Public Policy Studies is a discipline that explores the role and impact of decision-making by governments. The discipline includes knowledge of both process and substance of a particular policy area. Thus, a student in public policy must have both generalist and specialist skills to apply to a particular public problem. In terms of political process, the study of public policy examines questions of how public policy is formulated, implemented, and evaluated over time. It also explores notions of agenda-setting and framing of issues that lead to a problem gaining the attention of the government. Public policy specialists and analysts are hired by all levels of government. During the past several years in addition to the government sector, the nonprofit and private sectors have sought public policy analysts for employment. Therefore, the curriculum prepares students for being public policy specialists in both the private and nonprofit sectors in addition to the public sector. The curriculum also is tailored to prepare students who would like to continue their education in graduate programs or law schools. The faculty members of the department work closely with students to place them in internships, and when possible, employment positions.

The Public Policy Studies Department (PPS) offers an undergraduate degree (BA). Students take a common core of courses dealing with public policy theories, processes, methods of public policy analysis, and important environmental and urban policy issues. In addition, a data analysis course is required that the student selects from a list of approved courses. Microeconomics or statistics is strongly encouraged.

Beyond the core curriculum, a capstone course reconvenes the students at the end of their curriculum to study a public policy problem in-depth under the direction of a public policy professor. The capstone changes approximately every three years, to reflect a current issue on the public policy agenda.

Faculty
Hugh E. Bartling, PhD
Associate Professor
University of Kentucky, Lexington

Kelly A. Tzoumis, PhD
Professor
Texas A&M University