Spring 2015

PBPL/WRIT 41: Writing & Speaking Public Policy

Instructor: Julie Kalish
Hours: Tu/Th 2:00-3:50pm; x-hr W 4:15-5:05pm
Classroom: Haldeman 28
Office hrs: Tu. 12:00-2:00pm; Th. 12:30-2:00pm & 4:00-4:30pm; & by appointment
Office: B03 Parker House

Course Description & Rationale

As those of you who study public policy know, its process is multi-faceted and endlessly dynamic. Those who influence that process come from all professions and, with daily advances in media communication, increasingly all walks of life. However, no matter what role you decide to play in the policy process - as a legislator or street-level protester - your ability to communicate your positions effectively and persuasively is critical to achieving your goals.

Writing and Speaking Public Policy is a hands-on experience, designed for students planning for a career in leadership, government, and/or public policy. The course uses politics, law, popular culture, psychology, history, and art, as well as public policy, to draw out fundamental persuasive principles and techniques. It will provide models of successful policy campaigns ... as well as those that suffered from some fatal flaws. We will start to explore barriers to effective communication and work with some tools for surmounting them.

The course readings, discussions, and workshops are all designed to support and build the competencies needed to complete the core student work product for the term: the policy campaign. Students will work together to create comprehensive campaigns to advance a policy issue of their choosing. The campaigns will be multi-faceted and multi-modal, exploring the many different arenas in which policy measures can succeed ... and fail. The design attempts to raise each argumentative principle in theoretical, case study, and practical, hands-on forms, and provide a substantive parallel within the course materials that can serve as a model for each portfolio piece.

The course places considerable emphasis on examining and applying argumentative principles in speech, as well as in multi-modal argumentative formats. "New media" formats are becoming arguably the most pervasive and effective tools of modern persuasion; however, they embed their argumentative techniques in ways the public isn’t as well-prepared to identify. Therefore, a primary goal of the course is to increase students’ literacy in these forms of argument. The class will spend a good portion of its time “reading” and analyzing these materials. In particular, we will look at how these tools have played an increasingly central role in the advancement of key public policy initiatives.

Through our discussions, students will eventually be asked to start exploring the ethical components of the persuasive techniques they are using and to develop their own
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guidelines about the ways in which they are, and are not, willing to persuade others. My hope is that students will emerge from the course as more thoughtful, sophisticated consumers and producers of argument, that they will understand their acts of persuasion as potentially weighty acts of power, and that they will someday soon help shape the future of public policy discourse in deliberate, responsible ways.

Class Time

Class time will be spent in discussion with one another; I will not be lecturing. Therefore, the quality of class time depends on your active participation. Similarly, the “Workshop” classes will rely on the material that you are bringing in to class for discussion; the quality of those class periods depends on you.

The Reading

There are two purchased texts for the class: *Summer for the Gods* and *The Righteous Mind*. Other reading assignments will be available online, via the Canvas site, and through the library’s physical and electronic reserves. All reading assignments must be completed by the date indicated on the syllabus.

Grading (See the Portfolio Description)

The Honor Principle

You are bound by Dartmouth’s Honor Principle in all work you do for this class. You will be working collaboratively throughout the course with your groups. I don’t expect there to be confusion as to the role of the Honor Principle in these collaborations; however, if any questions arise, please ask me immediately.

Disabilities

Students with disabilities enrolled in this course and who may need disability-related classroom accommodations are encouraged to make an appointment to see me, ideally, before the end of the second week of the term. Students requiring disability-related accommodations must register with the Student Accessibility Service office. If you have questions about whether you qualify to receive accommodations, you should contact the SAS office. All inquiries and discussions about accommodations will remain confidential.

Religious Observances

Some students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this academic term. If you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course, please meet with me before the end of the second week of the term to discuss appropriate accommodations.
## Week 1

**Course Introduction & Portfolio Project: Set Up**

Mar 31  Tu  In class:
- Introduction to course, groups and portfolio projects.
- Letters to Editor set up
- Oral argument rubric – in preparation for Thursday’s arguments, the class will create a set of values against which the presentations will be discussed and future personal oral advocacy goals set.

**Due tonight by Midnight**
- 1 Paragraph – submit to course website your proposed public policy issue and a one-paragraph argument for why it would make a good group issue for the portfolio project.

April 1  W  **Due by Midnight:**
- Preliminary vote – Look at the list of topics posted by your classmates and email me your top 3 choices.

2  Th  Portfolio Project – Set up
**Prepare:**
- Prepare a 3-minute oral argument in support of your proposed portfolio topic. (I will have made 1st-round edits based on the Wed. night poll. Not all students will argue, but you won’t know who will until class). Class will pick final topics and groups, as well as debrief the oral arguments against the rubric, discussing persuasive (and less-persuasive) elements and, perhaps, altering the rubric itself, as more nuanced values emerge.

## Week 2

**Case Study of a “Successful” Campaign: Smoking**

April 6  M  **Due by Noon:** Group 1 – letters to editor

7  Tu  Letters to the editor critique. Smoking case study: The Problem.

**Read:**
Smoking case study: Solutions (Laws, settlements, education & cultural change)

Read/Watch/Listen:

Laws & Education

- R.J. Reynolds Co. v. FDA et. al., 696 F.3d 1205 (D.C. Cir., 2012) (Course Materials) (Skim for an overall sense of the legal problem. Unless you’re really into the law, in which case read as deeply as you want!)

Proposals


Media Campaigns


• LegacyForHealth.org. Watch the opening video, read about the truth® campaign (which Bill Sorrell was just talking about above), & then look around to get a sense of what their advocacy website looks like (granted, a very sophisticated example!): http://www.legacyforhealth.org/what-we-do/national-education-campaigns/keeping-young-people-from-using-tobacco/?o=3571#

Due:

• Group strategic plan: What is the campaign? Who is the target audience? What kind of legislation are you envisioning? Who is doing which written piece (problem paper, strategy memo & talk)?

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Week 3 The Speech Act & Public Persuasion

April 13 M Due by Noon: Group 2 – letters to editor

14 Tu Letters to editor critique; What makes for persuasive oral argument?

Read:

  o Think about the implications of this reading for persuasive speaking. How might these ideas affect the way you approach a speaking opportunity. Would those choices change, depending upon your audience? The venue? The goal of the speech? (I.e. is it to persuade? To “rally the troops?” Etc.)
  o When you read and watch the following pieces, think about the ways these speech acts are (and aren’t) working with these ideas about human cognition and reasoning, and are (or aren’t) able to circumvent argumentative “resistance.”

• Martin Luther King Jr. “I Have a Dream” (you can get this text from just about anywhere, but this site has both audio & text together, so you can follow the text and listen to the delivery: http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkhaveadream.htm)
  o Print the speech and mark it up, noting techniques used that 1) seem specific to the oral context, 2) seemed “unique” to King, as a speaker (i.e. may or may not work for all speakers), and 3) were most persuasive to you.

Watch:

• President Obama’s “We Are What We Learn” message for America’s students speech, 9/8/2009: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Z76GrzWkw0
  o As you watch, take notes on Obama’s rhetorical strategies and techniques. How, for instance, is he using personal
narrative, appealing to logic and/or emotion, using evidence, advocating for specific policy goals, etc.? Who is/are his audience(s) for this speech? How is he addressing this, more complex, notion of “audience”?

- Bush v. Gore debates:
  These are the first and last debates of a series. Watch the first 20 minutes of each. Then, in the first debate, watch from 25:00-27:05 MUTED. See what you think...
  - St. Louis, 10/17/2000 (there are no podiums here, so you can see the candidates’ full body language): http://www.c-span.org/video/?159297-1/presidential-candidates-debate

- Look for these same features you identified above, and how they are used similarly or differently within the debate context. Pay particular attention in these debates to the importance of “image,” body language (eye contact, facial expressions, assertiveness of body stance, etc.) & the extent to which they are (and aren’t) answering the questions and following the “rules” of the debate. When do these seem like effective choices? When don’t they? Why?

16       Th       Art & Persuasion
CLASS MEETS AT THE HOOD! (In the Bernstein Study Center)¹
Read:
- The Civilians’ (an investigative theater company founded by Steve Cosson ’90) website for “The Great Immensity,” a project on climate change. You don’t have to read the whole site – that’s impossible! But scroll & click around, watch some of the videos, and, in general, try to get a sense of what they’re doing, the different kinds of tools they’re using, what they’re trying to accomplish with the site, with the play ... and how effective you think they are (or aren’t) with these different approaches. (Be sure to click on the “Art” link and watch at least one or two of the “Climate Change ‘Stories.’” “Aspect” probably has the clearest explanation posted, but all are working with the same idea.)
  http://thegreatimmensity.org/

¹ Directions to Bernstein Study Center: To get to the Bernstein Study Center, enter at the glass doors between the Hood and Wilson Hall. (Located to the left of the Archway with the letters H O O D, and the Hopkins Center.) Exit through the glass doors at the opposite side. Follow the sidewalk straight ahead and to the right around the corner of the building. Once you turn to the right, you will see a stairway with a triangular green awning straight ahead. Climb the stairs, and ring the doorbell. (To the left of the door.) There will be a sign, and the door is labeled: Bernstein Study Center.
### Week 4

**Art & Persuasion, cont. and Your Turn: 1st round writing & speaking**

| April 21 | Tu | CLASS MEETS AT RAUNER!  
Due:  
- Complete draft of 1st 3 written portfolio pieces (Problem Paper, Strategy Memo & Keynote Address), submitted to me and all group members. |
|----------|----|----------------------------------|
| 24       | Wed| X-hour.  
*Workshop:* Groups read and comment on drafts, discussing implications for others’ pieces and necessary revisions. Groups also start discussing implications of this work for the group’s proposed legislation. |
| 23       | Th | **Keynote Talks:** Students will deliver a shortened version of the talk they wrote for the portfolio campaign. Each individual talk may be *no longer* than 3 minutes; the group can sequence themselves so as to deliver a longer chunk, or you may deliver different, “discrete” moments. Your choice. (You may bring notes, but you may *not* “read.”)  
Due:  
- **Media Campaign: Work Plan.** What are the audiences you want to target & why? What venues are you considering & why? What types of pieces & why? What group member is taking on the Coordinator role for which piece? |

### Week 5

**Controlling the Message: Understanding the role of “new” media**

*This week: Group conferences with me to discuss legislative proposals.*

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<tr>
<th>April 27</th>
<th>M</th>
<th><strong>Due by Noon:</strong> Group 3 – letters to editor</th>
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| 28       | Tu | Letters to editor critique; Case study: health care – using media to control (or not?) the terms of debate  
Read:  
- “Barack Obama & Joe Biden’s Plan to Lower Health Care Costs and Ensure Affordable, Accessible Health Coverage for All” (Course Materials)  
Listen:
  • *On the Media:* May 22, 2009 “Doctors in Jail” (now called “Rewrite”) segment re: Clinton-era health-care reform initiative and public debate:
    http://www.onthemedia.org/2009/may/22/rewrite/

Watch:
  • “Interpreting” the government health care plan (note different approaches from official sources, news media, professional advocacy groups, individuals, and so on – think about which you’ll need to be concerned about in your campaign and why)
    o “Death Panels” (Fox seems to have taken down its video on this, but you can get an overview of how the conversation evolved and who was contributing via: http://mediamatters.org/research/2009/08/10/fox-news-personalities-advance-palins-death-pan/153138 and then Ezra Klein has a nice interview going over the actual facts of the provision at: http://voices.washingtonpost.com/ezra-klein/2009/08/is_the_government_going_to_eat.html )
    o Family Research Council: “After A Government Health Care Takeover”
      http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JxFc9Af3W1U
    o *Daily Show* entertaining summation of the ongoing communication problems: “Healthraiser”
      http://thedailyshow.cc.com/videos/gtdjhw/healthraiser
    o White House.gov: “Obama’s Health Care Plan Explained” April 21, 2010 (note dates and strategies on White House attempted responses to public perception):
      http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7FrzdVLcd6TU&feature=related
    o Look around – you’ll find endless video on this subject and arguments of every conceivable kind, quality, and rhetorical approach.

30  Th  CLASS MEETS @ JONES MEDIA FOR SUPPORTED WORK PERIOD

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**Week 6**  Arguing When Evidence Isn’t the Point, Part I: Recognizing & respecting the power of belief.

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May  4    M    Due by Noon: Group 4 – letters to editor

5  Tu    Letters to editor critique; *Summer for the Gods*

Read:
  • *Summer for the Gods*: Parts I & II
Read:
- *Summer for the Gods: Part III*

Watch:
- “Miss U.S.A. 2011: 51 Delegates Interview (Q2: Evolution taught in school)” http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkBmhM0R2A0

**Week 7**

**Part II: How do we communicate across belief systems?**

May 11 M Due by Noon: Group 5 – letters to editor

May 12 Tu Letters to editor critique; Exploring alternatives (mandates, “dialogue,” alternate venues, humor, insulating communities & confirmation bias)

Read:

Watch:
- Spoof: “Should Math Be Taught in Schools?”
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9OBv2CFTSWU
- John Stewart Extended Interview w/ David Barton (link starts you in Part 1, but watch all parts):
  http://www.thedailyshow.com/watch/wed-may-4-2011/exclusive---david-barton-extended-interview-pt--1

May 14 Th Workshop: Understanding and navigating the communication barrier

Read:

Watch:
  http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=7420528
Look for the principles Lakoff discusses. How is she using them? Are they effective?

**Due: Application** (complete as individuals; you’ll work w/ group in class)

- **“Defense”:**
  - Identify the primary objection(s) to your group’s policy campaign.
  - Name the key stakeholder(s) who espouse that position.
  - What is/are that group’s core moral value(s)?
  - Identify the 3 most consistent *metaphors* used by that group in their arguments.

- **“Offense”:**
  - Identify the strongest argument in your campaign.
  - Name the key stakeholder(s).
  - What are the most critical moral values at play in your campaign?
  - Develop 3 *metaphors* that encapsulate those values as applied to your policy. Do those metaphors effectively “re-frame” the conversation (or are they debating the opponents on the terms they set)?

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**Week 8**

- **May 19**  
  Tu  2-day Media Workshop
  *Bring in your draft media pieces (print/ graphics ads, video, blogs, etc.) and/or “ideal” pieces you’d like to emulate. Class will give feedback for improving and advice on how to adapt “ideal” pieces for student projects.*

- **May 21**  
  Th

**Week 9**

**Group Presentations to Board of Directors begin:** For these presentations, imagine your group is a non-profit organization that represents your policy issue. You have spent months developing this new campaign and now have 25 minutes in which to present it to your Board of Directors for review and approval. (The class will ask questions, provide feedback, and evaluate the presentation from Directors’ point of view.)

- **May 25**  
  M  **Due by Noon:** Group 6 – letters to editor

- **May 26**  
  Tu  **Hour 1:** Letters to editor critique; Finalize evaluation rubric for presentations.  
  **Hour 2:** Wrap-up exercise  
  **Read:**
  - Marcel Proust, “The Melancholy Summer of Madame DeBreyves”  
  **Prepare debate:**
  - 1/3 of class – Yes, Mme DeBreyves really is in love with M. de LaLéande (come in with your arguments and textual evidence)
• 1/3 of class – No, Mme DeBreyves is not in love with M. de LaLéande (come in with your arguments and textual evidence)
• 1/3 of class – Facilitators: listen to the first rounds of your peers’ arguments and then, listening carefully to what they are saying, help them reach a common ground of agreement. By the end of class, there must be unanimous agreement on the question.

28      Th      Final Presentations

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Week 10

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June  2   Tu.   Last Day of Class – Final Presentations
Due
• Final Public Policy Portfolio
The policy portfolio is the primary work-product of the course. Students will work in groups of 3; each group will focus on a public policy issue that they have proposed and chosen during the first week of class. The portfolio pieces, collectively, should form a multi-dimensional “campaign” for the issue, targeting a wide range of audiences, capitalizing on multi-modal forms of communication and argument, implementing a complex array of persuasive techniques, and integrating any ethical parameters the group has created for itself re: its means of persuasion.

Because effective communication in the modern world increasingly relies on evolving technology, the portfolios will require students to develop argumentative and compositional competency within different media formats. Persuasion in these formats happens at multiple, often unnoticed, levels; throughout the course students will improve both their own “literacy” and mastery of these techniques.

Portfolio Components:

The first 3 pieces are the written pieces that will be due on April 21st. Groups will divide responsibility for the pieces, with each student writing one.

Students will share responsibility for developing the Legislative Proposal and the media pieces; however, each of those pieces must have one student who serves as its work "Coordinator."

Each portfolio must contain the following:

1. **The Problem Paper.** A researched memo/paper defining and explaining the issue and underlying problem to an audience of presumed “experts” (or those poised to be so). This piece is about facts and hard evidence; the piece must convince the audience not only of the seriousness of the issue, but that the group is well-informed and credible.

2. **The Strategy Memo.** A strategy paper exploring the historic and possible future barriers to getting the issue and proposed solution heard, accepted, and implemented. You are obviously not the first people to try to solve your policy problem. With this in mind, the strategy memo analyzes past efforts to address the issue, discussing both successes and failures. What can you learn, now, from those past efforts?

3. **The Keynote Address.** A “keynote” talk to be given at an event. (If you are unfamiliar with the parameters of such talks, Wikipedia does a nice job: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Keynote) Students will research and find an ACTUAL, specific event at which it might be appropriate to advance the group’s agenda. The group may select any kind of event, but must explain
what it is and why it would be an effective forum in which to cultivate support for the issue. The talk must be appropriate to that event and audience in its content, rhetorical approach, potential media accompaniments, and so on. Keynote addresses are often given by well-known figures in their respective communities; because who the speaker is informs the perspective from which the talk is given, it is helpful to have a “type” of speaker in mind when you write your talk (a “role” or job title). You are welcome to be as creative as you like and design your talk for a particular “celebrity” speaker, but you are not required to do so.

4. The Legislative/Policy Proposal. A legislative proposal that briefly articulates the problem and then outlines your proposed “solution.” Note the difference between this piece and the “Problem Paper.” This is the piece that would go to the relevant governing body that is being asked to do something about the problem. This piece is the group’s literal policy proposal.

5. The Media Campaign. A multi-piece (at least 2), multi-modal “campaign,” targeting a mass audience. The pieces must, collectively, use text, image and video, but may do so in any combination the group chooses. Options include, but are not limited to: websites, YouTube videos, blogs (creation or strategic participation in), television commercials, posters, billboards, direct mailings, and so on. Students must submit a written “strategic plan” for this public campaign, explaining the target audience(s), choices of media and fora, and how the approaches are interacting to accomplish the group’s overall goals.

6. The Letters to the Editor. Each week, three students will write letters to the editor, to be critiqued by classmates, revised by the author, and then submitted to either the “D,” The Valley News, or to an alternative venue (chosen in consultation with the class, during the critique). The letters will follow the guidelines set by each publication* and discuss a “timely,” or particularly compelling feature of the group’s policy issue; they will be written with the publication’s readership in mind and will target the perceived concerns of that audience. Revised letters are to be included in the final submission of the group’s portfolio.

Feedback on these letters will happen in a two-step process. Writers will have posted their letters to the Canvas discussion board by noon on Mondays, so the first step is that the rest of the class will read these and post written feedback online, by midnight. Then, in class on Tuesday, we will use this feedback as a jumping off point, exploring the different reactions and synthesizing our collective recommendations for the writers.
Grading:

- **35%** - Students will receive a group grade, based on
  - The portfolio as assessed and graded as a single, unified whole. Barring exceptional circumstances in which justice requires otherwise, all group members will earn the same grade for the portfolio, which will comprise a quarter of the final grade. Students will also complete a self-assessment, evaluating the group’s final portfolio product, the group work dynamics, and their individual contribution and performance – 25%
  - A “peer assessment” of the groups’ final presentations. These grades will evaluate the group’s campaign as presented to the Board of Directors and as measured against the class-generated rubric – 10%

- **65%** - Students will receive an individual grade, based on:
  - The independently written portfolio piece due in week 4 (either problem paper, strategy memo, or keynote) – 25%
  - The group portfolio piece for which they took on the “Coordinator” role (policy proposal & media pieces) – 20%
  - Letters to the editor & other written exercises, including peer feedback – 15%
  - Preparation and participation in discussions & workshops – 5%
* Letters to the Editor Submission Instructions

1) Valley News:

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
WE ENCOURAGE OUR READERS TO WRITE TO THE FORUM to comment on matters of general public interest. We publish virtually all letters, regardless of their politics, providing they are in good taste, are signed by the author, and address a subject of broad concern.
To keep the Forum open to all, we request that you keep letters to about 350 words, and that you write no more often than once every two weeks. All letters are subject to editing.

Mailing address:
The Forum
Valley News
P.O. Box 877
White River Junction, VT 05001
FAX: 603-298-0212
E-mail: forum@vnews.com
Please be sure to include your name, address and a telephone number where you can be reached during the day.
Telephone inquiries about other editorial page features should be addressed to Kathryn Stearns, editorial page editor, at 603-727-3231.

2) The Daily Dartmouth:

Letter to the Editor policy
The Dartmouth welcomes all contributions, which can be delivered to the Editor by paper mail to The Dartmouth, 6175 Robinson Hall, Hanover, NH 03755, in person at 221 Robinson Hall or via electronic mail to Editor@TheDartmouth.com.
All submissions become property of The Dartmouth. Because The Dartmouth receives more letters and columns than available space can accommodate, not all submissions can be acknowledged or printed. Letters should not be longer than 250 words and must include the name, location and contact information of the author. Columns should be 600-800 words long, and observe formal rules of spelling and grammar. The Dartmouth reserves the right to edit all material.
An editorial that appears without a byline during Fall, Winter or Spring term represents the views of The Dartmouth. An editorial that appears without a byline during the summer reflects the views of the Summer term directorate. Any other column, letter or cartoon is the work of the attributed author and does not necessarily represent the views or opinions of The Dartmouth.