WRITING FOR PUBLIC POLICY (90-717)

Carnegie Mellon University, Heinz College
6 Units, In-Person Expectation
Fall 2024, MINI 1 & 2
Section A1, MW 9:30AM- 10:50AM HBH 1007
Section B1, MW MW 11:00AM-12:20PM HBH 1007
Section F2, MW 09:30AM - 10:50AM HBH 1004

Professor: Dr. Rebekah Fitzsimmons , Assistant Teaching Professor
Office Location: HBH 2101F
Office Hours: Tuesdays 10:30am-12:15pm, Thursdays by appointment
Email: Fitzsimmons@cmu.edu (please use email as primary point of contact, not Canvas messages)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Communication in written form is an essential element of being a public policy professional. Writing for consulting firms, government agencies, think tanks, advocacy groups, industry associations, and other contexts in the sphere of public policy differs from academic writing.

Accordingly, this course challenges students to convey critical thinking by anticipating readers' needs and the perspectives of stakeholders in the practice of shaping public policy. The writing skills integral to this process include: developing essential and persuasive content, communicating complex ideas, organizing information, targeting diverse audiences with varying levels of expertise and roles, ensuring clarity, controlling tone, and designing a document for readability.

Students analyze real-world documents relevant to careers in public policy, craft strategic quotes for news releases, and write policy one-pagers as well as policy memos. Writing guidance and sample documents specific to public policy are provided during the course.

Note: This course assumes proficiency in English grammar. Numerous resources for improving English skills are available through CMU.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Differentiate the format and style of professional writing from personal and academic writing
- Determine the purpose and scope of a message
- Distinguish between essential versus nonessential information
- Target writing to particular readers, rather than a generic audience
- Leverage writing as a tool to build and maintain professional relationships
- Adapt complex, data-heavy topics for non-expert audiences through the use of clear, specific, plain language
- Maintain a logical structure through calculated organizational methods,
- Format headings, lists, data, citations, and visuals with a focus on precision, consistency, readability, and accessibility
- Create efficiently phrased, actionable communications for use in a workplace
- Edit and proofread documents thoroughly prior to distribution

REGISTRATION

Once a section of Writing for Public Policy is full, then enrollment is dependent on the: (1) number of registered students who drop the section, and (2) waitlist order. Students who miss the first class meeting can be automatically dropped from the course. After the initial session, registration is closed. Priority registration may be given to students for whom Writing for Public Policy is required for graduation.

COMMUNICATIONS POLICIES

- Email is my preferred mode of communication and the fastest way to get in touch with me. The Canvas internal message system is unreliable.
- Please **include your name and section number and CC the TA for your course** section in all emails. TA emails are posted on Canvas Page.
- Please allow a minimum of 24 hours for me to respond to all emails.
- Students are expected to check their CMU emails and Canvas regularly
- I can not discuss grades via email; please come to office hours with questions pertaining to grades.
- If we talk about something before class starts or in the hallway (an extension, a revision, another project you'd like feedback on), please plan to send me a follow up email confirming the details.

OFFICE HOURS POLICIES

Office hours are designated times for students to get one-on-one feedback or ask questions; you are welcome to drop in to my physical office at any point during those times. If you would prefer to meet via Zoom during office hours, please let me know via email.

- If you have a specific topic you want to discuss, feel free to email and schedule a time in advance. This can include course work or other writing projects you would like help on.
- If you are unable to attend my scheduled office hours, we can set up an appointment at another time, either in person or via Zoom.
- Office hours this semester will be held both in person and via Zoom - please feel free to utilize the meeting format that fits your comfort level.
- If an emergency arises so you cannot make a scheduled appointment, please contact me by email as soon as possible.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION POLICY

In keeping with CMU and Heinz's expectations and policies, including the In-Person Expectation (IPE) modality for this course, you are expected to attend all scheduled classes. The expectation from Heinz is that your attendance for this course will be in the physical classroom during all scheduled class periods.

However, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic as well as a commitment to accessibility presents challenges to maintaining any graded attendance policy that is equitable and based in care and safety. As your professor, I recognize and acknowledge that we can not make assumptions about others' experiences and as a result, we ought to offer compassion, patience, and grace to one another as best we can. Therefore, there are options to help students who may need asynchronous attendance options (<u>see page 13</u>).

For the purposes of this policy, "**attendance**" is defined as arriving physically in our classroom during our regularly scheduled class period. "**Participation**" covers a broad range of interactive opportunities, both synchronous and asynchronous, that demonstrate engagement with the course content. These participation opportunities include:

- Speaking during class discussions (asking questions, responding to discussions, working in small groups)
- Posting required in-class workshop materials and homework to Canvas
- Providing peer review feedback to classmates during in-class or asynchronous activities

- Attending office hours (in-person or virtually) with questions, concerns, thoughts, inspiration, etc.
- Offering constructive feedback to classmates, adding to ongoing discussions, or practicing additional skills via asynchronous discussion boards on Canvas.

This course focuses on professional development skills; as such, professional conduct will be expected of all participants. Students should expect to behave as they would in a staff or client meeting. Students should make a good faith effort to attend all classes prepared, to interact with peers and the professor on a regular basis, and to demonstrate respect for all class participants through verbal and non-verbal modes. Students who engage in abusive or harmful speech will be immediately excused from class.

Assessment for participation will be a holistic measure of a student's work on a daily basis and is based on more than mere presence in the classroom. **Active participation** includes engaging in active listening, offering constructive, skills-based feedback, and adding to class conversation on a daily basis. Students should refrain from doing other coursework, sleeping, conducting personal business, or other forms of "multitasking" while in class as much as possible.

Students who miss a significant number of classes (which means both failing to attend the in-person class sessions AND failing to participate in the asynchronous course options) may be issued a failing grade or a grade deduction. If you are absent from class, course materials will be posted on Canvas, but you should also plan to reach out to a classmate to find out what you missed. Assignments are due on their due dates regardless of absences, unless a student is specifically issued an extension.

Students who have religious observations, medical/personal emergencies, or other major difficulties that will result in missed synchronous classes are encouraged to contact the professor and TA as soon as possible.

Late Policy:
Obviously, the occasional emergency can disrupt even the most organized person's schedule; however, habitual lateness is considered unprofessional and inconsiderate. Students who arrive habitually late to class (more than five minutes late) during the semester may have their grades lowered.

LEARNING RESOURCES

Required Texts:
(Books are available through the CMU bookstore or bookseller of your choice; you may purchase a print or digital copy depending on your preference but please be sure to purchase the correct edition). Additional readings and materials will be provided via Canvas and can be printed or accessed digitally as you prefer.

- *Writing Public Policy* by Catherine F. Smith. **6th edition.** Oxford University Press. ISBN-13: 9780190854232
- *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*, **13th edition** by Joseph M. Williams and Joseph Bizup. Pearson. ISBN-13: 9780135171837

Required Software Platforms:
In order to fully participate in our course, you will be asked to use a few different online systems.

- **Canvas** - Our course will utilize this central Learning Management System (LMS) as the main technology hub. Students will be granted access to materials through Canvas and will use the platform to submit formal assignments. Links to the rest of the technology platforms will also be embedded into Canvas.
- **Zoom** - Our course will use this online conferencing platform available through CMU for asynchronous class attendance options. I will also utilize Zoom for online office hours.
- **Google Suite** (Docs, Slides, Jamboard etc.) - Our course will regularly use collaborative writing and editing software during in-class activities to help students practice and refine skills. Materials for class work will be stored in a centralized Google folder with a link on Canvas.

Teaching Assistants
Each section of this course will have a TA. Contact information and office hours will be posted on Canvas, under the "Pages" tab in the first week of the mini. The TA can answer questions, respond to issues, direct you to resources, and work through assignments with you.

Syllabus Modifications
This syllabus – especially the homework and assignment schedule – may be modified as the semester progresses in order to meet the course outcomes and best address the needs of members of the class. Pay close attention to course announcements on Canvas and in class for any of these changes.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS AND MISSING WORK

DRAFTS AND PROJECT STAGES
Writing is a process that necessarily takes time; the project stages of this course are designed to help students focus on improving both their own personal process as well as final deliverables. As a result, all project stages must be submitted in a timely fashion; the professor reserves the right to refuse to accept a final deliverable without the accompanying required project stages.

Extension Policy
Each student has a single extension which they may use on any individual project or project stage. To request an extension, students should:
1. Email the professor and TA no later than 24 hours prior to the deadline.
2. Provide a new, reasonable date and time for the assignment to be due.
    a. If the assignment is a draft or project stage of a larger project, this date needs to come before the larger project is due.
    b. For larger projects, this new date should be within a week of the original due date.
3. This new date/time will be considered the new deadline for the assignment.
    a. A comment will be added to the Canvas assignment with this new due date for mutual reference
4. The student will submit the assignment as instructed on the assignment sheet.
5. The student should notify the professor and TA an email indicating you have submitted your assignment and it is ready for grading.
6. If you have any difficulty submitting your assignment to Canvas, it may also be appropriate to attach a copy to that email.

Late Assignment Penalties:
Ideally, you will avoid turning in late work. Please plan to make use of the extension policy to avoid these types of issues. In addition to the extension policy outlined above, this course has a late work policy where assignments may be turned in late for up to 24 hours with a 20% deduction.

After 24 hours, students will need to schedule an office hours appointment to discuss any extended due dates.

Missing Work Penalties:
Due to the participatory nature of this course, it is important for work to be completed in a timely manner. In-class discussions and activities are a vital part of your success in improving your professional communication skills. Outside of the course policies and accommodations, students are expected to put forth a good faith effort to complete the work of the course.

I am dedicated to working with students to ensure they have equitable access to the materials and flexibility to complete the work of the course across a broad range of experiences. However, work that is missing or is significantly incomplete may not be eligible to receive points towards the course.

ACADEMIC CONDUCT

Plagiarism is a serious offense that will result in the student failing the course. All academic integrity violations will be reported to the associate dean's office for the student's program of study and the Carnegie Mellon University Division of Student Affairs. If an academic integrity violation is suspected, the student will be contacted to meet with the instructor to determine if a violation has occurred based on Carnegie Mellon University's Policy on Academic Integrity.
Note that plagiarism includes:

- Presenting another writer's work as your own; this includes written text but also data visualizations, charts/graphs, graphics and research
- Cutting and pasting content verbatim without using quotation marks to indicate a direct quote; this includes published work but also work produced collaboratively with classmates
- Inserting a direct quote or paraphrasing content without citing the source in-text using footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical citations with a corresponding Works Cited, References, or Notes page – in a manner consistent with an APA, MLA, or Chicago style guide;
- Providing incomplete or incorrect information about the source cited;
- Over-relying on templates or other writers' phrasing.

Also, submitting work written for another course is not acceptable. Consequently, a failing grade may be issued for that assignment. Additional penalties may be imposed.

In addition to maintaining academic integrity, this course aims to maintain an open, ethical, respectful, collaborative atmosphere. This class, therefore, will not tolerate any discrimination on the basis of race, color, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, martial status, disability, or status as a veteran. Alternative, even conflicting viewpoints, are welcome in class discussion (including those that take place online). However, statements that are racist, sexist, homophobic, classist, or otherwise discriminatory to others, either inside or outside the class, will not be tolerated.

A Note about Predictive AI like ChatGPT

Within this class, there are situations and contexts where the use of AI programs such as ChatGPT, DALL-E and others will be expected. Together we will experiment with these emerging technologies to explore how they can be used and better understand their benefits and limitations. Learning how to use AI is an emerging skill and we will work through the implications of these evolving systems together.

However, it is important to be aware of the limitations of these programs.

Similarly, using generative AI tools does not absolve you from your existing responsibilities as a student to follow the academic integrity guidelines of the university and of this class.

In this class, you may use Generative AI programs for the following:
- Brainstorm new ideas
- Develop example outlines or approaches to your work ("writer's block breaker")
- Work through in-class scenarios when directed

You may **not** use generative AI programs to:
- Generate content that you cut and paste into an assignment with a written component without quotations and a citation
- Generate content that is not adequately paraphrased without a citation
- Research topics, or generate different ways to talk about a problem
- Generate bibliographies for topics that you have not researched yourself
- Generate other content (images, video, others) unless expressly permitted and following provided guidance
- Otherwise use or present generative AI content that you pass off as your own work

Finally, it is important that you recognize that large language models frequently provide users with incorrect information, create professional-looking citations that are not real, generate contradictory statements, incorporate copyrighted material without appropriate attribution, and can sometimes integrate biased concepts. You are ultimately responsible for the content that you submit; work that is inaccurate, biased, unethical, offensive, plagiarized, or incorrect will be penalized. Turning in any assignment with generative AI content outside of the allowable uses identified in the previous section may constitute an academic integrity violation.

If you have any questions about acceptable use, it is highly encouraged to ask before you use it on any assignment that you will turn in for a grade for this course.

RESOURCES

Student Health and Safety:
During your time at Carnegie Mellon, do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle by eating well, exercising, getting enough sleep and taking some time to relax. This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress.

All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. You are not alone. There are many helpful resources available on campus and an important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. Asking for support sooner rather than later is often helpful.

If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings like anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS) is here to help: call 412-268-2922 and visit their website at http://www.cmu.edu/counseling/. Consider reaching out to a friend, faculty or family member you trust for help getting connected to the support that can help.

Commitment to Accessibility:
As an instructor, I am committed to making the course material accessible to as many students in as many ways as possible. Please feel free to approach me to discuss ways in which I can accommodate your unique needs in accessing the materials.

In order to best meet this goal, I will also rely on guidance from the Office of Disability Resources at Carnegie Mellon University, which has a continued mission to provide physical and programmatic campus access to all events and information within the Carnegie Mellon community. They work to ensure that qualified individuals receive reasonable accommodations as guaranteed by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Students who would like to receive accommodations can begin the process through Disability Resources secure online portal or email access@andrew.cmu.edu to begin the interactive accommodation process. Students with disabilities are encouraged to self-identify with the Office of Disability Resources and request needed accommodations. Any questions about the process can be directed to Catherine Getchell, 412-268-6121, getchell@cmu.edu. http://www.cmu.edu/education-office/disability-resources/.

Student Academic Success Center (SASC):

SASC supports student success by providing academic coaching, subject-specific tutoring, effective communication strategies, accommodations for students with disabilities, and language support for multi-lingual learners. They have a wealth of resources and individual appointments available.
https://www.cmu.edu/student-success/

CMU Center for Student Diversity & Inclusion:

Diversity and inclusion have a singular place among the values of Carnegie Mellon University. The Center for Student Diversity & Inclusion actively cultivates a strong, diverse and inclusive community capable of living out these values and advancing research, creativity, learning and development that changes the world.
https://www.cmu.edu/student-diversity/

Heinz College Diversity, Inclusion, Climate and Equity (DICE)

Heinz College strives to foster an open, equitable and inclusive environment where people of all identities and experiences are welcome; all are encouraged to participate in the energetic exchange of ideas; there is a shared focus on ensuring the success of our students, faculty, and staff; and where, as a community, we unlock innovations that will improve the human condition.

The Heinz College of Information Systems and Public Policy represents over 50 nations and over 40 U.S. states, which increases our ability to foster a community with greater variation in perspectives and approaches to our work.

By design, Heinz College is an empathetic and open environment that inspires continuous learning, conversation, and intelligent action that will impact society for the better. Diversity, inclusion, and equity are not radical concepts—rather, the ongoing pursuit of these ideals, and a campus climate of belonging in which every person in our community can thrive, are fundamental to our mission.
For more information or to get involved with DICE initiatives at Heinz, Email our office at heinzdiceoffice@andrew.cmu.edu

ASSESSMENT

Assignment Instructions
Detailed instructions for all assignments are posted to Canvas. Each student is responsible for reading the assignment sheet and grade rubric before submitting the assignment. These instructions will also include assessment criteria for each assignment.

Students are responsible for submitting their assignments on time and to the correct (digital) location as directed on the assignment sheet.

Course Grading
Assignments each receive a certain number of points, adding up to 1000 total points, over the course of the mini. Grades are not curved or weighted beyond these points.

As a note, semester grades are not rounded; in other words, a student who earns 889 points throughout the semester would earn an 88.9% or a B+.

Assignment Breakdown

Major Deliverables	50% of final grade
Policy Brief	200 points
Policy Recommendation Memo	200 points
Blog Post	100 points

Project Stages/Drafts	15% of final grade
Professional Email - Proposal	75 points
Annotated Bibliography - Policy Brief	75 points

Peer Review and Reflective Writing	20% of final grade
Peer Review on Policy Brief	25 points
Reflection on Policy Brief	25 points
Peer Review on Policy Memo	50 points
Reflection on Policy Memo	25 points
Peer Review of Blog Post	50 points
Reflection on Blog Post/Course	25 points

In-Class Work and Participation	15% of final grade
In-Class Work & Participation	150 points

Table 1. Heinz College Grading Scale

Grade	Interpretation	Points	Percentage Equivalent	Course Point Equivalent	Graduation Credit
A+	Exceptional	4.33	100-97%	970-1000	Yes
A	Excellent	4.00	96-94	969-940	Yes
A-	Very Good	3.67	93-90	939-900	Yes
B+	Good	3.33	89-87	899-870	Yes
B	Acceptable	3.00	86-84	869-840	Yes
B-	Fair	2.67	83-80	839-800	Yes
C+	Poor	2.33	79-77	799-770	Yes
C	Very Poor	2.00	76-74	769-740	Yes
C-	Minimal Passing	1.67	73-70	739-700	Yes
R	Failing	0	69% or below	699 or below	No
I	Incomplete	0			No

Source: Heinz College Student Handbook

ASYNCHRONOUS COURSE MAKEUP POLICY

Absences:

Our course this semester has an in-person meeting expectation – please plan to attend all of the scheduled classes in person. However, if you are ill or experiencing an emergency, the course does have an asynchronous makeup option. **If you are sick, especially with symptoms of highly contagious illnesses like COVID-19, RSV, or the flu, please do not come to class.**

To receive full credit for asynchronous attendance and participation for a missed class, you must complete all of the following steps. Due to the nature of a mini course, this asynchronous participation is expected to be completed within 48 hours of the missed class, unless another deadline has been arranged with the professor.

If you are experiencing severe illness or other personal emergencies, please be in touch with the professor and TA as soon as possible. Your health and safety are our top priority; we can make accommodations to help you keep up with the coursework once you are healthy.

To Make Up a Missed Class:

1. Notify the professor and your TA that you will be missing class as soon as possible.
    a. We don't need details but if you have a sense of how impactful your illness may be ("I'm likely to miss the next two weeks of classes" versus "I started taking medicine yesterday and am already feeling better"), we can help you develop a game plan for making up work/structuring extensions.
2. Watch the Zoom recording of class when it is posted on Canvas (usually a few hours after class).
3. Use the "Asynchronous Discussion Board" on our Canvas site to post responses to the in-class discussion (aim to respond to 2-3 discussion questions,) as you would have if you were in class.
    a. In general, the discussion questions are also available on the lecture slides for the class period, though the in-person discussion sometimes jumps to other topics or addresses only a few of those questions, depending on time constraints.
4. Use the Canvas Discussion Boards to complete any in-class activities that your classmates completed during class time (as applicable).
5. Notify your course TA when you have completed all of these makeup items in order to receive attendance and participation credit for the missed class.
    a. It is the student's responsibility to notify the TA when this work is complete, or that work may not be graded.