

# Professional Applications 1 Syllabus

RPAD 507 – Fall 2019

Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy, SUNY Albany  
Department of Public Administration and Policy

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Class time: Tuesdays 5:45 – 7:35

Class location: Husted 106A

Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:00-4:00p, and by appointment

Office location: Milne Hall 306

Office phone: 518-442-2621

Teaching Assistants:

Janet Andrade: [jandrade@albany.edu](mailto:jandrade@albany.edu)

Leslie Green: [lgreen3@albany.edu](mailto:lgreen3@albany.edu)

## Course Description

The purpose of this course is to help prepare students to succeed in internships and your future careers by developing specific skills important to the public and nonprofit work environment. Over the semester we devote attention to four skill sets: writing professional memos, delivering presentations, building professional networks, and identifying and responding to ethical dilemmas. Students will demonstrate mastery of these skills through in-class exercises, homework assignments, peer feedback, and case studies. At the conclusion of the course students should be able to communicate key ideas, in writing and orally, in a well-organized, concise, and persuasive manner. Additionally, students will recognize the importance of building networks for the purposes of career advancement and professional effectiveness. Finally, students will be able to identify and respond to ethical dilemmas in a thoughtful manner for the purposes of building and maintaining public trust in government.

## Textbooks

- Required
  - Garner, B. (2012). *HBR Guide to Better Business Writing*. Harvard Business Review Press.
- Recommended (but optional)
  - American Psychological Association. *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Sixth Edition*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
  - Donovan, J. and R. Avery (2014). *Speaker, Leader, Champion: Succeed at Work Through the Power of Public Speaking*. New York: McGraw Hill.

- Searing, E., and Searing, D. (2015). *Practicing Professional Ethics in Economics and Public Policy*. Dordecht: Springer. ISBN-13: 978-9401773058
- Additional readings will be made available through the course Blackboard site which can be accessed from MyUAlbany.

## Communication

Communication outside of scheduled class meetings and office hours will occur primarily over email. Students are expected to check their email every day. The best way to contact me outside of class is by email, NOT through Blackboard. Meetings outside of class and office hours should be scheduled by appointment. All class-related activities, including class and group discussions, emails, and assignments should be conducted in business standard English.

## Grading

Student performance in the course will be determined by the total number of points earned on assignments.

Welcome Week Case:	35 points
Commentaries:	35 points
Homework Assignments:	280 points

The maximum number of points a student may earn during the semester is 350. Additionally, students will have opportunities to earn up to 22 bonus points. Details for all assignments will be distributed separately. Due dates and point totals for each assignment are provided in the schedule attached to this syllabus.

*Attendance.* Attendance is required and necessary for your success in the course, and attendance will occasionally be taken in class. Three or more unexcused absences will result in a student's semester grade being reduced by half a letter grade (from a B to a B-, for example). A student with more than 3 sequential unexcused absences will have a notation placed on the transcript indicating you stopped attending class. Absences will only be excused under certain circumstances, such as an unplanned health emergency, in case of religious observance, or for an authorized intercollegiate event. Documentation is required to have an absence excused. Work-related travel and events are not excused absences, but should be communicated with the instructor and group members in order to facilitate assignment responsibilities.

*Grading Scale.* Each student's final grade will be determined by an average of points earned. For example, a student earns 322 points over the course of the semester, including the Welcome Week case and bonus points. Her grade would be calculated as:  $322/350 = 92\%$  (A-). As a result of missing three classes, her grade is reduced to a B+. Note that she would have earned an A- if she had attended class.

A: 93 percent and above  
A-: 90 to 92 percent  
B+: 87-89 percent  
B: 83-86 percent  
B-: 80-82 percent  
C+: 77-79 percent

C: 73-76 percent  
C-: 70-72 percent  
D+: 67-69 percent  
D: 63-66 percent  
D-: 62-60 percent  
E: below 60 percent

*Grade Appeals.* Students may appeal a grade on a specific assignment within two weeks of the assignment being returned. Appeals must be submitted on paper, typed-written. In the appeal, students must identify 1) the specific issue you believe should be reconsidered and 2) evidence from assignment instructions, assigned readings, lectures, or other materials that would indicate your original submission is worthy of a higher grade. Be aware that your grade may go up, down, or remain the same as a result of your appeal. A grade appeal will not be considered if the student submitted the wrong version of the assignment.

*Late Assignments.* An assignment is considered late if the paper copy is not submitted at the beginning of class, if the electronic file is not submitted before class, and/or if the electronic file is not readable. Assignments (electronic or hard copy) considered late will be automatically reduced by 20% if they are submitted within 24 hours of their due date and time. Homework submitted between 24-48 hours after the due date will be automatically reduced by 30%; no homework will be accepted after 48 hours from when it was due. Exceptions will be made for extreme health and family emergencies. It is better to submit homework early rather than late, so please plan ahead if you know you will be missing a class session in which an assignment is due.

*Academic Honesty.* Academic honesty is something I take very seriously. Cheating in any form will not be tolerated. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism and submitting the same assignment for multiple classes. Students are required to be familiar with the university's academic honesty policies; ignorance is not an excuse for dishonest behavior. In all cases of cheating, a Violation of Academic Integrity Report will be submitted to the Dean of Graduate Studies to be placed in your university file, with copies provided to you, the department head, and the Dean of Rockefeller College. Additional penalties may include some combination of the following: revision and re-submission of the assignment, reduction of the grade or failure of the assignment, reduction of the course grade or failure of the course. In serious instances of cheating, the matter may be referred to the Office of Conflict Resolution and Civic Responsibility, and students may be recommended for suspension or expulsion.

## Ombudsperson

An ombudsperson in government acts as a neutral intermediary between management and the public. Professionals in this role hear complaints or concerns, investigate the issues, and bring the complaints to management's attention. Ombudspersons are to raise these issues in a manner that is confidential, neutral, and independent. One student will be selected to act as an ombudsperson and will meet with me on a regular basis to offer feedback from students in terms of the direction the course is going and bring to my attention any problems with readings, assignments, etc.

Name of ombudsperson:

Email:

## Other Course Policies

- It is your instructor's goal to conduct class in an environment that is welcoming to all perspectives. Please treat your fellow students with the respect you want to receive.
- Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should:
  - (1) contact the Disability Resource Center; and
  - (2) provide the instructor with the appropriate and official university documentation indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class.For more information about services available to University at Albany students with disabilities, contact:  
Disability Resource Center, University at Albany, State University of New York  
CC 130, 1400 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12222  
(518) 442-5490 (voice)  
Director: [cmalloch@albany.edu](mailto:cmalloch@albany.edu) , <http://www.albany.edu/disability/>
- This syllabus serves as a general outline. The instructor reserves the right to deviate from the plan if necessary. Students will be notified promptly of any modifications.
- Arrive to class on time. Arriving late is disruptive to both the instructor and your classmates.
- Turn off all cell phones, music/video players, and anything that beeps and/or vibrates. If there is an emergency which requires you to leave your cell phone on during class, notify your instructor before class begins.
- Taking notes on your laptop is acceptable, but computer use should be limited to course activities appropriate for that class. The instructor reserves the right to view anything on your computer screen if it is open in class (and the people sitting around you are already probably viewing it, too.)
- Semester grades of "Incomplete": A tentative grade given only when the student has nearly completed the course but due to circumstances beyond the student's control the work is not completed on schedule. The date for the completion of the work is specified by the instructor. The date stipulated will not be later than one month before the end of the session following that in which the Incomplete is received. The grade I is automatically changed to E or U unless work is completed as agreed between the student and the instructor. For more information, please see the Graduate Bulletin:  
[https://www.albany.edu/graduatebulletin/requirements\\_degree.htm#graduate\\_grades](https://www.albany.edu/graduatebulletin/requirements_degree.htm#graduate_grades)

## Course Schedule

August 27	<p><b>Topic:</b> Introduction to the Course</p> <p>For half of class we will have a guest panel on succeeding in the MPA program.</p>
September 3	<p><b>Topic:</b> Being a Professional: Service, Competence, and Teamwork</p> <p><b>Readings completed before class:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MPA Competencies (back of this packet and in MPA handbook)</li> <li>• “Teamwork” by the Center for Army Profession and Ethic. Available on YouTube. 8:05 minutes.</li> <li>• Dillon, “Managing Conflict Constructively” (on Blackboard)</li> <li>• Rather, “The Vote” from <i>What Unites Us</i></li> <li>• TED Talk by Siddhartha Roy: Science in Service to the Public Good. Filmed November 2016 at TEDxVirginiaTech. 14:33 minutes.</li> </ul> <p><b>Homework Due:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome Week team evaluation</li> <li>• Commentary 1 Due</li> </ul>
September 10	<p><b>Topic:</b> Professional Writing I</p> <p><b>Readings completed before class:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Garner, Sections 8-14, 18-20</li> <li>• Pennock, Chapter 13 (on Blackboard)</li> <li>• Examples of memos and emails (please bring these to class)</li> </ul> <p><b>Homework Due:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competencies Essay (20 points)</li> </ul>
September 17	<p><b>Topic:</b> Professional Writing II</p> <p><b>Readings completed before class:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Garner, Sections 1, 2, and 17</li> <li>• Pennock, Chapter 1 (on Blackboard)</li> </ul> <p><b>Commentary 2 Due</b></p>
September 24	<p><b>Topic:</b> Professional Writing III</p> <p><b>Readings completed before class:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Garner, sections 6 and 15</li> <li>• Pennock, chapter 7 (on Blackboard)</li> </ul> <p><b>Homework Due:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing Assignment Part I (15 points)</li> </ul>

October 1	<p><b>Topic:</b> Making Presentations I: The Basics</p> <p>Half of this class will be a mini-workshop on interacting with the press.</p> <p><b>Readings completed before class:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Donovan and Avery, chapter 2 (on Blackboard)</li> <li>• Duarte, pgs. 3-26 (on Blackboard)</li> <li>• Listen to Dr. Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech (August 28, 1963) before class: <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smEqnklfYs">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smEqnklfYs</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Homework Due:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing Assignment Part II &amp; III (10+45 points)</li> </ul>
October 8	<p><b>Topic:</b> Making Presentations II: Policy</p> <p><b>Readings completed before class:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Donovan and Avery, chapter 8 (on Blackboard)</li> <li>• Duarte, pgs. 155-180 (on Blackboard)</li> <li>• TED Talk by Amy Cuddy: Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are. Delivered June 2012, posted online in October 2012. 20 minutes long. <a href="https://youtu.be/Ks-Mh1QhMc">https://youtu.be/Ks-Mh1QhMc</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Commentary 3 Due</b></p>
October 22	<p><b>Topic:</b> Making Presentations III: General Audience</p> <p><b>Readings completed before class:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Donovan and Avery, chapter 7 (on Blackboard)</li> <li>• Two TEDish talks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Pat Kelly: Thought Leader <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ZBKX-6Gz6A">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ZBKX-6Gz6A</a></li> <li>○ Will Stephen: How to Sound Smart in Your TEDx Talk <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8S0FDjFBj8o">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8S0FDjFBj8o</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Homework Due:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before class: Presentation Assignment Part I Due (15 points)</li> <li>• Final Presentations will be delivered and recorded outside of class on the following Thursday (24<sup>th</sup>) and Friday (25<sup>th</sup>) (Part II &amp; III: 10+45 points).</li> </ul>
October 29	<p><b>Topic:</b> Ethics and Public Sector Values I</p> <p><b>Readings completed before class:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Searing and Searing, chapter 1 and 3 (on Blackboard)</li> <li>• Examples of Codes of Ethics</li> </ul> <p><b>Homework Due:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commentary 4 Due</li> <li>• <i>Optional</i> presentation bonus (5 points)</li> </ul>

<p>November 5</p>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Ethics and Public Sector Values II</p> <p><b>Readings completed before class:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Searing and Searing, chapter 4 (on Blackboard)</li> <li>• Downe, J., Cowell, R. and Morgan, K. (2016), What Determines Ethical Behavior in Public Organizations: Is It Rules and/or Leadership? <i>Public Administration Review</i>. (on Blackboard)</li> </ul> <p><b>Homework Due:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commentary 5 Due</li> <li>• Networking Assignment Parts I and II (10+5 points)</li> </ul>
<p>November 12</p>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Ethics and Public Sector Values III</p> <p>Ethics Assignment Part I will be completed in class.</p> <p><b>Readings completed before class:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rather, “Dissent” from <i>What Unites Us</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Homework Due:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TDPs with signatures from your adviser and Yalitza Negron (5 points)</li> <li>• Commentary 6 Due</li> </ul>
<p>November 19</p>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Networking I</p> <p>Guest speaker: Dr. Karl Rethemeyer</p> <p><b>Readings completed before class:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baker, W. (2000). What is Social Capital and Why Should You Care about It? In <i>Achieving Success Through Social Capital</i>, p 1-25. Jossey-Bass. (on Blackboard)</li> <li>• Putnam, R. D. (1995). Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital. <i>Journal of Democracy</i> 6(1), 65-78. The Johns Hopkins University Press. Retrieved August 27, 2017, from Project MUSE database. (on Blackboard)</li> </ul> <p><b>Homework Due:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networking Assignment Part III (30 points)</li> <li>• <i>Optional</i> network bonus assignment (5 points)</li> </ul>
<p>November 26</p>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Networking II</p> <p>Guest speaker: Yalitza Negron</p> <p><b>Reading completed before class:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tufts, Jacobson, and Stevens (2015). Status Update Social Media and Local Government Human Resource Practices. <i>Review of Public Personnel Administration</i> 35.2: 193-207. (on Blackboard)</li> </ul> <p><b>Homework Due:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethics Assignment Part II &amp; III Due (10+30 points).</li> <li>• <i>Optional</i> ethics bonus assignment (10 points)</li> </ul>

December 3	<b>Synthesis:</b> What it means to be in public service  <b>Readings completed before class:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rather, “Service” from <i>What Unites Us</i></li></ul> <b>Commentary 7 Due</b>
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## Appendix I: Commentaries

Commentaries are designed as short assignments intended to get student to engage with the week's reading material. Over the course of the semester students will submit seven commentaries, each worth five points, for a total of 35 points towards the semester point total. There are two primary purposes for the commentaries: 1) to hold students accountable for completing the assigned reading, and 2) to facilitate class discussions.

Each commentary assignment will ask students to reflect on the readings assigned for the week. The instructions for each commentary will be different and will be posted on Blackboard.

*Submission.* Commentaries are due before class. They are to be submitted through Blackboard, in electronic form only. Late commentaries will not be accepted, except in extreme cases of a health or family emergency.

*Grading.* Each week's commentaries are worth five possible points. Submissions will be graded according to the following criteria: 1) did the student complete the assignment, 2) did the student respond thoughtfully to the instructions for the week, and 3) to what degree does the submission reflect the content of the assigned reading.

## Appendix II: MPA Core Competencies

On the first day of Welcome Week and at the beginning of PAD 507, students are introduced to the five competencies identified by the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA). The competencies and their supporting descriptions are posted on Blackboard. Overall, the competencies are intended to ensure MPA students are well-rounded academically and professionally in the core subject areas important to the field.

What are competencies?

- Competencies are integrative. Competencies are a bundle of knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors that, when fully integrated, define successful performance. Competencies are broader than knowing how to use excel or being able to define what marginal cost means.
- Competencies describe the characteristics of the person who does the job best. In this way, competencies describe the whole person and their total performance. Competencies are broader than job tasks.

The five NASPAA competencies are:

#1 The ability to lead and manage in public governance

#2: To participate in and contribute to the policy process

#3 To analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions

#4 To articulate and apply a public service perspective

#5 To communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry

This course is designed to develop students as part of competencies 3, 4, and 5. Specifically:

- Competency #3: In the memo, presentation, and ethics homework assignments students will respond to cases and make clear recommendations that are actionable. These recommendations are to explain technical information in an accessible way and explain the positive and negative implications of proposals.
- Competency #4: The unit on ethics will challenge students to reflect on what it means to act ethically, and will provide students with tools to make decisions when faced with ethical dilemmas.
- Competency #5: The writing and presentation units are designed to develop student skills in presenting information, in writing and orally, that is concise, accurate, clear, and informed by evidence. Assignments and class examples are designed to train students to tailor information to diverse audiences by writing for skimming and repeating key points to ensure the audience remembers important information.