The central focus of Rice University’s Social Policy Analysis program, administered by the School of Social Sciences, is policy design, analysis, and communication. Interdisciplinary in nature, the curriculum’s emphasis is on integrating rigorous instruction in theory and method with hands-on, skills-based instruction by social science faculty. The primary goal of the program is to train Rice students to obtain the specialized knowledge, skill and experience to be leaders in the field of social policy analysis.

The Social Policy Analysis program focuses on the evaluation of alternative interventions that proposed to improve human well-being. Graduates will be able to answer questions like: Which early interventions lead to greater educational attainment for low-income children? Which juvenile rehabilitation programs are more likely to reduce the recurrence of criminal behavior? How does healthcare policy influence our daily health behaviors? Without evidence-based research and rigorous evaluations to test these ideas, there is no way to know which solutions work and for whom. In a time of limited resources and rising demands, our leaders need the analytical expertise to make a demonstrable, sustained impact on the most pressing issues facing our cities and nation. The Social Policy Analysis program will train Rice students to meet these needs.

Bachelor’s Program

- Bachelor of Arts (BA) Degree with a Major in Social Policy Analysis

Social Policy Analysis does not currently offer an academic program at the graduate level.

Director and Undergraduate Advisor

Melissa J. Marschall, Political Science

Advisory Board

Chase Lesane-Brown, Psychological Sciences
Flávio Cunha, Economics
Anna Rhodes, Sociology
Robert M. Stein, Political Science
Elizabeth Vann, Sociology

Affiliated Faculty

Erin Baumgartner, Houston Education Research Consortium
Dominic C. Boyer, Anthropology
Paul Brace, Political Science
Jenifer L. Bratter, Sociology

Tony N. Brown, Sociology
Brielle Bryan, Sociology
Sergio Chavez, Sociology
Flávio Cunha, Economics
Özge Gürcanlı, Psychological Sciences
Elaine Howard Ecklund, Sociology
James R. Elliott, Sociology
Christoper P. Fagundes, Psychological Sciences
Bridget K. Gorman, Sociology
Vivian Ho, Economics
Mark P. Jones, Political Science
Rachel Tolbert Kimbro, Sociology
Stephen L. Klineberg, Sociology (Professor Emeritus)
Chase Lesane-Brown, Psychological Sciences
Melissa J. Marschall, Political Science
Nancy A. Niedzielski, Linguistics
Daniel J. Potter, Houston Education Research Consortium
Robert M. Stein, Political Science
Ruth N. Lopez Turley, Sociology

For Rice University degree-granting programs:
To view the list of official course offerings, please see Rice’s Course Catalog (https://courses.rice.edu/admweb/!SWKSCAT.cat?p_action=cata)
To view the most recent semester’s course schedule, please see Rice’s Course Schedule (https://courses.rice.edu/admweb/!SWKSCAT.cat)

Social Policy Analysis (SOPA)

SOPA 200 - APPROACHES TO SOCIAL POLICY
Short Title: APPROACHES TO SOCIAL POLICY
Department: Social Policy Analysis
Grade Mode: Standard Letter
Course Type: Lecture
Credit Hours: 3
Restrictions: Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.
Course Level: Undergraduate Lower-Level
Description: This course provides an introduction to the social sciences and the study of public policy. Students will review the nature of different disciplines and their research programs. These approaches will be studied as different paradigms for policy making.

SOPA 238 - SPECIAL TOPICS
Short Title: SPECIAL TOPICS
Department: Social Policy Analysis
Grade Mode: Standard Letter
Course Type: Internship/Practicum, Laboratory, Lecture, Seminar, Independent Study
Credit Hours: 1-4
Restrictions: Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.
Course Level: Undergraduate Lower-Level
Description: Topics and credit hours may vary each semester. Contact department for current semester’s topic(s). Repeatable for Credit.
SOPA 300 - SOPA FIELD RESEARCH EXPERIENCE
Short Title: SOPA FIELD RESEARCH EXPERIENCE
Department: Social Policy Analysis
Grade Mode: Standard Letter
Course Type: Seminar
Credit Hours: 3
Restrictions: Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.
Course Level: Undergraduate Upper-Level
Prerequisite(s): SOPA 200 and (SOSC 302 or STAT 310 or STAT 315)
Description: Students work on approved field research projects, write a research report for publication and present finding from their field research project to Rice faculty and staff. Recommended Prerequisite(s): POLI 338 or SOSC 301. Repeatable for Credit.

SOPA 309 - APPLIED ECONOMETRICS FOR POLICY EVALUATION
Short Title: APPLIED ECONOMETRICS: POL EVAL
Department: Social Policy Analysis
Grade Mode: Standard Letter
Course Type: Lecture
Credit Hours: 3
Restrictions: Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.
Course Level: Undergraduate Upper-Level
Prerequisite(s): SOSC 302 or STAT 310 or ECON 307 or STAT 315 or DSCI 301
Description: This course covers applications of statistics to policy analysis and evaluation. Topics include regression, limited dependent variable and selection models, and other estimation techniques appropriate for evaluation and causal inference.

SOPA 340 - INTRODUCTION TO PANDEMIC RESPONSE
Short Title: INTRO TO PANDEMIC RESPONSE
Department: Social Policy Analysis
Grade Mode: Standard Letter
Course Type: Lecture
Credit Hours: 3
Restrictions: Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.
Course Level: Undergraduate Upper-Level
Description: This course provides students with a broad, introductory-level overview of the knowledge and skills necessary for preparing a public health response to epidemics or pandemics of infectious diseases. The course will use the recent pandemic, COVID-19 (coronavirus disease 2019), and the subsequent response efforts in the United States to provide context to covered topics.

SOPA 400 - SOPA CAPSTONE RESEARCH SEMINAR I
Short Title: SOPA CAPSTONE RESEARCH I
Department: Social Policy Analysis
Grade Mode: Standard Letter
Course Type: Research
Credit Hours: 3
Restrictions: Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.
Course Level: Undergraduate Upper-Level
Prerequisite(s): (ECON 209 or SOSC 302) and (POLI 338 or SOSC 301) and SOPA 200
Description: Students work in teams under the guidance of a Rice faculty member, researcher, or community partner (government, nonprofit, advocacy Organization, etc.) to evaluate or design a social policy intervention. Teams write a research report of publication quality and present findings at the end of the year.