Professional Applications I
RPAD 507 – Fall 2017
Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy, SUNY Albany
Department of Public Administration and Policy

Dr. Elizabeth Searing
esearing@albany.edu

Class time: Tuesdays 5:45 – 7:35
Class location: Husted 106A
Office location: Milne Hall 305
Office Hours: Tuesdays 3:00-4:00, and by appointment
Office phone: 518-442-2621

Teaching Assistants:
Amy Sheldon: asheeldon@albany.edu
Bill Sisk: siskwilliam@gmail.com

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
- Recommended
- 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: 25 points
Commentaries: 45 points
Homework Assignments: 230 points

The maximum number of points a student may earn during the semester is 300. 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. 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 276 points over the course of the semester, including the Welcome Week case and bonus points. Her grade would be calculated as: 276/300 = 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 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 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
BA 120, 1400 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12222
(518) 442-5490 (voice)
Director: 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.
## Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings Completed Before Class</th>
<th>Homework Due</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 29</td>
<td>Introduction to course</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>September 5</td>
<td><strong>Topic:</strong> Professional Competencies and Credibility</td>
<td>• MPA Competencies</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• TED Talk by Siddhartha Roy: Science in Service to the Public Good. Filmed November 2016 at TEDxVirginiaTech. 14:33 minutes.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Selections on credibility</td>
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<td><strong>Homework Due:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Welcome Week team evaluation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Commentary Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 12</td>
<td><strong>Topic:</strong> Making Presentations I</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Readings completed before class:</strong></td>
<td>• Donovan and Avery, chapters 1, 2, and in chapter 9 read only tips 77-80 and 84.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• 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=smEeqnkIffYs">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smEeqnkIffYs</a></td>
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<td><strong>Homework Due:</strong></td>
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<td>• Competencies Essay (20 points)</td>
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<td>• Commentary Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 19</td>
<td><strong>Topic:</strong> Making Presentations II</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Readings completed before class:</strong></td>
<td>• Donovan and Avery, chapters 8 and 10.</td>
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<td>• Two TED Talks:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Delivered June 2012, posted online in October 2012.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>20 minutes long.</td>
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<td>o Joe Kowan: How I Beat Stage Fright. Delivered November 2013, posted online in January 2014. 9 minutes long.</td>
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<td><strong>Commentary Due</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>September 26</td>
<td><strong>Topic:</strong> Making Presentations III</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Readings completed before class:</strong></td>
<td>• Donovan and Avery, chapters 7 and 11</td>
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<td>• Two TEDish talks:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Guest Speaker</td>
<td>Reading Completed Before Class</td>
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• Optional presentation bonus (5 points)                                    |
| October 10 | Professional Writing I       |                                 | Garner, sections 8-14, 18-20  
Examples of memos and emails (please bring these to class)                               | • Commentary Due                                                                 |
| October 24 | Professional Writing II      |                                 | Garner, sections 1, 2, and 17                                                                 | • Commentary Due                                                               |

**Homework Due:**
- Before class on Tuesday: Presentation Assignment (Part I: 10 points)
- Final Presentations will be delivered and recorded outside of class on Thursday and Friday this week, September 28 and 29 (Part II: 40 points).

**October 3 Topic:** Networking I  
Guest speaker: Yalitza Negron  
**Reading completed before class:**  
**Homework Due:**  
- Commentary Due  
- Optional presentation bonus (5 points)

**October 10 Topic:** Professional Writing I  
**Reading completed before class:**  
- Garner, sections 8-14, 18-20  
- Examples of memos and emails (please bring these to class)  
**Commentary Due**

**October 17 Topic:** Networking II  
Guest speaker: Dr. Karl Rethemeyer  
**Reading completed before class:**  
**Homework Due:**  
- Networking Assignment Parts I and II (10+5 points)

**October 24 Topic:** Professional Writing II  
For half of class we will have a guest panel on communicating with different audiences.  
**Reading completed before class:**  
- Garner, sections 1, 2, and 17  
**Commentary Due**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<th>Readings completed before class</th>
<th>Homework Due</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| October 31 | **Virtual Class**: Professional Writing (Peer Review)  
**Topic**: Professional Writing III  
**Readings completed before class**:  
- Garner, sections 6 and 15  
**Homework Due**:  
- Writing Assignment Part I (10 points) |                                                                                           |                                                                              |                |
| November 7 | **Topic**: Ethics and Public Sector Values I  
**Readings completed before class**:  
- Searing and Searing, chapters 1, 3, and first choice of 7-16  
- Examples of Codes of Ethics  
**Homework Due**:  
- Writing Assignment Part II & III (10+40 points)  
- Commentary Due |                                                                              |                |
| November 28| **Topic**: Ethics and Public Sector Values III  
**Readings completed before class**:  
- Searing and Searing, chapters 5 and 6  
**Homework Due**:  
- **Optional** network bonus assignment (5 points)  
- Networking Assignment Part III (20 points)  
- Commentary Due |                                                                              |                                                                              |                |
| November 21| No class – Happy Thanksgiving!                                                                 |                                                                              |                                                                              |                |
| November 28| **Topic**: Ethics and Public Sector Values III  
**Readings completed before class**:  
- Searing and Searing, chapters 5 and 6  
**Homework Due**:  
- **Optional** network bonus assignment (5 points)  
- Networking Assignment Part III (20 points)  
- Commentary Due |                                                                              |                                                                              |                |
| December 5 | **Synthesis**: What it means to be in public service  
**Readings completed before class**:  
- Readings to be provided separately.  
**Homework Due**:  
- Ethics Case Analysis (60 points). Presentations will be delivered outside of class on Thursday and Friday.  
- **Optional** ethics bonus assignment (10 points) |                                                                              |                                                                              |                |
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 nine commentaries, each worth five points, for a total of 45 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.