

**Syllabus
PUBPOL 578**

**Strategic Public Policy Consulting
Mondays & Wednesdays, 8:30-9:50AM
Zoom Passcode: 4208
Fall 2020**

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Student Visiting Hours (Office Hours): Monday, 2:30-4:30pm by appointment

A note about taking class during a pandemic

This semester will be unlike any semester we've experienced. Unlike the Winter term, we have more time to prepare for a remote course, but that doesn't guarantee it will go smoothly. We will all (me included) be dealing with a lot of stress and distraction. My promise to you is that I will do my best to communicate clearly about my expectations for this class, to be compassionate, and to help you find external sources to help if a problem goes beyond my expertise. My expectation from you is that you will communicate with me early and often, especially if you are struggling. I will do whatever I can to get us all through this semester, but I can only do that if you let me know when you need help.

Course Description

The Ford School of Public Policy's Strategic Public Policy Consulting (SPPC) is a semester-long course offered to students in the Ford School and other UM professional degree programs. The course provides an opportunity for students to conduct a supervised consulting project for a real policy organization. Each year, topics for student projects are jointly developed by the course's faculty director and staff at the external partner organization. Projects range widely in policy area, methodology, size, and complexity. All projects culminate in the production of a final report and an oral presentation to the partner.

Course Objectives

- Gain hands-on experience applying policy tools to help an external partner;
- Learn to organize, plan, and carry-out a long-term group project;
- Enhance writing and oral presentation skills via a final presentation and paper.

Reading Materials:

There are no assigned textbooks for this class.

Grading and Evaluation

Communication, participation, & organization during project meetings (only individual grade): 20%
Initial project plan (group): 10%
Mid-semester check-in (group): 10%
Written final report (group): 30%
Lightning talk presentation (group): 30%

Class communication, participation, and organization (graded at individual level)

Participation: You will be working in small groups (3-5 students) and meeting regularly with both me and your client organization representative(s). Regular participation in these meetings is key to your project team's success. I expect all members of the team to participate in all meetings and to be punctual,

unless otherwise arranged. Failure to show up for meetings will affect your only individual grade and may affect your entire groups final grades by affecting the quality of the final products. Absences may be excused (in advance, via email) due to UM-related activities, job interviews, or illness. However, you will still be expected to meet all expectations for the course.

I expect you to be present to class in both body *and* mind. You are encouraged to ask questions and make substantive contributions to meetings. I also expect that you will listen and respond respectfully to your classmates' and client's contributions. This means actively engaging with their viewpoints rather than just waiting for your next chance to talk. Some of us are more comfortable than others about speaking in meetings, so encouraging your fellow students to have their voices heard is vital.

Communication: When it comes to research projects, nothing ever goes perfectly according to plan. This is especially true in the midst of a pandemic! I understand that and your clients should understand that as well. However, we all expect to be kept abreast of how the project is progressing, any obstacles you are facing, and any issues that require help. We are here to advise and guide you, but can only do so if we are kept in the loop. I expect that you will communicate regularly with your fellow project team members, me, and your client and that you will respond in timely manner to emails, etc. I also expect that you will voice any concerns you have about the project in a constructive way so that they can be addressed early before bigger problems arise.

Organization: Big research projects, especially those in teams, require a great deal of project management and time management, and record-keeping. I expect that you will show up to meetings prepared to discuss the topics for each day, having completed any work that was outlined from the previous meeting, and that you (as a team) will keep notes of meetings (or meeting outcomes) so that the projects can move forward without having to revisit the same discussions repeatedly. We will have a mid-semester check in to review how the overall project is progressing, but I expect each team member to keep on top of their own assignments throughout the semester and to help their fellow team members as needed.

Assignments (all graded at group-level)

Project plan: Details of the project plan assignment are on Canvas. As a team, in coordination with your client representative, you will come up with an initial project plan, review it with a "premortem" analysis, and revise the plan according. This revised plan will be due the third week of classes.

Mid-term check-in: This is a 1-page assessment of how your team's project is progressing in comparison to your original project plan. This is an opportunity to change project goals if the team has faced major obstacles. More details are on Canvas.

Written final report: This is the final written product that you will be presenting to your clients. The exact format and nature of the report will depend on what the client has asked for, and so will differ for each group. However, all reports must be well-written, all graphics or visual images must be clear and advance understanding, and the report should be a thorough summary and analysis of your key findings.

Oral presentation: As a group, you will all present an oral presentation to your clients and/or key stakeholders for your client. The length and format of these presentations will be determined in consultation with your client. You will also presenting a "lightning talk" version of your presentation in class on the last day of class (more details on Canvas). Both my own assessment of your lightning talk and your client's assessment of your stakeholder/client presentation will be factored into your oral presentation grade.

Academic Honesty and Learning Environment:

Ford School Academic Expectations: If you haven't already, familiarize yourself with the academic expectations of the Ford School: <http://fordschool.umich.edu/academics/expectations>. This link contains more details about issues such as plagiarism, learning differences, and use of technology.

Plagiarism and References: I take plagiarism very seriously. Familiarize yourself with UM's guide to academic integrity and plagiarism here: www.lib.umich.edu/academic-integrity/understanding-academic-integrity-and-plagiarism-students. You can use the citation style of your choice (APA, MLA, etc), as long as you are consistent and citing your sources. When in doubt, add a citation and a reference even if you are just referencing an idea (that is, even if you do not quote directly the source). Make sure the sources you are referencing are reputable (aka, not Wikipedia, not a blog).

Recordings Policy: Both synchronous and asynchronous lectures and videos will be audio/video recorded and made available to other students in this course via Canvas. As part of your participation in this course, your synchronous Zoom discussions will be recorded and posted to Canvas (and ONLY Canvas). Students may not record or distribute any class activity without written permission from the instructor, except as necessary as part of approved accommodations for students with disabilities. Any approved recordings may only be used for the student's own private use. They may not be shown or shared with anyone outside of this class.

Writing Help: Whether you are new to policy writing or an old pro, I encourage you to work with the Ford School's writing tutors. You can make these appointments online, using the following link: <http://www.fordschool.umich.edu/writing-center/>

Class Notes Policy: Notes from the course (both the ones that I provide and the ones that you take) may not be posted on a web site, made available for file sharing, or distributed in any medium. The only exception is to provide a copy to a student in the class who has been absent from class.

Special Needs: If you believe you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of this course may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities to help us determine appropriate accommodations. I will treat any information you provide 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/>

Learning Environment: Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, and nationalities. I receive class rosters with students' legal names and preferred gender pronouns. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

Ford School Public Health Protection Policy: **This class is fully remote, the following statement refers to any in-person activities this semester.** In order to participate in any in-person aspects of this course, including meeting with other students to study or work on a team project, you must follow all safety measures mandated by the State of Michigan, the University of Michigan and the Ford School. This includes maintaining physical distancing of six feet from others and properly wearing a face covering at all times while on campus. In addition, it is expected that you will protect and enhance the health of everyone in the Ford School community by staying home and following self-isolation guidelines if you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19, have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, are awaiting a test result, or have engaged in a higher-exposure activity such as flying or attending an indoor social gathering of more than 10 people. If you are unable or unwilling to adhere to all prescribed safety measures, you will be accommodated through remote access to all aspects of this course. Additional information on public health safety measures is described in the [Wolverine Culture of Care](#) and the [University's Face Covering Policy for COVID-19](#).

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 UM community

SPPC
Class Schedule and Outline

NOTE: Any reading assignments will be posted to Canvas

Week 1 (Aug 31)

- Introductions to course and each other
- Split into project groups, set up initial meetings with clients

Week 2 (Sept 7)

- Meet with clients/Kaitlin, figure out details of research plan
- Write draft project plan

Week 3 (Sept 14)

- Read Kahnemen (2011) Thinking, Fast and Slow Chapters 23 & 24
- Conduct “premortem analysis”
- Revise project plan, get it approved by client, turn in project plan and premortem by end of week (Friday at 5pm ET)

Weeks 4-7 (Sept 21-Oct 12)

- Work on projects with (at least) weekly check-ins with Kaitlin and client

Week 8 (Oct 19)

- Mid-semester Check-in due (1 page assessment of how plan is progressing)
- Adjust project plan as needed

Week 9 (Oct 26)

- Work on projects with (at least) weekly check-ins with Kaitlin and client

Week 10 (Nov 2)

- Election Day (Nov 3) – don’t plan any major data collection efforts this week

Weeks 11-12 (Nov 9-16)

- Work on projects with (at least) weekly check-ins with Kaitlin and client

Thanksgiving Break (Nov 23 & 25)

Week 13 (Nov 30)

- Final touches on written reports, prepare oral presentations

Week 14 (Dec 7)

- Lightning talk presentations on December 9th (everyone will meet for full 80 minutes that day)
- Complete teaching evaluations
- Wrap up