Classroom: Littauer 382  
Class meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:15am-11:30am  
Office: Belfer 208  
Office Hours:  
  Monday 1:00-4:00  
  Or by appointment  
Faculty Assistant: Alison Kommer, Belfer 207  
Email Contact: lauren_brodsky@hks.harvard.edu

Course overview:  
The goal of this course is to prepare students to write persuasive and well-conceived policy memos. Course exercises will foster confidence in writing, and students will gain analytic tools valuable across sectors, industries, and cultures. No prerequisites are required, only a desire to improve your writing.

This course builds strong policy writers via:  
- **Frequent writing:** writing assignments break up memo components into smaller pieces to assist student learning.  
- **Feedback:** workshops with peers and timely feedback from the professor provide personalized learning for each student. Handwritten feedback, rather than track-changes, encourages students to build writing skills from the ground up. Students are highly encouraged to attend office hours, or make appointments, in order to enhance feedback opportunities.  
- **Class discussions:** class sessions will allow students to be active participants in their learning experience and growth, and will give students the tools to turn research and advocacy into action.  
- **Required reading:** course materials provide guidelines for effective writing styles and policy analysis.

Course assignments and expectations:  
In order to focus on building modes of persuasion and effective policy writing, students are encouraged to utilize case studies within their own interest area as the subjects of their policy memos. However, please note, University policies do not permit the same paper to be submitted for two different courses, and therefore students must prepare unique assignments for this module. Students are expected to abide by the University policies on academic honesty and integrity; violations of these policies will not be tolerated.

Grading for this course will be modeled on the Kennedy School’s “Recommended Grade Distribution,” available on the HKS website:  
https://knet.hks.harvard.edu/DPSA/Registrar/Exams-Grading/Pages/Credit-Grades-Grading.aspx
Throughout the semester, students will be given “grade forms” indicating point allocation and providing guidance on assignments.

The assignments and grading for this course:

- **Participation: [18% of grade]**
  - Timely submission of written material, online quizzes and polls. [8 points]
  - On-time arrival to class to ensure that all students are up-to-date with administrative components of class. [3 points]
  - Effective team participation. [2 points]
  - Thoughtful feedback to classmates and participation in classroom discussion. [5 points]

- **Short writing assignments:**
  - Free write, problem paper, executive summary, and briefing slide(s) [20% of grade – 5 points each]

- **Team component:** A team-written, 2-3 page, double-spaced information or decision memo (“Memo for the Dean”) [5 % of grade]

- **Longer individual writing assignments:**
  - An information memo (2 pages, double spaced) [15% of grade]
  - Decision memo 1 (3 pages, double spaced) [15% of grade]
  - A final portfolio:
    - The original copy and a rewrite of either the information memo or decision memo 1 [5% of grade]
    - Decision memo 2 (1 page, single spaced) [15% of grade]
    - A cover letter, marking course progress [7% of grade]

**Due dates:** Students are expected to hand in work on time. Late work makes classroom learning difficult, as teams and partnerships need to be adjusted. Points will be deducted for late assignments.

**Absence:** As the module is only 6 weeks long, it is vital that students attend class. If you know you will need to miss a class, please be in touch as soon as possible as partnerships and writing assignments may need to be adjusted.

**Submissions:** Written work submitted to the professor must be printed before class. Please plan ahead. (Sometimes writing is double spaced, sometimes single. Sometimes you need to bring 1 copy, sometimes 2. Please pay attention to these details. Points will be deducted.)

If class must be cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances, a make-up will be scheduled on Friday.

**Writing Teams:** The class will be divided into 4 writing teams, allowing for a smaller writing community within the class. Teams will work together on a collaborative writing assignment – a “Memo for the Dean” – that can be either an information or decision memo. Teams are assigned randomly by the professor.
**Memo writing grid --**

| Topic 1 (Individual Memo) | Problem paper:  
Step 1: Submit onto canvas by noon Monday 10/23.  
Step 2: Read classmate problem papers and fill out hand-written feedback forms for class 3.  
Step 3: Come to class 3 with two printed copies and feedback forms. | Information Memo:  
Step 1: Submit information memo onto canvas noon Monday 10/30  
Step 2: Read classmate information memo and fill out feedback form for class 5.  
Step 3: Come to class 5 with two printed copies of the information memo and feedback form.  
Note: Teams 1A & 2A submit briefing slides via email to professor by 9am Tuesday, 10/31. | Decision Memo 1:  
Step 1: Submit decision memo 1 onto canvas by noon Monday, 11/13.  
Step 2: Read classmate Decision Memo 1 and fill out feedback form for class 9.  
Step 3: Come to class 9 with one printed copy of decision memo 1 and feedback form. Submit decision memo at Class 10.  
Note: Teams 2A & 2B submit briefing slides via email to professor by 9am Tuesday, 11/14. |

| Topic 2 (Individual Memo) | Decision Memo 2:  
Step 1: Submit onto canvas at noon Monday 11/27.  
Step 2: Read individual memos of teammates by class 12 (No feedback forms). (Final draft submitted as part of portfolio). |  |  |

| Memo for the Dean (Group Memo) | Step 1: Teams work on problem statement, strategic research.  
2A/2B = Class 5  
1A/1B = Class 6 | Step 2: Draft memo: during Class 7.  
Email to professor from each team (details below) due by Class 8. | Step 3: Teams work on revision.  
2A/2B = Class 9  
1A/1B = Class 10 |

*Submit onto canvas by 5pm Monday 11/20.  
Class vote by 5pm Wednesday 11/29.*
**Texts:**
All texts are on reserve at HKS library and available at the COOP:
- Additional materials on canvas, see below.

**Detailed Course Schedule:**

*CLASS 1: Introductions, course structure, expectations and goals:* Tuesday October 17

*In class:* Review course structure, assignments, goals and expectations.

**Assignments:**
1. Read articles on canvas and complete quiz (1):
2. Write a 1-page, double-spaced “Free Write” to answer: *Why is memo-writing style important in your career?* Print 1 copy for Class 2.

*CLASS 2: Policy problems:* Thursday October 19

*Bring to class:* Free Write

*In class:* Discuss policy problems and prepare for problem paper.

**Assignments:**
1. Read Bardach Step 1.
2. Write a 350-word Problem Paper: outline a problem that you would like to explore in your first memo assignments (topic #1, see syllabus p. 3). Consider whether this problem is quantifiable. Hold back on research and describing the causes for the problem (you will explore causes/factors in your information memo later in the module).
3. Submit problem paper by noon Monday October 23 on canvas.
4. Read 2 peer problem papers (determined by professor) and complete feedback forms (printable from canvas).
5. Print 2 double-spaced copies of your problem paper to submit Class 3.
CLASS 3: Evidence: Tuesday October 24
Bring to class: Problem paper for submission. Feedback forms for classmates.

In class: Discuss strategic research in preparation for executive summary assignment. Provide feedback for problem papers in groups of 3.

Assignments:
1. Read Bardach Step 2.
2. Write a 1-page Executive Summary, synthesizing information from a report, book, or article in your problem area (topic #1). This assignment should focus on an argument-based piece of writing, not a wiki-type information piece. Please print 1 double-spaced copy for submission only.
3. Read Williams Chapters 5 & 9 and complete quiz (2).

CLASS 4: Finding audience: Thursday October 26
Bring to class: Executive Summary

In class: Prepare for information memo writing. Discuss “Memo for the Dean” assignment.

Assignments:
1. Write an information memo, a 2-page, double-spaced memo describing a policy problem and the factors: either the reasons for the problem, or the consequences of the problem, or both. You will not be advocating for a solution, yet, but instead creating urgency around a problem.
2. Submit information memo by noon Monday October 30 on canvas.
3. Read one student information memo (determined by Professor) and complete feedback form for class 5.
4. Teams 1A and 2A email briefing slides to Professor by 9 am October 31.
5. Teams 2A and 2B bring laptops to class.
6. Print 2 double-spaced copies of your information memo for submission at class 5.

CLASS 5: Factors to problems: Tuesday October 31
Bring to class: Information memo and feedback forms. Laptops for Teams 2A & 2B.

In class: Provide feedback to partners for information memos.

Teams 1A & 1B stay for briefing slide presentations. Teams 2A and 2B work on “Memo for the Dean” problem statement & strategic research.

Assignments:
1. Read Williams Chapters 3, 4, & 6 and complete canvas quiz (3).
2. Read Bardach Steps 3, 4, 5 and complete canvas quiz (4).
* **CLASS 6: Policy analysis: Thursday November 2**

* **Bring to class:** Laptops for Teams 1A & 1B.

* **In class:** Discuss information memo best practices and Bardach’s “eightfold path” for policy analysis. Prepare for projecting outcomes and storytelling with Framework for Analysis Chart.

Teams 2A & 2B stay for briefing slide presentations. Teams 1A & 1B work on “Memo for the Dean” problem statement & strategic research.

* **Assignments:**
  2. Read Bardach Steps 6, 7, & 8 and complete canvas quiz (5).

* **CLASS 7: Team Writing: Tuesday November 7**

* **In Class:** Discuss best practices for writing in groups. Teams draft “Memo for the Dean.” Be prepared to send one email per team to the professor by Class 8, explaining the problem statement of your team memo, your reason for drafting either an information or decision memo, and any questions/ concerns that came up during this working session.

* **Assignments:**
  1. Read Williams Chapter 7 and complete canvas quiz (6).
  2. Each team must submit one email to the Professor about the “Memo to the Dean” (problem statement and reasons for information or decision memo) by Class 8.

* **CLASS 8: Advocating for solutions: Thursday November 9.**

* **Bring to class:** Framework for Analysis chart.

* **In class:** Prepare for decision memo 1. Discuss Framework for Analysis charts, storytelling, conceptual problems and using shared context for your memo introduction.

* **Assignments:**
  1. Skim Bardach Appendix B.
  2. Write a 3-page, double-spaced decision memo 1 draft. This assignment will link your problem definition, factors, alternatives, and criteria with a solution you are advocating for. This draft will be completed over two course days, with a first draft read by classmates only.
  3. Submit decision memo 1 draft to canvas by noon Monday November 13.
  4. Read one student decision memo draft (determined by Professor) and complete feedback form.
  5. Teams 1B & 2B email briefing slides to Professor by 9am November 14.
6. Teams 2A & 2B bring laptops to class.

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**Class 9:** Generating action: Tuesday November 14  
**Bring to class:** Feedback form and Laptops for Teams 2A & 2B.

**In class:** Provide feedback for classmate on decision memo draft.

Teams 1A & 1B stay for slide briefings. Teams 2A & 2B work on “Memo to Dean” revisions.

**Assignments:**
1. One printed, double-spaced copy of revised **Decision Memo 1 for submission** (3-page limit) for class 10.
2. Williams Chapters 10 & 11 plus canvas quiz (7).
3. Skim Bardach Appendix C.

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**Class 10:** Writing for organizations: Thursday November 16  
**Bring to class:** Polished draft of Decision Memo 1 and Laptops Teams 1A & 1B.

**In class:** Discuss challenges, goals and opportunities when writing to organizations. How do you frame information to ensure organizational missions are incorporated?

Group 2A & 2B stay for slide briefings. Teams 1A & 1B work on “Memo to Dean” revisions.

*(If Team 2B would like to make changes to their decision memo, a final draft is due at noon on October 4).*

**Assignments:**
2. Read and vote on other team memos by 5pm Monday November 27.

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**Class 11:** Revision: Tuesday November 21.

**In class:** Discuss decision memo best practices & revision. Prepare for 1 page memos.

**Assignments:**
1. **Decision Memo 2 rough draft:** write a one-page, single spaced decision memo on a new topic (Topic #2), highlighting problem and criteria/solution and compromising on factors and alternatives. This draft will be completed over two course days, with a first draft read by classmates only.
2. Submit decision memo 2 draft to canvas by noon Monday, November 27.
3. Read decision memo 2 drafts from your team and by class 12.
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**Class 12:** Writing short documents: Tuesday November 28  
**In class:** Provide feedback on decision memo 2 as a team. Discuss cover letters and portfolio.

**Assignment:**  
Final portfolio, including:  
   1. Cover letter  
   2. Original draft of either Information Memo or Decision Memo 1.  
   3. Revised copy of either Information Memo or Decision Memo 1.  

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**Class 13:** Demonstrating growth: Thursday November 30  
**Bring to class:** Printed final portfolio.

Discuss ongoing questions, areas for improvement.

8/8/17