

Writing and Speaking Public Policy

Prerequisite: Writ 2-3 or 5, FYS
Cross-listed in Writing Program and Public Policy
Enrollment cap: 16
Spring 2007
10A or 2A

Professor Crumbine

Course Description

This course is designed for students who want to improve their writing skills to effect real change. Students will read and write in areas of public policy, develop arguments, editorials, position papers, briefing memos, as well as op ed pieces and "letters to the editor" to be submitted to the local newspapers. Students will strengthen their understanding and practice of argument, critique testimony, and develop and present their own oral testimony to the class. The course will focus on clarity, conciseness, and brevity, "the soul of wit," distinguishing always between objectivity and advocacy. The course is intended for students interested in government, law, public health, education, and/or the environment. *Prerequisite: Public Policy 5.*

Texts

Carson, Rachel, *Silent Spring*
Rottenberg, Annette, *The Structure of Argument*, Bedford Books
Smith, Catherine, *Writing Public Policy: A Practical Guide to Communicating in the Policy-Making Process*, Oxford University Press, 2005
Williams, Joseph, *Style: The Basics of Clarity and Grace*, Longman, 2003
Reader: A collection of public policy writings

Course Requirements:

Class attendance, class participation, mutual respect, and a sense of humor.

Two required conferences.

Xhours will be used for video clips of exemplary oral testimony and successful change agents.

One Field Trip to Concord or Montpelier, to see live testimony in the State House.

All papers must be handed in on time unless the professor has approved an extension.

All assignments must be completed for a passing grade.

Students are responsible for multiple copies of their papers for their workshops, and to have readily available hard copy of all work handed in.

All papers must be spell-checked, proofread, double-spaced and stapled, pages numbered. One inch margins, 12 font, 2-sided. Please, no folders or plastic covers, no title pages or other excess waste of paper. Papers will be returned if these minimal requirements are not met.

In case of contagious serious illness, blitz the professor a short note before missing class. Illness requires a medical excuse from Dick's House. Please do not come to class or office spreading germs. Any students missing class for any reason are responsible for checking with their colleagues to find out what they missed and what they are to do in order to come prepared for the next class. Absence is not an excuse for coming ill prepared to the next class. Coming to class ill-prepared trumps not coming to class.

Each class meeting: Bring relevant texts. Be prepared every class to state the theses of the assigned texts and to discuss the texts in detail.

Keep a journal in response to all readings and all classes. The professor will ask to see this during the course of the term.

Read all assignments at least twice.

Enjoy the class. If, for any reason, the course is not working for you, see the professor as soon as possible.

I encourage students with disabilities to discuss with me, after class or during my office hours, appropriate accommodations that might be helpful to them.

The written assignments will generally increase in length from the first assignment, one paragraph, to the final project, no longer than 6 pages. The course will have a Writing Assistant. Students will rewrite every assignment three times: in response to peers, WA, and the professor's conference. By the end of the course, the students will know what is meant by the statement: Every word counts.

Grades: 40% class participation, including editing for workshops, 40% written work, including drafts, and 20% oral presentation.

Week One

Tuesday: Understanding Argument and the Process of Public Policy

Thursday: Defining the Issue and Researching the History and Context
What exactly is the problem?

Reading Due: Smith, Ch.1-3, Williams, Ch.1

Written Due: Two Paragraphs

Week Two

Tuesday: Responding as a Critical Reader/Writer

Reading Due: Rottenberg, Ch. 1-2, Williams, Ch. 2-3, Selection from Reader

Written Due: One short letter to the editor

Thursday: Claims: of fact, of value, of policy

Reading Due: Rottenberg, Ch. 3, Williams, Ch. 4, Selection from Reader

Written Due: One-page argument, paragraph rewrites

Week Three

Tuesday: Definition and Support

Reading Due: Rottenberg, Ch. 4-5, Williams, Ch.5, Selection from Reader

Written Due: Rewrite of letter to the editor

Thursday: Induction and Deduction

Reading Due: Rottenberg, Ch. 6-8, Williams, Ch. 6, Selection from Reader

Written Due: Two-page paper, rewrite of one-page argument, thesis for oral testimony

Week Four

Tuesday: Researching Public Policy: Library Staff

Reading Due: Smith, Ch. 4, Williams, Ch. 7, Selection from Reader

Written Due: Rewrite of two-page paper

Thursday: Position Papers

Reading Due: Smith, Ch.5, Williams, Ch. 8

Written Due: Annotated Bibliography

Week Five

Tuesday: Petitions

Reading Due: Smith, Ch. 6, Williams, Ch. 9, Selection from Reader

Written Due: Three-page Position Paper, rewrite of bibliography

Thursday: Proposals

Reading Due: Williams, Ch. 10, Selection from Reader

Written Due: Research Project: Legislative History, Petition, rewrites

Week Six

Tuesday: Opinion Statements

Reading Due: Smith, Ch. 7, Selection from Reader

Written Due: Opinion Statement

Thursday: Public Hearings
Reading Due: Smith, Ch. 8, Selection from Reader
Written Due: Two Letters to the Editor, rewrites

Oral Presentations Begin

Week Seven

Tuesday: Written Public Comment
Reading Due: Smith, Ch. 9, Selection from Reader
Written Due: Written Comment

Thursday: Field Trip / Oral Presentations
Reading Due: Selection from Reader
Written Due: 2 page petition, proposal, or op ed

Week Eight

Tuesday: Field Trip / Oral Presentations
Reading Due: Selection from Reader
Written Due: Rewrites

Thursday: Workshop of Final Projects

Week Nine

Tuesday: Writing from the Outside: the Prophetic Tradition
Guest Speaker: a contemporary version of a Carson or Harrington
Reading Due: Carson, Selection from Reader
Written Due: A 3-page analysis of a successful changer of public policy

Thursday: Conclusion
Reading Due: Selection from Reader

Final Paper due Friday of last week of classes. Extensions are available with reasonable request.

The Reader will include material on issues in government, health, education, and the environment. Selections from particularly well written public policy documents will be examined.