



**PUBPOL 521.001 Introduction to Policy Writing
Winter 2020**

**Classroom: Steelcase Conference Room, 2120 Weill
Dates: Each Wednesday from January 15 to February 12
Time: 11:30 AM – 12:50 PM**

Instructor: Molly Spencer
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Office hours posted each week at <https://fordschool.mywconline.com/>

Course Objectives

The goal of this course is to familiarize you with types and fundamentals of policy writing. While policy writing draws on principles familiar to academic writing, it has its own conventions, which are rooted in the needs and practices of the field. Through these five intensive classes, we believe you will acquire the skills and confidence to excel in the policy writing expected of you at the Ford School and in your future career.

Course Content

This class will introduce you to three genres of policy writing: the stakeholder memo, the strategy memo, and the op-ed. Before we write and critique these genres ourselves, we will examine different approaches and strategies that students and professionals have adopted for each type of document by reading and discussing sample documents, and evaluating them according to policy writing norms and principles of good writing.

The class will also consider the choices that you, the writer, must negotiate. What makes a convincing, well-supported argument? What makes for an effective opening? When, where, and how can we amplify our voice to persuade or educate our audience? How might we develop greater stylistic precision? What are some strategies for writing as clearly and concisely as possible? Why do order and organization matter? We believe you'll gain a better sense of how to answer these questions in your own work by taking this course.

Course Requirements

The value of this course will depend heavily on the quality and quantity of student participation. I expect you to take all requirements seriously and to contribute your best writing, criticism, ideas, and questions. Course requirements include:

- Completion of three writing assignments: a stakeholder memo, a strategy memo, and an op-ed.
- Active participation, which includes: reading and analyzing sample documents and responding to accompanying questions prior to class; critiquing your peers' written work; attendance and punctuality; participating in class discussions.

Failure to meet these requirements will result in an "unsatisfactory" course grade. While I realize speaking up in class comes more naturally to some than to others, I encourage you to focus your thoughts and questions into words before class begins so that participation will be less daunting.

Workshop, Written Critiques and Line Edits, and Instructor Feedback

The aim of providing feedback to a writer is to *describe and encourage*, and all feedback—in workshop, written critiques, line edits, and instructor comments—will be provided in this spirit. That doesn't mean you should check your honest appraisal of things that aren't working well in a piece of writing. As opposed to generic praise or criticism, however, you should give thoughtful, constructive feedback that specifically engages with the author's argument, intent, and words as they appear on the page.

Workshop

This class is structured as a workshop in which students discuss and critique one another's writing based on the policy writing fundamentals and principles of good writing we discuss in class. The goals of any writing workshop are: to provide constructive criticism to the writer; and to develop and practice the skills you'll need to critique your own writing.

For each student, one of the three assignments will be workshopped in class. When it is your turn to be workshopped, you will email your assignment to the class and to me in advance **by 4PM on the Sunday before workshop**. You will also upload a copy to Canvas for purposes of my record-keeping. When your peers come to class on the day of your workshop, they will have read and critiqued your work and will be prepared to discuss it.

Written Critiques and Line Edits

You will write a critique and provide line edits (sentence-level concerns such as clarity, spelling and typos, word choice, syntax, etc.) for each of the papers workshopped in class, except your own.

A **written critique** should consist of roughly three single-spaced, typed paragraphs (minimum of a half-page; no longer than a page-and-a-half) and should include the following:

- A few sentences explaining what, specifically, is working well in the piece and why.
- “Big picture” questions or comments: What didn't you understand? What felt poorly supported? What was organizationally ineffective?
- Specific suggestions for addressing your concerns.

While written critiques are not graded, I check them for quality and completeness. If your critique does not meet the above guidelines, I will ask you to revise and resubmit it until it is satisfactory. There are sample critiques on Canvas with my notes indicating what is and is not satisfactory in the sample critiques.

You can make your **line edits** directly on the document, by notation if using a hard copy, or by using Word's track changes functionality if working in the electronic file.

Please bring a **hard copies** of the piece being workshopped and of your written critique to class, and submit an electronic copy of your written critique to Canvas **before the start of class**. If you're making line edits in an electronic file rather than on hard copy, e-mail your line edits to the person being workshopped, and cc me, **before the start of class**. At the end of the workshop, you will hand your critiques (both your hard copy written critique and your line edits, if on hard copy) to the student being workshopped.

Instructor Feedback

You will receive detailed written feedback from me on the assignment that you submit for workshop. If you would like detailed feedback on the other two assignments, please set up a 30-minute appointment with me to discuss your paper. I recommend doing this soon after you turn in each assignment. You can make an appointment at <http://fordschool.umich.edu/writing-center/>. If none of my open appointment times work for you, let me know and we'll find a time that does.

Electronic Devices

I strongly prefer that students do not use laptops, tablets, or smartphones in the classroom. I've come to this conclusion reluctantly, given the resource- and time-intensiveness of printing hard copies, but my experience, as well as pedagogical research, indicate that working with hard copies has significant advantages for learning. It allows for the synthesis of content and ideas when taking notes, for easier/better annotation on sample documents (which I highly encourage), and for a more engaged face-to-face discussion. If you need an accommodation in this area due to a disability or some other urgent concern, please discuss with me.

Assignment Schedule and Guidelines

ASSIGNMENT	DUE
Volunteer 1: Stakeholder memo for workshop	Sunday, January 19, 4PM via email
Everyone else: Written critique and line edits for Volunteer 1	Wednesday, January 22 , hard copy <i>and</i> Canvas upload (critique) / hard copy <i>or</i> email (line edits)
Volunteer 2: Stakeholder memo for workshop	Sunday, January 26, 4PM via email
Everyone else: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stakeholder memo - Written critique and line edits for Volunteer 2 	Wednesday, January 29 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Memo via Canvas - Hard copy <i>and</i> Canvas upload (critique) / hard copy <i>or</i> email (line edits)
Volunteers 3 and 4: Strategy memo for workshop	Sunday, February 2, 4PM via email
Everyone else: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategy memo - Written critique and line edits for Volunteer 3 <i>and</i> Volunteer 4 	Wednesday, February 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Memo via Canvas - Hard copy <i>and</i> Canvas upload (critique) / hard copy <i>or</i> email (line edits)
Volunteers 5 and 6: Op-ed for workshop	Sunday, February 9, 4PM via email
Everyone else <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Op-ed - Written critique and line edits for Volunteer 5 <i>and</i> Volunteer 6 	Wednesday, February 12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Op-ed via Canvas - Hard copy <i>and</i> Canvas upload (critique) / hard copy <i>or</i> email (line edits)

Please follow these guidelines for submitting and formatting your assignments:

- Submit electronic versions of assignments in Word
- Name your assignment files **LastnameFirstname-AssignmentName.doc**; *example*: MollySpencer-StrategyMemo.doc or MollySpencer-Critique1.doc
- Memos and op-eds:
 - Double space and **paginate**
 - Include your **name** and a **word count** on the first page
- Written critiques: **paginate** if more than one page, and include your **name** on the first page

Course Schedule

Class #1 – Wednesday, January 15

Topic: Stakeholder Memos

- Syllabus review and workshop schedule
- Policy writing norms
- Stakeholder memo discussion
- Writing focus: argumentation

Homework to be completed before 1/22:

- Re-read and annotate sample stakeholder memos; answer reading questions
- Review clarity and concision principles (“Cheat Sheet for Clarity and Concision”)
- Write critique of Volunteer #1’s stakeholder memo and upload to Canvas; turn in line edits

Class #2 – Wednesday, January 22

DUE: Stakeholder Memo (Volunteer #1 only); written critique and line edits for Volunteer 1

Topic: Stakeholder Memos, continued; Clarity and Concision in Policy Writing

- Workshop of Volunteer #1’s stakeholder memo: _____
- Stakeholder memo discussion, continued
- Writing focus: clarity and concision; executive summaries

Homework to be completed before 1/29:

- Write critique of Volunteer #2’s stakeholder memo and upload to Canvas; turn in line edits
- Write stakeholder memo (except Volunteer #1) and upload to Canvas
- Read and annotate example strategy memos; answer reading questions

Class #3 – Wednesday, January 29

DUE: Stakeholder Memo (except Volunteer #1); written critique and line edits for Volunteer 2

Topic: Stakeholder Memo Wrap-up and Strategy Memos

- Workshop Volunteer #2’s stakeholder memo: _____
- Strategy memo discussion
- Writing focus: counterargument

Homework to be completed before 2/5:

- Write critique of Volunteers’ #3 and #4 strategy memos and upload to Canvas; turn in line edits
- Write strategy memo and upload to Canvas
- Read and annotate op-ed handouts; answer reading questions

Class #4 – Wednesday, February 5

DUE: Strategy Memo (everyone); written critique and line edits for Volunteers 3 and 4

Topics: Strategy Memo Wrap-up; Op-Eds

- Workshop Volunteers’ #3 and #4 strategy memos: _____, _____
- Op-ed discussion
- Writing focus: beginnings and endings

Homework to be completed before 2/12

- Write critiques of Volunteers’ #5 and #6 op-eds and upload to Canvas; turn in line edits
- Write op-ed and upload to Canvas

Class #5 – Wednesday, February 12

DUE: The Op-Ed (everyone); written critique and line edits for Volunteers 5 and 6

Topics: Op-Eds, continued; Course Wrap-up

- Workshop Volunteers' #5 and #6 op-eds: _____ , _____
- Op-Ed wrap-up
- Course wrap-up

This syllabus is subject to change. I will announce any changes in class and on Canvas.

FORD SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY INCLUSIVITY STATEMENT

Members of the Ford School community represent a rich variety of backgrounds and perspectives. We are committed to providing an atmosphere for learning that respects diversity. While working together to build this community we ask all members to:

- share their unique experiences, values and beliefs
- be open to the views of others
- honor the uniqueness of their colleagues
- appreciate the opportunity that we have to learn from each other in this community
- value one another's opinions and communicate in a respectful manner
- keep confidential discussions that the community has of a personal (or professional) nature
- use this opportunity together to discuss ways in which we can create an inclusive environment in Ford classes and across the U-M community

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: If you need an accommodation for a disability, please let your instructor know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of courses may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make your instructor aware of your needs, they can work with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office to help determine appropriate academic accommodations. Any information you provide will be treated as private and confidential.

Student Mental Health and Well-Being Resources: The University of Michigan is committed to advancing the mental health and wellbeing of its students. We acknowledge that a variety of issues, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, and depression, directly impacts students' academic performance. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services are available. For help, contact [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (CAPS) and/or [University Health Service](#) (UHS). For a listing of other mental health resources available on and off campus, visit: <http://umich.edu/~mhealth/>

Please review additional information and policies regarding academic expectations and resources at the Ford School of Public Policy at this link:

<http://fordschool.umich.edu/academics/expectations>