

PPOL 514 Public Management

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Case Study Memos

There will be multiple case options presented over the course of the class. You are required to **choose 2** that interest you the most. Each student must choose one from weeks 2 through 6 and one from weeks 9 through 15 (see sign-up sheet). Though you may complete an additional one and have the two highest scores count toward your final grade. During the weeks you complete a case study memo, you will be expected to heavily participate in the class discussion and lead in answering questions and engaging with other students in the class around the case.

You are required to provide a **2-page, single-spaced, 1-inch margins, 12-point font** case memo. References should be included and this will not count toward your page limit. All memos should be submitted through Canvas on the day it is due. Any late papers will receive points taken off for each late day.

Case studies are scenarios that provide you with an opportunity to identify real world problems, apply theories and course materials, and recommend a course of action – when completing these assignments, you should imagine you were hired by an organization to do just this as a policy analyst! These cases may be real or fictional but will usually represent a complex management or administrative situation in criminal justice with multiple courses of action or solutions. This will enable you to improve your critical thinking and analytical abilities.

In the memo, you will be asked to analyze the problem, recommend a strategy to move forward, and address potential pitfalls. You will be expected to incorporate theories of and concepts from public management into your analysis.

Before you begin writing your case analysis, first ensure that you have walked through the following:

- 1) Read and examine the content and details of the case thoroughly. As you are reading you should be taking note of the key issues, key players, and pertinent facts of the case.
 - a. Things to consider: what is the goal or mission of this organization or department? Who are the stakeholders (internal or external?) What is the service delivery? What external factors impact the organization or department? What is the major problem? What are subsequent problems and implications? What is the role of management and administration in relation the problem? What is the role of service providers in relation to the problem? How does it relate to course content? What are the possible courses of action to resolve issue? What are the likely consequences of each course of action?
 - b. As you are reading you will also need to fill in gaps based on your knowledge of theory and of the real world because the case will not have all of the information provided. For cases that are factual (i.e., ones with news articles), you should research additional information as needed to help you better understand the context or fill in information as needed.
- 2) Focus in on your analysis on one to two key problems to dissect why those problems exist, how they impact the organization or department, and who is responsible for the problems

(causing or resolving). You should analyze the main issues within the context of theories and course materials.

- a. In order to identify the core problems, you will need to: differentiate between symptoms of the major problem and the actual major problem(s); distinguish between immediate and longer-term problems; find supporting evidence to support your decision about what problem you identified as “core” or “major.”
 - b. Once you have identified the core problem, you will need to classify the factors that influence the problem as internal or external; reflect on theoretical principles from the class to explain aspects of the case; identify the decisions that need to be made; identify risk factors; or identify historical precedents.
- 3) Identify all possible administrative or management solutions/changes that could address the problem. In doing so, you should review and utilize relevant course readings, discussions, outside research, and your experience.
- a. As you are analyzing the alternative solutions, you should: consider individual and organizational levels and implications; consider the long and short term; and compare and contrast each alternative solution (e.g., theoretical grounding, strengths and weaknesses, risk factors, etc.).
 - b. It is important to keep in mind that there is **no one correct answer** to any case analysis. At times cases will be intentionally vague because there are multiple ways to interpret a case and solve problems. As is common in real life, you will have to compare and think through different solutions before finally making a decision on a course of action.
- 4) Choose the best solution by considering the evidence, the pros and cons, the feasibility of adoption and/or implementation of your recommended solution, as well as the costs associated and resources needed. What do you hope to achieve with your solution? How will you measure success? You should be able to provide a justification for the solution you choose. For instance, why/how do you think your solution will lead to better outcomes?

Your 2-page written analysis should include this general information:

1) **Introduction and Background**

- a. Describe the situation and purpose of the memo; Include any relevant background information, facts, and the most important issues for the reader to understand the context and policy dilemma.
- b. Begin with BLUF (Bottom Line Up Front), the main conclusion succinctly stated in a couple of sentences. Place the most important information first. Your goal is to make it as easy as possible for others to understand your argument even if they are glancing at the memo for the first time as they walk into the meeting that will address the issue at hand.

2) **Evaluation of the Case**

- a. Outline the key problems or issues of the case that you are focusing on and evaluate them.
- b. You should identify what is working and is not working well and then explain the reasons why these are or are not working. You should analyze the issues underlying the problem in terms of relevant literature.
- c. Present and analyze alternative solutions to the problem. In making your case, you may need to discuss the viability of other alternatives to your recommendation. Be sure to summarize the alternative views and what you believe their relative merits are.

If you disagree with one of the alternatives, say so—but say why! Assertions of disagreement (or agreement) must be backed up by evidence.

3) **Proposed Solution or Change**

- a. What is your recommendation? Provide a specific and feasible management or administrative solution or policy change needed to resolve the issue identified. Explain why you chose this specific solution as the best possible option. You should support this with solid evidence including a discussion of costs/benefits or pros/cons, concepts from class and any additional research necessary to make your argument.
- b. Be sure to use examples wherever possible to illustrate your argument, but do not get sidetracked or bogged down in the weeds of any examples you use. Examples should help you illustrate your main point, but are not the main point in and of themselves.
- c. Do NOT recommend doing research, hiring a consultant, or setting up a team or task force to study the situation. You are the consultant.

4) **Recommendations and Implementation**

- a. Determine and define specific and actionable strategies to accomplish the proposed solution. Think about what should be done to achieve the solution or change, who should do it, how long will it take, where will funding come from?
- b. Include all necessary information for us to have a basic understanding of how this policy will be put into practice. These recommendations should be feasible for the organization or person in the case to implement and should complement each other.

5) **Conclusion and Reflection**

- a. Summarize your main argument here, and re-state your policy recommendation. This is the last thing that will be read, so be sure and provide a compelling conclusion.
- b. Reflect on the following questions: What other information would have been helpful for you to better understand the case? Relatedly, what do you still need to know or what was unclear?

Grading Scheme

Points	<i>Introduction and Background</i>
2	<i>Shows superior knowledge of the situation and all relevant background information, facts, key stakeholders, and issues using his/ her own language. Thesis clearly brings focus to the discussion, summarizes the outcome of the case, and compels the reader</i>
1	<i>Does not demonstrate a clear grasp of the situation. Presents information borrowing language from the case almost exactly and does not use his/ her own language. Inconsistencies are present and a lack of clear context. Thesis statement is either not included or vague, ill-defined, and/ or demonstrates a lack of understanding. Student does not summarize the outcome of the case well.</i>
	<i>Evaluation of the Case</i>
3	<i>Student fully identifies and addresses the key managerial elements of the problem in a meaningful way. The student includes supporting facts and evidence as to why this is the most important issue at hand. Student relies on course concepts as needed to display understanding of problem. Student presents an analysis of issues underlying the key problem in a logical way. Displays deep grasp of class material and makes creative connections between different aspects of the course.</i>
2	<i>Student identifies and addresses some aspects of the problem, displaying some knowledge about the key problem but ignores other important components. Student includes limited mention of key concepts or literature without explaining in depth or fully integrating with supporting points.</i>

1	<i>Student misunderstands the nature of the root problem or addresses a different problem. There is little understanding of key issues, no clear logic presented and lack of connection to course material. Important information is overlooked and student shows little to no evidence of critical analysis</i>
Proposed Solutions or Changes	
3	<i>Student presents innovative/interesting solutions and clearly addresses counterarguments convincingly. The student makes a strong case for one favored course of action out of alternative options and supports decision with solid evidence, concepts from class, and/or outside research.</i>
2	<i>Student presents anticipated solutions and either doesn't address alternatives effectively or simply repeats material discussed in class and reading (without demonstrated mastery or comprehension of course concepts, independent thought or critical analysis).</i>
1	<i>Student is too vague with suggested solutions, fails to develop a compelling argument and does not incorporate any learnings from class or alternative research.</i>
Recommendation and Implementation	
3	<i>Makes effective, well-reasoned, well-thought out, actionable strategies that are specific to accomplish the proposed solution. Outlines who would be responsible for implementing or achieving the solution and the associated steps involved. Specific data or facts were referred to when necessary to support the analysis and conclusions.</i>
2	<i>Student only partially notes actionable strategies to implement the solution or change. There is a lack of specific details, data, or facts included for implementation steps to fully address the problem.</i>
1	<i>Student only provides brief statement about what needs to be done but does not provide effective and specific recommendations, implementation steps, plans of action, supporting data and facts regarding implementation. Feasibility of some actions are in question. Implementation steps do not align with proposed solution or change. Action steps rely heavily on setting up a committee or team to decide how best to solve problem rather than actually solving the problem.</i>
Conclusion and Reflection	
2	<i>Student clearly reiterates main argument and recommendation. Student provides an insightful and strong reflection as to what other information would have been helpful to assess the case and what is still outstanding.</i>
1	<i>Student neither provides summary of argument or recommendation, evidence of reflective thought, nor any details as to what other information could be needed to better understand the case.</i>
Structure and Writing	
2	<i>Student's writing is clear, succinct, and logical. No superfluous sentences or tangential material included. References are properly cited. There are no spelling or grammatical errors. No first person or informal language is used.</i>
1	<i>Student's writing is unclear, structured inappropriately. The reader has to refer back and forth throughout the menu because the flow is not logical. References are not properly cited or are missing. There are many spelling or grammatical errors. Informal language and first-person language dominate.</i>
15	TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS