Professional Applications I
RPAD 507 – Fall 2014
Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy, SUNY Albany
Department of Public Administration and Policy

Dr. Ellen V. Rubin
erubin@albany.edu

Class time: Thursdays 4:00-5:30
Class location: Unitarian (across from Draper Hall)
Office location: Milne Hall 314B
Office phone: 442-5261
Office Hours: Thursdays 1:00-2:00, and by appointment

Teaching Assistants:
Anna Bartlett (abartlett@albany.edu)
Mahati Acahrya Tonk (macharya2@albany.edu)

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to develop and polish students’ abilities to write professional memos, deliver presentations, build professional networks, and confront 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
- Recommended
- Additional readings will be made available through the course web page on Blackboard 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. 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: 25 points
Commentaries: 30 points
Homework Assignments: 205 points

The maximum number of points a student may earn during the semester is 260. Additionally, students will have opportunities to earn up to 20 bonus points. Details for all assignments will be distributed separately. Due dates and point totals for each assignment are provided below.

Attendance. Attendance is required and necessary for your success in the course. 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 unexcused absences will have a notation placed on the transcript indicating you stopped attending class. The instructor reserves the right to drop you from the class if you have more than three unexcused absences. 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.

Grading Scale. Each student’s final grade will be determined by an average of points earned. For example, a student earns 235 points over the course of the semester, including the Welcome Week case and bonus points. Her grade would be calculated as: $\frac{235}{280} = 90\%$ (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  C: 73-76 percent
A-: 90 to 92 percent  C-: 70-72 percent
B+: 87-89 percent  D+: 67-69 percent
B: 83-86 percent  D: 63-66 percent
B-: 80-82 percent  D-: 62-60 percent
C+: 77-79 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) submitted 10 minutes after the beginning of class will be considered late and will be automatically reduced by 20%. Homework submitted one day after the due date will be automatically reduced by 30%; assignments submitted two days after the assigned date will be reduced by 40%, etc. 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 your professor takes 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 particularly 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 needs consistent with the Americans with Disability Act should inform the instructor during the first week of class so that reasonable accommodations can be made.
- 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, iPods/MP3 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.

Course Schedule

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 28</td>
<td>Introduction to course</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Homework due:</strong> Welcome Week team evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 4</td>
<td>Advise-a-thon Round II</td>
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<td>September 11</td>
<td><strong>Topic:</strong> Professional Competencies and Credibility</td>
<td><strong>Readings:</strong></td>
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<td>MPA Competencies</td>
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<td>TED Talk by Sarah Levis: Embrace the Near Win. Presented March 2014,</td>
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<td>posted online April 2014. 12 minutes.</td>
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<td>Credibility Case</td>
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<td><strong>Homework Due:</strong> Competencies Essay (20 points)</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 18</td>
<td><strong>Topic:</strong> Professional Writing I</td>
<td><strong>Readings:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Garner, sections 8-11, 18, and 20</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Examples of memos and emails (please bring these to class)</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Commentary Due</strong></td>
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<td>September 25</td>
<td>University closed – Rosh Hashanah holiday</td>
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| Date       | Topic: Professional Writing II  
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<tr>
<td>October 2</td>
<td>Readings:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Garner, sections 1, 2, and 17</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Rubin’s MLA Guide for Citing Government Documents</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Please bring the memo examples from Sept 18 with you to class again this week</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Commentary Due</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### October 30
**Topic:** Ethics and Public Sector Values I  
**Readings:**  
- Recommended but not required: Examples of Codes of Ethics  
**Homework Due:** Presentation (40 points). Presentations will be delivered outside of class on Thursday and Friday.  
**Commentary Due**

### November 6
**Topic:** Ethics and Public Sector Values II  
**Guest Speaker:** Dr. Mitch Abolafia  
**Homework Due:** Network Assignment parts 1 and 2 (10+5 points)

### November 13
**Topic:** Ethics and Public Sector Values III  
**Reading:**  
- Two cases on whistleblowers: 1) Bunny Greenhouse and 2) Veterans Affairs Administration  
**Homework Due:** *Optional* presentation bonus (5 points)  
**Commentary Due**

### November 20
**Topic:** Networking I  
**Guest Speaker:** Dr. Karl Rethemeyer  
**Homework Due:**  
- Network Assignment part 3 (20 points)  
- *Optional* network bonus assignment (5 points)  
- TDPs with signatures from your adviser and Jen MacLaughlin

(next page)
November 27 | No class – Happy Thanksgiving

| December 4 | **Topic:** Networking II  
|            | Guest speaker: Jen MacLaughlin  
|            | **Homework Due:**  
|            | - Ethics Assignment (60 points). Presentations will be delivered outside of class on Thursday and Friday.  
|            | - *Optional* ethics bonus assignment (10 points)

**Appendix I: Commentaries**

Over the course of the semester students will submit six commentaries, each worth five points, for a total of 30 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.