CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY, HEINZ COLLEGE
WRITING FOR PUBLIC POLICY (90-717), 6 UNITS
FALL 2024 MINI 2

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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 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 craft policy one-pagers as well as policy memos. Writing guidance and sample documents – specific to public policy – are provided during the course.

This course assumes proficiency in English grammar, punctuation, capitalization, citation, and other mechanics. See Canvas > Modules > Grammar to review these skills. It is the responsibility of students to access and apply these resources.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Differentiate the format and style of professional writing from personal and academic writing
- Determine the purpose and scope of the message
- Distinguish between essential versus non-essential information
- Target writing to particular readers, rather than preparing generic material
- Demonstrate writing as a tool to build and maintain professional relationships
- Communicate complex, data-heavy topics accurately using specific, plain language
- Maintain a logical structure throughout a document
- Format headings, lists, data, citations, and visuals with a focus on precision and consistency
- Create efficiently phrased, actionable communications for use in a workplace
- Explore generative AI as it relates to crafting professional documents
- Edit documents thoroughly prior to distribution

WRITING GUIDE AND STYLE MANUAL

Students are responsible for all skills covered in the reading assignments (Table 2) and for following Chicago style.
- Chrisinger, David. *Public Policy Writing.* Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2017. Print. *(ISBN-13: 978-1421422268) E-Book is available.*
- The Chicago Manual of Style Online

TEACHING ASSISTANT'S ROLE

Students who are seeking individualized help with writing can request appointments with the Teaching Assistant (TA). The TA's contact information is posted on Canvas > Announcements. Please contact the TA at least 2 business days in advance. After scheduling an appointment, come prepared to ask a particular question about the assignment or about a specific writing skill. Do not ask the TA to read and edit your entire draft. Instead, think of the TA as a professional coach; the role is intended to provide guidance on the writing process and offer resources for you to improve your work – ultimately, you are responsible for the work you submit.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

Instructions for written assignments will be posted to Canvas > Assignments. According to the schedule of classes (see Table 2), on the draft and final due date for each assignment upload the document – before the time your scheduled section begins – to the Assignments area of Canvas using: lastname_firstname_section_assignment.pdf.

EVALUATION

Grades are non-negotiable (see Table 1). The semester grade will be based on the following:
- Class participation/exercises (10%)
- Quiz (20%)
- Policy One-Pager (30%)
- Op-Ed (40%)

The Heinz College writing rubric is included in this syllabus. Assignment-specific checklists for peer review and self-editing will be posted to Canvas > Modules > Editing Checklists.

PURPOSE AND ASSESSMENT OF DRAFTS

Drafts serve as preparation for meetings with the TA and for peer-feedback sessions prior to submitting the final, graded version. Further, drafts are useful for time management. Grade deductions will occur if a draft is incomplete, or if there is a lack of participation in the peer-feedback sessions. Drafts submitted past the due date and time result in a one-letter grade deduction from the final version of that assignment. Incomplete drafts result in half a letter grade deduction off the final version for that assignment.

POLICY ON EXTENSIONS

Late assignments earn a failing grade unless: (1) a religious observance or a medical condition prevents on-time submission; and, (2) the student consulted with the instructor in advance, when possible, for approval of an alternate due date.

POLICY ON STUDENT ACCOMMODATIONS

The Carnegie Mellon University Office of Disability Resources reviews requests for "reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and auxiliary aids and services."[1] Students can work with the instructor to arrange accommodations as needed once accommodations are granted by the Office of Disability Resources.

ACADEMIC CONDUCT

Assignments are reviewed by Turnitin. This technology compares documents with content available on the Internet and with files previously uploaded. The site generates a report indicating matching content. 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 academic integrity violations include:
- Presenting another writer's work as your own;
- Cutting and pasting content verbatim without using quotation marks to indicate a direct quote;
- Inserting a direct quote or paraphrasing content without citing the source in-text using footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical citations with a corresponding References, or Notes page – in a manner consistent with an APA or Chicago style guide;
- Providing incomplete or incorrect information about the source cited;
- Over-relying on templates or another writer's phrasing;
- Using content generated by AI platforms unless required by the instructor for a specific exercise.

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. Additional penalties may be imposed.

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[1] University, C. M. (n.d.). Retrieved June 27, 2017, from https://www.cmu.edu/hr/eos/disability/students/policy-on-student-accommodations.html

GUIDANCE ON THE USE OF AI

This course will provide you with an opportunity to explore generative AI for professional writing. We will consider how AI platforms can be used to craft documents and to better understand the benefits and limitations of generative AI.

Please note that the direct use of AI platforms, such as CoPilot, Gemini, or ChatGPT, is optional. Students who opt-out may be paired with students who opt-in so everyone can still participate in class exercises and discussions.

IMPORTANT: Using generative AI tools does not absolve you from your responsibilities to follow the academic integrity guidelines of the university – and to ensure any content presented as part of your coursework stems from a credible, verifiable source and is both cited and accurate.

In this class, you may use AI tools to:
- brainstorm topics
- identify key issues and stakeholders relevant to your topic
- participate in discussions and exercises about AI-generated content

Submitting assignments with AI-generated content outside of the allowable uses specifically identified by the instructor may constitute an academic integrity violation. If you have any questions about acceptable use of AI-generated content or visuals, then ask the instructor before submitting work for this course. - *(This policy is adapted from the Heinz College ChatGPT Toolkit 2023)*

Table 1. Heinz College Grading Scale*

Grade	Interpretation	Points	Graduation Credit
A+	Exceptional	4.33	Yes
A	Excellent	4.00	Yes
A-	Very Good	3.67	Yes
B+	Good	3.33	Yes
B	Acceptable	3.00	Yes
B-	Fair	2.67	Yes
C+	Poor	2.33	Yes
C	Very Poor	2.00	Yes
C-	Minimal Passing	1.67	Yes
R	Failing	0	No
I	Incomplete	0	No

*Note that final course grades are not calculated in Canvas. Grades are based on the information in Table 1 and are weighted for each assignment as stated in this syllabus.

CLASSROOM POLICIES

Professional conduct is necessary. Demonstrate respect for everyone in the class through active listening and skills-focused comments. While class is in session, refrain from accessing a device for any reason other than engaging with this course.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION
This course consists of lectures, discussions, individual writing exercises, and peer-review sessions. Active engagement in the class sessions is important. Absences are excused for religious observance and medical conditions. Contact the instructor to discuss attendance concerns. Students are responsible for obtaining course material distributed during their absence.

Participation includes: (1) being a constructive contributor to class discussions; and (2) meaningful involvement in writing exercises and peer-review sessions. Overall, students are expected to exhibit an interest in professional development beyond simply completing the assignments.

SPECIAL NOTES FOR ONLINE CLASS MEETINGS

If needed, class meetings may be held remotely via Zoom. The dates for online classes will be announced in advance and the access link will be provided via Canvas. Please note only students officially enrolled in this course may access the class sessions and recordings.

Video in Zoom sessions: In this course, being able to see one another helps to facilitate a better learning environment and promote more engaging discussions. Therefore, our default is to have cameras on during lectures and discussions. However, I also understand there may be reasons students would not want to have their cameras on. If you have any concerns about sharing your video, please email me in advance of an online session.

Audio in Zoom sessions: During our class meetings, please keep your mic muted unless you are contributing to class discussions or are within your breakout group. As always, be mindful of professionalism and use respectful language.

RESOURCES ON CAMPUS

Carnegie Mellon University has a wide array of [resources and programs to support student wellness](). Students are encouraged to access these resources.

ACADEMIC SUCCESS
Carnegie Mellon University has a wide array of resources and programs to support student wellness and academic achievement. For example, the [Student Academic Success Center (SASC)]() is designed to provide academic coaching, peer tutoring, as well as communication and cross-cultural support.

ACCOMMODATIONS
If you have a disability and have an accommodations letter from the Disability Resources office, please discuss your accommodations and needs with me as early in the mini as possible so I can offer flexibility as appropriate. If you suspect that you may have a disability and would benefit from accommodations but are not yet registered with the Office of Disability Resources, please contact [access@andrew.cmu.edu]().

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION
Help us promote a safe and inclusive classroom environment. Please visit the [Carnegie Mellon University Center for Diversity and Inclusion]() for programs, events, and resources that focus on developing a respectful community.

FOOD SECURITY
If you are worried about affording food or feeling insecure about food, there are resources on campus that can help. Email the CMU Food Pantry Coordinator to schedule an appointment: [cmu-pantry@andrew.cmu.edu]()

COUNSELING SERVICES
Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS) provides a confidential environment for students to talk about personal and academic concerns. Please visit [https://www.cmu.edu/counseling/]() or call 412-268-2922 for more information.

Table 2. Schedule of Classes and Assignments*

Class Meeting	Topic	Reading Assignments and Resources *(handouts are posted to Canvas > Modules)*	Work Due *(Upload .pdf file to Canvas > Assignments or Canvas > Discussions as announced. Additional exercises could be assigned throughout the course.)*
Week 1	Research and Cite Thoroughly	Research and citation resources *(posted)* Zotero overview and tutorials	October 22: Course overview October 24: CMU Libraries guest lecture
Week 2	Analyze Public Policies	Framework for Analyzing Public Policies *(posted on Canvas > Modules)*	October 29: Lecture providing a framework for policy analysis October 31: Lecture and class exercise on concise writing
Week 3	Target the Audience Strategically	Audience Analysis *(posted on Canvas > Modules)*	November 5: No class meeting due to Democracy Day per CMU calendar November 7: Draft Policy One-Pager feedback session *(Bring a printed copy to class)*
Week 4	Write Strategic News Releases	How to Write a Press Release *(posted on Canvas > Modules)*	November 12: Final Policy One-Pager due on Canvas; Lecture and exercises on writing news releases and crisis statements November 14: Quiz in class on writing press releases
Week 5	Build Consensus	Sample Op-Eds *(see discussion board)*	November 19: Lecture and class exercise on Op-Ed writing November 21: Example Op-Ed due on Canvas > Discussions for class exercise
Week 6	Use Generative AI Platforms Ethically and Effectively	Background reading on AI *(posted on Canvas > Modules)*	November 26: Generative AI workshop November 28: No class meeting due to Thanksgiving break
Week 7	Edit for publication	Review guidelines for Op-Ed writing (see Canvas > Assignments)	December 3: Draft Op-Ed due *(Bring a printed copy to class)* December 5: Workshop to be announced December 7: Final Op-Ed due on Canvas

Note: This schedule is subject to change. For more information, please consult the Heinz College academic calendar.

HEINZ COLLEGE WRITING RUBRIC

LEVELS OF PROFICIENCY	CONTENT	AUDIENCE	LOGIC AND ORGANIZATION	CLARITY AND TONE	GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS
	The extent to which the document demonstrates knowledge of the subject matter and objective. • Communicates a clear purpose • Provides relevant, thorough content • Demonstrates critical thinking	The extent to which the document is suitable for diverse audiences. • Prepares documents based on audience demographics and roles • Prioritizes audience needs • Addresses stakeholders' likely questions and concerns	The extent to which the document demonstrates a coherent structure. • Uses topic sentences • Supports topic sentences with examples and/or evidence • Includes meaningful transitions • Maintains logical sequencing and categorization via headings as well as parallel structure in lists	The extent to which the document demonstrates the ability to communicate clearly and to use an appropriate tone. • Selects precise words • Writes concisely • Writes in active voice • Limits the use of pronouns • Uses professional language	The extent to which the document demonstrates the conventions of English, including correct: • Grammar • Punctuation • Capitalization • Spelling • Citations • Format
4 **Advanced; Professional and effective**	Demonstrates advanced knowledge of the subject matter and objective.	Demonstrates advanced knowledge of the audience.	Demonstrates a logical, cohesive structure.	Demonstrates advanced word choice that creates clarity and produces a professional tone.	Demonstrates advanced control of grammar and mechanics.
3 **Acceptable; Minor revisions are recommended**	Demonstrates acceptable knowledge of the subject matter and objective; yet, revisions are recommended to improve effectiveness.	Demonstrates acceptable knowledge of the audience; yet, a more targeted appeal is recommended to improve effectiveness.	Demonstrates an acceptable structure; yet, revisions are recommended to improve organization, sequence, or transitions.	Demonstrates acceptable word choice; yet, revisions to phrasing are recommended to improve clarity and/or for a more professional tone.	Demonstrates acceptable control of grammar and mechanics; yet, corrections are recommended to improve language skills and/or professionalism.
2 **Limited; Substantial revisions are needed**	Demonstrates limited knowledge of the subject matter and/or objective. More relevant and/or thorough content is needed for effectiveness.	Demonstrates limited knowledge of the audience. Revisions are needed to address audience diversity and/or roles.	Demonstrates a limited control of structure. Revisions in organization are needed for a coherent structure, or for logical transitions.	Demonstrates limited control of word choice. Revisions are needed for clarity and for a professional tone.	Demonstrates limited control of grammar and mechanics. Corrections are needed for suitable language skills and/or professionalism.
1 **Unsatisfactory; Does not meet course requirements**	Does not meet the minimum course requirements for "Content"	Does not meet the minimum course requirements for "Audience"	Does not meet the minimum course requirements for "Logic and Organization"	Does not meet the minimum course requirements for "Clarity and Tone"	Does not meet the minimum course requirements for "Grammar and Mechanics"
Score					