Persuasive Writing Credential Program

Summer 2023

This writing-intensive course introduces students to evidence-based communication tools, frameworks, and strategies that can be used to craft persuasive policy narratives for audiences that need to be reached by public policy professionals.

Each week, students will have ample class time to experiment with and receive extensive feedback on their writing to ensure they are able to communicate public policy as clearly, concisely, and compellingly as possible.

The writing tools we will cover in this course fall into one of three categories:

1. **Nuts and Bolts**: Tools for making meaning and creating connection at the paragraph, sentence, and individual word levels
2. **Blueprints**: Frameworks for organizing and building effective evidence-based policy narratives that meet the unique needs of the intended audience
3. **Special Effects**: Strategies to best structure policy narratives to ensure they are as clear, concise, and compelling as possible.

**Learning Outcomes:**

By committing to the rigorous process of reading, discussing, writing, and rewriting, students who complete this course will be better positioned to:

- Discern the differences between more and less effective communication approaches and/or styles in public policy.
- Recognize the relationship between power and influence and develop sound strategies to structure policy narratives in anticipation of the audience’s expectations.
- Define the limits and ethical constraints of persuasion as they apply to bias, belief, attitude, and moral foundations.
- Use a human-centered approach to ask better research questions, organize evidence efficiently, and frame narratives to meet the unique needs of the intended audience.
- Read actively to understand and test an author’s claims, evidence, and opinions.
- Write persuasive policy narratives based on analysis and synthesis that provide valuable recommendations to address the root causes of pressing policy challenges.
- Distinguish between substantive revision and surface editing; practice both and rethink and reshape their writing based on audience and purpose.
- Assess their peers’ writing and provide useful feedback on matters ranging from content to structure and evidence to grammar.
## Weekly Schedule:

### Week 1  July 17-21

**Topic:** Answering the Three Types of Policy Questions

**Lecture:**
- Three Types of Policy Questions
  - Descriptive, Evaluative & Prescriptive
- Exercise: Statement Starters

**Discussion:**
- Exercise: Abstraction “Plussing” Your Statement Starter
- Peer Review: Questions Only

**Readings:**
- *Public Policy Writing That Matters* (Chapters 1 & 2)

**Assignments:**
- Research Statement with Key Questions for Policy Decision Memo — Analysis of Proposed Policy Reform *(Due Week 2)*
- Personal Policy Writing Style Guide *(Due Finals Week)*

### Week 2  July 24-28

**Topic:** Meeting the Unique Needs of Your Reader

**Lecture:**
- Questions to Ask about Your Reader
- Introduction to Key Stakeholder Mapping
- Using the Moral Foundations Theory to Analyze Audiences and Develop Reader Profiles

**Discussion:**
- Exercise: Mapping Your Key Stakeholders
- Discussion: How do I create a useful reader profile?

**Readings:**
- *Public Policy Writing That Matters* (Chapter 3)

**Assignment:**
- Key Stakeholder Map & Reflection *(Due Week 3)*
### Week 3  
**July 31-August 4**

**Topic:**  
**Four Elements of a Persuasive Policy Recommendation**

**Lecture:**
- Four Elements of a Persuasive Policy Recommendation:
  - Status, Criteria, Interpretation & Outlook
- Claims of Fact vs. Value vs. Policy
- Three Types of Policy Recommendations:
  - Discrete, Operational & Strategic

**Discussion:**
- Exercise: Affinity Clustering
- Discussion: Where can I find good evidence?
- Discussion: Outlining a Policy Memo with the Four Elements

**Readings:**
- *Public Policy Writing That Matters* (Chapters 4 & 6)

**Assignment:**
- Draft Policy Decision Memo — Analysis of Proposed Policy Reform w/ Reader Profile (Due Week 4)

### Week 4  
**August 7-11**

**Topic:**  
**Mastering the Five Essentials of Policy Narratives**

**Lecture:**
- Aristotle’s Dramatic Arc
- Vonnegut’s “In-the-Hole” Story
- Four Types of Policy Storytellers
  - Researcher, Practitioner, Advocate & Participant
- Five Goals of Policy Reform Narratives:
  - Exposure, Urgency, Correction, Solidarity & Activism

**Discussion:**
- Exercise: Uncovering the Object of Desire
- Exercise: Outlining a Policy Reform Narrative with the Five Essentials

**Readings:**
- *Public Policy Writing That Matters* (Chapter 5)
- “Personal Narratives Build Trust across Ideological Divides,” by David Hagmann, et al. (2021)

**Examples of Narratives That Accomplish One of the Five Goals:**
### Assignment:
- Draft Policy Reform Narrative w/ Reader Profile (Due Week 5)

#### Week 5
**August 14-18**

**Topic:** Crafting Coherent Paragraphs & Clear Sentences

**Lecture:**
- Deductive Structure and Strong Sentence Cores
- Demystifying Punctuation
- Improving Coherence with the Old-to-New Sequence
- Quoting vs. Paraphrasing

**Discussion:**
- Peer Review: Highlighting Only
- Discussion: The Limits of Persuasion

**Readings:**
- *Public Policy Writing That Matters* (Chapters 7-10, 12)

#### Week 6
**August 21-25**

**Topic:** Making More Valuable Policy Recommendations

**Lecture:**
- Theories and Critical Sectors of Policy Change
- Introduction to the Importance/Difficulty Matrix
- Discussion: Is incremental change a moral failure?

**Discussion:**
- Exercise: Importance/Difficulty Matrix
- Peer Review: Deep Listening

**Readings:**
- “The Procedure Fetish,” by Nicholas Bagley, Niskanen Center (2021)
- *Public Policy Writing That Matters* (Chapter 11)

**Assignment:**
- Final Portfolio (Due Finals Week)
“Finals Week”: August 28-September 1

You will need to submit a Final Portfolio that includes:

1. **Policy Decision Memo — Analysis of Proposed Policy Reform**
   - 2-3-page memo that helps the intended reader make an informed decision on whether to support a reform.

2. **Policy Reform Narrative and Email Pitch**
   - 1,000-1,500-word article for external publication, along with a short email pitch for a media outlet that reaches your intended audience.

3. **Personal Policy Writing Style Guide**
   - Throughout the course, students will collect at least 10 writing tools, frameworks, and strategies to communicate effectively as a policy analyst and leader into a personal style guide. More than a simple list of “rules,” students should name the tool, describe when and how to use it, and provide an example of when and how it was used effectively.

Please submit your portfolio as a single document, with your assignments in the order listed above. Use Chicago Style footnotes for all citations. Standard formatting requirements also apply: 1-inch margins, size 12 Times New Roman font, and 1.5 line spacing.
# How You Will Be Evaluated:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Novice = 4</th>
<th>Proficient = 6</th>
<th>Distinguished = 8</th>
<th>Master = 10</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audience &amp; Purpose</strong></td>
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<td>Appropriate audience not clearly identified and limited awareness of topic...</td>
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<td>Problem not addressed</td>
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<td>Problem addressed/strategically addressed</td>
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<td><strong>Cohesive &amp; Organization</strong></td>
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<td>Executive Summary/Flowing Event is cohesive and well-defined.</td>
<td>Executive Summary/Flowing Event contains some elements of cohesive flow.</td>
<td>Executive Summary/Flowing Event contains most elements of cohesive flow.</td>
<td>Executive Summary/Flowing Event contains all elements of cohesive flow.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing lacks logical organization</td>
<td>Writing is mostly coherent and organized.</td>
<td>Writing is coherently and logically organized with deductive structure, and transitions are used between ideas and paragraphs.</td>
<td>Writing shows attention to logical reasoning, as evidenced by audience interest.</td>
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<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
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<td>Shows some elements of a policy finding, but most ideas are undeveloped.</td>
<td>Shows most elements of a policy finding, and one or more developed.</td>
<td>Shows all elements of a policy finding and develops ideas with appropriate and sufficient evidence.</td>
<td>Shows all elements of a policy finding and clear synthesis of ideas, depth analysis, and evidence. Original thought and support.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arguments and alternative viewpoints are not considered.</td>
<td>Arguments and alternative viewpoints are mentioned but not fully developed.</td>
<td>Arguments and alternative viewpoints are presented and rebutted, but the writer could go further.</td>
<td>Arguments and alternative viewpoints are presented and rebutted, resulting in a well-supported argument.</td>
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<td>Evidence points do not advance the argument.</td>
<td>Evidence points advance the argument.</td>
<td>Evidence points advance the argument.</td>
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<td><strong>Development</strong></td>
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<td>Main points lack detail and development (deviation from evidence or points of view).</td>
<td>Main points are present with limited detail and development.</td>
<td>Main points are well developed with supporting details.</td>
<td>Main points are well developed with high-quality support.</td>
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<td>The Conclusion/Resolution is missing or fragmentary.</td>
<td>The Conclusion/Resolution is present but could be better developed.</td>
<td>The Conclusion/Resolution is present and adequate makes a good argument.</td>
<td>The Conclusion/Resolution is compelling, convincing, and makes the story effective.</td>
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<td><strong>Paragraph Structure</strong></td>
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<td>Paragraphs lack cohesion and are not well developed.</td>
<td>Some paragraphs are unified, coherent, and written clearly.</td>
<td>Most paragraphs are unified, coherent, and written clearly.</td>
<td>All paragraphs are unified, coherent, written clearly, and supported with examples and have smooth transitions.</td>
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<td>Transitions are weak.</td>
<td>Transitions are effective.</td>
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<td><strong>Sentence Structure</strong></td>
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<td>Modest variety in sentence length and structure.</td>
<td>Approaches gradual level of usage of strong sentence tones and sentence varieties in the text.</td>
<td>Strong sentence tones are consistent, strong, and appropriate, and sentence variety and diction are used effectively.</td>
<td>Shows outstanding skills, strong sentence composition throughout, tone used effectively, create a sense of sentence structure and coordination.</td>
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<td><strong>Grammar &amp; Mechanics</strong></td>
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<td>Some spelling, punctuation, and grammar errors.</td>
<td>Most spelling, punctuation, and grammar errors are corrected, allowing student to progress through the story easily.</td>
<td>Document has few spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors, allowing reader to follow the story easily.</td>
<td>Document is free of distracting spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors.</td>
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<td><strong>Format</strong></td>
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<td>Flexible length and format requirements, incorrect margins and spacing.</td>
<td>Meets length and format requirements, correct margins and spacing.</td>
<td>Meets length and format requirements, correct margins and spacing.</td>
<td>Meets length and format requirements, correct margins and spacing.</td>
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<td>Attention to document needs attention.</td>
<td>Document is neat but may have some presentation errors.</td>
<td>Document is generally neat and approaching professionalism.</td>
<td>Document is neat and correctly assembled with professional look.</td>
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Course Expectations:

Late Assignments:

The late penalty is one grade level per day (A- to a B+). We can waive the penalty if you have a timely, legitimate, and documented excuse. If you are missing classes or have a late assignment because of sickness or religious observance, we can certainly accommodate you.

If possible, please alert us by email before being late on an assignment to make specific arrangements for extensions. It is much easier to accommodate timely requests. Please do not wait until weeks after a missed assignment to reach out. We especially advise against waiting to contact us until the last week of classes or after we have submitted final grades.

Re-Grading Policy:

Feel free to discuss your grades with us. If, following such a conversation, you feel that an error was made, please submit a re-grade request to us by email, within two weeks of the assignment being graded. Please include an explanation or justification for the re-grade request. It’s far more effective to discuss why you thought your work was effective and why you feel your grade did not accurately reflect that. If we make a mistake, we will own up to it, correct it, and try not to make the same mistake again.

Managing Any Disruptions That May Arise:

We’re committed to helping everyone pass this course in a way that ensures you learn the materials and get the work done. That said, your safety and wellbeing is more important than anything going on in class. If you find yourself unable to complete an assignment because of serious illness or other personal reasons, here’s what we suggest: As soon as possible, you should email David Chrisinger (dchrisinger@uchicago.edu) with a note about the missed work and an explanation. We hold everything in the strictest confidence. We will work together to find a way for you to make up missed assignments.

Please Use Your Words; They’re the Best Words:

All University of Chicago students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. This means that students shall not represent another’s work as their own, use un-allowed materials during exams, or otherwise gain unfair academic advantage.

What is plagiarism?

“Simply put, plagiarism is using words and thoughts of others as if they were your own. Any time you borrow from an original source and do not give proper credit, you have committed plagiarism,” according to the University of Chicago’s Office of International Affairs. “While
there are different degrees and types of plagiarism, plagiarism is not just about honesty, it is also a violation of property law and is illegal.”

Furthermore, “It is contrary to justice, academic integrity, and to the spirit of intellectual inquiry to submit another’s statements or ideas as one’s own work,” according to the University of Chicago’s policies and regulations on academic honesty and plagiarism.

What are the consequences if you plagiarize?

You will earn a grade of 0 on the assignment and no higher than a B- in the course, regardless of performance on other assignments.

How to Avoid Unintentional Plagiarism:

After all my years of teaching writing, I’ve come to believe that the vast majority of incidents related to plagiarism are unintentional. The best way to avoid unintentional plagiarism is to keep good notes of your sources so that you do not forget where a piece of information comes from. The University of Chicago has created several citation management resources you may want to consult:

- **Citing Resources**: A detailed guide to citation from the University of Chicago Library. Includes instructions on locating and using major citation manuals and style guides, as well as information about using RefWorks bibliographic management tool.
- **RefWorks**: RefWorks is a web-based bibliographic management tool provided by the University of Chicago Library that makes creating bibliographies and citing resources quick and easy. The Library's RefWorks' web site links to information about classes and extensive online tutorials, as well as help guides on keeping organized and citing resources using RefWorks' Write-N-Cite feature.
- **Citation Management**: A helpful guide on how to use RefWorks and other citation management tools, including EndNote and Zotero.

I expect you to acknowledge the source material you consulted—whether that’s by using direct quotations or paraphrases—with proper citations according to the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

**Accessibility**

The University of Chicago is committed to ensuring equitable access to our academic programs and services. Students with disabilities who have been approved for the use of academic accommodations by *Student Disability Services (SDS)* and need a reasonable accommodation(s) to participate fully in this course should follow the procedures established by SDS for using accommodations. Timely notifications are required to ensure that your accommodations can be implemented. Please meet with me to discuss your access needs in this class after you have completed the SDS procedures for requesting accommodations.

Phone: (773) 702-6000
Diversity and Inclusion

The Harris School welcomes, values, and respects students, faculty, and staff from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences, and we believe that rigorous inquiry and effective public policy problem-solving requires the expression and understanding of diverse viewpoints, experiences, and traditions. The University and the Harris School have developed distinct but overlapping principles and guidelines to ensure that we remain a place where difficult issues are discussed with kindness and respect for all.

- The University’s policies are available here. Specifically, the University identifies the freedom of expression as being “vital to our shared goal of the pursuit of knowledge, as is the right of all members of the community to explore new ideas and learn from one another. To preserve an environment of spirited and open debate, we should all have the opportunity to contribute to intellectual exchanges and participate fully in the life of the University.”

- The Harris School’s commitments to lively, principled, and respectful engagement are available here: “Consistent with the University of Chicago’s commitment to open discourse and free expression, Harris encourages members of the leadership, faculty, student body, and administrative staff to respect and engage with others of differing backgrounds or perspectives, even when the ideas or insights shared may be viewed as unpopular or controversial.” We foster thought-provoking discourse by encouraging community members not only to speak freely about all issues but also to listen carefully and respectfully to the views of others.