



**THE OHIO STATE
UNIVERSITY**

JOHN GLENN COLLEGE
OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Written and Oral Communications Skills (6500)

Fall Semester 2017

Mondays, 5:45–7:35 p.m.

Mendenhall Lab 131

Credit Hours: 2

Instructor: Kimberly Ratcliff

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Office Hours: Mondays, 7:35–8 p.m., in Mendenhall Lab 131 (scheduled in advance with instructor)

Teaching Assistant: Sarah Gray

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Office Hours: Mondays, 4–5:45 p.m. (location and time scheduled in advance with T.A.)

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 management issues. 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. A team project will enhance your interpersonal skills and accelerate your writing and speaking capabilities by requiring you to tackle a real-life policy problem from a communications perspective.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course includes a combination in-class discussions and interactive activities, complemented by readings and out-of-class individual and team assignments. **The overarching goal is for students to communicate policy issues and solutions effectively and efficiently to target audiences.** By the end of the course, you should be able to:

1. **Write succinctly and support claims with statistically sound quantitative and qualitative evidence**, to inform a contemporary policy/management issue and impact the policy process to advance the public interest;
2. **Speak articulately about policy/management issues in high-pressure situations** (e.g., media interviews, legislative testimony) and apply and communicate private/public sector methods of addressing the neoclassical model;
3. **Facilitate communication about a policy issue for productive meetings** with stakeholders, involving preparation, delivery, and response to questions (hostile and friendly), demonstrating an understanding for the logic of a statistical argument presented for varied audiences in multiple ways and strategic planning for public organizations; and
4. **Learn to write for communications channels that influence modern policy creation and implementation**, including the Web, video, traditional media, and social media, to help manage innovation and change.

GRADING AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Your grade for this class will be assessed through specific individual and team assignments using rubrics for written and oral communications, as well as your contribution during group discussions and activities. 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

Individual Assignments 35%

Policy Brief Detailed Outline 5%
Policy Brief Draft 10%
Final Policy Brief 20%

Team Assignments 30%

Final Position Paper 15%
Final Presentation 15%

Individual In-Class Contribution 35%

Team Colleague Evaluation 10%
Instructor Evaluation 25% (includes Team Lab, Class Attendance, and Participating in Class Discussion)

See specific point values for each assignment in Graded Components.

NOTE: In-class contribution is based upon both attendance and participation.

- *ATTENDANCE: Since the class only meets once per week, your attendance is critical to your team and instructor grades for in-class contribution. 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

POLICY PROJECT TEAMS AND TOPICS

The work for this course revolves around a public policy topic that each student will explore, individually and within an assigned group—based upon interests expressed by students at the start of the semester.

One topic will frame your efforts to improve your policy communications acumen, and you will receive information about the topic, sponsoring organization, and fellow team members in the first class of the semester. The organization representative(s) sponsoring each team will provide their team with this standard set of expertise and resources to inform and support the team's efforts:

- Written summary of the policy problem and a list of sources for factual background information.
- A one-hour phone, in-person, or email interview to brief the team on the policy issue and answer any questions.
- One 20-minute "lifeline" call (or equivalent email) during the semester to answer any burning questions from the team.
- As feasible, participation in person for the team's 30-minute presentation during finals week, and providing input for judging the presentation and final products.

Because project sponsors are busy, they will not be available for reviewing drafts, listening to presentations in progress, taking random phone calls or emails, or additional support throughout the semester. It will be important for each team to be highly organized and professional when interfacing with their project sponsor, both so that they can make most effective use of their time together AND make a good impression upon the sponsor—and thereby positively influence the sponsor’s reactions to the final presentation. This is how positive influence takes form in real life, and the class is no different.

GRADED COMPONENTS

Becoming an effective policy communicator does not happen overnight. It is both an art and a science, developed over time as a result of hard work and a lot of practice. The more you work at it, the better you become. This course will give you ample opportunity to practice and refine your strategic intuition and your tactical skills.

Knowing how to create effective policy communications often involves making mistakes. While making mistakes is embarrassing (and risky) in real life, it is essential for learning and moving to the next level. This class is a safe forum for improving your own process and the final results. By flubbing your delivery on practice presentations, you will improve your delivery on your final presentation. By not clearly describing your policy problem in an early draft, you will learn how to better communicate it for the final version.

During the semester, most of our time will be focused on learning how to create communications materials—position papers, policy briefs, media kits, written and oral testimony, websites, video assets, and slide decks. Revising drafts for the policy brief and position paper will give you a chance to hone your skills and polish the final products that will count more heavily for your team and individual grades.

Communications do not happen in a vacuum. In real life, there are many target audiences judging your work. Often, your most helpful constructive critics are your colleagues, which is why many of your efforts throughout the semester— both in writing and through presentation—will be shared with your colleagues and critiqued in class. The instructor will also be giving you in-class feedback, as well as more formal feedback on drafts turned in for homework. You will learn from the instructor, as well as from each other.

Below are descriptions of the assignments that each individual and team will create during the course, along with a team writing lab that is also a part of your grade. Due dates are listed in the Course Calendar section of this syllabus. Point values are listed in parentheses after the name of the assignment. **Each student’s final grade will be generated by dividing the number of points earned by the total potential point value of 100. Grading rubrics for the individual and group assignments will be provided for reference on Carmen.**

Part 1: Individual Assignments (35 points)

- **Policy Brief** – A cornerstone document for all policy communications, the policy brief can be 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. Each student will address one aspect of his/her overall team’s policy issue in detail in a policy brief.
 - **Detailed Outline** (5 points): You will first write a detailed outline to be critiqued in class by a team colleague (2 pages single-spaced).
 - **First Draft** (10 points): Informed by colleague feedback on your detailed outline, you will turn in for instructor review a completed first draft (4 pages single-spaced).
 - **Final Version** (20 points): Finally, each student will further evolve his/her policy brief for the final draft (5 pages single-spaced) due to the instructor at the end of the course.

Part 2: Team Assignments (30 points)

- **Position Paper** (15 points) – The position paper, like the policy brief, is another key communication used in policy circles. It is often called a “white paper” and is more detailed than the policy brief, exploring more facets of the policy issue, going into greater analytical detail, and more strongly stating a clear position on the policy issue. The team will use raw material gathered from individual policy briefs being written by group members to flesh out arguments and

counterarguments within the position paper. The paper will be 10 pages single-spaced and submitted to the instructor at the final presentation.

- **Visual Aids** (8 points) – As a team, you will create visual aids (e.g., PowerPoint, Prezi) to breathe life into the final presentation (20 slides). The visuals should highlight and complement what you have written about the policy issue in the position paper and the policy briefs—they should not be a sound and light show that overshadows the point you are trying to make.
- **Final Presentation** (7 points for delivery) – Your team will present all final team policy recommendations in the context of your final presentation, in front of the professor and the project sponsor if they are available. Your delivery as a team, quality of presentation material, and the strength of the presentation content will be the criteria for judging the overall presentation. The team’s presentation will last 25 minutes, plus 5 minutes for questions.

A note about what to include and how to submit your final materials:

- By the time of their final presentation, the team will place all final versions of documents created during the semester on Carmen for the instructor in the dropbox assigned to your team.
- Additionally, the team will provide digital copies (e.g., flash drive or emailed to the project sponsor) AND three hard copy packets of selected materials highlighted in the presentation (one each for the instructor and the project sponsor, plus an extra copy for other judges evaluating your presentation).
- You can package the final presentation items professionally so that they appear as a portfolio showcasing your work, either loose-leaf in a folder for easy pull-out viewing, or organized in a binder or spiral-bound booklet with tabbed sections.

Part 3: Individual Class Contribution (35 points)

As already noted, attendance and participation in class are both important. Students will receive points for each regular class they attend and actively participate in, including engagement in online discussions during the week.

For one of the class meeting times, the class will be held in a different format—as a communications lab for the team where you can hone your skills. The **Team Lab** (2.25 points; replacing the class in Week 8) is a focused opportunity to work with your instructor and team to share your works in progress (i.e., drafts ready by date of the Team Writing Lab) and receive constructive criticism intended to improve the work as the semester progresses.

The lab is not optional. It is a critical component of the curriculum and is intended to hone your writing skills so that you demonstrate improvement from the start to the end of the semester. Not attending will make your in-class contribution grade from the instructor suffer. Even more importantly, the quality of your final work will not benefit from this in-process review and discussion.

In addition to the normal class contribution and writing lab points, your contribution to the group effort will be assessed by each of your team members. This will also be factored into your final grade; you have the potential to earn 10 points based upon your team colleague evaluations.

COURSE POLICIES

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY (ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT)

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. Other sources of information on academic misconduct (integrity) to which you can refer include:

The Committee on Academic Misconduct web page:
<http://oaa.osu.edu/coam.html>

Ten Suggestions for Preserving Academic Integrity:
<http://oaa.osu.edu/coamtensuggestions.html>

Eight Cardinal Rules of Academic Integrity:
www.northwestern.edu/uacc/8cards.html

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

ASSIGNMENTS

You will submit all assignments for the course via Carmen drop boxes (your individual or the team drop box) by the beginning of class (Mondays at 5:45) on the assigned day. Some assignments will be critiqued in class; for these assignments, please bring a hard copy of the work.

Informing me of your intention to be absent does not waive your obligation to submit assigned work. **Late work will be accepted with a one-third-letter grade penalty each day that it is late (A- to B+).**

REQUIRED COURSE READING MATERIAL

This course textbook is a bookshelf item that will help to build your understanding of communications in the policy environment and be useful for reference during your career:

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

Students can access textbook information via the Barnes & Noble bookstore website: 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.

Additional required readings are available on Carmen (organized by week) and in this *Harvard Business Review* course pack:

<http://cb.hbsp.harvard.edu/cbmp/access/66641148>

COURSE CALENDAR

Week	Due	Read/Review Prior to Class	What Will Happen in Class	Skills & Dispositions	Knowledge
1 Getting to Know You Aug. 28			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce everyone and practice elevator speeches • Review syllabus • Frame the concept of policy communications • Select policy projects and content knowledge modules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public speaking • Listening and giving feedback 	Class content overview
<p><i>After this class, each student will be assigned to a policy topic and project team based upon one of their selected areas of interest. Any changes to the assigned topic must be discussed with and coordinated through the instructor by Sept. 5.</i></p>					
NO CLASS (Labor Day) Sept. 4					
2 Communicating Clearly and Well Sept. 11		<p>Smith: Chapters 1–2; Appendix A</p> <p>Other Authors: King, S. (2000). On writing: A memoir of the craft. New York: Scribner. Online excerpt on passive voice retrieved from http://www.westga.edu/~jloicano/Stephen_King_Passive.pdf</p> <p>Posted on Carmen: Sample policy communications on content module</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the 7C's of communications, writing mechanics vs. persuasive writing • Roundtable: Conduct text protocol on policy writing samples for content module 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Becoming a better writer in a policy setting (discipline and creativity) 	Content Module 1: Opioid Crisis
3 Framing the Policy Problem Sept. 18		<p>Smith: Chapters 3–5</p> <p>Other Authors: Strategic Communications Knowledge Base (Element 1)</p> <p>Posted on Carmen: Sample policy communications on content module</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deconstruct the policy brief • Reviewing various aspects of framing the policy problem, including stakeholder perspectives, political, legal, and social environment, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy brief writing • SWOT / PEST analysis 	Content Module 1: Opioid Crisis
4 Putting Your Best Foot Forward as a Presenter Sept. 25	Completion of project sponsor interview	<p>Posted on Carmen: Anderson, C. (2013). How to Give a Killer Presentation. Reprint, pp. 2–6.</p> <p>Sample policy communications on content module</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written testimony, hearing protocols and public commentary • Effectively presenting as a policy professional: tips on preparation, content, and delivery • Team report-outs on interviews with project sponsors • Team development exercise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public speaking • Preparation for and delivery of presentations • Team collaboration 	Content Module 1: Opioid Crisis
5 Speaking in a Public Hearing	Detailed Outline of Policy Brief	<p>Smith: Chapters 6–8</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mock public hearing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process and procedures for 	Content Module 2: Energy

Week	Due	Read/Review Prior to Class	What Will Happen in Class	Skills & Dispositions	Knowledge
Oct. 2		<p>Other Authors: Flowchart for the OPSB Process: http://www.opsb.ohio.gov/emplibrary/files/OPSB/flowchart.pdf</p> <p>Buckeye Wind Project Approval and Summary (see final staff report esp.): http://www.opsb.ohio.gov/opsb/index.cfm/cases/08-0666-el-bgn-buckeye-wind-project-buckeye-wind-llc/</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> public hearing Public speaking Role-playing 	
6 Understanding Strategic Communications for Policy Oct. 9		<p>Other Authors: Strategic Communications Knowledge Base (Element 2)</p> <p>Posted on Carmen: Sample policy communications on content module</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss aspects of strategic communications that tie together policy communications Roundtable: Conduct text protocol on writing samples from students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications planning and strategy 	Content Module 2: Energy
7 Being a Professional Oct. 16		<p>Smith: Chapters 9–10; Conclusion</p> <p>Other Authors: Drucker, P. (1995). <i>Managing Oneself</i>. Harvard Business Review. Reprint, pp. 1–13.</p> <p>Posted on Carmen: Sample policy communications on content module</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional communications pointers Handling email, social media, and meetings in a professional setting Roundtable: Conduct text protocol on policy writing samples for content module 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submitting public comment Professional communication 	Content Module 2: Energy
8 Policy Lab Oct. 23 MANDATORY	First Draft of Policy Brief		<i>Instead of meeting as a full class, each group will meet with me in half-hour time blocks to discuss approach for your position papers.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizing policy problem/solution content for position paper 	
9 Understanding Real and Fake News Oct. 30		<p>Posted on Carmen: Primer on AP Style and Writing for News Media</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Debrief on policy brief feedback relevant for all Media relations strategies and tactics, including advisories, releases, target lists, pitching, talking points, FAQs, online newsrooms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy brief writing 	Content Module 3: TBD

Week	Due	Read/Review Prior to Class	What Will Happen in Class	Skills & Dispositions	Knowledge
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 		
10 Making Great Websites Nov. 6		<p>Posted on Carmen: Sample websites</p> <p>Sample student policy briefs and position papers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of process for website design, development, and production Roundtable: Conduct text protocol on policy writing samples for content module 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	Content Module 3: TBD
11 Creating Videos to Bring Policy to Life Nov. 13		<p>Posted on Carmen: Sample videos on content module</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss how an integrated communications approach incorporating video can be a compelling call to action Review the video production process, from creative brief to video capture and editing Discuss other communications that complement video, such as a facilitation guide for broad dissemination and engagement Guest speaker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Video production 	Content Module 3: TBD
12 Telling Your Story with Infographics and Other Visuals Nov. 20		<p>Smith: Appendix B</p> <p>Posted on Carmen: Schwabish, J. A. (2014). An economist's guide to visualizing data. <i>Journal of Economic Perspectives</i>, 28(1), 209-234. doi:10.1257/jep.28.1.209.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn about communicating with infographics 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 Guest speaker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making and using infographics Finding quality photos (acquired and free) 	Content Module 4: TBD
13 Monitoring and Evaluating Your Communications Effectiveness		<p>Other Authors: Strategic Communications Knowledge Base (Element 3)</p> <p>Posted on Carmen: Sample policy communications on content module</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using analytics to make meaning of your effectiveness Roundtable: Conduct text protocol on policy writing samples for content module 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications evaluation 	Content Module 4: TBD

Week	Due	Read/Review Prior to Class	What Will Happen in Class	Skills & Dispositions	Knowledge
Nov. 27		and evaluation/monitoring			
14 Practice and Feedback for Final Presentations			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehearse final presentations • Enjoy a potluck 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening to and giving feedback to others • Public speaking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immersion in other groups' topics
Dec. 4					
Dec. 8 (6–8:15 p.m.) <i>Yes, it's a final, on a Friday night!</i> MANDATORY	Final Individual Policy Briefs Final Policy Portfolios for Groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Position Paper • Visual Aids and Presentation 		Each team will be assigned to one of these times: 6–6:30 p.m. 6:35–7:05 p.m. 7:10–7:40 p.m. 7:45–8:15 p.m.		

FINAL NOTES

DIVERSITY VALUES

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.

WRITING ASSISTANCE

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.

ACCOMMODATIONS

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. **SLDS contact information:** slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

MENTAL HEALTH

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 or calling 614-292- 5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th 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. 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/>.