

BEHAVIORAL ECONOMICS AND PUBLIC POLICY

API 304, Fall 2016

Kennedy School of Government
Harvard University

FINAL PROJECT

Due: Preliminary Concept Note, Wednesday, October 26 (not a hard deadline)
Final submission, Friday, December 16 (noon—this is a hard deadline)

Assignment: you will do a project/paper on a policy relevant topic of your choice in which you identify a policy problem of interest to you and then propose a potential policy solution that is informed by behavioral economics.

You can do the project individually or as a small group.

A good submission will include:

- A description of the policy problem that includes a discussion of why intervention in this domain is potentially warranted (e.g., is there a market failure?).
- A discussion of current policies designed to address your policy problem and their shortcomings if any. If there are no policies directed at your policy problem this section will be short!
- A concrete policy proposal informed by the behavioral economics principles that we have discussed in class or that have been covered in the readings. This could be a single intervention/policy, or a set of related interventions/policies. You can feel free to go beyond what we have covered in class or in the readings if desired, but this is not required.
- A connection between behavioral economics principles and your policy proposal.
- A summary of the likely impact of your proposal, that is, do you think it will have “big” effect or a “small” effect, and why? Note that small effects are not necessarily uninteresting, especially if the cost of getting a small effect is low.
- A summary of the practicalities concerning your proposal: how costly is it, how scalable is it, how feasible is it technologically, how feasible is it politically?
- A thorough proofreading before you turn in your submission

If desired, you can cover a range of behaviorally informed policy proposals, including a discussion of which are likely to work best, and for whom different approaches would be most appropriate. This could also include a discussion of behaviorally informed policy proposals that would likely be ineffective or inappropriate, or that could backfire. Thinking these issues through would be a good exercise for almost any project, although this is not required in your submission and the extent of the discussion, if any, will likely be highly variable.

If desired, your submission could also discuss how you would measure the impact of your proposal, but this is not required.

If desired and appropriate, your submission could include something visual (e.g., a mock-up of a disclosure or simplification-based intervention), but this is not required.

You have two submission options. Choose one of the following:

1. A paper

OR

2. A slide presentation (please submit as either a PowerPoint file or a PDF file)

If you choose to submit a paper:

- 1" margins
- Title page (title, author(s), course, date)
- Page numbers
- 1.5 spacing
- References at the end, citations in the text or footnotes as appropriate
- Length:
 - Solo project: 6-8 pages of text
 - Two-person project: 8-10 pages of text
 - Three-person project: 10-12 pages of text
 - Title page, references and any appendices you want to include do not count towards the page limits

If you choose to submit a slide presentation:

- Title page (title, author(s), course, date)
- Page numbers
- Slide with references at the end
- Citations as appropriate
- Length:
 - Solo project: 12-15 slides
 - Two-person project: 15-18 slides
 - Three-person project: 18-20 slides

Deadlines:

- **Wednesday, October 26**, brief 1-2 page document (***“concept note”***) listing your group members (if applicable), your policy problem, and your preliminary ideas on behaviorally informed policy solutions. This assignment is solely for the purposes of getting feedback. It will not be graded as an assignment. If you have more than one idea and aren’t sure which way to go, feel free to turn in something on the longer side that lays out the options on the table.

In contrast to the regular course assignments, if you are working in a group, you only need to turn in ONE COPY of your concept note; each group member DOES NOT need to turn in a separate concept note.

- ***Final submission due on Friday, December 16 at noon.***