George Mason University
Schar School of Policy and Government
PUBP 850: Professional Development Seminar

“In the academic world, you think now and decide never; and in the government, it’s just exactly the other way around.”

-G. Warren Nutter

Overview: Becoming a successful scholar in public policy is about more than taking courses and writing a dissertation. You will also need to become familiar with the culture and norms of the profession, such as navigating the journal publication process, giving effective academic presentations, making career choices that are consistent with your preferences, bridging the gap between academic research and policy making, and engaging in professional networking. Most of us gain this kind of knowledge informally – through mentoring and trial and error – over the course of our careers. This course provides you with a glimpse into this body of informal knowledge. Of course, there is no way for you to get a career’s worth of informal knowledge from a 1-credit course. You will still have to do a lot of informal learning on your own, throughout graduate school and your careers. But the goal is to give you an overview of what many PhDs say they wish they’d learned in graduate school. Each week, a different guest speaker (or in some cases multiple guest speakers) will share some informal knowledge.

Communication: I will generally send out information about this course by email. Email will go to your Mason email address. If you do not check your Mason email regularly, please arrange to have it forwarded to an account that you do check regularly.

Reading Assignments: The reading assignments are listed in the detailed schedule below. Any readings not linked below are posted on Blackboard. You are expected to read these articles before class and come prepared to ask the guest speaker(s) questions. On some days, there is a short assignment related to the reading or topic. Please make sure you have completed that assignment before coming to class.

Grading: This course is graded on a pass/fail basis (i.e., rather than a letter grade, you will receive an “S” if you pass and “NC” if you do not). If you meet the requirements described in this syllabus, you will pass the course.

Written Questions: Starting the second week of class, before each class – by COB each Wednesday (meaning I need to see your email in my inbox when I check on Thursday morning) – you must email me at least one question that you would like to ask the guest speaker(s). These questions may be based on the readings, or they may be general questions you have about the topic. Missing more than three weeks of questions puts you in jeopardy of not getting credit for the course.
**Presentation Summaries and Workshop Comments:** Over the course of the semester, you are expected to attend at least two presentations by Schar school faculty or visitors. For each presentation, you must write a brief (~200 word) summary and email it to me; the summary should include the name(s) of the speaker(s), the date and time of the presentation, the title of the presentation, and the location. Both presentation summaries are due by **May 4 at noon**. You must also attend at least one PhD student workshop and provide a written set of comments to at least one of the student presenters. Comments must be emailed to the student presenter and copied to me. Comments may cover either the substance or style of the presentation. Critical comments are fine (and can often be helpful), but please be civil and constructive, and be sure to mention at least one thing the presenter did well. These comments are due within **seven days** of the workshop. Failing to submit even one of these written assignments puts you in jeopardy of not getting credit for the course. (PhD student workshop dates are ???.)

**Participation and Attendance:** You are expected to attend each class and engage in dialogue with the guest speaker(s). If you need to miss class for work or illness, you must contact me before class. Missing more than two classes puts you in jeopardy of not getting credit for the course.

**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.

**Schedule and Reading Assignments:**
Please note that this schedule is tentative and subject to change. Please always consult the online version of this syllabus for the assigned reading.

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<th>Topics and Readings</th>
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| January 25 | **How to be Successful at the Schar School**  
Guest Speakers: Amit Patel, Mike Williams, Snigdha Dewal, and Alexis Lasselle (Schar School alumni)  
| February 1 | **Norms of the Profession**  
Guest Speaker: Jim Pfiffner  
Reading:  
Indiana University Writing Tutorial Services, “Plagiarism: What It Is and How to Avoid It.” |
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### March 1
**Careers in Government**
Guest Speakers: Barry Clendenin (formerly OMB) and Fred Ames (U.S. Trade Representative)

**Reading:**
- Rachel Leventhal-Weiner (2014), *“Interviewing for an Alt-Ac Position,”* *Vitae*.
- Elizabeth Keenan (2015), *“Ph.D.s Do Have Transferable Skills, Part 1 and Part 2,”* *Vitae*.

### March 8
**Careers at Universities**
Guest Speakers: Anh Pham (Schar School), Ahsan Butt (Schar School), and John Marvel (Schar School)

**Reading:**

### March 15
**No Class: Spring Break**

### March 22
**Careers in the Think Tank World**
Guest Speakers: Sasha Romanosky (RAND) and Aparna Mathur (AEI)

**Reading:**
- Andrew Rich (2004), *“The Political Demography of Think Tanks,”* in *Think Tanks,*
**Public Policy, and the Politics of Expertise**, Cambridge University Press.


### March 29

#### Publishing in Peer-Reviewed Journals

**Guest Speakers:** David Hart and Jack Goldstone

**Reading:**

### April 5

#### Giving Effective Presentations

**Guest Speaker:** Michael Veneri

**Reading:**
- RAND Corporation (1996), *Guidelines for Preparing Briefings*, Communications Consulting Group and Publications Department at RAND. [posted on Blackboard]

### April 12

#### The Schar School’s Centers

**Guest Speaker:** Tonya Neaves and Ellen Laipson

**Reading:**
- Schar School Research Centers [browse center websites and get an idea of what they do]

### April 19

#### Communicating Your Policy Ideas

**Guest Speaker:** Justin Gest

**Reading:**
- Justin Gest (2016), *Key Words: Communicating Policy Ideas in Multiple Media.*
[posted on Blackboard]

| April 26 | Professional Networking  
| Guest Speaker: Katrin Anacker and Alan Abramson |

**Reading:**


| May 3 | Effective Scholarly Writing  
| Guest Speaker: Ed Rhodes |

**Reading:**

