

SOL PRICE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

PPDE 505: Professional Workshop in Public Administration

2 Units

Syllabus

Instructor Information

Laura Wittcoff, DSW, LICSW

Course # 50907 20211

Thursdays, 6-7:50pm

Adjunct Assistant Professor

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Office Hours by appointment

“Write for the expert, but write so the non-expert can understand”

Bernard Kilgo, Editor, Wall Street Journal

Course Description:

Professional public administration at its core involves engagement and communication with diverse constituencies both inside organizations and in the external environment. This course considers the diverse channels that public administrators use for professional communication, and develops skills in written reporting, professional briefing, and social media use. The goal is to develop excellent skills in writing professional memos and reports, while advancing the core competency to “communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry” (see NASPAA universal competencies at <https://naspaaaccreditation.files.wordpress.com/2017/01/standard-5-text-ssi.pdf>)

The course focuses in particular on evidence-based argumentation and communication, and in particular, effective practices for writing, reviewing, editing, and revising. Peer review, editorial workshops focusing on work in progress, and use of online tools such as Grammarly will contribute to the skill of producing, critiquing, and revising professional writing and PowerPoint products. There will also be attention to changing expectations regarding written and visual communication in the digital age.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES:

The course assumes that students enter with competency in basic writing skills; students identified as needing help with writing mechanics will be connected to resources such as the USC writing center. Specific learning outcomes include:

- Improve skill in producing persuasive short products for internal and external audiences, including memos, communications material, administrative reports and visual media.
- Articulate how cultural differences influence communication and stakeholder engagement, and practice effective engagement with diverse audiences;
- Develop focused research skills, and in particular, comprehensive review of literature that substantiates the issue at hand and informs potential solutions;
- Develop basic skills in design of infographics and PowerPoint presentations;
- Research, analysis, and reporting on current policy or management cases, using a “sheltered workshop” approach.

The course is taught as a workshop, utilizing a “flipped class” workshop approach in which students read and review posted materials, and produce work that will be brought to class to be shared, critiqued, and rewritten. The class is writing intensive, and most reading will be focused on research collected for the reporting project.

TEXTBOOKS & COURSE MATERIALS

- Garfinkle, A. & Brooks, D. (2012). *Political Writing: A Guide to the Essentials*. Taylor and Francis.
- Russell, L. & Munter, M. (2014). *Guide to Presentations (4th Ed.)*. Pearson.
- Bardach, E. & Patashnik, E. M. (2020) “Smart (Best) Practices Research: Understanding and Making Use of What Look Like Good Ideas from Someplace Else. Ch. 4 from *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*. Congressional Quarterly Press.
- Supplementary readings and web resources are identified in the course schedule and will be available through ARES and on Blackboard.

GRADING AND COURSE EVALUATION

5% Participation (individual)

10% Other class contributions (individual based on peer review, discussion board, in-virtual-class exercises, etc.)

10% Baseline writing assignment (individual)

75% Administrative Reporting Project. Broken out as follows:

Individual components:

10% Issue-focused annotated bibliography research

5% Issue-focused infographic (display of data)

10% Issue-focused literature review memo

10% Build out of literature review research to include solutions

Group components

5% Mind-map the policy argument

10% Draft administrative outlined sections for in-virtual-class activity

10% PowerPoint presentation

15% Final administrative report (6-8 pp)

Computation of Grades:

Letter Grade	Grade Point	Percentage
A	4.0	94-100%
A-	3.7	90-93%
B+	3.3	87-89%
B	3.0	83-86%
B-	2.7	80-83%
C+	2.3	77-79%
C	2.0	73-76%
C-	1.7	70-72%
D+	1.3	67-79%
D	1.0	60-66%
F	0.0	0-59%

ACADEMIC CONDUCT AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>

Student Counseling Services (SCS) – (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1 (800) 273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) – (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp

Sexual Assault Resource Center

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: sarc.usc.edu

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. equity.usc.edu

Bias Assessment Response and Support

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support

The Office of Disability Services and Programs

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. dsp.usc.edu

Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa

Diversity at USC

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. diversity.usc.edu

USC Emergency Information

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible. emergency.usc.edu

USC Department of Public Safety – UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24-hour emergency or to report a crime.

Provides overall safety to USC community. dps.usc.edu

Religious Holidays

If you have a religious holiday that falls during our class time, please notify me of your planned absence at least one week before the religious holiday to be observed.

Weekly Schedule

I. Course Overview: Professionalism and Persuasive Communication in Public Administration

Readings and resources: **01-21-21**

Garfinkle and Brooks, Ch. 1-4.

Create draft class working agreements together in class

In-Virtual-Class Assignment: Issue Research in the Digital Age

Prompt: what social issue matters to you?

Memo writing worksheet activity –

What is the purpose of a memorandum?

II. Written Communication for Internal Audiences: Memos and Emails

Readings and resources **01-28-21**

Musso, Biller, Myrtle, “Tradecraft.”

Weeks, Holly. “The Best Memo You’ll Ever Write.” Harvard Management Communication Letter. Article Reprint No.: C0504C

Garfinkle and Brooks, Ch. 9, the Memorandum.

Assignment: Baseline writing assignment **due** – write a brief memo to the class why this particular issue is important to you

III. Approaches to Research: Experts, Documents, and Data

Readings and resources: **02-04-21**

Garfinkle and Brooks, Ch. 10: The Commission Report

In-Virtual-Class Assignment: Team project assignments announced.

Team discussion; individual issue research commences

IV. Cultural Diversity and Communication in Organizations

2-11-21

Pre-Virtual-Class/In-Virtual-Class Assignment: Consult the APA (or similar) for guidelines on inclusive language. Rewrite an older document [or excerpt] taking a more modern and inclusive approach, consistent with the guidelines. Write a reflection on the changes and choices you made; share your document and your reflection on the Blackboard forum.

V. Issue-Focused Literature Review: What's the Problem?

Readings and Resources:

02-18-21

Garfinkle and Brooks, Ch. 5, The Review.

Pre-Virtual-Class Assignment: Bring to class an annotated bibliography (using Zotero) that includes ten sources (from peer reviewed and government sources) that substantiate your understanding of the issue at the heart of the team project.

VI. Visual Argumentation through Infographics

02-25-21

Pre-Virtual-Class Assignment: Use the sources in the team research wiki to develop a draft "info-graphic" that conveys the "problem" or "issue" that is a focus of the team project. Class members will work in teams, consulting to other teams to critique and improve the infographics.

VII. Writing for External Audiences: Issue Briefs

03-04-21

Pre-Virtual-Class Assignment: Build an issue brief around the infographic (and other graphic elements if you wish). Post to discussion board. Class members will work in teams to critique issue briefs, which will then be revised. Resource:

<https://www.acteonline.org/issue-briefs/>

VIII. Solution-Focused Literature Review: “Best?” Practice Research

Readings and resources:

03-11-21

Bardach and Patashnik, (2015) “Smart (Best) Practices Research: Understanding and Making Use of What Look Like Good Ideas from Somewhere Else. Ch. 4 from *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*. Congressional Quarterly Press.

Pre-Virtual-Class Assignment: Bring to class an annotated literature review that includes five sources (from peer reviewed and government sources) that discuss or justify potential solutions to the issue or problem that your team is addressing. Also post all sources Zotero.

IX. Cultural Diversity, Communication in Organizations Related to Issue

03-25-20

Pre-Virtual-Class Assignment: Individually interview someone with professional work experience in another country or from another culture about how their country/culture addresses the issue you/your team is researching. Summarize in discussion board forum for discussion in class.

X. Writing to Persuade: Finding the Argument

Readings and resources:

03-18-21

John W. Budd, Mind Maps as Classroom Exercises. *The Journal of Economic Education*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Winter, 2004), pp. 35-46

Rob Marvin, Eight Ways a Mind Map can Declutter Your Project Management. *PC Magazine*, Oct. 1, 2015.

<https://www.pcmag.com/article/338260/8-ways-a-mind-map-can-declutter-your-project-management>

Blackboard Assignment: Individual and Team exercise: mind-mapping the argument

1. Brainstorm ideas on your own
2. Meet with you team and put your ideas together
3. Post on Blackboard and bring in ideas to discuss in class
4. Add interview ideas to Mind Map

XI. Political Writing from Op-Eds to Social Media

04-01-21

Pre-Virtual-Class assignment: find an Op-Ed, Social Media Blog, posting/article/opinion piece related to your team's issue; write up your thoughts on this – agree/disagree with the piece you found?

Readings and resources: Garfinkle and Brooks, Ch. 6; The Op-Ed; Ch. 11, Blogs.

Musso et. al. Tradecraft (re-read)

XII. Pitching with PowerPoint

04-08-21

Readings and resources:

Russell, L. and Munter, M. Guide to Presentations (4th Ed.). Pearson. (New York) 2014.

Perceptual Edge: Examples of ineffective graphics and how to fix them: <http://www.perceptualedge.com/examples.php> (review the left column.)

Garfinkle and Brooks, Ch. 7-8.

Recommended: Tufte, "The Cognitive Style of PowerPoint."

XIII. Bring PowerPoint Presentation to class for peer feedback

Pre-Class Assignment: Come to class with team PowerPoint presentation that communicates:

- Brief review of importance of issue
- How it has been addressed (literature review and current solutions)
- Recommendations

Information to inform report

No Class on 04-22-21 – Wellness Day

XIV. Final Class Presentations

04-29-21

XV. Exam Week:

through 05-04-21

Musso et. al. Tradecraft (re-read)

Edit, Edit, Edit; Revise, Revise, Revise

Readings and resources:

Garfinkle and Brooks, Ch. 12, A Philosophy of Editing.

Two Final Assignments Due 05-06-21

1. Team Report

*Final Report Due in Turnitin and emailed to Professor Wittcoff:
lwittcof@usc.edu*

2. The Future of Professional Communication

Brief individual paragraph(s) on reflections and professional goals