

Sciences Po
Master of Public Affairs 2009-2010

Syllabus, Required Course, 2nd semester (5 credits)

Study Trip

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Objectives:

Policy analysts and policy-makers are often required to conduct a field research to gather information necessary to understand, analyse and evaluate a policy, to compare alternative policies, or to lay grounds for (re-)formulating a policy. The Study Trip is a component of the MPA curriculum that aims to help students develop skills in conducting a field research, and gain an understanding of what such an exercise could entail.

More specifically, the Study Trip enables students to:

- Gain hands-on experience in conducting a field research on a specific policy area;
- Improve competency in gathering, as efficiently as possible, relevant first-hand information about the specific policy and the field within a limited time and working with a team;
- Develop skills in policy description, analysis, and diagnosis using a mix of tools and modes of reasoning that they learn in other courses.

Consequently, students shall obtain a better understanding of:

- What is involved in conducting a field research and the challenges in collecting first-hand information;
- What the added-value of a field research, i.e. first-hand experience and information, is;
- What the limitation of field research and first-hand information is, how their quality may be assessed, and how these shortcomings could be accounted for.

Description and Outline:

Study Trip 2010 is organised as a one-week field research in two field cities – Los Angeles, the USA, and Mexico City, Mexico. A theme and an analytical angle have been determined for the 2010 Study Trip. The theme for the trip is urban policy. The students are split in 10 teams, 5 teams examining 5 given urban policy areas in Los Angeles and 5 examining similar policy areas in Mexico City. The analytical angle through which students are asked to examine their policy area is the institutional history and organisation of their respective policy area and field city. The institutional (organizational) bias that is built in the existing arrangement, which among others may be reflected in funding channels, should be particularly looked into.

The field research is supported by a number of preparatory activities beforehand and a number of activities afterwards. The activities and the associated timeline are indicated in the following table.

Activity	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Introduction, team formation	x				
Reading up on materials, discussion ...	x	x	x	x	
Teaching by Study Advisors		Nov 2-6			
Meeting w/ Study Advisors		Nov 5-6			
Developing study proposal		x			
Creating trip agenda and sorting out logistics		x			
Study proposal – v. final – delivered			Dec 8		
Trip agenda – v. final – delivered			Dec 8		
Field research				Jan 16-23	
Final analysis, writing up the report				Jan 25-29	
Presentation					Feb 10 (TBC)

Requirements:

Students are required to deliver the following:

- i. Each team must develop and get approved a *study proposal*.
- ii. Each team must prepare and finalise a *trip agenda* before the field trip.
- iii. On completion of the field trip, each team shall produce a *report*.
- iv. After the submission of the reports, two presentation / discussion sessions will be organised where each team will *present* their report to the other teams.

The requirements for each deliverable are specified below.

i. Study Proposal

Each team is required to prepare a study proposal. The purpose of the study proposal is to specify the topic that the team plans to examine during the field research. The teams should aim for a topic that allows them to understand, describe and analyse a certain

policy. Topics concerning a policy recommendation are not feasible given the extent of the material that could possibly be accessed within the framework of the Study Trip. The study proposal shall outline the objective(s) and the approach of the study that the team plans to conduct during the week of the field trip.

The team is free to include any information in the proposal that they see necessary for the above purpose. The proposal must nonetheless, and at least, contain the following components:

a. Title

The title must be in the form of a question. It must state the research question that the team aims to examine. Given the target analytical angle, institutional organisation, the team shall identify a specific policy that allows them studying the institutional organisation. The title must point to both of these elements: the specific policy to be studied, and how the research targets institutional organisation.

b. Objective(s) of the study

c. What is the policy that is to be studied?

d. Why is this significant?

The significance of studying the proposed policy from the angle of institutional architecture may be explained in terms of its relevance and significance to the field city as well as what it, as a specific case, allows to be learnt.

e. What information (data, anecdote, evidence ...) will be collected for the study?

f. What are the potential challenges in carrying the study as it is structured (in a group, with a timeline, given the access it requires in a policy area and field city that is new to the team)? How does the team plan to overcome these challenges?

g. A bibliography of potential resources (literature, websites, ...).

The proposal should be a maximum of 10 pages, but could obviously be shorter.

Each team must submit their study proposal to the Study Trip Organiser and their respective Study Advisor for feedback. The team must then incorporate the feedback in the study proposal and resubmit. This process may be repeated until the Study Trip Organiser and the Study Advisors approve the study proposal.

Once the proposal is approved, it must be submitted to the MPA Director for a final confirmation. The deadline for this submission is Tue Dec 8, 2009 at midnight.

ii. Trip Agenda

The purpose of the trip agenda is to outline in detail the plan for the week of the field research. The trip agenda must specify for each appointment (1) the date and time, (2) the location, and (3) the purpose of the appointment including the name of the person(s) / organisation that is to be visited.

Each team is in charge to set up their trip agenda. They may use the help of their Study Advisor and Field Assistants as well as the organisers for reaching out to their desired contacts.

The team must submit the agenda to the Study Trip Organiser and the Study Advisor for approval. Upon approval, the team must submit the trip agenda to the MPA Director for a final confirmation. The deadline for this submission is Tue Dec 8, 2009 at midnight.

iii. Report

The report must present an answer to the research question stated in the title of the study proposal, and address the objective(s) that were therein specified. It must justify the significance of the topic, and describe the findings regarding the specific policy area the team studied in the respective field city. If possible, links with other policy areas and the larger institutional arrangement should also be elaborated on.

In the report, it is just as important to state what has been found as to state clearly what has not been accomplished, what is not understood, what seems uncertain in the findings. In other words, addressing the objectives of the Study Trip, students have to reflect on the quality of what has been done, the value as well as the limits of the first-hand information and experience that they have acquired.

Students are encouraged to not only present the answers they could provide, but also state the questions that they would ask at this stage. They may consider addressing the following: how would they reformulate their initial question and / or change their strategy given what they have learnt? What additional information would be needed and what other questions should be answered if the team were to go further in their research?

The report shall be prepared in the form of a PowerPoint presentation but can have accompanying notes / commentary.

Each team must submit their report to the MPA Director by Fri Jan 29, 2010 at midnight.

iv. Presentation

Each team shall present their report (the presentation that they will have already submitted to the Director) to the other teams. The exact timing of these presentation / discussion sessions will be confirmed later.

Assessment:

The assessment of the Study Trip is based on the performance of the students as reflected in the required deliverables and their attendance and participation during the field research. The assessment of each component will be done as indicated in the following table. The columns specify the various components and the rows the evaluators. The delivery timeline for each component is stated in the bottom row.

	Study Proposal	Trip Agenda	Field Trip	Report	Presentation / Discussion
Team Members	x	x	x	x	x
Organiser	x	x			
Field Assistant			x		
Study Advisor	x	x	x		
Director	x	x		x	x
Deadline	Dec 8	Dec 8	Jan 16-23	Jan 29	Feb 10 (TBC)

Potential Follow-up Programme:

The 2010 Study Trip provides an opportunity where:

- Each team gains an understanding of their specific policy area in their respective field city, and can learn about the findings of the other teams.

The organisation of the trip however also provides a potential for a follow-up programme. In such a programme, interested students could engage to extend their understanding of urban policy formulation and management in two additional levels:

- To extend their understanding to the overall working of each field city, by combining the findings from the 5 policy areas.
- To come to an understanding of different models of urban policy formulation and management, by comparing the overall working model of the two field cities.

The possibility and further details of such a follow-up programme can be discussed at the conclusion of the Study Trip with the organisers.

Bibliography:

Recommended readings will be introduced to each team in due time.