CENTER FOR ACADEMIC WRITING
WRITING FOR POLICY AUDIENCES
(Department of Public Policy)

Winter 2022-2023 AY

Instructor: Sanjay Kumar

Course: Elective

No. of Credits: 1
Prerequisites: none

BACKGROUND AND OVERALL AIM OF THE COURSE

This elective course is aimed at students who would like to improve their policy writing skills, with a focus on non-academic policy writing tasks. It is designed to provide students who are working on non-academic policy writing tasks (e.g., a briefing report or a policy paper in the context of an Applied Policy Project or Policy Lab) with structure, guidance, and feedback from peers and course instructors. The goal of the course is to help students complete these non-academic writing tasks and hone their drafting, collaborative writing, and revising-editing skills in the process.

Writing for policy audiences, just like writing for other audiences, is a process rather than a one-off task. In this course, students will learn that writing starts even before developing the first draft. The course adopts a learning-by-doing approach: students will learn about writing for non-academic audiences through tailored in-class activities, and through shorter writing tasks to be completed at home. Teaching weeks will alternate with weeks when there is no class, but students are expected to work on developing their drafts.

The in-class activities and homework assignments are designed around three main topics: Understanding your audience; Writing in a team; and adding the finishing touches. While these main topics will serve as the basis for mini-lectures, workshops and in-class activities, the course is flexible to respond to the specific writing challenges the students encounter in their own non-academic writing projects.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- - Map the expectations of non-academic audiences for written deliverables.
- - Effectively write in a collaborative setting;
- - Effectively respond to feedback and develop revised drafts; and
- - Demonstrate advanced skills of sourcing, evidencing, and referencing in the writing of non-academic genres.

ASSESSMENT

Students will be assessed based on their performance on the following:

- Class participation   10%
- Peer assessment of quality of feedback and
  collaboration   20%

- Midterm draft of the policy writing
  project   30%
- Course instructor assessment of quality of Final Policy paper   40%

  or related genre

  Student hours and consultations by appointment

- Students are welcome to pose questions about the course material, assignments, and other academic matters during the instructors' weekly student hours. The instructors are also available for consultation by appointment. Students should request appointments for consultation by emailing the instructors at least 24 hours in advance of the requested meeting.
- Sanjay Kumar
  Student hours: Thursdays, 3:30- 4:30 pm, Room C103
- Email: kumars@ceu.edu

COURSE SCHEDULE AND CONTENT

(This course content may undergo some minor changes by Winter Term, 2022-2023. Please check the Moodle page for final updates by November 30, 2022)

Class 1: Introduction to the course; Understanding your audience – Part 1.

This session will be an introduction to the course covering the broad aims, learning outcomes, teaching methods, assessment and finally understanding the foundational role of assessing the needs of your audience for policy writers in the academic and policy contexts. Students will introduce their existing policy writing tasks and projects, detail the needs and expectations of their targeted readers and audience; share past experiences and writing challenges for different policy audiences. We will also discuss and agree on the ground rules of the course; deliberate on the stages of the writing process - differences and similarities between academic and non-academic audiences. A schedule of writing tasks, deadlines, stages of revision of drafts and milestones will be also covered in the first session.

Class 2: Understanding your audience – Part 2.

In the second part of Understanding your audience, students will be analysing their individual policy writing projects based on the principles and guidelines provided by the course faculty. This will be a combination of a policy writing workshop and a seminar. Students will read, reflect, respond, and give peer feedback about audience expectations and strategies for planning and preparing the structure of the writing genres including process, stages, and division of tasks. Each student will oversee a writing portfolio that will be monitored by the course faculty; shared in the group and defined by the needs of the respective policy audience. At the end of the session, student policy writers will be divided into writing teams in preparation for the next session.

Class 3: Writing in a team – Part 1.

Part 1 of this session will be a basic introduction to the theory and practice of Collaborative Writing in general and tailoring it to the needs of policy audiences. We will go through the different models of collaborative writing, discuss, and agree on the basic ground rules, learn some techniques, practice some methods and discuss the best practices for the course through small group work. All these activities will help in cementing the writing teams and get them ready to chart their plans and execute their time-bound writing tasks.

Class 4: Writing in a team – Part 2.

In this session, all the teams will be working on their respective group writing tasks and collaborating over the different sub-tasks. All teams will share their work-in-progress drafts for a peer evaluation by other teams. There will be also structured feedback on all the team-writing challenges and successes. The aim will be to develop a set of guidelines on best practices of collaborative writing for policy audiences.

Class 5: Revising to Edit and Editing to Revise – Part 1.

We return to the policy writing process here with a focus on the final stages of the completion of the writing projects. Teams and individual writers will reflect on the feedback from peers and course faculty and workshop on different editing strategies. We will check the effectiveness of the products against the principles of audience expectations outlined in Class 1 and 2. Teams and individual writers will reflect on the feedback from peers and course faculty and workshop on different editing strategies. We will check the effectiveness of the projects.

Class 6: Adding the finishing touches – Part 2. Reflections on lessons learned

The final session will have two main aims. One, the completion of the individual writing projects for all students. The teams will also have a parallel presentation session reflecting on the collaborative part of the writing process.

Final proof-reading and editing strategies will be discussed, shared and applied to all the writing projects. We will work on a document collectively compiling the lessons learnt from the course coupled with self-reflexive inputs from all the participants.