

BUILDING BETTER

Strategic Policymaking in Tomorrow's Communities

MPA, Winter Quarter 2026

SYLLABUS – 4 credit class

CLASS MEETINGS

Tuesday 5:30-9:00pm / 10 Weeks:
Tacoma campus (will revisit class hours in first class)

Instructor: Larry Seaquist
E-mail: larryseaquist@comcast.net
Phone: 253-225-0616 m

LOCATION: Evergreen Tacoma (Rm TBA)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

At a time of wrenching changes to legacy public policies and social program funding, our overall goal is to enable each student to prepare to lead strategic policy making forward into tomorrow's communities and public sector organizations.

Compounded by a Federal reset of core American policies, programs, and norms, rapidly evolving political, economic, social, and technology dynamics are transforming our society and the public sector that serves it. In the years ahead, creative, agile policy innovation will be as much the hallmark of the leaders of healthy, successful public service agencies and community organizations as it is of the entrepreneurs in today's high tech startups.

With a view to developing new policies suited to tomorrow's America, the class explores a wide range of the thorny strategic policy issues and leadership opportunities which lie ahead in the working careers of our MPA graduates.

Students in this intensive course will strengthen their personal capacities to create and lead strategic policy change efforts in public agencies, in community-based organizations, and in the hybrid collaborations which increasingly plan and deliver key public services.

Using real world strategic planning problems, seminar work will develop a repertoire of the policy planning principles and practices needed by leaders in tomorrow's American communities and governments. Augmented by preparatory reading and by in-class conversations with guest experts, students will use in-class "clinics" to strengthen a personal repertoire of policy planning and change leadership skills. That repertoire will include students' conduct of an innovative "Strategy Lab" to explore a difficult, class-selected public policy problem with invited community guests.

At the heart of the class experience is each student's step-by-step development of an action plan to tackle one of our society's difficult problems. Selecting a policy issue of compelling personal interest, aided by in class discussion and faculty coaching, students will progress from

problem definition to strategic concept to a finished game plan as they each tackle one of the big challenges likely facing tomorrow's public sector leaders in our *We the People* democracy.

KEY LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The work in seminar, clinic, and on the personal project aims to equip each student with the knowledge and skills needed in these unprecedented times to organize and direct strategic planning efforts in public-sector agencies and in community-based organizations. Through their active participation, students will develop a personal repertoire for leading change in public sector organizations. To that end, seminar participants will:

- Practice the diagnosis of real world policy planning problems and the design and leadership of rapid, effective strategic policy making responses;
- Consider the constantly changing dynamics which may require in the years ahead the redesign of our society's legacy architecture of public policy and programs.
- Learn from the experiences and advice of selected public service leaders directly involved in current public policy making at the state and local levels; and
- Explore a variety of strategic policy planning concepts across a wide range of looming problems, and consider the lessons from recent policy making successes and failures.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Mindful of the personal commitments of students with evening classes, two breaks will divide our 3 1/2-hour class into three blocks featuring active student engagement throughout the evening. Brief admin and course info will open the evening promptly at 5:30 pm and close the evening promptly at 9:00. *We'll revisit class hours in our first class to agree "best fit" class hours.*

Week Theme

- 1 Welcome, student project introductions; policy-making in tomorrow's communities.
- 2 Repertoire & clinic: Recognize the sovereign dignity of each *We the People* citizen.
- 3 Repertoire & clinic: Move upstream to tackle **root causes**, act on **whole systems**.
- 4 Repertoire & clinic: Reimagine principles and policies for **public safety and security**.
- 5 Repertoire & clinic: Reimagine principles and policies for **health care** for all.
- 6 Repertoire & clinic: Reimagine principles and policies for **housing** everyone.
- 7 Repertoire & clinic: Reimagine principles and policies for a **skilled society**.
- 8 Repertoire: StratLab: Engage the whole system with design of role-playing simulations.
- 9 Repertoire: & clinic: Look ahead to future challenges and durable problems.
- 10 Final presentations: Wrapup with final presentations; summary policy frameworks.

Note: In consultation with the class, individual class segments may be adjusted to capture real-world policy planning issues of interest.

PRE-CLASS READING

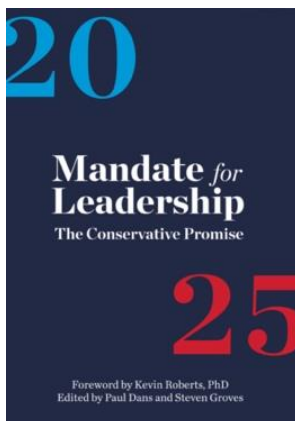
While our class is **firmly non-partisan and non-political**, we meet during an era of intense partisan division across many of the public policy issues we will consider. Our class discussions will respect and acknowledge these differences as factors among many which may shape future policy making.

Although we will keep our focus on strategic planning at the state and local level, the reset of many key Federal policies and programs is driving much of state and local policy making. Note that the Trump 47 administration has centralized policy making in the office of the President



[Executive Orders and other Presidential Actions.](#)

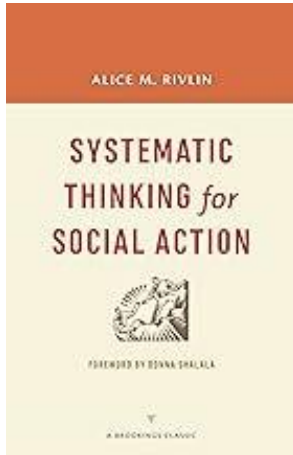
The White House publishes a daily stream of [Executive Orders](#), [Presidential Memoranda](#), and [Proclamations](#). **Briefly familiarize yourself with the array of directives** coming from the White House. Note the economy of language. While future Presidents may reverse some of these actions with their own orders, many directives are changing federal agencies and our communities in ways that cannot be reversed by fiat.



[Project 2025 & Mandate for Leadership](#)

To prepare for a possible Trump return to the White House the Heritage Foundation organized an elaborate project to prepare agency by agency, program by program, a comprehensive overhaul of the Federal government. Many of the authors are now in key positions in government.

You need only familiarize yourself with the general framework. You may find it useful to look through the chapters covering federal agencies whose programs are of personal interest to you. Note the insistent language.



***Systematic Thinking for Social Action* by Dr. Alice Rivlin**

An economist working during an era of rapid change in American ambitions for social well-being, Dr. Rivlin condensed a remarkable array of public policy leadership experience in this classic book. Creator of the Congressional Budget Office, Vice Chair of the Federal Reserve, and Director of the Office of Management and Budget, Dr. Rivlin offers in this classic book a framework still useful for steering public policy amid the disruptions to today's public policy systems.

Read this book for key ideas. Use Rivlin's five key questions (Chapters 2-6) to aid your own thinking about the challenges ahead as we design social action policies for our local communities, state, and society.

Still in print, this classic has a place on every public service leader's professional bookshelf.

IN-CLASS REFERENCES

Our in-class discussions will occasionally use local examples of current strategic planning projects. Emailed links will invite you to examine these projects in advance of the week in which we may consider them.

PRE-CLASS & IN-CLASS WRITING – YOUR PERSONAL STRATEGIC POLICY PROJECT

You are each invited to tackle a hard policy problem. Select something you care personally about. Pick a compelling problem or opportunity which you would like your community or our state, nation, or the world go to work. Develop that action proposal in a series of steps. Please stay relaxed. These are opportunities to keep advancing your thinking as your test your ideas in class and gain from the seminar discussions about the methods of strategic planning.

1. **INITIAL ONE PAGER** – *due the day we start class*. Outline the essence of your idea in a page or less. Sketch the problem (and/or the opportunity) and your initial thinking about how to fix it. Say why it is important and who cares. Write as though you might hand this to a friend to invite them to join you in taking action. *Please plan to email these one pagers to me, please, before our first class on Tuesday, 6 January.*
2. **ELEVATOR PITCH** – *first evening in class*. In our opening class briefly introduce yourself and sketch the essence of your idea in about two minutes. I'll have copies of your paper for all.
3. **INITIAL CLASS PRESENTATION** – *15 minute clinic session (as sked during weeks 2-6)*. Continuing to refine your one-pager, outline your ideas in a 5-10 minute "first draft" presentation to the class. Invite the class to engage the problem and your game plan. Use PowerPoint slides if you wish, or talk from your (evolving) one-pager.
4. **FINAL CLASS PRESENTATION** – *5 minute clinic session (as sked during week 10)*. Drawing on the classwork and your further thinking, present a revised "final draft" to a guest VIP decision maker, inviting her/his responses and advice.

5. **FINAL PAPER – *due COB Wednesday, 11 March.*** Based on the class work and your continued refinements, present the problem and your plan for strategic action. Polish the key ideas in the one pager, add any additional material you'd like to include in the finished package. Think of this as something you'll be able to hand to the Governor, a community leader, or a fellow citizen as a persuasive call to studied, sustained action.

PLEASE CONSULT

You are invited to call/text/email me anytime. I look forward to conferring with you anytime: as you select your personal strategy project, as you mull an action plan, and as you advance through the stages of developing and presenting your evolving strategic action plan.

As you incorporate what you are learning and the feedback from your class presentations during the 10 weeks of class, **please plan for us to talk in depth at least once** over coffee or by phone or zoom.

As an adjunct, I do not have an office at Evergreen. But I am committed to helping each student succeed; I am available to consult with individual students both on course work and on students' personal career planning. I live not far from the Tacoma campus so we may meet anywhere in the area.

We can confer by email, by phone, or in person by arrangement. My phone: 253-225-0616, personal email: larryseaquist@comcast.net, Evergreen email larry.seaquist1@evergreen.edu.

EVALUATION

We will follow standard TESC/MPA practices using the Evergreen on-line system.

- Students will be evaluated based on knowledgeable participation, timely submission of the final advocacy campaign plan, and active engagement with their classmates.
- In light of the course objective – to develop as a public service strategic leader -- students are asked to submit a self-evaluation. A faculty evaluation is optional. You can submit these evaluations via the College's online evaluation system at www.my.evergreen.edu. An evaluation conference is optional at student's request.

INSTRUCTOR:

Larry Seaquist served as a strategist and strategic planning executive in a wide range of local, national, and international public service roles. During his eight years as elected State Representative (26th Legislative District/Gig Harbor) in the Washington State Legislature, four as Chair of the House Higher Ed committee, Larry led strategic planning and advocacy efforts in education, health, operating budgets, environment and transportation.

In his prior career as a U.S. Naval officer, Larry commanded a series of four warships including Battleship USS IOWA. His duty ashore in the Pentagon focused on political-military strategy, national security policy, and budget making. Following service in the Navy's Strategic Studies Group, he led strategy and budget planning efforts for the Navy, the Joint Staff, and the Office

of the Secretary of Defense. He directed the Secretary of Defense Office of Policy Planning and served in the Office of Net Assessment during the transition to the post-Cold War world.

Larry followed his Navy career with a decade of peacebuilding and community development in at-war and at-risk countries in the Middle East, South Asia, Central Asia, and Latin America. Advising the Director-General of UNESCO, working with local government and community leaders and with local students, he pioneered the design and demonstration of innovative strategies for locally led campaigns of conflict prevention and community development. He continued this work in a number of U.S. cities and towns including Washington DC, Columbus OH, Seattle-King County, and Tacoma-Pierce County.

A former Federal Executive Fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington DC, he has led strategic planning seminars with students at universities in the U.S., Europe, the Middle East, Central Asia, South Asia, and Latin America. Early in his career, Larry wintered over both in the Arctic and the Antarctic taking weather and ice observations for a year at Barter Island in the Arctic Ocean and for fourteen months as American rep to the Argentine Expedition to Ellsworth Station on the Antarctic ice shelf on the Weddell Sea from where he went to the South Pole.

Larry's wife, Carla, was a writer and playwright. Her new book, *Across the Kitchen Table: A Mother and Daughter Turn Tragedy into Peace*, was published in January 2025. After writing for *The Christian Science Monitor* and *Huffington Post*, Carla regularly published commentary on politics, culture, and the American character at *Medium*. Her widely-read essays are collected in *Can America Save Itself from Decline? Politics, Culture and Morality*, Vol. I, II & III.

Larry is at work on a book, "Doing Democracy," which outlines the work ahead if our *We the People* democracy is to achieve our founding ideals in a changed and changing world. With the League of Women Voters, YMCA, and other groups, Larry also works with local students and citizen leaders to address the crises of inequity, homelessness, and civility in our communities.

COURSE POLICIES -- THE FINE PRINT

General: We will adhere to the usual procedures and policies of Evergreen and the MPA program. Those include:

1. TESC Statement on Academic Honesty
<http://www.evergreen.edu/advising/academic-honesty>
2. TESC The social contract – College philosophy
<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=174-121-010>
3. TESC Student Conduct Code
<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=174-123>

Attendance. Designed to develop personal professional skills, full credit in this highly participatory course assumes full participation and engagement.

Communicating with Each Other: Email is our primary means of communication outside class. Generally, I'll email direct from my personal account, larryseaquist@comcast.net.

TESC policy: Other Expectations of TESC Students and Faculty: We commit to promoting a cooperative, supportive atmosphere within the community; to give everyone opportunity for self-reflection and expression; to use high standards in reading the texts and preparing our papers, lectures, and comments in seminar; to handle all disputes in a spirit of goodwill; to respect our differences; and to discuss any problems involving others in the learning community directly with the individuals involved.

LS 2.0 5 October 2024