**Introduction to Policy Writing | PUBPOL 521.002  
Winter 2023**

**Dates: Mondays, January 23 – February 20  
Time: 11:30AM - 12:50 PM U.S. Eastern  
Weill Hall 1220 / The Fisher Classroom**

**Instructor:** Molly Spencer | she / her / hers  
**Office:** 3223 Weill Hall  
**Email:** [mollysp@umich.edu](mailto:mollysp@umich.edu)  
**Office hours:** Mondays 2:00 – 3:00 or by appointment at <https://fordschool.mywconline.com/>. Appointments take place in my office, Weill 3223. Office hours are on a drop-in basis, so you may have to wait for a few minutes while I’m wrapping up with one of your classmates. Please *wear a mask when CDC community levels are high or medium*. If this doesn’t work for you, email me at the time you schedule the appointment to request a Zoom meeting.   
 **Course Objectives:** The goals of this five-week, pass/fail course are: to familiarize you with types and fundamentals of policy writing; to develop your capacity for cogent argumentation; to practice strategies for clear and concise writing; and to develop your skills in critiquing writing. While policy writing draws on some principles familiar to academic writing, it has its own conventions which are rooted in the needs and practices of policy professionals. Through this course, you will practice the skills and develop confidence to excel in the policy writing expected of you at the Ford School and beyond.  
 **Course Readings and Materials:** There is no textbook for this class; I will provide all readings and materials. Please bring copies of the readings to class each week. You will also need something to write with (pen/pencil) and a notebook or laptop for note-taking.

**Workshops, Written Critiques, and Instructor Feedback:** This class is structured as a writing workshop in which students read, discuss, and critique one another’s papers based on the principles of effective policy writing we discuss in class. The working assumption of any writing workshop is that, by providing constructive criticism to other writers, we become better writers and revisers of our *own* work.   
  
*Workshop Schedule:* Each student will have a minimum of *one* of the three papers workshopped in class. The workshops will take place during Weeks 3, 4, and 5 of the class. During our first class meeting, I will ask for volunteers for each week's workshops. After that, I'll update the assignments so that Canvas will reflect what's due for you and when. When your classmates come to class on the day of your workshop, they will have read and critiqued your work and will be prepared to discuss it.

Important Note on Critiquing Writing: The aim of critiquing writing is to describe and encourage, and all feedback—in workshop, written critiques, line edits, and instructor comments—should be delivered in this spirit. That doesn’t mean you should check your honest appraisal of things that aren’t effective in the workshop papers. As opposed to generic praise or criticism, however, you should give *specific, constructive, and actionable feedback* that engages with the author’s argument, intent, and words as they appear on the page.

Written Critiques and Line Edits: You will write a critique for three of the workshopped papers, one per week during Weeks 3, 4, and 5. 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.
* One or two sentence-level edits (“line edits”) that aim to make a sentence clearer or more concise.

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 them.

*Have a copy of the workshop paper to refer to in class*. At the end of the workshop, you will give a copy of your written critique to the student whose paper is being workshopped (if you prefer, you may send your written critique via email after class). In your written critiques or on a hard copy of the workshop memo, you should offer one or two line edits aimed at improving clarity and concision. Although you are *writing* only one critique per workshop, you should be prepared to critique **both** papers in specific, actionable terms as part of the workshop discussion. In essence, you’ll be doing the reading and thinking required to critique both memos but writing a critique for only one. In addition to providing your classmates with critiques of their work, you will need to *upload your written critiques to Canvas* for my recordkeeping purposes.

Instructor Feedback: You will receive detailed written feedback from me on the paper you submit for workshop. If you would like feedback on your other two papers, set up an appointment with me to discuss your paper during my office hours or in another open slot on my writing center schedule. I recommend doing this soon after you turn in each paper. 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. If you’d like me to reserve the appointment so that you don’t use up your one appointment per week, I am happy to do so.

**Course Requirements, Attendance, and Due Dates**

* **Three short papers:** a stakeholder memo (max. 500 words), a strategy memo (max. 500 words), and an op-ed (min. 750 – max. 900 words). Submit on Canvas as a Word doc (no google docs). Memos for workshop are emailed to the instructor and your classmates a few days before the workshop.
* **Three written critiques** of your classmates’ assignments. Submit on Canvas as a Word doc (no google docs), and provide a copy to workshoppee at the end of workshop or after class, or email after class.
* **Preparation and engagement:** The value of this course will depend heavily on student preparation and engagement. Please be prepared to contribute your best ideas, questions, writing, and critiques. Specific areas of preparation and engagement include:
  + *Prior to each class session*, read the sample documents and turn in responses to discussion questions by 5:00 p.m. the day before class. I will use your responses and questions to guide class discussion. *Come prepared to discuss your responses to discussion questions in class*; it may be helpful to have a copy of your answers to refer to.
  + *Writing exercises:* We’ll begin each class with a writing exercise intended to give you practice on principles of clear and concise writing and/or argumentation. Writing exercises will double as my means of taking attendance.
  + *In class*, I look for the following signs that you’re engaged: focus (avoiding distractions); presence; asking questions; listening; engaging with specifics from readings and discussions; building off what others have asked or said; making connections among concepts, readings, and/or class discussions. I understand that speaking in groups comes more easily to some than to others, so I am not inclined to apply a one-size-fits-all approach to contributions in class, but I ask that you make your best effort to participate substantively in the ways that feel authentic, even if not always entirely comfortable, to you.

To receive a "satisfactory" (pass) grade you must meet all requirements and attend all five class sessions, but I will work with you if this becomes difficult or impossible given your circumstances. Absences are, of course, excused for illness and other emergencies. I ask that you *contact me* *24 hours* *in advance of due dates and class meeting times* if you anticipate missing them, so that we can work together on a plan that allows you to successfully complete the course. If you need an extension, please fill out the “I need an extension!” form on Canvas. Please note that it is more difficult to give extensions on workshop papers than on other assignments, since an extension would affect the amount of time your classmates’ (and I) have to develop our critiques. That said, *with the appropriate notice*, we can usually figure out a solution that works for everyone.

**Notes on Another Pandemic Semester**

Being in class is important, but so is your health and the health of others. *If you don’t feel well, please stay home and follow Ford’s COVID testing and reporting recommendations.* All class sessions will be recorded and uploaded to Canvas through lecture capture; if you miss class for illness or another reason, the best way to know what you missed is to watch the recording. If you have questions that are not answered in the class recording, feel free to make an appointment to meet with me. If illness impacts your ability to turn in assignments on time, please fill out the “I need an extension!” form in the Course Information module on Canvas.

**Course Topics, Assignment Schedule, and Due Dates (next page)…**

**Course Topics, Assignment Schedule, and Due Dates: Please note that *due dates for papers will vary according to workshop schedule*.**

| **WEEK / TOPIC** | **ASSIGNMENTS** | **DUE FROM** | **DUE DATE** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **WEEK 1**   * Course introduction / workshop schedule * Policy writing fundamentals * Stakeholder memo discussion |  |  | n/a |
| **WEEK 2**   * Stakeholder memos, continued * Clear and concise writing | Reading discussion questions | Everyone | Sunday 1/29 5:00PM  (upload to Canvas) |
| **WEEK 3**   * Workshops 1 and 2 * Strategy memo discussion | Stakeholder memos for workshop | Volunteers 1 and 2 | Friday 2/3 5:00PM  (upload to Canvas *and* email to instructor & class) |
|  | Reading discussion questions | Everyone | Sunday 2/5 5:00PM  (upload to Canvas) |
|  | Written critiques | Everyone | Monday 2/6 11:30AM  (upload to Canvas *and* give hard copy to classmate) |
|  | Non-workshop stakeholder memos | Everyone *except* Volunteers 1 and 2 | Monday 2/6 11:30AM  (upload to Canvas) |
|  | Strategy memos for workshop | Volunteers 3 and 4 | Friday 2/10 5:00PM  (upload to Canvas *and* email to instructor & class) |
| **WEEK 4**   * Workshops 3 and 4 * Op-ed discussion | Reading discussion questions | Everyone | Sunday 2/12 5:00PM  (upload to Canvas) |
| **WEEK 4 continued** | Written critiques | Everyone | Monday 2/13 11:30AM  (upload to Canvas *and* give hard copy to classmate) |
|  | Non-workshop strategy memos | Everyone *except* Volunteers 3 and 4 | Monday 2/13 11:30AM  (upload to Canvas) |
|  | Op-eds for workshop | Volunteers 5 and 6 | Friday 2/17 5:00PM  (upload to Canvas *and* email to instructor & class) |
| **WEEK 5**   * Workshops 5 and 6 * Focus on counterargument | Reading discussion questions | Everyone | Sunday 2/19 5:00PM  (upload to Canvas) |
|  | Written critiques | Everyone | Monday 2/20 11:30AM  (upload to Canvas *and* give hard copy to classmate) |
|  | Non-workshop op-eds | Everyone *except* Volunteers 5 and 6 | Monday 2/20 11:30AM  (upload to Canvas) |

**Canvas Site:** The Canvas site is organized according to modules: one that contains general course information and one for each week of the class. I will build the modules week by week, and all assignments due for each week will be in that week’s module. Each week’s module will be available on the Friday prior. After class each week, I’ll upload the class slides to the Files section of Canvas so you’ll have them to refer to.  
 **Communication:** Please *check your e-mail regularly and opt into Canvas Announcements notifications*. Email and, for information that applies to the whole class, Canvas Announcements, are the primary ways I will communicate with you. I ask that you *use e-mail to contact me* and *not* the Canvas messaging function—this allows me to consolidate all my incoming communication on one platform. *Please begin your subject line with the course and section number* (e.g., “PUBPOL 521.009”). As a rule, I try not to check my e-mail over the weekend.

**Changes to Syllabus and Schedule:** This syllabus and the assignment schedule are subject to change, although this is unlikely unless the change is based on student needs. I will inform you of any changes, and the current syllabus will always be available on Canvas.

**DEPARTMENTAL INFORMATION**

**Ford School 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

**Ford School Public Health Protection Policy:** 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 the public health safety measures and policies put in place by the State of Michigan, Washtenaw County, the University of Michigan, and the Ford School. Up to date information on U-M policies can be found [here](https://campusblueprint.umich.edu/). 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

**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, both those relating to the pandemic and other issues such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, and depression, can directly impact students’ academic performance and overall wellbeing. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services are available.

You may access counselors and urgent services at [Counseling and Psychological Services](https://caps.umich.edu/) (CAPS) and/or [University Health Service](https://www.uhs.umich.edu/mentalhealthsvcs) (UHS).  Students may also use the Crisis Text Line (text '4UMICH' to 741741) to be connected to a trained crisis volunteer.  You can find additional resources both on and off campus through the [University Health Service](https://uhs.umich.edu/stressresources) and through [CAPS](https://caps.umich.edu/article/um-mental-health-resources).

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** If you believe you need an accommodation for a disability, please reach out to U-M [Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD)](https://ssd.umich.edu/) office to help determine appropriate academic accommodations and how to communicate about your accommodations with your professors. Any information you provide will be treated as private and confidential.

## 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. The Ford School's policy of academic integrity can be found in the [MPP/MPA,](https://www.dropbox.com/s/oxbgig3kw5dwjzy/FINAL%202022%20Masters%20Handbook.pdf?dl=0) [BA](https://www.dropbox.com/s/i3eiituwsblsncc/FINAL%202022%20BA%20Handbook.pdf?dl=0), and [PhD Program](https://www.dropbox.com/s/31d5lihoviiloqs/FINAL%202022%20PhD%20Handbook.pdf?dl=0) handbooks. Additional information regarding academic dishonesty, plagiarism and misconduct and their consequences is available at: <http://www.rackham.umich.edu/current-students/policies/academic-policies/section11#112>

## Use of Technology: Students should follow instructions from their instructor as to acceptable use of technology in the classroom, including laptops, in each course. All course materials (including slides, assignments, handouts, pre-recorded lectures or recordings of class) are to be considered confidential material and are not to be shared in full or part with anyone outside of the course participants. Likewise, your own personal recording (audio or video) of your classes or office hour sessions is allowed only with the express written permission of your instructor.  If you wish to post course materials or photographs/videos of classmates or your instructor to third-party sites (e.g. social media), you must first have informed consent. Without explicit permission from the instructor and in some cases your classmates, the public distribution or posting of any photos, audio/video recordings or pre-recordings from class, discussion section or office hours, even if you have permission to record, is not allowed and could be considered academic misconduct.

**Please review additional information and policies regarding academic expectations and resources at the Ford School of Public Policy at:** [**https://intranet.fordschool.umich.edu/academic-expectations**](https://intranet.fordschool.umich.edu/academic-expectations)