

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

Course # 505_50907

Thursdays, 6-7:50pm

Location: RGL 209

Adjunct Instructor

Mobile: 617-694-0019

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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

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: **01- 11-24**

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?

What is the purpose of a memorandum?

II. Written Communication for Internal Audiences: Memos and Emails

Readings and resources **01-18-24**

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: **01-25-24**

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

02-01-24

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:

02-08-24

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

02-15-24

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

02-22-24

Assignment: Build an issue brief around the infographic (and other graphic elements if you wish). Class members will work in teams to critique issue briefs, which will then be revised. Resource: <https://www.acteonline.org/issue-briefs/>

VIII. Cultural Diversity, Communication in Organizations Related to Issue

02-29-24

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.

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

Readings and resources:

03-07-24

Bardach and Patashnik, (2015) “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.

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.

X. Political Writing from Op-Eds to Social Media

03-21-24

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.

Musso et. al. Tradecraft (re-read)

XI. Writing to Persuade: Finding the Argument

Readings and resources:

03-28-24

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 your 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
5. Add Op Ed ideas to Mind Map

XII. Pitching with PowerPoint

04-04-24

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

- Brief review of importance of issue
- How it has been addressed (literature review and current solutions)
- Alternatives
- Recommendations
 - Implementation & action plans

Information that summarizes main points of report, focus on the alternatives, recommendation(s), implementation & action plans

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. Anatomy of a Report **04-11-24**

Musso et al. Tradecraft (re-read)

In-Class Assignment: Team exercise: outlining the report

XIV. Class Presentations **04-18-2024 & 04-25-2024**

XV. Exam Week:

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 05-9-2024

1. Team Report (one per team)

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

2. The Future of Professional Communication (individual assignment)

Brief individual paragraph(s) on reflections and professional goals

