on actual local experience.

*This project is likely to entail a literature review, periodicals review, identification of best practices, policy analysis, primary data collection through interviews and other methods, collection and presentation of quantitative data.*

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### Setting Enforcement Priorities

Policy makers, concerned about the reduction or prevention of employment discrimination, need to evaluate carefully the relative costs and benefits of investigations focused on smaller outlying industries (eliminating “the worst of the worst”) and investigations focused on larger industries with the greatest impact on overall discrimination. Thus, focuses on producing greater compliance among industries that already have low levels of employment discrimination (making “the good better”) might be more effective in reducing overall occupational discrimination than focuses on those industries with high levels of discrimination.

Faced with the prospect of a “bad industry,” enforcement agencies might want to consider what could be called the search for “good firms in a bad industry” that is, the search for firms with jobs similar to A and B (or stockers and cashiers) but a higher proportion of female managers than the firm under investigation or the industry as a whole. The purpose of the search would be to assess to what extent, if any, the industry has “positive” outliers; i.e., firms that might place a higher priority on diversity practices than other firms in the industry. The search could be conducted in various ways depending on the available data sources. For example, with respect to sex discrimination, EEO-1 data can be used, as an initial screening tool, to determine whether there is variation in the proportion of female managers within the industry. Investigators typically assume that gender distribution is uniform within an industry, but this may not be the case. Exemplary firms may exist, but they are easy to overlook, especially when the EEO-1 data is used to measure aggregate totals. The EEO-1 survey was not designed to collect information on internal labor markets, but if one assumes that most firms in the industry recruit managers internally, then information on a “good” firm might also be used to provide an alternative availability estimate for the subject firm. A sample based on one “good” firm is, of course, not a reliable estimate, but it does provide a rough upper bound on the highest availability figure that is likely to be observed in the industry. Put simply, it tells the investigator what might be expected under the best of circumstances.

*Students participating in the EEOC project would be named "Fellows," and would have the opportunity to work closely with staff on an applied policy research project. At least one or two students should know SAS (preferred, although SPSS is an option). Quantitative will only be a part of the project, and it is likely that the project will entail some level of legislative analysis, interview or case study research, literature review, and application of theory.*

Margaret Rice, Chief, Reregistration Branch II, Office of Pesticide programs, US EPA  
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### Evaluation of EPA's Fumigant Stewardship Program

Description of Project: Provide options for structuring and implementing a performance-based evaluation plan for EPA's fumigant stewardship program.

Background: EPA's Office of Pesticide Programs (OPP) is currently reviewing the safety of a group of soil fumigant pesticides. Fumigants are used to "disinfect" soil prior to planting a variety of commercial food crops. These compounds are gases that move readily through the air, and at sufficient concentrations, can cause health effects, ranging from respiratory irritation to reproductive effects, to the people who are engaged in application activities as well as others who live and work in areas near applications. EPA is developing a series of measures to reduce exposure to farm workers and communities where fumigants are used. We expect to announce a decision in May 2008. With over 100 million pounds of fumigants being applied in the US annually, the scope and potential impact of risk mitigation is immense. This project is among the most highly visible in OPP.

Among the risk reduction measures is a requirement for the companies who sell fumigants to develop and implement a stewardship program, with two distinct parts—one designed to educate and train applicators and handlers and another directed toward community planning, education and response. (See the description of Stewardship Program components, posted on the Blackboard site. For more information about soil fumigants in general go to: [epa.gov/oppsrrd1/reregistration/soil-fumigants/](http://epa.gov/oppsrrd1/reregistration/soil-fumigants/)).

Having a sound basis for evaluating the stewardship program will be important to demonstrate whether or not the program has been effective in reducing pesticide exposure to agricultural workers and farm communities, and in identifying which aspects of the program need to be revised or strengthened.

Because EPA is asking the chemical companies to provide and augment education and services that have traditionally been provided by state and local governmental authorities, demonstrating the effectiveness of the stewardship programs will be particularly important, both to establish its credibility and as a model for future public-private initiatives related to pesticide safety.

To participate in this project no specific knowledge of pesticides or chemistry is required. Interest, education or experience in the health sciences and program evaluation would be an asset.

Challenges: EPA has some experience evaluating the effectiveness of the worker/handler training programs, although moving toward performance based measures remains a challenge. Even more challenging is the community outreach and education component of the stewardship program. Elements that will need to be addressed include:

- **Communication.** Many of the communities affected by fumigant use are immigrants, largely Hispanic, although some workers speak indigenous languages and do not understand either Spanish or English well.
- **Cultural Differences.** People in the communities where fumigants are used come from different countries, mostly Latin American, and bring with them different perceptions and beliefs regarding health, risk, and safety.
- **Stakeholder Perspectives.** Growers and community activists disagree on the need for notification prior to using fumigants, the substance and content of information that should be included in notification, and the need for posting buffer zones around treated areas after fumigant use.

Product: EPA is looking for options for structuring and implementing a performance based evaluation plan. These recommendations could take the form of a written report and/or a briefing for the OPP fumigant project managers. The product would be used by OPP managers to inform our choice of evaluation methods for the fumigant stewardship program.

Recommendations would address, but not be limited to, the following:

- In consultation with OPP staff, clarifying/quantifying the goals or desired outcomes of both components of the stewardship program.
- In consultation with OPP staff, identifying key stakeholders.
- Identifying potential methods for measuring progress toward these goals.
- Evaluating pros and cons of various methods
- Developing a time frame for implementing the stewardship program evaluation plan, in concert with other elements of EPA's fumigant decision.

Timing: The Capstone group's recommendations would be most useful by the end of April, 2008. We would like to establish a briefing date early in the process, as EPA intends to issue its decision on the risk mitigation for the soil fumigants in May/June of 2008.

*This project is likely to entail process review, process development, program evaluation planning, legislative review, identification of best practices.*

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### Barriers to Accessibility in D.C.

**Research Topic:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Title III and the D.C. Human Rights Act of 1977 (HRA) prohibit discrimination against people with disabilities<sup>1</sup> in places of public accommodation. A place of public accommodation is a public or private entity that is open to the general public. Covered entities are enumerated in both the HRA and ADA. Although these laws safeguard against discrimination, access to places of public accommodation for people with disabilities is often non-existent. The purpose of this project is to assess the impact of the ADA and HRA on accessibility in D.C., and the challenges that exist for businesses in complying with these laws. Tasks will likely include legislative analysis, primary data collection through interviews, and development of accessibility solutions.

### Research Objectives:

- A. Assess the overall impact and success of the HRA and the ADA on accessibility for people with disabilities in places of public accommodation in D.C.;
- B. Develop, conduct and evaluate a sample survey of businesses' knowledge of accessibility required under the HRA and ADA;
- C. Research any tax breaks given by D.C. for accessibility to places of public accommodations;
- D. Propose possible D.C. tax breaks;
- E. Survey businesses to determine their knowledge of the HRA and the ADA;
- F. Propose possible solutions to these challenges.

**ERC's Background:** Founded by community leaders and interdenominational clergy, the ERC was formed in 1999 when the Fair Housing Council of Greater Washington merged with the Fair Employment Council of Greater Washington. The ERC is one of only a few private civil rights organizations in the nation dedicated to advancing the principles of fair housing, fair employment, and equal access to public accommodations for all protected classes.

Since its inception the ERC has been aggressively combating persistent discriminatory practices that place many Washington area residents at a disadvantage or illegally deny them access to opportunity. In partnership with fair housing groups from across the nation, and a variety of local and national community organizations, academics, researchers, the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs and other civil rights litigators, the ERC implements effective education, research, testing, counseling, enforcement, and advocacy programs. The goal is to identify, challenge and eliminate discrimination in housing, employment, public accommodations and government services.

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<sup>1</sup> Under the HRA and ADA, a person with a disability is a person with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities, an individual having a record of such impairment, or being regarded as having such impairment. While this definition has been narrowed by the court system, the legislation does not specifically name the disabilities that are covered.

## Sources of data or information to which the ERC has access and can provide to students:

### *A. Brief Summary of three HRA and ADA Cases:*

Under the ADA, places of public accommodation have an obligation to remove architectural barriers that prevent people with disabilities from accessing their facilities.

#### *Subway*

On April 24, 2006, the ERC filed a lawsuit against one of the largest and most popular fast-food restaurants in the country - Subway.

The lawsuit alleges long-standing systematic and continuing discrimination by DC-area Subway Restaurants against persons with disabilities because of the restaurants' inaccessibility in violation of the ADA and HRA. Both of these Acts prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability in public accommodations or places that provide goods and services to the public.

Many of the approximately sixty Subway restaurants in Washington, D.C. allegedly contained significant barriers to wheelchair users and other persons with disabilities, including steps blocking access to the restaurants; doors that are too narrow, difficult or impossible to open; bathrooms that are inaccessible or without required equipment; obstacles to the path of travel that prevent wheelchair users from ordering or dining; and self-service items that are out of reach or otherwise inaccessible.

#### *Flexcar/Zipcar*

On October 10, 2007, the ERC filed lawsuits against two car-sharing companies - Flexcar and Zipcar. Flexcar and Zipcar violated both the ADA and the HRA because they did not provide people with disabilities full and equal enjoyment of their car-sharing services.

Plaintiff Rosemary Ciotti of Virginia became a member of Flexcar in May 2007 and was led to believe, through the membership agreement and company website, that hand controls were available in Flexcar vehicles. Hand controls are devices that enable people to drive independently despite being unable to operate accelerator and brake pedals. Also, when the plaintiff contacted Zipcar, she was informed that they did not provide hand controls for its vehicles, which prevented her from becoming a member.

#### *Washington Hospital Center*

In 2004, the Disability Rights Council of Greater Washington (DRC) - a nonprofit advocacy group that merged with the ERC in 2005 - collectively with individual plaintiffs filed a lawsuit against the Washington Hospital Center.

The lawsuit alleges Washington Hospital Center denial of access to health facilities and services, which harmed and endangered the plaintiff's health, and which caused them to suffer humiliation, embarrassment and physical discomfort in violation of the ADA and HRA.

### *B. Additional sources of information:*

DC Office of Human Rights, <http://www.ohr.dc.gov/ohr/site/default.asp>, (202) 727-4559

Justice Department (Civil Rights Division), <http://www.usdoj.gov/> (202) 514-4713

DBTAC - ADA Center, <http://www.dlrp.org/html/topical/PublicAccommodations/index.html>

ADA Home Page [www.ADA.gov](http://www.ADA.gov)

Federal Tax Incentives, <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/taxpack.htm>,  
[http://www.nfib.com/object/IO\\_33417.html](http://www.nfib.com/object/IO_33417.html)

C. *Contacts who can provide assistance:*

- Jennifer Conrad, Esq., Disability Rights Sr. Project Coordinator Manager, ERC, [jconrad@equalrightscenter.org](mailto:jconrad@equalrightscenter.org);
- Elaine Gardner, Esq., Director, Disability Rights Project, Washington Lawyers' Committee, [elaine\\_gardner@washlaw.org](mailto:elaine_gardner@washlaw.org);
- Rabbi Bruce E. Kahn, Executive Director, ERC, [bkahn@equalrightscenter.org](mailto:bkahn@equalrightscenter.org);
- Marc Fiedler, Esq., Member of Disability Rights Council Advisory Board, [mfiedler@koonz.com](mailto:mfiedler@koonz.com).
- Dan Silver, ERC Board Member; Cleary, Gottlieb, Steen & Hamilton, [danandsybil@yahoo.com](mailto:danandsybil@yahoo.com);
- James O. Gibson, ERC Board Member; Senior Fellow, Center for the Study of Social Policy, [jim.gibson@cssp.org](mailto:jim.gibson@cssp.org).

*This project is likely to entail legislative analysis, review of legal documents, interviews, site visits, development of problem-solving processes.*

Donna Cooper, [DMCOOPER@DCCOUNCIL.US](mailto:DMCOOPER@DCCOUNCIL.US), (202) 724-8161  
John A. Wilson Building, 1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, room 17 (temporary), Washington, DC

### The Impact of Homeland Security Grants on Emergency Preparedness in D.C.

Background: In an article dated, Friday, September 7, 2007, the Washington Post reported that the United States Department of Homeland Security (“Homeland Security”) rated the D.C. Region very low, in terms of its ability to respond to a major disaster. The referenced study identified problems in coordinating response, evacuation, medical care and the release of information to the public during a terrorist attack or other emergency. Homeland Security determined that the D.C. region met 13% of the requirements for responding to a major disaster. A former federal official is quoted in the article as saying, “Worst-case disaster planning is important for cities and states because it can help them deal with smaller crises. He said that Homeland Security realized in its study last year that many government agencies had done little planning and training for major incidents; however, these entities had received millions of dollars for planning and training purposes.”<sup>2</sup>

The District of Columbia Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (“HSEMA”) is responsible for administering homeland security grants awarded to the District of Columbia. In order to provide for more effective and cohesive oversight of emergency preparedness and Homeland Security activities, the Department of Homeland Security requires that DHS grants awarded to states (the District is viewed as a state) be transmitted through a single State Administrative Agent (“SAA”). The District was chosen as the SAA for grants awarded to the National Capital Region. The Office for Domestic Preparedness awarded all homeland security grants to the District of Columbia, the established SAA for both state and regional funds, and a select number of grants that affect jurisdictions outside of the District. HSEMA’s objective is to provide oversight and management of grant funds at the District agency and regional levels in order to improve mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery capabilities for all hazards.<sup>3</sup>

Project Description: Students will obtain contract award information for select agencies in the District of Columbia from the District of Columbia Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency. The purpose, of which, will be to organize the data for review and analysis. Contract awards/expenditures will be reviewed to determine how the District of Columbia has utilized grants provided by the United States Department of Homeland Security to further the District’s emergency preparedness efforts. Students will have to obtain the priorities of the District of Columbia, in terms of emergency preparedness, for purposes of comparing priorities with actual expenditures, on an agency-by-agency basis. Students will also review the report released by the United States Department of Homeland Security to obtain more detailed information concerning the region’s emergency preparedness assessment.

The purpose of reviewing expenditures is to obtain whether or not the expenditures have placed the District of Columbia in an actual position of being more prepared in the case of a major emergency. This covers: first responders; hospitals; evacuation plans; communications; emergency shelters; and our coordination with neighboring jurisdictions for additional support and assistance.

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<sup>2</sup>Sheridan, Mary Beth. “Area Disaster Planning Gets More Muscle: Officials Respond to Criticism of Evacuation Preparedness.” Washington Post 7 September 2007.

<sup>3</sup>Homeland Security and Emergency Management (District of Columbia), Grant Administration. <http://hsema.dc.gov/dcema/cwp>, December 10, 2007.

It may be valuable to compare select expenditures with the expenditures of other comparable jurisdictions (e.g. New York City, Chicago, Illinois) in an effort to compare and contrast expenditures, and how the expenditures translate to a better prepared city. The Homeland Security Report could provide insight into how certain other cities were rated.

*This project is likely to entail literature review, budget review and analysis, data retrieval and analysis, process review, examination of grants documentation, primary data collection through interviews and other methods.*

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### Re-Integrating Ex-Offenders into the Community

Overview: There are many programs and initiatives that target the ex-offender population. Such programs are critical to re-entrants, as they make the transition from incarceration to being productive citizens. However, these individuals face many barriers to becoming independent and self-sufficient adults, after being released. There are several variables that are generally cited as contributing factors to this population being disconnected from employment:

- The preference of employers to hire individuals that do not have criminal records;
- Legal barriers that prevent them from hiring persons with criminal records for certain jobs;
- A general refusal to hire ex-offenders for fear that workers and/or customers would sue them if the ex-offender harmed them during work activities; and
- The low education attainment and job experience levels of the ex-offender population.

In summation, there are two general barriers—(1) the employer (failure of employers to hire ex-offenders); and (2) lack of job skills (ex-offender population). In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of programs and initiatives that target this population for purposes of helping them reintegrate back into society. On August 13, 2004, Mayor Williams issued an Executive Order (“EO”) establishing the Ex-Offender Re-Entry Initiative. Subsequent to the EO, Councilmember Marion Barry introduced Bill 16-910, the “Office of Ex-Offender Affairs and Commission on Re-Entry and Ex-Offender Affairs Act of 2006”. The bill, which became law on March 8, 2007, established, within the government of the District of Columbia, an Office on Ex-Offender Affairs and the Commission on Re-Entry and Ex-Offender Affairs. Councilmember Barry cited the importance of establishing the Office and Commission as a matter of law. He also noted that the Office would promote the general welfare, empowerment and reintegration of this population in the areas of employment and career development, health care, education, housing and social services.

Project Description: This research project would focus on variable two, lack of job skills. Many ex-offenders require employment training that is directly related to opportunities that are available or that are being created in the District of Columbia. There are several programs that provide job skills training for this very population. Students would review select programs and evaluate those programs pursuant to their established criteria. The results would serve the purpose of providing guidance/recommendations to the District of Columbia government concerning how these programs should be designed to be most effective. Students may want to begin the process by reviewing model programs in maybe one or two jurisdictions, nationally. This would serve as a starting point for students to obtain information on the various initiatives that have achieved positive outcomes. The identified strategies could be replicated in the District of Columbia.

Considerations: Mission of the program; number of participants served; programs offered; funding; placement of participants; tracking system (ex-offenders that have participated in the program).

*This project is likely to entail literature review, program assessment and comparison, primary data collection through interviews and other methods.*

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### Identifying Value-Based Variation in National Budgets

Academy staff seek help in developing a set of U.S. future budget scenarios reflecting a range of possible public value choices and preferences.

The work will include the following research tasks: (1) survey social science and public opinion literature and experts to identify value sets held by substantial portions of the U.S. public that are likely to affect their budget preferences; (2) survey the international economics and comparative fiscal policies to identify published typologies of fiscal policies/strategies that may reflect differing national values as well as a particular nation's history and challenges; (3) drawing on the types identified in tasks 1 and 2, consult with Academy staff to specify measures to be used in arraying the budgets of developed countries on each of a set of several value dimensions; and (4) as time permits, document and quantify the actual range of variation among developed nations, e.g., the 30 developed nations that comprise the OECD set, on several value dimensions as manifested in their budgets and national accounts.

Several value dimensions come to mind immediately that are likely to manifest themselves through the national budget process. On each of these there is a wide range of variation among developed countries:

1. Public vs. private allocation of resources. Nations with developed economies differ widely in their manifest preference for allocation of resources through public sector revenues and spending vs. private decision-making. Readily measured as percent of GDP in the public sector.
2. Redistribution/egalitarianism. Nations differ in the extent to which they choose to use taxation and spending policies to reduce economic and social inequality and offset the distributive effects of markets. Measurable in part by analyzing the distribution of taxation and spending across economic strata.
3. Investment/savings vs. consumption. Nations differ greatly in the proportion of both public and private income that is saved and invested rather than consumed. Public spending can be classified as primarily investment or consumption, where investment includes human capital investments such as education and training, primary and preventive health care for children and youth and consumption includes health spending for the last years of life of the elderly. National accounts can be analyzed to make this split at a broad level, but we may want to analyze health spending separately in these terms given its centrality to the discussion of U.S. fiscal futures.
4. Public security/safety. Nations differ widely in the proportion of public spending devoted to national and homeland security, public safety and criminal justice, and intelligence functions. These are partly based on historical choices and circumstances and partly based on differences in public values or preferences.
5. Economic growth maximization vs. resource/environmental sustainability. Some developed nations, e.g., Russia in the case of oil and gas, base their current fiscal strategy on exploitation of exhaustible national resources and/or damage to their natural environment while others emphasize environmental protection and sustainability.

No doubt the survey of literature and experts will uncover other value dimensions that are represented in the actual range of experience of developed nations. One reason for focusing on the OECD set is to help bound the range of possible scenarios to those that are plausible because they are within the range of choices already

being made at a national level by developed nations. Note that measurement has to include the combined public sector, both national and subnational governments, given constitutional variation between centralized and federal systems.

Work will be under the supervision of GWU faculty, with guidance from Academy staff. A first interim report on the results of tasks 1 and 2 should be provided after one month. At this point, Academy staff will specify several value dimensions of interest and provide guidance on possible quantitative measures. A second interim report proposing and assessing the validity and reliability of each measure will be provided. At this point Academy staff will work with the research team to select measures to be used for each value dimension. A final report and oral presentation to the Academy will explore the range of variation among developed countries on each of the selected value dimensions, using the selected measures, and how this variation may be related to social values widely held in those nations.

## *I. DC Office of the City Administrator (OCA)*

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### Emergency Health Care Management Strategies

**Background:** Inpatient hospitalizations, emergency department visits, and emergency transports constitute one of the most costly segments of health care delivery in the District. Unfortunately, a sizable portion of hospitalizations, ED visits, and ambulance rides are for non-emergent cases. This generates unnecessary spending in our publicly funded Medicaid and Alliance programs as well as strain and overcrowding of critical services that should be reserved to meet the demand for verifiable emergent situations. To reduce unnecessary use of these services, the Office of the City Administrator and the Department of Health are developing a comprehensive city-wide strategy for effective education and care coordination, for all patients receiving care in the District. The goals of this initiative are to:

- Identify populations and sources of unnecessary hospitalizations, ED visits, and emergency transports.
- Develop tangible strategies for reducing preventable use of these services.
- Devise implementation plans specific for each participating agency and community stakeholder.

A phased approach will be adopted to address each main category of emergency care misuse. Best-practices research and strategic planning will be necessary for the following four phases:

**Phase I – Frequent Flyers:** Identify and target specific individuals, populations, and sites that are commonly misuse emergency services, also known as “frequent fliers”. These may include homeless shelters, nursing homes, group homes, individuals with chronic diseases, and other persons or sites with excessive use of emergency care.

**Phase II – ER Diversion Pilot Program:** Evaluate the success and feasibility of long-term implementation of the current ER Diversion pilot program operation by the DC Primary Care Association, in which Community Health Workers are placed in area emergency rooms and link patients to medical homes in the community for primary care.

**Phase III – Street Outreach:** Research best practices on effective outreach to and care coordination of high-risk individuals who frequently misused emergency care, including the homeless, mentally ill, or substance abusers.

**Phase IV – Community Outreach and Education:** Develop a city-wide communication and education strategy to alter deep-rooted and long-standing health seeking behavior that favors emergency care over primary care and prevention.

Findings from the Capstone project will greatly influence the city’s plans for how existing and new funds will be directed through grants and contracts to reduce emergency care misuse in FY 2009.

*This project is likely to entail literature review, identification of best practices, interview or case study research, policy analysis, collection and presentation of quantitative data.*

## 8. Guidelines for Report Writing and Presentation

*The final report should be 30-40 pages in length, double-spaced (7,500 to 10,000 words), exclusive of attached tables, graphs and other appendix material.*

1. *Identify your audience.* It is usually layered: The client is a decision maker or decision-making body. There is usually a staff audience as well. There may also be other audiences of peers of the client, media, and general public. Any document prepared for a public official must be assumed to be in the public domain. It is important to understand the client's/audience's technical competence level, how they may apply the information conveyed, and the institutional and policy/political context within which they work.
2. *Identify key messages and get your message straight.* It is important to focus on a few key points, targeted to the identified audience.
3. *Simplify your words – present in simple, non-technical language, which is free of scientific jargon.* Strip away everything that isn't essential in order to make the point as clearly as possible.
4. *Get the facts straight.* Spell names and things correctly. Organize evidence in a logical sequence. Double-check the accuracy of figures (especially those derived by calculation) and other information. Know where you're the sources of your data and other information. Exercise due diligence as to their credibility.
5. *Understand the importance of graphics -- photos, charts, illustrations.* In presenting data, especially in briefing papers or executive summaries, simplify tables and graphics to convey the essential message. Details can go into appendices. For each table or graphic, include a complete and accurate caption. Coordinate your report's text with the table or graphic to which it refers. Graphs and tables should tell a story in a way that makes it possible for the reader to quickly grasp its point without having had two semesters of advanced econometrics.
6. *Use academic citations sparingly.* "For Further Information" may be a useful appendix.
7. *Structure the report to help the reader follow your logic.* Use numbers and/or letters for headings and sub-headings to help the reader to understand the logical flow of your report. Include a table of contents and a list of figures or tables. (Note that Microsoft Word automates numbering of headings and headings, and the creation of tables of contents and lists of figures. If you have not learned how to use this functionality, this is a good time to do so.)
8. *Keep all pages identified.* Include page numbers on every page, as well as the final submission date and project title. Documents have a way of taking on a life all their own, and individual pages can become separated from the rest of the document.

The report should be organized (with some variations to fit the situation) as follows:

### **1. The Executive Summary or Briefing Paper**

Busy clients will read the executive summary of a report or a briefing paper based on it, and if it is compelling, may read the entire report. So these documents should be brief, clearly written and free of jargon; and organized to present:

- The central problem that has been addressed, and its importance;
- Major recommendations, with
  - i. concise statements of the supporting findings and
  - ii. the reasoning behind each of them.

The executive summary or briefing paper should be able to “stand alone” as a basis for decisions.

It also provides the basis for the PowerPoint presentation, which should take approximately 15 minutes and 10-12 frames.

### **2. Introduction (The Problem)**

This section orients the reader to the problem by providing background, describing the key characteristics of the institutional / environmental / legal / historical / other context, and describing and characterizing the problem. Explain why the client has asked for the research, and how the client could use the research to pursue the organization’s objectives. This may entail brief descriptions of any applicable laws, regulation, policy or management issues that are involved or have contributed to any of its dimensions. Remember, how the problem is framed greatly affects the kinds of responses that can be fashioned for it.

This section may also be used to describe how the study was conducted and provide a brief synopsis of the organization of the report.

### **3. Sections, as needed, to discuss salient aspects of the problem, findings and recommendations with respect to each.**

These sections of the report provide the detailed analyses that support the executive summary’s findings and recommendations, which should be stated at the conclusion of each sub-section. The number of sections has to be tailored to fit the subject matter. The use of sub-headings and tables or graphics should be used where possible to provide appropriate historical or comparative information, and to simplify the presentation.

- a. *Establish the relevance of the research.* What could happen as a result of this research? It may be helpful to think about what would happen if this research were *not* performed. Why has the client asked for this research now? Why is it now on the organization’s agenda?
- b. *Describe the implications.* Explain the relevance of your research, focusing on how your research provides insight into the issue or can help the client to address the issue.

### **4. Appendices**

Detailed descriptions of methodology, references, and tables containing large amounts of data should be placed in appendices unless they are essential to the discussion in the body of the report. Appendices may also contain acknowledgements, copies of relevant statutes, regulations, MOUs, etc., and drafts of new policy or management instruments designed to implement the recommendations.

## 9. Instructor Bios

**Nancy Y. Augustine, Ph.D.**, is Senior Research Associate with the George Washington Institute of Public Policy at George Washington University. Her research interests focus on public finance, economic development, and a wide range of state and local economic policy and governance issues. Her main responsibilities are to assist policy research conducted through GWIPP, and pursue additional research and funding opportunities for herself and other researchers affiliated with GWIPP.

Dr. Augustine brings with her 10 years of experience as an urban planner at the local government level. Her responsibilities included intergovernmental relations, policy assessment, population forecasting, protection of environmental and cultural resources, comprehensive and strategic planning, as well as planning for immediate and future investments in transportation, parks, schools, public safety, information technology and overall capital expenditures for government operations. She has also conducted research in the areas of affordable housing, housing finance, and housing market trends. She received a Master of Urban and Environmental Planning from the University of Virginia in 1990, a Master of Arts in Economics from Georgetown University in 2000, and a Ph.D. in Public Policy (Urban Policy concentration) from the George Washington University in 2006. She also received her B.A. from George Washington.

**Prof. Joseph J. Cordes** is Director of SPPPA and Professor of Economics, Public Policy and Public Administration, and International Affairs. He received a B.A. in Economics from Stanford University (1971), and the Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Wisconsin, Madison (1977). Dr. Cordes was a Brookings Economic Policy fellow in the Office of Tax Policy in the U.S. Department of the Treasury in 1980-81, and served as a senior economist on the Treasury's Tax Reform project in 1984. From 1989 to 1991 he was Deputy Assistant Director for Tax Analysis at the Congressional Budget Office. He was a Visiting Fellow at the Urban Institute in 1998-1999, and is currently an Associate Scholar in the Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy at the Urban Institute. He is presently engaged in co-editing a volume on the causes and policy implications of increasing convergence between nonprofit organizations and for-profit businesses, and a volume comparing the evolution and challenges facing welfare state institutions in Europe and the United States.

**Dr. Julia Friedman** served as Chief Economist for the District of Columbia from December 1992 until her retirement on September 30, 2006. As Chief Economist and Deputy CFO for Revenue Analysis, she built a research program to describe and forecast the economy of the District and to forecast revenue from all tax and non-tax sources. These forecasts are the baseline for the annual budget and long-term financial plan. She also managed the preparation of hundreds of sworn testimonies and fiscal impact analyses of more than a thousand legislative proposals and special studies. As of 1996, these budgetary analyses are binding on all new legislation.

Friedman's work helped to shape D.C.'s fiscal recovery and emergence from a period of federal control that began in 1995 and lasted for 8 years. Guided by considerations of efficiency, revenue adequacy, equity, and other basic principles, her work deeply influenced the Tax Parity Act of 1999 and the GAO report of March 2003 that finds an annual "structural imbalance" in D.C. of roughly \$1 billion. And it affected many economic development policies such as Tax Increment Finance, the Way to Work legislation, the Convention Center, and the Ballpark. She received the Cafritz Award for Excellence in Government Service in 2000, the first year the award was given, and the public service award granted by the GWU chapter of Pi Alpha Alpha, graduate honorary society in Public Affairs, in 2006.

Prior to service in D.C., Dr. Friedman was assistant and associate professor of economics and department chair in the Department of Economics, Macalester College, St. Paul, Minnesota. While on leave from Macalester she served a Visiting Associate Professor at the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, University

of Minnesota. In 1990/1991 she was the elected President of the Minnesota Economics Association. She was Visiting Assistance Professor of Economics at the University of Oregon in the 1970s.

Dr. Friedman received a Master's degree and PhD (1972) in Economics from the University of Oregon, following a BA (1965) in Mathematics from the University of Missouri. She was Vice President and a founding principal of Economic Consultants Northwest from 1974-1984.

**Charlotte Kirschner** is a Ph.D. candidate in Public Policy concentrating in national security with a specific interest in homeland security and terrorism. Ms. Kirschner's dissertation research focuses on the impacts of the homeland security grants on state and local public safety spending and preparedness. She is also currently working as a Research Assistant for the George Washington Institute of Public Policy on a property tax project in partnership with the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. Ms. Kirschner has also worked on the Government Performance Project and on a project for the Homeland Security Institute estimating the economic impacts of homeland security measures.

Before coming to GWU, Ms. Kirschner worked for the Administrative Offices of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court conducting macro-level policy research on domestic violence, juvenile court justice, and court house security and managing the state's caseload statistics system. Charlotte received her Master of Social Service from Bryn Mawr College and her B.A. in Psychology and Women's Studies from Syracuse University.

**Elizabeth Sherman, PhD** Elizabeth A. Sherman, Ph.D., is the Executive Director of Presidential Classroom, a non-partisan democracy education program for high school students from around the world. Now in its 39<sup>th</sup> year, Presidential Classroom offers one-week conferences in Washington, D.C. on diverse topics but with a common focus on democratic citizenship, public service and civic responsibility. Dr. Sherman also serves as Adjunct Professor at the Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration at the George Washington University in Washington, D. C. where she currently teaches courses on politics and public policy and advises students completing their capstone projects in the master's program.

In 1992 Dr. Sherman founded and directed the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. She established a graduate certificate program, conference series, political network and research institute focused on policy research, political education and leadership development for women. From 2001-2004, Dr. Sherman served as a research at the Center for Public Leadership and at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Sherman holds a Ph.D. in sociology from Boston College, a master's degree in urban and environmental policy from Tufts University and a bachelor's degree in political science from Emmanuel College. She is married to former Congressman Mickey Edwards.

**Prof. Hal Wolman** holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Michigan and a Master's in Urban Planning from M.I.T. Prior to coming to George Washington, Dr. Wolman was Director of the Policy Sciences Graduate program at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County from 1997-2000. Prior to that he was Professor of Political Science and Urban Affairs at Wayne State University. He also was a Senior Research Associate in the Urban Institute's Public Finance Program from 1978-1984.

## 10. School of Public Policy and Public Administration Policies

*The following policies have been recommended by the faculty of the School of Public Policy and Public Administration. These policies are in addition to the expectations and standards laid out in this syllabus. Please contact any of the instructors if you have any questions.*

1. Incompletes: A student must consult with the instructor to obtain a grade of I (incomplete) no later than the last day of classes in a semester. At that time, the student and instructor will both sign the CCAS contract for incompletes and submit a copy to the School Director.

The grade of I (incomplete) must be changed by a date agreed on by instructor and the student but no later than the last day of the examination period for the fall or spring semester immediately following the semester or summer session in which the grade of I is assigned. An Incomplete that is not changed within this period automatically becomes an F. In cases of well-documented extenuating circumstances, an instructor and a student may jointly petition the director of the student's degree program for additional time in which to complete the work of the course. Such petitions should be submitted within the same period. The grade of I cannot be changed by reregistering for the course here or by taking its equivalent elsewhere, and remains on the student's permanent record even after the course has been successfully completed.

2. Submission of Written Work Products Outside of the Classroom: It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that an instructor receives each written assignment.

3. Submission of Written Work Products after Due Date: Policy on Late Work

- a) It is the policy of the School that all work must be turned in by the assigned due date in order to receive full credit for that assignment, barring any extenuating circumstances.
- b) This policy does not apply to in-class examinations, which must be taken at the assigned time unless permission is received in advance from the instructor.

4. Attendance: Attendance is required. Should exceptional circumstances arise, students must contact the instructor prior to the class meeting to obtain an excused absence.

5. Academic Honesty: Please consult the "policies" section of the GW student handbook for the university code of academic integrity. Note especially the definition of plagiarism: "intentionally representing the words, ideas, or sequence of ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise; failure to attribute any of the following: quotations, paraphrases, or borrowed information." All examinations, papers, and other graded work products and assignments are to be completed in conformance with the George Washington University Code of Academic Integrity.

6. Changing Grades after Completion of Course: No changes can be made in grades after the conclusion of the semester.

7. The Syllabus: This syllabus is a guide to the course for the student. Sound educational practice requires flexibility and the instructor may therefore, at her discretion, change content and requirements at any time during the semester.

8. Accommodation for Students with Disabilities: In order to receive accommodations on the basis of disability, a student must give notice and provide proper documentation to the Office of Disability Support Services, Marvin Center 436, 994-8250. Accommodations will be made based upon the recommendations of the DSS Office. Class sessions may be taped only in cases of documented necessity.