DRAFT SYLLABUS

PUBP 570-002 Policy Writing Fundamentals

Course Credits: 3.0

Spring 2018

Days/Time: Monday 4:30 pm – 7:10 pm

Classroom: Founders Hall FH 324

Instructor: Ambassador (ret.) Richard D. Kauzlarich

Distinguished Visiting Professor, Schar School of Policy and Government, Interim Director Peace Operations Policy Program (POPP), and Co-Director Center for Energy Science and Policy (CESP)

My Office: Founders Hall Room 709

Office Hours: TBD

Email: rkauzlar@gmu.edu

Phone number (O): 703-993-9652

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Communicating is something we constantly do. We write. We speak. The environments in which we communicate are constantly changing. Understanding how we communicate – ethically and honestly -- to policymakers in shifting environments is important to success in our professional lives whether we are in government, private or NGO sectors.

Think – Plan - Organize¹

¹ Perlmutter, A Practical Guide to Effective Writing
Above all, this seminar is designed to help you think about communicating -- whether in written or oral form -- in a public policy environment. The seminar has two objectives. First, help you identify the tools for skillfully and effectively presenting your writing to senior policy makers whose most precious commodity is not what you are conveying, but the time they devote to hearing or reading what you convey. Second, help you take responsibility for communicating to policymakers according to ethical standards centered on objectivity and integrity.

Communication does not happen in a vacuum. Therefore this seminar will stress the importance of team-building and peer review for good communications. It will include class participation through oral briefings and written papers. We will learn how peer review can improve the quality of our message -- and learn how to take helpful critiques of our work.

Edit – Edit – Edit ²

This seminar is a writing class, where we will focus on how we can improve our writing. It is not a public speaking class, but we will talk about briefing techniques for conveying key information most effectively. It is not a new-media class, but we will discuss the impact of social media on policy communications.

COURSE MATERIALS

Required Books


Pinker, Steven *The Sense of Style*, Penguin Group, New York, 2014


These will be the core texts for the course. I will assign sections as relevant to the topics under discussion.

² Perlmutter, *A Practical Guide to Effective Writing*
Other Required Readings

Haseley, Ken. *4 Key Communications Skills for Business Leaders*. The Moscow Times August 6, 2013, https://themoscowtimes.com/articles/4-key-communication-skills-for-business-leaders-26512


Guest, Justin. *Key Words: Communicating Policy Ideas in Multiple Media*. DRAFT January 8, 2018


Orwell, George *Politics and the English Language*, 1946 http://www.utdallas.edu/~aria/research/resources/orwell.pdf


Shovel, Martin *How to Be an Effective Communicator*, 16/05/2011
http://www.creativityworks.net/how-to-be-an-outstanding-communicator/

Shultz, George P. *Diplomacy in the Information Age* from Virtual Diplomacy Conference US Institute of Peace September 1997


Trubek, Anne *Proper Spelling? Its Tyme to Let Luce!* From Wired.com January 31, 2012,
http://www.wired.com/magazine/2012/01/st_essay_autocorrect/


Walt, Stephen M. *Why Is Academic Writing So Bad?* February 12, 2013,
http://walt.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/02/15/on_writing_well


Other Course Resources

**Internet Tools**

MiniNote Pro (for Mac)  https://fiplab.com/apps/mininote-for-mac  -- outline

Grammarly https://app.grammarly.com/  -- check grammar and spelling


Farnam Street https://www.farnamstreetblog.com/ From the blog “Farnam Street helps you make better decisions, innovate and avoid stupidity.”

AdviceToWriters http://www.advicetowriters.com/ Can be a bit overwhelming but a great reference set

XMind8 https://www.xmind.net/xmind8/ Great for mind-mapping.
Communications Resources


Additional readings/articles posted on course Blackboard site.
COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Knowledge and Understanding

A. Learn different forms of written (and oral) communications for senior policymakers
B. Understand how written analysis affects policymaking.
C. Understand the importance of thinking and structure before writing and making policy presentations.
D. Develop ethical principles and analytical standards that provide the foundation for written and oral communications based on integrity.

Analytical Skills and Abilities

A. Develop skills for processing information and cause and effect relationships.
B. Determine reliable information sources in an environment filled with conflicting, untrue, and self-serving information designed to influence as much as inform.
C. Working as part of a team and peer-review process

Professional Development

A. To effectively communicate policy-oriented research and analytical conclusions in written and oral form according to specific instructions and format.
B. To learn tools and approaches for delivering presentations to senior policy makers.
C. To conceptualize complex technical issues for a policymaker in terms that enable senior officials to make decisions.
TEACHING OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING METHODS

NOTE: Unless otherwise permitted for specific sessions, there is to be no use of laptops and other devices for internet access or note taking.

Students will prepare to discuss the reading assignments each week. These classes will be discussion based and often lead off with an oral presentation of a relevant topic (see assignment details below) by selected students although each student should be prepared to present each class. You also will be expected to participate during class in critiquing assigned readings. If you do not contribute you will lose participation points. Unlike life in general, showing up is not enough to demonstrate participation in the class.

Students are required to attend class.

GRADING AND PERFORMANCE

A. Policy Presentations 10%
B. Written Policy Paper 30%
C. Oral Policy Briefings 30%
   NIE and Final Policy Paper
D. PDB Item 20%
E. Attendance & Class Participation 10%

NOTE: Not everyone will receive an “A,” and final grades are non-negotiable.
Grade Table

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NOTE: Grading written and oral presentations is difficult and subjective. I will use a rubric (based on the criteria for grading associated with each assignment) against which I will grade each gradable event.
SUBMISSION OF DOCUMENTS

Paper Submission Guidelines

Students should use Microsoft Word word processing software. Use Times New Roman font with a font size of 12. Left, right, top and bottom page margins should be 1 inch only. All papers should be double-spaced. All papers must be submitted on Blackboard for 201810.16104 PUBP 570-002 (Spring 2018).

Writing help

Diana Hacker's A Pocket Manual of Style is the standard style manual for the School. It is available in the Bookstore. If you would like help with learning about how to compose your arguments or write more clearly, please contact the University Writing Center, http://writingcenter.gmu.edu

Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the DRC.

SCHAR SCHOOL OF POLICY AND GOVERNMENT (Schar School) POLICY ON PLAGERISM

The profession of scholarship and the intellectual life of a university, as well as the field of public policy inquiry, depend fundamentally on a foundation of trust. Thus, any act of plagiarism strikes at the heart of the meaning of the university and the purpose of the Schar School. It constitutes a serious breach of professional ethics, and it is unacceptable.

Plagiarism is the use of another's words or ideas presented as one's own. It includes, among other things, the use of specific words, ideas, or frameworks that are the product of another's work. Honesty and thoroughness in citing sources are essential to professional accountability and personal responsibility. The appropriate citation is necessary so that arguments, evidence, and claims can be critically examined.
Plagiarism is wrong because of the injustice it does to the person whose ideas are stolen. But it is also wrong because it constitutes lying to one’s professional colleagues. From a prudential perspective, it is shortsighted and self-defeating, and it can ruin a professional career.

The Schar School faculty takes plagiarism seriously and has adopted a zero tolerance policy. Any plagiarized assignment will receive an automatic grade of “F.” This may lead to failure for the course, resulting in dismissal from the University. This dismissal will be noted on the student’s transcript. For foreign students who are on a university-sponsored visa (e.g. F-1, J-1 or J-2), dismissal also results in the revocation of their visa.

To help enforce the Schar School policy on plagiarism, all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit student’s work without prior permission from the student.

Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. The Schar School policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace it or substitute for it.

Resources:

Avoiding Plagiarism
http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/?cat=23

Turnitin
http://wac.gmu.edu/program/newsletter/archive/fall2006/turnitin.htm
ASSIGNMENT DETAILS

Important: All assignments and grading will take place in Blackboard. I will not accept hard copy or e-mail submissions. If you do not know how to use Blackboard, learn it now.

I. Weekly Discussion

Written outline:

Basis for short (3 1/2 minute) oral presentation to policy maker
You chose the topic
Can be for your boss -- or the President of the United States
Focus on brevity, clarity, and relevance


A. Key point for the policy maker
B. Why important — so what?
C. Policy recommendations
D. Sources — newspapers, blogs
E. Tweet – 280 characters based on

One-page max (sources only may be on a second page)

Criteria for grading:

Follow instructions/format;
Understand use of outline;
Usefulness for oral presentation;
Clarity of written/oral presentation.

II. Talking Points
III. PDB Item for President

Topic of your choice based on

   What POTUS needs to know
   
   Does not have to be foreign/national security policy

1-1/2 page narrative

One chart/map/table that conveys key point in narrative

Lead with key policy point: “So what?”

Criteria for grading

   Follow instructions/format
   
   Clarity of written presentation
   
   Addresses “So what?” test

IV. ORAL PRESENTATIONS

(A) Team Briefing of the President

   Assigned a declassified National Intelligence Estimate (NIE)

   Setting: 7-1/2-minute briefing for President of the day

   Team must decide who will brief what

   No visual aids

   No script

   Outline for each presenter

   Fit on a 4 x 6 card
Criteria for grading

Follow instructions
Segue between presenters
Clarity of presentation
“Presidential”
Meet time limits

(B) Individual Briefing of 10-page policy paper (see below)

V. POLICY PAPER

10-page policy paper on a topic of your choice

Key policy question (s)

Time period

Executive Summary

Assumptions

Analysis

Drivers

Wild Cards

Alternative outcomes

Policy recommendations

Sources

Criteria for grading

Follow instructions/format

Understanding of Drivers/Wild Cards/Alternative Outcomes

Executive Summary

Clarity/connection between policy recommendations & key policy question.
COURSE OUTLINE

Session 1 -- Introduction and Overview

Theme: Who are we and why are we here?
Discuss Logical Fallacies: Argument from Consequences & Straw Man
Discuss Trubek, Johnson, Haseley, and Shoval articles
Assignment: One-page (double-spaced) essay: You and course objectives

WRITING TO COMMUNICATE

Session 2 -- Thinking about Thinking

Theme: How to approach writing? Outline and Checklist
Discuss Logical Fallacies: Appeal to Irrelevant Authority
Discuss Psychology of Intelligence Analysis by Richards J. Heuer, Jr.
Chapters 1&8, Part IV Conclusions – skim rest
Prepare/present outline for 3-½ minute policy-maker presentation
Assignment: Concept for Policy Paper (one page)

Session 3 – Characteristics of Good Writing and Editing

Theme: Separating Fact from Commentary; Omit Needless Words
Discuss The Sense of Style, Chapter 1 and Chapter 6
Discuss Logical Fallacies: Equivocation and False Dilemma
Discuss Shultz and Orwell articles
Prepare/present outline for 3-½ minute policy-maker presentation
WRITING TO INFORM

Session 4 – Talking Points and Notetaking
  Theme: When points are points and notes are notes
  Discuss Logical Fallacies: Not a Cause for a Cause
  Discuss Salmon and Walt articles
  Discuss Wiens and Bluff Tech Writing Handbook
  Prepare/present talking points
  Assignment: Outline (two-page) Policy Paper

Session 5 – Analysis 1 -- Briefing the President
  Theme: “But I will never brief the President.”
  Discuss Logical Fallacies: Appeal to Fear
  Discuss Peterson “What I learned….”
  Discuss Sherman Kent Words of Estimative Probability
  Discuss O’Grady and Roos Linking Academic research with the Public and Policy-makers
  Prepare two-page briefing/talking points for foreign leader to call Trump
Session 6 – Analysis 2 -- Briefing the President

Theme: Varieties of Communications – Guest: Professor Justin Guest

Discuss *The Sense of Style*, Chapter 2

Discuss Logical Fallacies: Appeal to Ignorance

Discuss Kent School “Rethinking “Alternative Analysis’….”

Discuss Guest *Key Words*

Discuss Ford “The Primary Purpose of National Estimating….”

Prepare Rev 1 of Policy Paper Outline

Session 7 – Congressional Testimony

Theme: “Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity….”

Discuss Logical Fallacies: Hasty Generalization

Discuss Catherine Smith *Writing Public Policy* Chapter 9 Testimony: Witness in a Public Hearing.


Prepare page PDB note for POTUS

Session 8 – Ethics in Policy Communication:

Theme: Truth to Power and Dissent

Discuss Logical Fallacies: No True Scotsman and Genetic Fallacy

Discuss Viner *How Technology Disrupted Truth*

Discuss Lowenthal Chapter 13 “Ethical and Moral Issues in Intelligence.”

On electronic reserve

Assignment: First Draft 10-page Policy Paper
WRITING FOR DECISION-MAKING

Session 9 – Recommending Policy Action

Theme: Answering “So What?” while avoiding Hanlon’s Razor:
Discuss Logical Fallacies: Affirming the Consequent and Appeal to Hypocrisy
Discuss *The Sense of Style Chapter 3*
Prepare Testimony based on your policy paper

Session 10 – Presenting options

Theme: “How Confident are You, not how Persuasive are You?”
Discuss Logical Fallacies: Slippery Slope and Guilt by Association
Discuss *The Sense of Style, Chapter 2*
Exercise in class – Actions and Options for Promoting Democracy

Session 11 – Analysis 3: Sourcing and Alternative Views

Theme: Importance of Sourcing and Alternative Views
Discuss Logical Fallacies: Appeal to Bandwagon
Exercise in class – Actions and Options for Promoting Diplomacy

Session 12 – Beating the Clock

Discuss Logical Fallacies: Ad Hominem
Team (2 students) oral presentation of NIE for POTUS
Session 13 – Communication and New Media

   Discuss Logical Fallacies: Circular Reasoning

   Discuss Matthais Lufkens *Twiplomacy 2016*

   Discuss Richard Levick, *The Communicators Leadership in an Age of Crisis* Chapter Leadership in the Digital Era

   Exercise in class – Actions and Options for Promoting Democracy

   Assignment: Final 10-page Policy Paper

Session 14 – Final Policy Paper – Oral Presentation

   Discuss Logical Fallacies: Composition and Division