

Summer 2020

Reading List

Master *of* Public Policy



McGill

The following is a collection of pre-readings for the summer months, in preparation for the four core policy courses in the fall of 2020. All incoming students, no matter your academic or work background, should read these descriptions carefully and do the readings appropriate for your own background.

From Christopher Ragan Professor *for* Microeconomics for Public Policy (PPOL 602)

Some of you will have taken many economics courses and may even have degrees in the subject; others will have taken few or maybe even no courses in economics. Yet there will be useful work for all of you to do in preparation for PPOL 602. There are two different parts of establishing a solid foundation in economics. One is to understand the ideas and models and theories; the second is to use those ideas to really understand real-world phenomena, including the impact of public policies. Doing the second thing reinforces the first.

FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE LITTLE BACKGROUND IN ECONOMICS

Over the summer months, you must acquaint yourself with the first 6-8 chapters of a solid introductory economics textbook. By “acquaint” I mean that you need to actually read it and think seriously about it.

My personal favourite book in this category (although I am biased!) is:

Microeconomics (16th Canadian Edition), Pearson Canada,
by Christopher Ragan

but there are other introductory economics textbooks (including non-Canadian ones) by Mankiw, Hubbard, Parkin, Frank and Bernanke, Krugman, and others. They all cover similar material in roughly similar ways.

I strongly recommend that you get one of these microeconomics textbooks for your personal collection. (In fact, they usually come with a sister book in macroeconomics, and that sister book will be very useful in the winter term for PPOL 601: also taught by me.)

FOR THOSE OF YOU WITH A SOLID BACKGROUND IN ECONOMICS

My experience is that even people who have degrees in economics have forgotten most of it after a few years, unless they are using those economic concepts on an almost-daily basis. So even if you think you have a solid background in economics, I recommend that you review the first several chapters of a solid introductory microeconomics textbook.

As for the right textbook, I think any “standard” introductory economics textbook should be appropriate; you probably already have one in your personal collection. If for some reason you don’t have one, I recommend the one listed above.

FOR ALL OF YOU

Now for *using* those ideas and theories that you see in the textbooks. It is harder to find “popular” books that are (1) accurate in their logic and thinking, (2) useful in helping you to understand the world, and (3) enjoyable to read. Here are four examples, and I recommend that you read selections from them all. If you have the time, I am very confident that you would enjoy reading all of them in their entirety.

Filthy Lucre, by Joseph Heath (Harper Collins 2009).

The Armchair Economist, by Steven Landsburg
(The Free Press, 1993).

Saving Capitalism, by Robert Reich (Knopf, 2015).

The Commanding Heights, by Daniel Yergin and
Joseph Stanislaw (Touchstone, 2002).

Economics for the Common Good, Jean Tirole
(Princeton, 2017).

These five books are all “readable” in the sense that they are written for “normal” people as opposed to professional economists. The book by Heath lays out several right-wing myths and left-wing myths about economics, and is likely the most readable of the group. The Landsburg book applies the logic of economic incentives to explain many real-world puzzles. The book by Reich is more polemical, but also has lots of analytical insights into some of the key problems with today’s dominant economic system. The book by Yergin and Stanislaw offers a broad sweep of the 20th Century, and the tension between more (or less) reliance on government and less (or more) reliance on markets. (It also has a three-part PBS mini-series which is quite good!) The Tirole book is probably the most “academic” of the bunch but is nonetheless a very accessible treatment of the “common good” and the many ways that economics is useful for society.

Reading these books will get your brain thinking about economics and public policy, and give you an introduction to some of the contentious debates that cannot be avoided when examining the role of the economy in society. A great way to spend the summer!

From Pearl Eliadis Professor *for* Ethics, Rights, and Law (PPOL 604)

We are accustomed to talking about “economic policy” and “social policy”, but outside legal circles, law is often seen as an end-of-pipe exercise, just one of many policy instruments chosen after decisions are taken. This course posits law differently, as a fundamental determinant of how societies organize knowledge and themselves.

What actually counts as law? Whose law counts? How are rules and laws different? Is international law relevant? How does law reflect and influence the values that shape societies? Where do global norms like human rights and sustainable development fit in? What is the role of civil society?

Because the Max Bell School has students from around the world, not all of whom have legal experience, the course will take a transsystemic approach¹ and presents several legal systems, as well as presenting diverse perspectives and authors. If you have suggestions for readings that you think may interest your future colleagues, please write to me at pearl.eliadis@mcgill.ca or eliadis@rights-law.net (law office) and I will share them with your colleagues before term starts.

Most of the readings are available as eBooks through the McGill library system.

REQUIRED SUMMER READING - CHOOSE THREE OF THE FOLLOWING TEXTS

Dapo Akande et al., Human Rights and 21st Century Challenges: Poverty, Conflict, and the Environment (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2020). DOI:10.1093/oso/9780198824770.001.0001 - Read the Introduction and ANY ONE article from any of the four main sections of the book (see 1-page PDF contents page in reading pack).

John Borrows, Law's Indigenous Ethics (University of Toronto Press, 2019). Rethinking law and ethics from the ground (or should I say “earth”) up. Introduction and Chapter 1.

Marie-Claude Gervais and Marie-France Séguin, “Some Thoughts on Bijuralism in Canada and the World” <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/csjsjc/harmonization/hfl-hlf/b2-f2/bf2.pdf>. This 20-page article provides an excellent overview of common law and civil law systems that “cohabit” in Quebec, the US, the UK and Europe*

HLA Hart, The Concept of Law (Oxford University Press, 1961). (A classic text, widely available, but be patient as it can be hard slogging for those with no background in law and/or legal philosophy.) Chapters 1-3. If you can't get your hands on the book, try Robert S. Summers “Professor H.L.A. Hart's “Concept of Law” (1963) Duke U LJ (no.4): 629-70. doi:10.2307/1371248. (JSTOR), which offers a critical discussion of why Hart matters and the thinking behind legal positivism.

Tom Bingham, The Rule of Law (Allen Lane, 2010) Chapters 1 and 2 (3-33)

OPTIONAL SUMMER READING

Pearl Eliadis “Inscribing Charter Values in the Policy Process” (2006) 33 Sup.Ct. Law Rev. (2d). (PDF attached to this email). A study developed with the Privy Council Office (Canada) on law in the public policy process.

Maina Kiai, "Imagine a World without Participation: Mapping the Achievements of Civil Society" Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association (June 2017) <http://freeassembly.net/reports/civil-society/>. A global perspective from one the world's leading activists and lawyers on the role of civil society in public policy debates and on participation as a fundamental norm in human rights-based approaches to public policy.

Edison J. Trickett and Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Thinking it Through: An Introduction to Contemporary Philosophy* (Oxford, UK; New York: Oxford, 2003). Chapter 5 "Morality". Pay special attention to the relationship between positive law and morality.

* Philippe Sands, *East West Street* (New York and London: Vintage Books, 2017). Winner of the Baillie Gifford Prize. A superb legal, historical, and political analysis of the emergence of two fundamental concepts of international law - crimes against humanity and genocide- and the men who were responsible for their development in the post second World War Period.

** May be more suitable for students with legal and/or political science training.*

Recent UN reports on how to prioritize human rights and freedoms in the context of a public emergency. Choose 2. A link to the main reports can be found [here](#).

EXERCISE IN PREPARATION FOR THE COURSE

Based on your readings, create a "mind map" of where and how you see law in relation to society, or other disciplines like social sciences, the humanities, etc., or in relation to morals, ethics, traditions, and norms. A sample mind map (on an unrelated topic), along with instructions is attached as a PDF to inspire you. Come to the first class ready to share an image of your mind map (your map should be uploaded to MyCourses), and prepare a short presentation of 2 minutes.

From Ian Peach

Professor *for* Comparative Government Structures (PPOL 603)

Welcome to the Max Bell School of Public Policy. I am looking forward to meeting you all (albeit virtually) in September and working with you to develop your understanding of comparative structures of government and how governmental structures affect the policy process and, sometimes at least, even policy outcomes.

To get you ready for what we will be doing (and in some cases to generate some interest in the topics we will be discussing in the course), I have crafted a summer reading list for you. First, I have a long tradition of giving Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal" to my students to discuss in our first class; I have attached it for you. I would like you to read it over the summer so that, in our first class, you can explain to me why you think I want you to read it. Secondly, I would like you to read the attached report from the World Bank, "Strategic Decision-Making in Cabinet Government: Institutional Underpinnings and Obstacles". This report will give you a good comparative overview of government decision-making structures at the political level. As you will be participating in two mock Cabinet meetings at the end of the course, it should prove useful to you.

The rest of the readings I propose to you are optional but I believe would be valuable and even enjoyable. First, for those who need or want to learn more about the Canadian system of government, I have included a paper by Eugene Forsey, "How Canadians Govern Themselves". Eugene Forsey was one of the Canada's most knowledgeable and intelligent experts on the Canadian constitution, so his work is a worthy overview of how Canadian governance is structured.

I would also like to introduce you to the work of Gilles Paquet. Gilles was an esteemed scholar of and commentator on public policy and administration and, much to my eternal pleasure, a colleague and dear friend of mine; unfortunately, he passed away last January.

First is Gilles's book "The New Geo-Governance: A Baroque Approach"; it is an e-book available through the McGill Library and can be found at <https://muse-jhu-edu.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/book/442>. I think you will enjoy the thoughtful commentary on public policy-making in the modern world.

Secondly, at the risk of generating a debate with Professor Ragan over economics (which is his area, not mine), I thought it might be interesting to provide you with Gilles' article "Evolutionary Cognitive Economics" (attached).

Lastly, I would suggest you cruise through the journal Optimum Online (at optimumonline.ca) and read some of the articles; Gilles was editor-in-chief of Optimum Online, so the journal had the commitment to free and open but intellectually solid critiques of the "conventional wisdom" of government that Gilles himself always had.

I hope you enjoy the readings and I look forward to meeting you in September.

From Mayssun El-Attar Vilalta

Professor *for* Analytical

Methods for Policy Evaluation

(PPOL 605)

This course aims to introduce students to the use of key methods of quantitative policy analysis. The course covers the basics of simple and multiple regression for cross-sectional data, as well as some further methods more specifically geared at policy evaluation, like instrumental variables, regression discontinuity, and difference in differences.

The course will provide students with a solid set of tools to address empirical questions. Students will also gain experience in applying these tools to real data using statistical software (Stata).

Finally, students will gain a sufficient awareness of basic quantitative techniques to be able to understand the presentation of empirical results in academic articles and professional reports, and to critically appraise their usefulness and appropriateness.

While we will cover some technical material, the focus of the course will be on applications, on the intuition of the methods we discuss, and on the interpretation of results. We will start the course by reviewing some essential background material in probability. It would be useful for students to prepare by reviewing this during the summer. I suggest reading Appendix B of the textbook by Wooldridge (see below).

In addition, the article “The Mystery of the Vanishing Benefits: An Introduction to Impact Evaluation” by Martin Ravallion provides an intuitive introduction to the pros and cons of several methods of policy evaluation, and will give students a useful preview, as well as background as we progress through the course.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

The following textbooks are useful, and it would be very good to peruse them during the summer. The first is the main course textbook.

Wooldridge, J.M. (2013), *Introductory Econometrics: A Modern Approach* 5th Edition, South-Western Cengage Learning, Mason.

Angrist J. D. and Pischke J.F. (2015), *Mastering ‘Metrics: The Path from Cause to Effect*.

This book covers key econometric tools for policy analysis using up to date, real-world examples. It is rigorous but easy to read, and uses only elementary statistics.

Angrist J.D. and Pischke J.S. (2009), *Mostly Harmless Econometrics: An Empiricist’s Companion*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey.

Cameron A.C. and Trivedi P.K. (2010), *Microeconometrics Using Stata*, Stata Press. This book integrates the discussion of econometric tools with their implementation in Stata, and provides a useful body of data sets and codes in Stata.

From Juniper Skills Workshops - Summer Tutorial Resources

As part of the Max Bell MPP curriculum we will be offering a series of Skills Workshops. These workshops will cover a variety of themes, including Extracting and communicating insights from data. In addition to those sessions, we are providing a list of online resources to become better acquainted with the software used during the workshops. Building these skills will help you succeed throughout the MPP program.

These online resources are not intended to replace the Skills Workshops or other courses. However, consulting these resources in advance will help you attain a basic level of familiarity with the tools. This will allow the Skills Workshops to focus on leveraging the tools beyond basic mechanics to better solve problems and generate insights.

A list of these online resources is included in the reading pack.