



**THE OHIO STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

JOHN GLENN COLLEGE  
OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

## **Written and Oral Communications Skills (2367)**

Spring Semester 2017

Wednesdays, 3:55–5:15 p.m. and Online

Mendenhall Lab 175

Credit Hours: 3

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**Instructor:** Kimberly Ratcliff

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**Phone:** 614.441.1452

**Office Hours:** Mondays, 7:35–8 p.m., in Mendenhall Lab 185 (scheduled in advance with instructor)

**Teaching Assistant:** Daniel Baker

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**Office Hours:** INSERT

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Being an effective communicator can determine the reach and impact of policy, as well as the ability to influence change. In this course, you will become a better writer and speaker on a topic of public policy—including communicating to diverse audiences with differing information demands.

By writing and critiquing your own work and that of your in-class colleagues, you will hone your abilities as a writer and editor. By preparing yourself and others to speak on policy topics, you will better understand the importance of delivering a concise and convincing policy argument via testimony and speeches. At the completion of the course, you will have created a portfolio of artifacts that demonstrates your mastery of communications tactics, and you will have a better sense of communications strategy to apply to future policy problems.

The purpose of the course is to learn and use communications strategies and tactics that inform and influence policy and public affairs issues. The course assignments aim to develop the competence, confidence, and rhetorical understanding needed by communicators in public life and governmental processes. Assignments are focused on an area of your personal interest, allowing you to conduct an in-depth exploration of an issue you care about through a variety of methods (briefs, speeches, social media posts). The instructor will help you learn to create communications strategy and activate tactics to reach policy goals. Readings and homework assignments will strengthen your individual capabilities, and peer-to-peer engagement builds the competence and confidence to engage in public life.

### **COURSE GOAL AND OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this course, students will become more skilled in written communication and expression, reading, critical thinking, and oral and visual expression. **The overarching goal is for students to communicate policy issues and solutions effectively and efficiently to target audiences.**

#### **General Education Course Objectives:**

PA 2367 meets the General Education (GE) Second Writing Course requirements. By the end of the course, you should be able to:

1. Demonstrate the ability to read carefully and express ideas effectively regarding issues of public concern through critical analysis, discussion, and writing;

2. Apply written, oral, and visual communication skills and conventions of academic discourse to the challenges in the public policy process; and
3. Access and use information critically and analytically.

Additional information on the General Education Goals is available on the Arts and Sciences website, <http://asccas.osu.edu/curriculum/ge-goals-and-learning-outcomes#Writing and Communication>

**Glenn College Course Objectives:**

There are additional course objectives that the Glenn College places on the writing curriculum. They are as follows:

1. Write succinctly to leverage research to inform a contemporary policy or management issue;
2. Design communications for multiple policy and management audiences;
3. Be prepared to speak articulately about policy or management issues in high-pressure situations, such as media interviews and legislative testimony;
4. Write for communications channels that influence modern policy creation and implementation, including the Web, video, traditional media, and social media; and
5. Exhibit skills in editing peer work.

The course includes a combination of in-class discussions and interactive activities, complemented by readings and out-of-class individual and team assignments. Course objectives will be met through assignments and in-class exercises of public affairs-oriented writing assignments, oral exercises, and visual design activity. In addition, peer review and revision are built into the learning process.

**GRADING AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Your grade for this class will be assessed through specific individual assignments using rubrics for written and oral communications, as well as your contribution during group discussions and activities (both in person and online). The overall grade distribution is provided below, followed by a detailed description of each graded component and the number of potential points that can be earned for each graded component.

**GRADE DISTRIBUTION**

**Class Participation** – 25%

**Problem Description** – 15%

**Position Paper** – 25%

**Testimony** – 20%

**Briefing Memo** – 15%

See specific point values for each assignment in Graded Components.

*NOTE: Class contribution is based upon both attendance and participation, in person and online.*

- *ATTENDANCE: Since the class only meets once per week, your attendance is critical to your grade. If you are absent, please let me know your specific circumstances, and I will take this into consideration when determining your grade. Participation includes in-person and online engagement in discussions.*
- *DISTRACTIONS: If you are present in class but are distracted by other reading, texting, or social media, I will reduce your in-class contribution points. “Being here now” makes a difference.*

**TOTAL 100%**

Transformation of a numerical grade to a letter grade will be according to the schedule below.

A	93-100	B+	87-89.9	C+	77-79.9	D+	67-69.9
A-	90-92.9	B	83-86.9	C	73-76.9	D	60-66.9
		B-	80-82.9	C-	70-72.9	E	< 60

## ASSIGNMENTS

Nearly all assignments revolve around a single issue chosen by you (student) and approved by the instructor. Selection will take place during Week 2 of class. Assignments build off one another. In addition, peer review and instructor review of drafts help you to become a better writer through the revision process. **Please refer to the separately provided rubrics for written and oral communications that will be used to judge your assignments.**

For all assignments use 1" margins and Times New Roman 12-point font. Single-space your papers. The papers must be free of grammatical errors and must present evidence that you have done research on the topic. Be sure to provide citations for statistics and controversial claims. You must use APA, latest edition style to format your citations. You can refer to APA citation style information on the University Libraries website if needed ([https://library.osu.edu/documents/research-services/OSUL\\_APA2012.pdf](https://library.osu.edu/documents/research-services/OSUL_APA2012.pdf)) or the Purdue OWL website (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>). Citation Machine (<http://www.citationmachine.net/apa>) is also a good resource for rendering proper citations, but each student is responsible for providing citations per APA guidelines.

Deposit your papers in a .doc or .docx format (not a .pdf) in the Carmen Dropbox by the beginning of class (Wednesdays at 4:55) on the assigned day. Please do not save as a Pages File (MAC). Any late papers will be reduced by one full letter grade for each day the paper is late. Day one begins the minute after the paper is due. In addition, bring a copy of your paper to class for days we are doing peer review in class. Peer review days are noted in the course schedule.

The instructor will provide a grading rubric and detailed description of assignments as a separate document on Carmen. The following is a summary of assignments for this course:

- **Class Participation:** Class participation counts for 25% of your grade and is based upon both attendance and participation in person and online, incorporating both written and verbal engagement. We will be doing activities in most of the classes and on Carmen related to the topic of discussion. Therefore, your attendance and meaningful participation are required. This includes weekly entries in your policy journal and participation in online discussions.
- **Problem Description:** This key element of policy analysis includes a brief description of an issue of public concern, stakeholders affected, scope of the issue, and influential conditions and interests. This writing assignment is worth 10% of your grade and should be 1 page in length.
- **Policy Brief:** A cornerstone document for all policy communications, the Policy Brief is created for and shared with policy makers and implementers. It summarizes the policy problem, background, stakeholders and their positions on the issue, and trends or scenarios that may help to project possible outcomes as part of a solution analysis. Your Policy Brief will include supporting evidence for your proposed solution and clear overarching recommendations, as well as a call to action with concrete recommended next steps for the policy maker. This writing assignment is worth 25% of your grade and should be 6 pages in length.
- **Testimony:** You will provide both written (5 pages in length) and oral testimony (5 minutes long). This assignment is worth 20% of your grade.
- **Briefing Memo:** Building from the previous assignments, your Briefing Memo will provide your audience with a readily consumable, short, and quickly comprehended summary of your issue. This writing assignment is worth 15% of your grade and should be 2 pages in length and addressed a business leader, executive leader in an elected position, a legislator at the state or national level, or a local elected official.

## **COURSE POLICIES AND SUPPORTS**

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### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY (ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT)**

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(From: <http://oaa.osu.edu/coamfaqs.html#academicmisconductstatement>)

The Ohio State University and the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM) expect that all students have read and understand the University's [Code of Student Conduct](#) and that all students will complete all academic and scholarly assignments with fairness and honesty. Failure to follow the rules and guidelines established in the University's Code of Student Conduct may constitute "Academic Misconduct." Sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the University.

In the Ohio State University's [Code of Student Conduct](#), Section 3335-23-04 defines academic misconduct as: "Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University, or subvert the educational process." Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student, and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination. Ignorance of the University's [Code of Student Conduct](#) is never considered an "excuse" for academic misconduct.

If you have any questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, please contact me.

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### **TURNITIN**

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When you submit items to Dropbox, Turnitin's "OriginalityCheck" is turned on. See the OSU website: <http://odee.osu.edu/resourcecenter/carmen/dropbox-turnitin-suite#overview>. OriginalityCheck is a service provided that scans your entire submission and then compares your text to other works (including your own) to determine how much of your paper matches. See the following web page for best practices when writing your homework and papers: <https://odee.osu.edu/resourcecenter/carmen/dropbox-turnitin-suite-students>

## **COURSE READING MATERIAL**

**Required:** *Writing Public Policy: A Practical Guide to Communicating in the Policy-Making Process*  
4th Edition  
Catherine F. Smith  
ISBN # 9780199388578

**Additional required readings are available on Carmen (organized by week) and in a *Harvard Business Review* coursepack provided by the instructor here:**

<http://cb.hbsp.harvard.edu/cbmp/access/57360449>

**Optional:** *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis*  
Eugene Bardach  
ISBN# 978-1-4833-5946-5

Students can access textbook information via the Barnes & Noble bookstore website: [www.shopOhioState.com](http://www.shopOhioState.com) as well as from their BuckeyeLink Student Center. This information is disseminated by B&N to all area bookstores. You may buy from a store of your choice and/or shop for books (always use ISBN# for searches) on line.

# COURSE CALENDAR

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## Week 1 (Jan. 11) Getting to Know You

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### Activities:

- In Class: Syllabus bingo
- Carmen Discussion: Meet and greet activity

### Readings for Next Week:

From *Writing Public Policy*:

- Chapter 1 – Public Policy Making
- Chapter 2 – Communicating
- Appendix A: Writing Clearly

Online and on Carmen:

King, S. (2000). *On writing: A memoir of the craft*. New York: Scribner. Online excerpt on passive voice at [http://www.westga.edu/~jloicano/Stephen\\_King\\_Passive.pdf](http://www.westga.edu/~jloicano/Stephen_King_Passive.pdf).

Knaflic, C. N. (2015). *Storytelling with data: a data visualization guide for business professionals (Ch. 1)*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

### Due Next Week:

Policy Journal Entry 1: Initial interests for policy topic

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## Week 2 (Jan. 18) Communicating in the Policy Process

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### Lecture (Baker):

- Writing well and with clarity.
- APA style review.
- Writing rubric overview.

### Activity (Baker):

- In Class: What do you care about? Discuss topics.

### Readings for Next Week:

From *Writing Public Policy*:

Chapter 3 – Definition: Frame the Problem

From *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis*:

Parts I and II

### Due Next Week:

Policy Journal Entry 2: Further reflect on possible policy topics.

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## Week 3 (Jan. 25) Problem Definition

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### Lecture (Baker):

- Defining and framing the policy problem.
- Review of “best hits” problem definitions from sample policy briefs and position papers.

### Activities (Baker):

- In Class: Form peer review teams.
- Carmen Peer Review: Critique drafts of Problem Description
- Policy Journal Entry 3: Select policy topic and clarify.

**Readings for Next Week:**

From *Writing Public Policy*:

- Chapter 4 – Evaluation: Analyze and Advise
- Chapter 5 – Legislative History: Know the Record

From *Harvard Business Review*:

Sinickas, A. (2001). Communicating Is Not Optional. *Harvard Business Review*. Reprint, pp. 1–5.

**Due Next Week:**

Problem Definition

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**Week 4 (Feb. 1) Backgrounding and Situation Analysis**

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**Lecture:**

- In Class: Conducting background research and framing the issue.
- **Guest Speaker:** Policy analysis

**Activity:**

- Carmen Submission: Elevator speech on your topic (upload your video)

**Readings for Next Week:**

From *Writing Public Policy*:

- Chapter 8 – Briefing, Opinion, Resolution: Inform Policy Makers
- Chapter 9 – Testimony: Witness in a Public Hearing

**Due Next Week:**

Policy Journal Entry 3: Your reflections on preparing for and giving elevator speech

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**Week 5 (Feb. 8) FIELD TRIP**

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***Instead of this week's class, you will go to a public meeting (City Council meeting or Ohio General Assembly committee hearing) to observe the process in action and share reflections in your Policy Journal. This will count for your class participation grade for this week.***

**Readings for Next Week:**

From *Writing Public Policy*:

- Chapter 10 –Public Comment: Influence Administration

From *Harvard Business Review*:

Drucker, P. (1995). Managing Oneself. *Harvard Business Review*. Reprint, pp. 1–13.

From *Harvard Business Review*, posted on Carmen:

Anderson, C. (2013). How to Give a Killer Presentation. Reprint, pp. 2–6.

**Due Next Week:**

Policy Journal Entry 4: Your reflections on the hearing you attended

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**Week 6 (Feb. 15) Saying It Well**

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**Lecture:**

- Written testimony, hearing protocols and public commentary.
- Effectively presenting as a policy professional: tips on preparation, content, and delivery.

**Activities:**

In Class: Random drawing for 3 students to present 3-minute hearing summary before class. Classmates provide feedback using rubric.

**Readings for Next Week:**

From *Writing Public Policy*:

- Chapter 6 – Position Paper: Know the Arguments
- Conclusion – What Writing Public Policy Means

From *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis*:

Part III, Cost Effectiveness Introduction

**Due Next Week**

Policy Journal Entry 5: Your reflections on what you need to improve upon as a presenter

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**Week 7 (Feb. 22) Constructing Alternatives**

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**Lecture:**

- Cost comparison: Use as a way of setting criteria, introduction, program selection
- **Guest Speaker:** Policy analysis

**Readings for Next Week:**

From *Writing Public Policy*:

Chapter 7 – Petition, Proposal, Letter: Request Action

From *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis*:

Part IV

**Due Next Week**

Policy Brief Outline (bring to class)

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**Week 8 (Mar. 1) Knowing Your Arguments**

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**Lecture:**

- Cost comparison: setting objectives of program, entering cost elements, understanding program impact, setting significance level, comparison of two different kinds of programs

**Activities:**

In Class: Peer review of Policy Brief Outline

**Reading for Next Week:**

Harvard Business Review. (2012). *HBR guide to making every meeting matter: Craft clear agendas, tame the troublemakers, keep people productive*. Harvard Business Review Press.

**Due by Mar. 10**

Policy Brief

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**Week 9 (Mar. 8) Communications in Meetings**

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**Lecture:**

- What happens before, during, and after the meeting?
- Shared ownership of meeting communications
- Communications as a time management tool

***March 15: Spring Break (no class)***

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## **Week 10 (Mar. 22) Engaging with Community Members**

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### Lecture:

- Community relations strategies and tactics, including grassroots outreach, myth-busters, local events, and building reliable issues supports.
- Leveraging the Web and social media for community relations.
- **Guest Speaker:** Giving public testimony

### Activity:

Carmen Discussion: Find and discuss “best in class” social media on public policy

### Readings for Next Week:

#### On Carmen:

- Sample media releases, advisory, opinion pieces, and news release
- Assigned reading on AP Style

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## **Week 11 (Mar. 29) Success with News Media**

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### Lecture:

- Media relations strategies and tactics, including advisories, releases, target lists, pitching, talking points, FAQs, online newsrooms.
- The role of opinion in media, including op-eds and letters to the editor.
- Discussion about the use of paid media (advertising) for public policy issues, and the prevalence of new media options for getting the word out.
- **Guest Speaker:** Media relations.

### Activity:

Carmen Discussion: Find a news story related to your policy topic and explain why you think it is a powerful communications tool

### Readings for Next Week:

#### From *Writing Public Policy*:

*Appendix B: Interpreting Data to Support Policy Argument*

Schwabish, J. A. (2014). An economist's guide to visualizing data. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 28(1), 209-234. doi:10.1257/jep.28.1.209

### Due Next Week

Written Testimony

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## **Week 12 (Apr. 5) Harnessing Information Design**

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### Lecture:

Review Tufte's PowerPoint case studies on PowerPoint misuse, information design/data visualization in general, the cholera epidemic, and others to demonstrate how smart information design can organize an overwhelming amount of information or data.

- Discuss the benefits of information design and its various applications, from Web design and presentations.

### Activity:

Carmen Discussion: Find an infographic related to your policy topic and explain why you think it is a powerful communications tool



**Reading for Next Week:**

From *Writing Public Policy*:

Chapter 8 – Briefing, Opinion, Resolution: Inform Policy Makers

**Due Next Week**

Oral Testimony

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**Week 13 (Apr. 12) Your Oral Testimony**

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**Class Activity:**

In Class: Oral testimony

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**Week 14 (Apr. 19) Your Oral Testimony**

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**Class Activity:**

In Class: Oral testimony, cont'd

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**FINAL ASSIGNMENT April 27, 5:45 p.m.**

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Policy Briefing Memo

SAMPLE

## CLOSING NOTES

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### DIVERSITY VALUES

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The Glenn College is committed to nurturing a diverse and inclusive environment for our students, faculty, staff, and guests that celebrates the fundamental value and dignity of everyone by recognizing differences and supporting individuality. We are dedicated to creating a safe space and promoting civil discourse that acknowledges and embraces diverse perspectives on issues and challenges that affect our community.

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### WRITING ASSISTANCE

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The Writing Center is a key resource for writing assistance. The following is from their website (<https://cstw.osu.edu/students>): The Writing Center works “one-one-one with undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and staff at Ohio State on writing projects. Writing consultants are able to review writing at any stage, from brainstorming to a final draft, as well as help with non-paper assignments such as presentations, blogs, etc.” Consultants are available by appointment, on a walk-in basis or online.

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### ACCOMMODATIONS

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Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>

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### MENTAL HEALTH

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As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student’s ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you or someone you know is suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the **Office of Student Life Counseling and Consultation Services (CCS)** by visiting [ccs.osu.edu](http://ccs.osu.edu) or calling 614-292- 5766. **CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10<sup>th</sup> Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on call counselor when CCS is closed at 614--292--5766 and 24 hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1--800--273--TALK or at [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org). Also, the OSU Student Advocacy Center is a resource to help students navigate OSU and to resolve issues that they encounter at OSU – visit <http://advocacy.osu.edu/> .**