

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:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three Types of Policy Questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Descriptive, Evaluative & Prescriptive • Exercise: Statement Starters
Discussion:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise: Abstraction “Plussing” Your Statement Starter • Peer Review: Questions Only
Readings:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Public Policy Writing That Matters</i> (Chapters 1 & 2) • “When Facts Are Not Enough,” by Katharine Hayhoe, <i>Science</i> (2018) • “How Human-Centered Design Contributes to Better Policy,” by Angelica Quicksey, Kennedy School Review (2017)
Assignments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions to Ask about Your Reader • Introduction to Key Stakeholder Mapping • Using the Moral Foundations Theory to Analyze Audiences and Develop Reader Profiles
Discussion:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise: Mapping Your Key Stakeholders • Discussion: How do I create a useful reader profile?
Readings:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Public Policy Writing That Matters</i> (Chapter 3) • “Moral Foundations Theory: The Pragmatic Validity of Moral Pluralism,” by Jonathan Haidt, et al., <i>Advances in Experimental Psychology</i> (2012) • “What’s Wrong with Moral Foundations Theory, and How to Get Moral Psychology Right,” by Oliver Scott Curry, <i>Behavioral Scientist</i> (2019) • “When to Use User-Centered Design for Public Policy,” by Steve Moilanen, Stanford Social Innovation Review (2019)
Assignment:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Stakeholder Map & Reflection (Due Week 3)



Week 3	July 31-August 4
Topic:	Four Elements of a Persuasive Policy Recommendation
Lecture:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Four Elements of a Persuasive Policy Recommendation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Status, Criteria, Interpretation & Outlook ● Claims of Fact vs. Value vs. Policy ● Three Types of Policy Recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Discrete, Operational & Strategic
Discussion:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Exercise: Affinity Clustering ● Discussion: Where can I find good evidence? ● Discussion: Outlining a Policy Memo with the Four Elements
Readings:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Public Policy Writing That Matters</i> (Chapters 4 & 6) ● “The Problem with Chicago’s Gang-Centric Violence Narrative,” by Lakeidra Chavis, <i>The Trace</i> (2021) ● “The Psychological Drivers of Misinformation Belief and Its Resistance to Correction,” by Ullrich KH Ecker, et al., <i>Nature</i> (2022)
Assignment:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 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:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Aristotle’s Dramatic Arc ● Vonnegut’s “In-the-Hole” Story ● Four Types of Policy Storytellers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Researcher, Practitioner, Advocate & Participant ● Five Goals of Policy Reform Narratives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Exposure, Urgency, Correction, Solidarity & Activism
Discussion:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Exercise: Uncovering the Object of Desire ● Exercise: Outlining a Policy Reform Narrative with the Five Essentials
Readings:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Public Policy Writing That Matters</i> (Chapter 5) ● “The Six Main Arcs in Storytelling, as Identified by an A.I.,” by Adrienne LaFrance, <i>Atlantic</i> (2016) ● “Personal Narratives Build Trust across Ideological Divides,” by David Hagmann, et al. (2021) ● “The Mobilizer’s Dilemma: Crisis, Empowerment, and Collective Action,” by Ion Bogdan Vasi and Michael Macy, <i>Social Forces</i> (2003) <p>Examples of Narratives That Accomplish One of the Five Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Segregation Now,” by Nikole Hannah-Jones, <i>ProPublica</i> (2014)



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Adaptation,” by Eric Klinenberg, <i>New Yorker</i> (2012) ● “Protest and Persist: Why Giving Up Hope Is Not an Option,” by Rebecca Solnit, <i>Guardian</i> (2017) ● “Why America’s Black Mothers and Babies Are in a Life-or-Death Crisis,” by Linda Villarosa. <i>New York Times</i> (2018) ● “There Has Been Blood,” by Diana Hubbell, <i>Eater</i> (2021)
Assignment:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Draft Policy Reform Narrative w/ Reader Profile (Due Week 5)

Week 5	August 14-18
Topic:	Crafting Coherent Paragraphs & Clear Sentences
Lecture:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Deductive Structure and Strong Sentence Cores ● Demystifying Punctuation ● Improving Coherence with the Old-to-New Sequence ● Quoting vs. Paraphrasing
Discussion:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Peer Review: Highlighting Only ● Discussion: The Limits of Persuasion
Readings:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Public Policy Writing That Matters</i> (Chapters 7-10, 12) ● “Winning arguments: Interaction dynamics and persuasion strategies in good-faith online discussions,” by Chenhau Tan, et al., <i>Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on the World Wide Web</i> (2016)

Week 6	August 21-25
Topic:	Making More Valuable Policy Recommendations
Lecture:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Theories and Critical Sectors of Policy Change ● Introduction to the Importance/Difficulty Matrix ● Discussion: Is incremental change a moral failure?
Discussion:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Exercise: Importance/Difficulty Matrix ● Peer Review: Deep Listening
Readings:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Incremental Change Is a Moral Failure,” by Denzel Smith, <i>The Atlantic</i> (2020) ● “The Procedure Fetish,” by Nicholas Bagley, Niskanen Center (2021) ● “Brokenism,” by Alana Newhouse, <i>Tablet Magazine</i> (2022) ● <i>Public Policy Writing That Matters</i> (Chapter 11)
Assignment:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 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:

Criteria	Novice = 4	Proficient = 6	Distinguished = 8	Master = 10
Audience & Purpose	Appropriate audience not clearly identified and insufficient awareness of purpose.	Shows limited awareness of appropriate audience and purpose.	Shows general awareness of appropriate audience and purpose.	Audience and purpose are clear throughout.
	Problem not addressed.	Problem addressed but not solved.	Problem addressed/potentially solved but needs more.	Problem solved.
Coherence & Organization	Executive Summary / Inciting Event is confusingly worded/ineffective.	Executive Summary / Inciting Event contains some elements of a policy finding.	Executive Summary / Inciting Event contains most elements of a policy finding.	Executive summary/Inciting Event contains all required elements and tells a story.
	Writing lacks logical organization.	Writing is mostly coherent and organized.	Writing is coherent and logically organized with deductive structure, and transitions are used between ideas and paragraphs.	Writing shows attention to logic and reasoning, as well as audience interest.
	Shows little coherence.	Some points are misplaced or irrelevant.	All points are relevant to central idea.	Writing clearly leads the reader through the key findings in a logical, persuasive way.
Content	Shows some elements of a policy finding, but most ideas are underdeveloped.	Shows most elements of a policy finding, and ideas are more developed.	Shows all elements of a policy finding and develops ideas with appropriate and sufficient evidence.	Shows all elements of a policy finding and clear synthesis of ideas, in-depth analysis, and evidence's original thought and support.
	Caveats and alternative viewpoints are not considered.	Caveats and alternative viewpoints are mentioned but not rebutted.	Caveats and alternative viewpoints are presented and rebutted, but the writing could be stronger.	Caveats and alternative viewpoints are recognized and rebutted convincingly.
	Data presented do not advance the argument.	Data presented are interesting but not easy to connect to the story.	Data presented are easy to understand and advance the story.	Data presented are easily understood, advance the argument, and are persuasive.
Development	Main points lack detailed development. Ideas are vague with little evidence of critical thinking.	Main points are present with limited detail and development.	Main points are well developed with supporting details.	Main points are well developed with high-quality support.
	The Conclusion / Resolution is missing or inappropriate.	Some critical thinking is present.	Critical thinking is weaved into the main points.	Reveals high degree of critical thinking.
		The Conclusion / Resolution is present but could be better developed.	The Conclusion / Resolution is present and generally makes a good argument.	The Conclusion / Resolution is compelling, persuasive, and ends the story effectively.
Paragraph Structure	Paragraphs lack unity and coherence and are not written deductively.	Some paragraphs are unified, coherent, and written deductively.	Most paragraphs are unified, coherent, and written deductively. Some illustrative examples are present.	All paragraphs are unified, coherent, are written deductively, and are supported with examples and have smooth transitions.
		Transitions are weak.	Transitions are relatively strong.	
Sentence Structure	Mostly weak sentence cores and little or no variety in structure or diction.	Approaches graduate-level usage of strong sentence cores and some variety in sentence structures and diction.	Sentence cores are consistently strong. Tone is appropriate, and sentence variety and diction are used effectively.	Shows outstanding style; strong sentence cores throughout; tone used effectively; creative use of sentence structure and coordination.
Grammar & Mechanics	Spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors are distracting, fragments, comma splices, and run-ons evident.	Most spelling, punctuation, and grammar are correct, allowing reader to progress through the story fairly easily.	Document has few spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors, allowing reader to follow the story easily.	Document is free of distracting spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors.
	Errors are frequent.	Some errors remain.	Very few fragments or run-on sentences.	Document is free of fragments, comma splices, and run-on sentences.
Format	Fails to follow length and format requirements; incorrect margins and spacing.	Meets length and format requirements; correct margins and spacing.	Meets length and format requirements; correct margins and spacing.	Meets length and format requirements and evidence's attention to detail.
	Neatness of document needs attention.	Document is neat but may have some presentation errors.	Document is generally neat and approaching professional look.	Document is neat and correctly assembled with professional look.

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

Email: disabilities@uchicago.edu

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.