

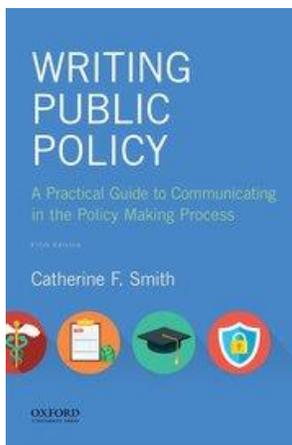
PADM 7331: Writing for Public Policy Syllabus, Fall 2020

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Required Text



Catherine F. Smith

***Writing Public Policy: A Practical
Guide to Communicating in the Policy
Making Process***

Oxford University Press, 5th ed., 2018

ISBN 9780190854232

Contact Information & Regular & Substantive Contact

To communicate, use Blackboard Messages
Rather than UA Little Rock e-mail

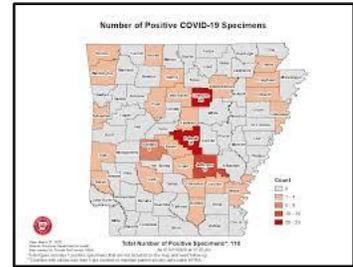
- Even though we are a hybrid campus class, I check the Bb message board every 18-36 hours, except on holidays. You can also check for answers to classmates' questions at "Ask Dr. Scranton"
- And, since we will have weeks during which you are working on writing assignments, I will be available to you online between campus classes. You can post questions about class materials and assignments at "Ask Dr. Scranton" in Bb; I post answers to the whole class within 18-36 hours.
- I post Announcements in Bb when I need to communicate with you about updates, campus information you need to know, and explanations of assignments and grading between our face-to-face classes.
- For a one-to-one meeting,
 - you can attend campus office hours on Mondays, 4:30-5:30 pm, and by appointment; send me a Bb message with times you are available and we'll set up an appointment.
 - Schedule an online appointment or phone call
 - Schedule online office hours appointment in Blackboard Collaborate

Note about our Hybrid Course Format, Fall 2020 - definitely a work in progress!

Sept. 27 UPDATE - no more face-to-face classes for a while

Starting Monday, Sept. 28th, we will hold class synchronously online only, using Bb Collaborate and Zoom. Most Mondays we will use both formats and I will send you an invitation Monday mornings with your Zoom invitation.

Some of our class meetings will be face-to-face during our scheduled class period, some will be synchronous during our class period, and some will be asynchronous. Anyone who prefers not to attend on campus will be able to participate virtually. We will assess the format plan during the first week of class and throughout the semester. You will wear your face mask during classes that meet on campus and maintain social distancing in our classroom. If necessary, I will amend the syllabus to reflect changes in our course format.

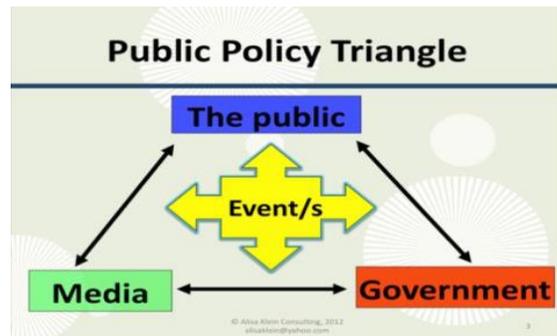


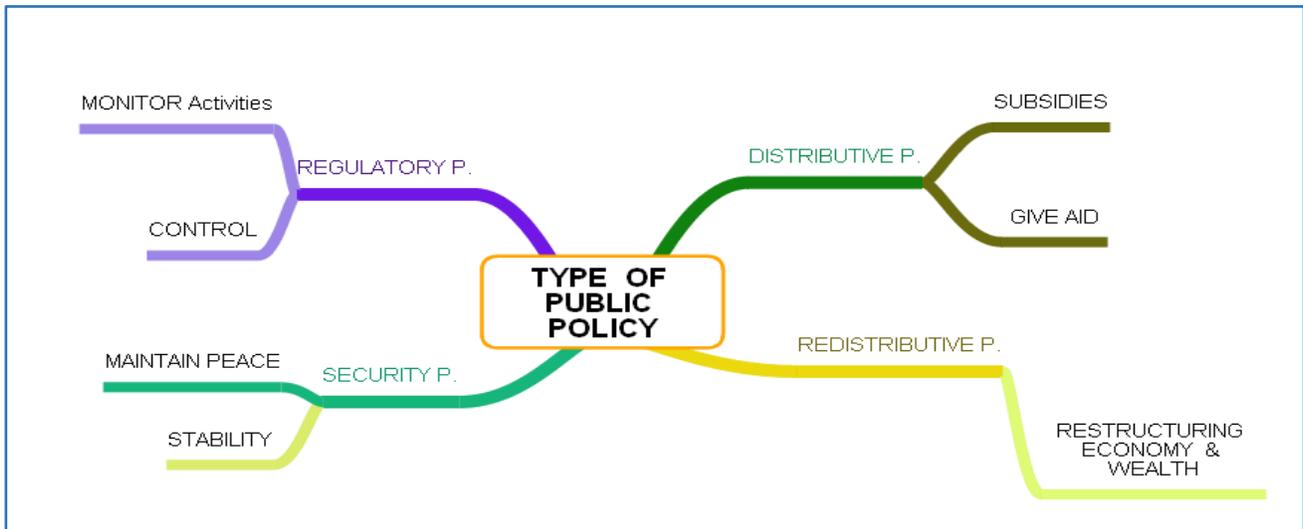
Our first class, August 24th, will be held on campus in DK 210; students who want to attend virtually will use Blackboard Collaborate Ultra during the class period - 6:00-8:40 pm, CST - so that we all start out on the same page and I can respond to everyone's questions.

Course Description

In this course, students learn a general method for planning, producing, assessing, and critically analyzing communications in a variety of real-life public policy contexts and situations.

This course is ideal for students preparing for careers in politics, government, public relations, law, public policy, journalism, social work, public health, or in any role related to public affairs. We will cover various public policies during the semester, so you will be able to read and write about policies that are most interesting to you, as illustrated in this concept map.





This course builds upon what you already know about academic writing, particularly your skills in researching and analyzing issues, and adds the technical writing skills you need to effectively communicate as a public administration professional. You will practice writing short documents like one-page memos, and longer documents: witness testimony before public agencies and legislatures, comments on federal regulations, policy briefs on issues, and technical policy reports. We will cover various public policies during the semester, so you will be able to read and write about issues that are most interesting to you.

This course also builds upon what you already know about the economic, social, and political contexts within which public policymakers and the public operate, and upon what you already know about the policy making process. Our special emphasis upon writing hones and enhances your policy writing skills, whether these relate to your present occupation or your next job.

Like other PADM courses we will pay particular attention to the **political context** of contemporary public administration, the role of public administration in the policy process, and accountability and ethical behavior of policy professionals and advocates.

Concerning ethics, our emphasis will be on writing that is accurate, based on credible evidence, and responsible as well as being lucid and concise.



MPA Learning Objectives

In terms of MPA Program learning objectives, this course emphasizes *Communication Skills*:

“Students will improve their written and oral communication skills that are essential for effective public administrators to communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry.”

Professional policy communication is quite different from scholarly writing because of the reader you are addressing, who typically is a very busy executive who needs a clear, concise message from you. That is why I think of this course as a bridge toward professional writing in a variety of workplaces, both in and outside of government.

During the semester you will read and critique writing samples written by citizen advocates, outside experts, and a variety of public officials and administrators. While our emphasis is primarily on written communication, you will critique an oral policy presentation and also make/record an oral presentation. For each week in the semester, we discuss specific learning goals that relate to the readings and writing assignments for the week.

This course pays attention to policy writing created by all of the actors in the policy process: those inside of government - elected officials, appointees, and civil servants - and those outside of government - individuals as members of the public, policy advocates, groups and their representatives, and experts in think tanks and professional associations. In terms of the policy process, our focus is on how information shapes policy choices at every stage - from identification through evaluation - rather than on details of the decision-making process itself.

By the end of the semester, you will have a portfolio of professional writing products that exemplify your policy writing skills.

Classwork Expectations and Goals

Students will read, analyze, and write about a variety of policy documents: press releases and transcripts of press conferences, federal regulations, congressional witness testimony, professional/technical reports, and policy memos that document the nature and consequences of a public problem.

Students will improve and diversify their technical writing skills through alternative writing strategies and these techniques: framing, rhetorical awareness, policy discourse awareness, understanding audiences.

Students will distinguish between “bad” and “good” writing.

Students will contribute to their learning by participating actively and responsibly, reflecting on their learning, and submitting completed assignments on time.

Course Requirements

Required Reading

- Catherine F. Smith, *Writing Public Policy: A Practical Guide to Communicating in the Policy-Making Process* (Oxford University Press, 5th ed., 2018); ISBN 9780190854232.
- Various technical papers, reports, and documents in Blackboard, as .pdf files or via links to websites

Required Writing and Participation

- ✦ Weekly writing assignments will include posting analyses of technical documents, discussing writing assignments, replying to class discussions and writing short policy papers
- ✦ Communicating with classmates on discussion, presentation, and peer review assignments

- ✦ Completing reflective surveys on your learning and feedback about the class
- ✦ Posting your Portfolio for MPA assessment

Course Structure

Following a start-up week with orientation assignments, the course will cover the topics listed in the table of contents of the Smith's *Writing Public Policy*.

1. Public Policy is Language
 2. Communicating in Policy Making
 3. Definition: Frame the Problem
 4. Evaluation: Analyze and Advise
 5. Legislative History: Know the Record
 6. Position Paper: Know the Arguments
 7. Petition, Proposal, Letter: Request Action
 8. Brief, Opinion, Resolution: Inform Policy Makers
 9. Testimony: Witness in a Public Hearing
 10. Public Comment: Influence Administration
 11. Conclusion: Practical Ethics for Policy Communication
- Appendix: Writing Clearly

Assignments and Grading Policies

To pass the course, students must satisfactorily complete all the following requirements; this means that you should not plan to omit any assignments:

Assignments*	Percentage Value
Orientation Start-Up Assignments	5%
Weekly Writing Assignments	45%
Longer Writing Assignment #1	15%
Longer Writing Assignment #2	25%
Portfolio	5%
Reflective Learning Surveys	5%
	100%

*For all of our assignments, I provide detailed written guidelines along with matching grading rubrics that you can see in Bb at MyGrades. You will see exactly what is required in terms of reading and writing, use of sources, and levels of proficiency (the difference between full points and fewer points earned).

Provided that all work for the course is completed, your grade is determined by the weighted average of your scores on each of these four requirements as follows: A: 90% and above; B: 80-89%; C: 70-79%; D: 60-69%; F: 60% or below.

I expect most students to perform at proficiency most of the time; I do not use a curve for grading, and we do not have any extra credit. I do not expect to see much “average” work, yet I will not hesitate to provide an honest appraisal of your performance.

I understand that assignment guidelines may seem clear, in principle, before you start processing readings and writing. Because we use a “flipped classroom” format, meaning that we begin working on assignments during class, I am present to address your concerns as you start writing. For this process to work, however, students must review those materials prior to class. In the Weekly Schedule, I distinguish between “new” materials that we are beginning to work on and “leftover” materials (or “old business”) - referring to assignments that you have finished and are submitting. For some materials, we spend more than two class sessions processing the reading and doing several kinds of writing based on those materials.

If you have questions between classes about assignment instructions or the grading rubric, please post questions/comments at “Ask Dr. Scranton” or send me a Bb message. Since we meet once a week, it is vital for you take responsibility for being confident that you are on the right track with your work. And, in addition to our weekly writing assignments, you may have questions about Smith’s chapters and other readings. So, just as you would raise a hand in a campus class or visit with your professor before/after class, you can use “Ask Dr. Scranton” to communicate with me.

When in doubt, contact me! I often post an answer announcement to a class when I receive a question, so you can also regularly check “Ask Dr. Scranton” to see if someone has already asked your question.

Course Policies

Assignment Submission

For full credit, assignments **MUST** be submitted by the unit deadline, at the appropriate location, and with a readable file or copied/pasted text. I cannot grade assignments I cannot open; use either a .pdf or a .docx format; when in doubt, convert your text into a .pdf. Always keep a file of your assignments in case you need to re-submit.

Attendance, Participation, Late Work and Bonus Points Policies

Regular attendance, on campus or virtually, is necessary to succeed in this class. Even if you must miss a class period, you should submit your writing assignment on time; you should also review the digital record of the class to process the content you missed.

I do not take attendance; instead, your written weekly assignments (1-2 per week) count as your participation. Ideally, assignments are handed in on time, according to the class deadline in the Weekly Schedule, because we have new assignments that build upon work completed during previous classes. Yet, we are operating under pandemic conditions, so as an incentive, you can earn five bonus points per assignment for submitting by noon on the day of the class specified in the Weekly Schedule.

Points are not deducted for late assignments during a Unit. All unit-based assignments are due by the end of the unit; those assignments are no longer available after the end of the unit.

The final deadline for all assignments during a unit is the end of the unit; once the unit deadline passes those assignments are closed.

Incompletes

I only accept a request for an incomplete if a severe emergency occurs during the last week of class that prevents you from completing the semester. I can only grant a request for an Incomplete to students who a) have completed (and passed!) the required work up to the point the emergency occurs, b) have a legitimate, documented emergency, and c) have proposed a reasonable plan, with a timetable, for completion of the required work within 15 days.

Syllabus Changes and Bb Problems

Although I make every effort to present accurate, complete information, this syllabus is subject to change, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic.

- If a schedule or assignment change is necessary, I will notify the class with a Bb announcement.
- If we experience a Bb server interruption during the 24 hours prior to a deadline, I will extend the deadline by 24 hours. Usually we will receive an email about a Bb outage; depending upon the length and severity of the problem, we may have Bb restored in a few hours or a day or longer. We will adapt to that situation.
- If you experience a Bb connection problem, it is your responsibility to contact Bb Student Support. Remember that I am a political science professor, not a computer support technician!

I do want to hear from you if you find an error in the syllabus or assignment so that I can fix that problem! I can troubleshoot the assignments and content that I create, but you will need Bb Student Support for issues relating to your computer's settings and your internet connection.

Classroom Etiquette/Netiquette

For our classroom to be a safe learning space, we must adhere to these values: respect for others and their views, civility, professionalism, and willingness to disagree agreeably. You can count on me as your professor to maintain a supportive and appropriate learning environment. In our Start-Up Assignments we have a handout on Netiquette that clarifies appropriate vs inappropriate communicating online; the same standards apply in person.

Computer Skills and Requirements

We use Blackboard as the “file cabinet” for our course, to submit assignments, and also as our messaging system, rather than UALR email. Students must possess basic computer skills and to have reliable internet access and a computer.



While some Blackboard (Bb) features are available with digital devices like smartphones and tablets, writing assignments are not. In our Start-Up Assignments, I post a list of Bb functions that are available for various digital devices as well as Bb Student Support advice for taking online classes.

For virtual class meetings we will use Blackboard Collaborate Ultra (Bb Collaborate). Use this site if you need a review of this tool: <https://its.gmu.edu/knowledge-base/where-can-i-find-help-on-how-to-use-blackboard-collaborate-ultra/>

If you are not yet comfortable in an online class environment, you should take the Blackboard Orientation course listed in your My Courses during the Start-Up week. This online tutorial course shows how to navigate a course in Blackboard and how to use tools like the discussion board, how to submit assignments, etc.

University Policies

Course Accessibility

Your success in this class is important to me, and it is the policy and practice of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock to create inclusive learning environments consistent with federal and state law. If you have a documented disability (or need to have a disability documented) and need an accommodation, please contact me privately as soon as possible, so that we can discuss with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) how to meet your specific needs and the requirements of the course. The DRC offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process among you, your instructor(s) and the DRC. Thus, if you have a disability, please contact me and/or the DRC at 501-569-3143 (V/TTY) or 501-683-7629 (VP). For more information, please visit the DRC website at www.ualr.edu/disability.

Academic Integrity

Anyone caught plagiarizing will be disciplined according to the regulations and procedures contained in the UA Little Rock Student Handbook. A slideshow on violations of academic integrity, including plagiarism, is available at <http://www.ualr.edu/copyright/articles/?ID=4>.

We have two Start-Up Assignments that support this policy: 1) you will sign the UA Little Rock Code of Student Conduct, and 2) you will take a Plagiarism Tutorial and Test that explains how to paraphrase correctly and when/how to cite sources. For additional information, see the UA Little Rock Academic Integrity site: <https://ualr.edu/deanofstudents/academic-integrity/>.

Inclement Weather

During inclement weather, UA Little Rock will decide whether or not to close based on all available information. The [UA Little Rock website](#), UA Little Rock email, the university's main telephone number (501.569.3000), and the Rave campus alert notification system are the official means of communicating information concerning weather-related closings. When necessary, the university will announce a separate decision about canceling night classes (those classes starting at 4:20 p.m. or later) by 2 p.m., if possible.

Weather and road conditions vary from place to place. Employees and students are expected to exercise good judgment regarding the safety of travel when road conditions are affected by the weather. If I cannot come to campus, I will post a Bb Announcement, and we will hold a class via Bb Collaborate instead.

Student Complaints

Students are encouraged to seek informal resolution at the department level when possible. After exhausting the department or informal complaint process, students may file a formal complaint with the university. To file a formal complaint, please complete this form with as much information as possible. Student complaints may be submitted anonymously; however, including your contact information will assist the university in responding to your complaint.

The policy for student complaints can be found here.

This form does not apply to complaints regarding the following issues:

- Title IX
- Grade Appeals
- Parking Violations
- ADA-related Discrimination
- Other issues where a separate policy and procedure for resolution are already approved.

Non-Discrimination Policy

UA Little Rock adheres to a policy that enables all individuals, regardless of race, color, gender, national origin, age, sexual orientation, veteran's status, or disability to work and study in an environment unfettered by discriminatory behavior or acts. Harassment of an individual or group will not be condoned and any person - student, faculty, or staff member - who violates this policy

will be subject to disciplinary action. Any person who believes they have been discriminated against should contact the Human Resources Office to obtain assistance and information concerning the filing of complaints, (501) 569-3180.

Harassment which is considered discriminatory, includes actions or conduct (verbal, graphic, gestural, or written) directed against any person or group with the intent to demean or create a hostile or threatening environment. It is not the intent of this policy to infringe upon or limit educational, scholarly, or artistic expression. At the same time the University prohibits discriminatory practices, it promotes equal opportunity through affirmative action.

Nondiscriminatory affirmative action, equal opportunity policies apply to: recruitment, hiring, job classification and placement, work conditions, promotional opportunities, demotions/transfers, terminations, training, compensation, choice of contractors and suppliers of goods and services, educational opportunities, disciplinary action, recreational and social activities, use of facilities, housing, and University sponsored programs.

UA Little Rock Student Resources

- **Blackboard Support (also see link in Blackboard navigation bar)** o The Blackboard Support website was designed to assist students with information about the Blackboard system including tutorials, helpful resources, downloads, and answers to their frequently asked questions. In addition to the website, students can call the Bb office during business hours; you can also find help within the Blackboard system using the Help tab or through their social media outlets on Facebook and Twitter. You can connect to Blackboard Help at Net ID login page or directly from ualr.edu/blackboard.
 - o Your courses in Blackboard also have an online “help” link.
- **IT Services**
 - o For technical support with other UALR systems, including logging into Blackboard, BOSS, or your UALR email, please contact the IT Help Desk at ualr.edu/itservices or by calling 501.916.3011.
 - o Business hours are Monday through Thursday from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm, and on Fridays from 7:00 am to 5:00 pm.
- **Ottenheimer Library**
 - o Ottenheimer Library collects, organizes, and provides access to information resources and library services that enrich and support the University’s research and teaching mission, foster intellectual development, and promote academic excellence.
 - o Visit the Ottenheimer Library Website <http://ualr.edu/library/> for information about the library and its collections, and view available services.
- **Writing Lab:** Visit the Writing Center <http://ualr.edu/writingcenter> for more information about the services they provide, their online submission guidelines, and virtual writing conferences.



- **Communication Skills Center:** The [Communication Skill Center](#) (CSC) is a resource devoted to helping campus and online students in the various stages of preparing a presentation. We help take the panic out of public speaking! Services include, but are not limited to, public speaking anxiety management, brainstorming, research, content organization, PowerPoint/Prezi design and integration, and providing presenters with helpful rehearsal feedback. The CSC will be offering online services during Fall 2020:
- To schedule an **online video call appointment**, please use the following link: <https://ualrcommunicationskillcenter.setmore.com/>
 - To access the **online chat**, please use the following link (and be sure to log-in to your email): <https://hangouts.google.com/group/ncmX9d991pbMAkV66>
 - To request **support via email**, please send your request to the following address: communication.skill.center@gmail.com