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, MSW, LICSW  
Adjunct Instructor  
Course # 505_50909  
Thursdays, 6-7:50pm  
Location: DMC 109  
Mobile: 617-694-0019  
Email: lwittcof@usc.edu  
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

- 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:

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ACADEMIC CONDUCT AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Integrity:
The University of Southern California is a learning community committed to
developing successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of
knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Academic misconduct, which includes
any act of dishonesty in the production or submission of academic work,
comprises the integrity of the person who commits the act and can impugn the
perceived integrity of the entire university community. It stands in opposition to
the university’s mission to research, educate, and contribute productively to our
community and the world.

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original
work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which
they have been submitted. You may not submit work written by others or
“recycle” work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission
from the instructor(s).

Other violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating,
plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), collusion, knowingly assisting others
in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an
unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious
offense against the university. All incidences of academic misconduct will be
reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and could result in outcomes such as
failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion
from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see the student handbook or the
Office of Academic Integrity’s website, and university policies on Research and
Scholarship Misconduct.

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized
assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation
and/or attribution.

Students and Disability Accommodations:
USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational
programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for
the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter
disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process
(registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and
accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of
Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA
must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a
discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as
accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at
osas.usc.edu You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email
at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term
psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis
intervention. 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline - 988 for both calls and text
messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide
Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in
suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the
United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local
crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national
standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number
makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services
(though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function
indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-
9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations
related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate
partner violence, and stalking).

Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX) - (213) 740-5086
Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or
discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional
resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.
Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298 Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) - (213) 740-0776 OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 740-0411 Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion - (213) 740-2101 Information on events, programs and training, the Provost’s Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information:

Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC) A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice - (323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.
Weekly Schedule

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

    Readings and resources: Garfinkle and Brooks, Ch. 1-4.

    Create draft class working agreements together in class

    In-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

    Musso, Biller, Myrtle, “Tradecraft.”


    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: Garfinkle and Brooks, Ch. 10: The Commission Report

    In-Class Assignment: Team project assignments announced. Team discussion; individual issue research commences
IV. Cultural Diversity and Communication in Organizations  
09-14-23

Pre-Class/In-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 Annotated Bibliography: What’s the Problem?  
Readings and Resources:  
09-21-23

Garfinkle and Brooks, Ch. 5, The Review.

In-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  
09-28-23

In-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  
10-05-23

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: 10-19-23


Pre-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

Pre-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:


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

Pre-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.
XII. Anatomy of a Report & Pitching with PowerPoint

In-Class Assignment: Team exercise: outlining the report & PowerPoint

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

Readings and resources:

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.


XIII. Class Presentations 11-30-2023

XIV. Exam Week:

Edit, Edit, Edit; Revise, Revise, Revise

Readings and resources:
Garfinkle and Brooks, Ch. 12, A Philosophy of Editing.
Two Final Assignments Due 12-7-2023

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