Basic Skills Needed for Public Policy Analysis

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1. time management
2. critical reading & note taking - mapping a route through a sea of info.
3. clear, logical, sequential, pragmatic thinking to solve problems
4. top notch research and synthesis
5. solid quantitative and qualitative data analysis
6. abstract thinking - using and creating frameworks for analysis
7. original, exciting, and to the point writing and verbal skills that can persuade a skeptical audience

Examples follow: I provide guidance and feedback but you have to do the work.

What skill sets are needed?
- Hard work, hard work, hard work
- Planning - never enough time, but need structured daily time for each task: reading, reflection, writing (multitasking does not work)
- Daily, steady work
- Communication to nip problems in the bud

Time management
• Do not read word for word.
• Read key titles and intro and conclusion.
• Understand the logic of the argument.
• Focus in on the sections needed.
• Examine the methodology.
• Take notes.
• Compare to other authors. Why do they differ?
• Prepare questions/comments for meeting.

• See my shape of writing
Logical Thinking

- Identify the key question and the sub-q.s.
- Criticize, but then suggest pragmatically and feasibly.
- Understand the constraints of knowledge, methods, context.
- Examine generalizations, assumptions, metaphors, appropriateness of cases/data (methods) for answering the question posed.
- Suggestion and examine alternatives. Which are practical, from a technical, economic, and political pov? Why do you favour a particular alternative?
• Use books as your first step.
• Articles are 2\textsuperscript{nd}.
• Then public policy reports.
• Internet search comes last.

• Know what you are looking for; what q.s you want to answer. You will have to read context first.
• Do not over-generalize.
• Define the frontiers of knowledge.
• Borrow frameworks.
• Use original data.
• Analysis covers a problem that recurs across space and time.
• A framework can be applied successfully to a variety of situations.

• A set of hypos from the framework are only valuable if they are falsifiable.

• Do not prove the obvious.
• Match questions to variables, actors, relationships, and data.

• Run the test and be prepared to interpret all of the possible outcomes.
• Use the least amount of words possible.- edit, edit, edit
• Have a clear idea.

• Create a blueprint.
• Get multiple feedback.

• Embrace criticism.
• Use peer review, learning commons, communicate with profs before sinking in too much time.

• Writing allows for complexity- but this requires depth of reflection and time for creating multiple layers of questions, logic, and testing.
Introduction
- general & specific importance of issue
- tie in to class, audience
- Key research question - categories & methods of evidence
  Preview key points of argument

Literature Review
- Addresses what we know about the q. now
- includes schools of thought/logical approaches, and key authors
- analyzes these in contrast to each other, offering a new synthetic view

Data Analysis
- reviews hard empirical evidence, incl. stats and case studies
- discusses empirical literature and its conclusions about data
- again, offers new synthetic view

Original Analysis
- offers a new theoretical and empirical analysis
- explains superiority of this view
- applied to case(s) or stats-cond’ns, assumptions

Conclusion
- answers research questions w/approp. conditionalities
- summarizes implications of new analysis, for lit, data, & policy
- gives policy & future research recommendations

Keys 1: Modularity, Linkages, symmetry - Write an outline with nested logic!

Keys 2: Trajectory no repetition; originality

Keys 3: Concise, no repetition, economy of words; graphs, tables, formatting inviting to the reader
• Type in numbers, eg
• Country by year
• Hit graph button
• You now have a graph.
• Cut and paste with source into your Word document