The central focus of Rice University’s Social Policy Analysis program 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


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  
Robert M. Stein, Political Science  
Ruth N. Lopez Turley, Sociology

Affiliated Faculty

Dominic C. Boyer, Anthropology  
Paul Brace, Political Science  
Jenifer L. Bratter, Sociology  
Tony N. Brown, Sociology  
Sergio Chavez, Sociology  
Flávio Cunha, Economics

Justin T. Denney, Sociology  
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  
Steve H. Murdock, Sociology  
Nancy A. Niedzielski, Linguistics  
Robert M. Stein, Political Science  
Kenneth Wolpin, Economics

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/ISWKSCAT.cat?p_action=cata](https://courses.rice.edu/admweb/ISWKSCAT.cat?p_action=cata))
To view the most recent semester’s course schedule, please see Rice’s Course Schedule ([https://courses.rice.edu/admweb/ISWKSCAT.cat](https://courses.rice.edu/admweb/ISWKSCAT.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, Lecture, Laboratory, Seminar  
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  
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 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): (POLI 395 or SOCI 382 or PSYC 339 or SOSC 302 or ECON 307 or STAT 310) and (POLI 338 (may be taken concurrently) or SOSC 301 (may be taken concurrently)) and (SOPA 200 or POLI 337)  
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. POLI 338 or SOSC 301 may be taken concurrently with SOPA 400.

SOPA 401 - SOPA CAPSTONE RESEARCH SEMINAR II  
Short Title: SOPA CAPSTONE RESEARCH II  
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): SOPA 400 and (POLI 338 or SOSC 301)  
Description: The capstone research seminar is a two-semester course taken in the final year of study. During the Spring Semester, the research teams will write up and present their final research report.

SOPA 477 - SPECIAL TOPICS  
Short Title: SPECIAL TOPICS  
Department: Social Policy Analysis  
Grade Mode: Standard Letter  
Course Type: Internship/Practicum, Seminar, Lecture, Laboratory  
Credit Hours: 1-4  
Restrictions: Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.  
Course Level: Undergraduate Upper-Level  
Description: Topics and credit hours may vary each semester. Contact department for current semester’s topic(s). Repeatable for Credit.

Description and Code Legend  
Note: Internally, the university uses the following descriptions, codes, and abbreviations for this academic program. The following is a quick reference:

Course Catalog/Schedule  
• Course offerings/subject code: SOPA

Program Description and Code  
• Social Policy Analysis: SOPA

Undergraduate Degree Description and Code  
• Bachelor of Arts degree: BA

Undergraduate Major Description and Code  
• Major in Social Policy Analysis: SOPA

CIP Code and Description  
1 • SOPA Major/Program: CIP Code/Title: 44.0501 - Public Policy Analysis, General

1 Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) 2020 Codes and Descriptions from the National Center for Education Statistics: https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cipcode/