## Discussion Questions

# Chapter 4 Policy Analysis

1. Discuss. Consider the case of using cell phones while driving a car, whether for talking or texting. Given the information provided in the chapter, would you favor restricting drivers’ use of handheld cell phones? What about hands-free cell phones? What about restrictions on texting? How would you defend this policy choice?
2. Much of the policy analysis that is used in public debates today comes from interest groups that are strongly committed to one side of the issue or another or from think tanks that espouse a particular ideology on the left or the right. Do you think these policy commitments make the quality of the analysis suspect? Why or why not?
3. Small-group activity (4 groups). How should the issue of California drought and fire risk be studied by policy analysts? Review the news clip video listed below, then assign each group to discuss (1) whether to investigate root causes or proximate causes; (2) whether to conduct comprehensive analysis or focus on short-term policy relevance; (3) whether to use consensual norms or contentious analysis; and (4) whether to employ rational analysis or democratic political process where the public is engaged. What are the pros and cons of each approach?
4. What are the root causes of homelessness? What would policy addressing root cause look like? What are the proximate causes of homelessness? What would a policy addressing proximate cause look like?
5. One-minute writing. At which point(s) in the policy-making cycle would policy analysis be especially helpful or important? (studying problem, studying policy alternatives, and evaluation/change)
6. Small group or entire class. Choose a policy issue (stimulating the economy, sleep-deprived driving, homelessness, climate change). Brainstorm various policy alternatives to address that policy issue. Then discuss the kinds of things a policy analyst would want to study about each policy alternative that you came up with.
7. Scavenger hunt. Assign students to use their laptops in class to locate examples of think tanks and assess whether each one has a “slant,” or bias.