

**Public Policy 521 -- Introduction to Policy Writing**  
Winter 2018

Classroom: Steelcase Seminar Room (2120 Weill)

Dates and Time: Tuesdays from 4:00 – 5:30pm. We'll meet each Tuesday through February 6

Instructor: Alex Ralph

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Office Hours: I will meet with each of you individually at least once over our five weeks together. See “Instructor Feedback” (p.3-4) for more information.

**Course Goals**

This module's goal is to familiarize you with the norms and types of policy writing. While policy writing draws upon principles familiar to academic writing, it has its own conventions, which are rooted in the needs and practices of policy professionals.

Through these five intensive classes, we believe you will acquire greater confidence to excel in the policy writing expected of you at the Ford School and in your future career.

**Course Requirements**

For these modules to be successful, they will require active student participation. By electing to take this five-week module, you are expected to take all requirements seriously and to give us your best writing—and your best criticism.

*Requirements for passing the course include*

- Completion of three writing assignments: stakeholder memo, strategy memo, op-ed.
- Active participation, which includes a) critiquing your peers' written work; b) attendance and punctuality; c) volunteering your ideas.

Failure to meet these requirements will result in an “unsatisfactory” course grade.

## **Ford School's Academic Expectations**

Below I have included some information from the Ford School that you've probably seen on the syllabi of other Ford classes. I do, though, want to emphasize that as your teacher it's my responsibility to do my very best to ensure that each one of you feels respected and listened to. If conflicts arise, if you feel uncomfortable with something I or a classmate has said, please do let me know right away. To reiterate, my goal is to help you to write the strongest papers you can—but it's also to help create a classroom space that prioritizes learning and that pleasurable snap that comes from a meaningful exchange of ideas.

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

The Ford School academic community, like all communities, functions best when its members treat one another with honesty, fairness, respect, and trust. We hold all members of our community to high standards of scholarship and integrity. To accomplish its mission of providing an optimal educational environment and developing leaders of society, the Ford School promotes the assumption of personal responsibility and integrity and prohibits all forms of academic dishonesty, plagiarism and misconduct. Academic dishonesty may be understood as any action or attempted action that may result in creating an unfair academic advantage for oneself or an unfair academic advantage or disadvantage for any other member or members of the academic community. Plagiarism involves representing the words, ideas, or work of others as one's own in writing or presentations, and failing to give full and proper credit to the original source. Conduct, without regard to motive, that violates the academic integrity and ethical standards will result in serious consequences and disciplinary action.

Additional information regarding academic dishonesty, plagiarism and misconduct and their consequences is available at: <http://www.rackham.umich.edu/current-students/policies/academic-policies...>

### **ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

If you believe 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 WELLBEING**

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/>.

## 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 UM community

*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>

## **Workshop, Critiques, and Instructor Feedback**

### *Workshop*

Each of you will be workshopped by the class one time. When it is your turn to be workshopped, you will email your assignment to the class in advance. On the day of the workshop, your peers will have read, critiqued, and come prepared to discuss your work.

### *Critiques*

A critique should consist of roughly three typed paragraphs at the end of the document. It should include the following:

- a few sentences explaining what, specifically, you admired about the work.
- “big picture” questions or comments: what didn’t you understand? what felt poorly supported? what was organizationally ineffective?
- specific suggestions for addressing your concerns.

Any style or sentence-level issue can be indicated directly in the document or by using Track Changes. It should go without saying that the aim of these workshops and critiques is to encourage rather than discourage. That doesn’t mean you should check your honest appraisal. As opposed to generic praise, you should give thoughtful, constructive criticism that actively engages with the author’s ideas and words.

### *Instructor Feedback*

You will receive written feedback on the document that you submit to be workshopped. For the other two documents, you will set up individual appointments with the instructor to discuss the work further; we recommend doing this the week you turn in each document. Appointments can be made through the Ford School Writing Center scheduler: <http://fordschool.umich.edu/writing-center/>

## **Course Content**

This course will introduce you to three distinct genres of policy writing: the stakeholder memo, the strategy memo, and the op-ed. Before we write and critique these three genres ourselves, we will examine different approaches and strategies students and professionals have adopted.

Each act of writing involves informed choices that you, the writer, must negotiate. What makes for an effective opening? When and where and how can we amplify our voice to persuade or educate our readers? How can arguments work more successfully? How might we develop greater stylistic precision? Through this course, it is our belief that you will develop a greater awareness and confidence in your policy writing skills.

## SCHEDULE

Class #1 – January 9  
Stakeholder Memos

- Policy Writing Norms
- Stakeholder Memo Discussion
- Solicit Volunteer #1 to submit Stakeholder Memo for Class #2 workshop.

Class #2 – January 16

Strategy Memos

- Workshop #1: Stakeholder Memo
- Strategy Memo Discussion
- Solicit Volunteer #2 for Stakeholder Memo for Class #3 workshop

**DUE: Stakeholder Analysis Memo (Assignment #1)**

Class #3 – January 23

Strategy Memos Cont.

- Workshop #2: Stakeholder Memo
- Workshop #3: Strategy Memo

**DUE: Strategy Memo (Assignment #2)**

Class #4 – January 30

Op-eds

- Workshop #4: Strategy Memo
- Op-Ed Discussion

Class #5 – February 6

Op-Eds Cont.

- Workshop #5: Op-ed
- Workshop #6: Op-ed
- Course Wrap-up

**DUE: The Op-Ed (Assignment #3)**

