DPI 821M: Syllabus

Advanced Policy Writing for Decision Makers

Spring module 1, January-March 2017
Lauren Brodsky, Lecturer in Public Policy

Important info:

Classroom: Taubman Building, Room 275, 1:15pm-2:30pm, Tuesdays and Thursdays.
Office hours: Monday 12-3 and by appointment.
Professor contact: Belfer 208, Lauren_Brodsky@hks.harvard.edu
Faculty Assistant: Alison Kommer, Belfer 207, Alison_Kommer@hks.harvard.edu

Course overview: This intensive 7-week module will focus instruction on the elements of long-format policy writing: analysis, structure, clarity and persuasion. Students will gain experience writing with authority for an intended audience and client, and they will also learn to become their own best editor on long-format documents.

Students working on their Policy Analysis Exercise (PAE) or Second Year Policy Analysis (SYPA) will find this class particularly useful, and students interested in completing a white paper outside of the structure of the second-year long-format assignments are welcome as well. This course is an excellent match for students interested in policy writing for career purposes.

In the course, students will have the opportunity to deconstruct elements of long-format documents, with particular attention paid to: problem definitions, table of contents, executive summary and visual aids.

Feedback on writing is a central learning component of this course. Students will have opportunities to give and receive feedback with classroom partners, and will receive feedback from the professor in handwritten form, as it is better for achieving learning outcomes. In addition, students will have the opportunity to present to the entire class on their policy writing, which provides an opportunity for feedback from more classmates, and gives presenters a chance to practice explaining problems and
solutions. Students will incorporate feedback for final versions of assignments, due at the end of the module.

**Policy on participation:** Lateness and unexcused absences will count against course final grades. Laptop use and checking phones are distracting and unhelpful for this course, as all in-class writing will be done with pen and paper. The professor, therefore, requests that you avoid bringing technology into the class.

Students are expected to hand in all assignments on due dates, listed below. All late assignments will be marked down one grade, unless advance permission is granted by the professor.

Double spaced, hard copies will be due at the beginning of class, so please make time to print before coming to class. Please do not email the professor your assignment.

**Grading:** Grading for this course will be modeled on the Kennedy School’s “Recommended Grade Distribution,” available on the HKS website.

Ultimately the grade of PAEs and SYPAs are determined by student’s advisers, and therefore the final assignment for students in DPI 821 will be a portfolio.

Grading will be based on the following elements:

- **Homework assignments: (10% of grade)**
  - A reverse outline of another long-format piece
  - A slide on your policy problem
  - An audience worksheet

- **First drafts: (45% of grade)**
  - Problem paper – 10%
  - Process paper – 5%
  - Table of contents – 5%
  - Graph/visual aid – 5%
  - Executive summary – 10%
  - And a section or appendix from your PAE, SYPA or white paper – 10%

- **Final portfolio and cover letter, including ¾ of the following:** A revised problem paper, table of contents, visual aid and/or executive summary. (30% of grade)

- **Participation (including discussion questions on reading) – 15%**
Texts: All readings can be found on canvas and are excerpts from the following texts:


Schedule:

**Tuesday Jan. 24th: Class 1**
In class today: Introductions, review course structure

**Thursday Jan. 26: Class 2**
In class today: What is a PAE, SYPA or White Paper? What are the components/goals? Complete student questionnaire.

**Tuesday Jan. 31: Class 3**
In class today: Discuss problem statements.

**Writing due today:** A reverse outline and 1 paragraph summary of a PAE, SYPA or White Paper of your choice.


**Thursday Feb. 2: Class 4**
In class today: Discussion of audience connection. Workshop problem papers and begin slide presentations.

**Writing due today:** Problem slide, and 1 printed copy of your problem paper for workshop only.

**Tuesday Feb. 7: Class 5**
In class today: Student slide presentations and discuss writing process, evidence and structure.

**Writing due today:** 1 printed copy of revised problem paper for submission and audience worksheet.

**Thursday Feb. 9: Class 6**
In class today: Student slide presentations and librarian visit.

**Writing due today:** Process paper

**Reading due today:** Danziger, “Planning Your Writing,” pp. 15-28

**Tuesday Feb. 14: Class 7**
In class today: Discuss visual aids and complete student slide presentations.

**Writing due today:** Table of contents.


**Thursday Feb. 16: Class 8**
In class today: Review student visual aids

**Writing due today:** One printed graph or chart for workshop and in-class presentations.

**Tuesday Feb. 21: Class 9**
In class today: Discuss effective writing with a focus on clarity and active voice. Continue visual aid presentations.

Thursday Feb. 23: Class 10

In class today: Discuss effective writing with a focus on sense of purpose and audience connection. Workshop executive summaries.

**Writing due today:** Two printed copies of executive summary for workshop & submission.


Tuesday Feb. 28: Class 11

In class today: Discuss writing and revision best practices.

**Writing due today:** Two printed copies of a section or appendix of your PAE, SYPA or White Paper for both workshop and review.

**Reading due today:** Garfinkle, Chap. 12, “A Philosophy of Editing,” pp. 169-175.

Thursday March 2 & Tuesday March 7:

**No class, one-on-one workshops with Professor instead.**

Each student should sign up on canvas for one appointment only. Open office hours, from 1:30-3:00 on 3/6, will be an opportunity for more advice.

*Workshops held in 30 minute sessions: 3/2 from 12-3pm, 3/6 from 12-1:30 pm, 3/7 from 12-3 pm, and 3/8 from 12-1:30 pm.*

Thursday March 9: Final Class

**Due today:** Portfolio: 3 documents – revised and first drafts for each. And a cover letter.

Please include your first and revised drafts of 3/4 of the following assignments: Problem paper, executive summary, graph/visual aid, table of contents.