

Brandeis University
The Heller School for Social Policy and Management
Syllabus: Professional Writing (183HS 240B-2) Fall, 2018

Master of Science in Global Health Policy and Management (MS)
Master of Arts in Conflict Resolution and Coexistence (COEX)
Master of Arts in Sustainable International Development (SID)

Monday Section, 12:30-1:50pm Schneider Room G2

Instructor: Professor Naomi Blumberg David, MPH Email: nblumberg@brandeis.edu
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 12:00pm – 2:00pm Room: G47 (next to computer lab)

TA: Gbenga Oni Email: ogi@brandeis.edu
Office Hours: Fridays 12:00-2:00pm Room: Alumni Lounge

University Notices

1. If you are a student with a **documented disability** on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please inform the professor immediately.

2. You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. The University policy on **academic honesty** is distributed annually as section 5 of the Rights and Responsibilities Handbook. Instances of alleged dishonesty are subject to possible judicial action. Potential sanctions include failure in the course and suspension from the University. If you have any questions about these expectations, please ask.

Academic integrity is central to the mission of educational excellence at Brandeis University. Each student is expected to turn in work completed independently, except when assignments specifically authorize collaborative effort. It is not acceptable to use the words or ideas of another person – be it a world-class philosopher or your roommate – without proper acknowledgement of that source. This means that you must use footnotes and quotation marks to indicate the source of any phrases, sentences, paragraphs or ideas found in published volumes, on the internet, or created by another student. If you are in doubt about the instructions for any assignment in this course, you must ask for clarification.

Acknowledgements Professor Naomi Blumberg David would like to extend a special thank you to Professors Joan Dassin, Diana Bowser and Mary Brooks for their generous input and suggested resources for this syllabus.

Course Information

This course is designed to support first year students in the MS, COEX and SID programs in reaching the Heller School's core competency in professional writing.

This is a full-semester, 2-credit course. The instructor may alter the curriculum as needed.

Students will develop their professional writing skills by working with a variety of formats used in the field of international development including arguments and essays, reports, summaries, effective office communications, proposals and job search writing. Regular writing assignments and utilization of online resources will allow students to strengthen these basic writing skills. The course uses hands-on exercises to improve students' fluency and confidence in their writing ability. This will be achieved by building skills in critical reading and analysis, learning about structure and organization, and practice using tools conduct literature reviews, find and evaluate sources and editing your own work.

All required readings are posted on LATTE, available online and/or have been placed on reserve at the Brandeis Library. Assignments may be adjusted during the semester at the instructor's discretion based on the class needs. Students will be advised of any changes in advance.

Course Requirements

1. Attendance at all sessions; prompt arrival.
2. Participation in class discussions and small group work.
3. Timely submission of all assignments.
4. Preparation of all readings.
5. Submission of final writing assessment.
6. Contributing to a classroom environment that welcomes and demonstrates respect for the diversity of classmates' backgrounds, perspectives, opinions, questions and abilities.

Student grades will be calculated as follows:

Attendance, class participation and in-class exercises: 45%

Written Assignments: 45%

Final writing assessment: 10%

Grading criteria for the writing assignments will include:

- ❖ Clarity and concision
- ❖ Demonstrated critical thinking and analysis
- ❖ Structure and organization
- ❖ Evidence to support your main arguments
- ❖ Spelling, grammar, sentence structure and paragraphs
- ❖ Proper use of citations

Reassessment in Core Competency in Professional Writing

On December 10th you will be reassessed for the Core Competency in Professional Writing at the Heller School. Students must pass before receiving a grade and credit for this required course.

Assignment Submissions

All writing assignments must be posted on LATTE by the date and time noted in this syllabus. Please bring hard copies with you to class and be prepared to discuss your work. The instructor will make every effort to return assignments within one week after they are submitted. Points will be deducted for late submissions at the instructor's discretion.

Assignment Format

- ✓ Assignments must be well formatted with minimal spelling or grammar errors.
- ✓ Each assignment must include the following information at the top left of page 1:
1) student's name, 2) assignment number, 3) name of assignment and 4) submission date
 - Font: Times New Roman, 12-point font
- ✓ Title: Centered at the top of the paper
- ✓ Spacing: 1.5
- ✓ Margins: 1 inch on each side

Texts and Online Resources for the Course:

Graff, G. & Birkenstein, C. (2017). *They Say, I Say, The Moves that Matter in Persuasive Writing*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co. Inc. (On Reserve)

Hacker, D. & Sommers, H. (2015). *A Writer's Reference*, 8th Edition. Boston/New York: Bedford/St. Martin's. (On Reserve)

Strunk Jr., W & White, E. B. (2000, Fourth Edition). *The Elements of Style*. New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc. (On Reserve)

The Purdue OWL Online Writing Lab. Retrieved from: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

The Writing Center at UNC-Chapel Hill. Retrieved from: <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/>

Harvard University Writing Center. Retrieved from: <https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/>

Important Brandeis resources for Professional Writing students:

1. Heller Librarians: Maric Kramer and Aimee Slater are the designated Heller Librarians. They will hold regular office hours at Heller two times per week to provide support. These are drop-in sessions that are held in G-50, Alumni Heller Lounge.

- ❖ Maric Kramer email: maric@brandeis.edu / Tel: 781-736-4667
Office Hours: Tuesdays 12:30-2:00pm Heller Room G50
- ❖ Aimee Slater email: aslater@brandeis.edu / Tel: 781-736-4673
Office Hours: Wednesdays 12:30-2pm Heller Room G50

Additional library resources for writing and research support include:

- Students may make an appointment online through the library calendar system.
- Library Chat function ('Bubble Chat')
- Drop-in support is available Mondays-Fridays, 11:00 AM – 5:00 PM at the library's main information desk.
- Inter-library loan service (free).

2. Brandeis Writing Center: Room 232, Goldfarb Library

The Writing Center offers writing support services to graduate students working on seminar papers, essays, applications, business writing and ESL concerns. Individual consultation services are collaborative and client-centered, focusing on focus on individual writing needs. Tutors provide feedback to help students develop their writing projects and address issues ranging from

style and grammar to nuanced argument and citation concerns. Sessions are 45 minutes; extended sessions are available if needed to work on longer papers and projects. Appointments can be made online. Hours: Mon-Fri 10:30am-6:00pm and 6:00-9:00pm. For questions please contact: writingcenter@brandeis.edu / www.brandeis.edu/programs/writing/writingcenter/

3. Brandeis English Language Program (ELP) <http://www.brandeis.edu/elp/>
ELP will be offering support services for English Language Learners during the Fall semester. This is a free, consultant-led drop-in service for Heller students. Dates, Times and Room TBD. Services will focus on improving your skills in a range of areas such as: Grammar, Sentence Structure, Critical Thinking, Analytic Writing, Writing Conference Abstracts and Pronunciation.

(Mon.) SESSION #1 Introduction to Professional Writing (Class held: Thurs. Sept. 6)

Session #1 Topics:

- Topic 1: Review syllabus, course learning objectives, course requirements.
- Topic 2: Class introductions: “What’s your story?”
- Topic 3: What is professional writing? Why does it matter? What are common pitfalls?
- Topic 4: What makes good writing? What makes bad writing? How can we improve our own work?
- Topic 5: Introduction to Zotero Workshop (Heller Librarian: Maric Kramer)
All MS/GHPM students are required to attend the Introduction to Zotero Workshop on Wed. September 12, 2018 from 10:30am-11:50am in Room G1.
- Topic 6: Political Autobiography
Video: “The Story of Self” (Joy Cushman, Lecturer)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Obiztwn2oEU&list=PL4E689E9602C614C6&index=2> Adopted from Marshall Ganz, Harvard University, Kennedy School of Government, PAL 177 Course, Organizing: People, Power and Change
<http://www.hks.harvard.edu/organizing/index.htm>
- Topic 7: Preview of Writing Assignment #1 (Political Autobiography) and Writing Assignment #2 (“Good” and “Bad” Writing)

Assignment #1: ‘Political Autobiography’

People become more effective agents for positive change when they understand their own motivations for engaging in the work of the community, the work of service, the work of politics and the work of leadership.

The purpose of this assignment is to help you in this exploration by writing a personal political autobiography. In a maximum of 2-pages, your essay should present clear connections between why you have chosen to pursue your work/studies, and the events in your life that have led you to this decision.

- ✓ Note: You may not submit your Brandeis application essay for this assignment.

Following are illustrative questions to help guide your writing:

1. What was the social justice issue that motivated you to choose your current path?
2. Why do you consider this concern a social justice issue?
3. What were your experiences that led to this decision?
4. What have you done in response to the injustice you are seeking to change?

5. How do you hope to continue your work in this area after your studies at Heller?
- **DUE DATE: This assignment must be posted on LATTE by Sunday 8:00pm September 16th.**

Assignment #2: “Good” and “Bad” Writing

Select two short passages from a book or journal, magazine or newspaper article in your primary field of interest. One passage should be an example of poor, unnecessarily complex or obscure writing. The other should be an example of good ‘classic’ style writing.

Answer the following questions (maximum 2 pages):

1. Explain why you have selected the two passages and what stood out to you as “good” or “bad” writing. Include the passages you have selected in your text. Present your explanation clearly and give examples.

2. What is the most frequent kind of poor writing that you read in your professional work?

3. What are the biggest challenges in your own professional writing?

DUE DATE: This assignment must be posted on LATTE by Sunday 8:00pm Sept. 16th.

NOTE: Please come to Session #2 class on September 17th prepared to discuss the biggest challenges you face in your own writing and areas you would like to work on this semester.

Session #1 Required Reading

Steven Pinker’s “Why Academics Stink at Writing” (Sept. 2014) *The Chronical of Higher Education*. https://stevenpinker.com/files/pinker/files/why_academics_stink_at_writing.pdf

(Mon.) SESSION #2 The Writing Process (Sept. 17)

Session #2 Topics

- Topic 1: What are your biggest writing challenges?
- Topic 2: Symptoms and cures for writer’s block
- Topic 3: Understanding the writing assignment (with in-class exercise)
- Topic 4: The Writing Task Resource List
- Topic 5: Jump-starting the writing process
- Topic 6: Quiz: Avoiding Plagiarism
- Topic 7: Preview of Writing Assignment #3

Assignment #3: Understanding and Planning your writing assignment

Select an important assignment from one of your other courses, perhaps this is a large final paper. Using what you have learned, describe your understanding of the assignment and develop a plan for how you will complete your work. Your plan should:

- a. Include a description (your understanding) of what is required in the assignment. This should be broken down by component.
- b. Include a calendar of tasks and due dates that will lead you to complete the assignment by its due date. Hint: In mapping out your work, it is often helpful to work backwards from the deadline.

➤ **DUE DATE: This assignment must be posted on LATTE by Mon. 8pm September 24th.**

Session #2 Required Readings:

1. Hacker & Sommers: Pages 3-8, 73-80.

2. Understanding Writing Assignments: Copyright ©1995-2017 by The Writing Lab & The OWL at Purdue and Purdue University. <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/688/01/>

(Mon.) SESSION #3 Tools & Skill for Finding Resources (This class will be held on Tues. Sept. 25)
--

This is the 1st of 3 library sessions led by Heller Librarian Maric Kramer

Session #3 Topics

- Topic 1: Introduction to library resources
- Topic 2: Finding sources (popular sources, scholarly literature, gray literature, etc.)
- Topic 3: Gathering evidence

Assignment #4 Finding Sources:

- Chose a research paper you are working on for another class. Using what you have learned, search for a range of 8-10 relevant sources needed for your research.
- Prepare a properly cited list of these sources
- Draft 1-2 paragraphs describing your experience finding these sources.
- End your work with a description of skill areas you would like to strengthen.
- **DUE DATE: This assignment must be posted on LATTE by Sunday 8pm Oct. 7th**

Session #3 Required Reading:

1. Walden University: Academic Skills Center (ASC) Success Strategies: Reading Retention and Comprehension. <https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/ASCsuccess/ASCreadingretention>

2. Strunk & White, *The Elements of Style*: Pages 15-33. Please also familiarize yourself with the Glossary (pages 89-95) for future reference.

(Mon.) SESSION #4 Increasing Reading Retention and Comprehension (Oct. 8)
--

Session #4 Topics

- Topic 1: Active reading strategies
- Topic 2: Surveying and Questioning
- Topic 3: Summarizing
- Topic 4: Preview of Writing Assignment #6 Active Reading

Assignment #5 Active Reading

- Select an article you need to read for another class. Based on what you have learned, ‘survey’ (pre-read) the article. This should include scanning the title, abstract, section headings, visuals and references. Note what stands out for you during your survey.
- Develop your active reading questions based on your survey.
- Answer the questions you have developed (2-page maximum). These may differ based on the article you have chosen. For a research article your questions may include:
 - Why was this article written and what was the main thesis being explored?
 - What were the results of the study, and how was it conducted?

- Why is this topic important?
- For a reading with two topics: How does topic A relate to topic B?
- For a reading that is in a sequence of other readings: If I understand that X is true from other sources I have read, how does this information support, contradict, or complicate that understanding?
- What are the key take-aways from the article?

Questions adapted from: <https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/ASCsuccess/ASCreadingretention>

➤ **DUE DATE: This assignment must be posted on LATTE by Sunday 8pm Oct. 14th**

Session #4 Required Reading:

1. Hacker & Sommers, *Outlines* (pages C: 14-16; A: 76, 78 and 87; 443)
2. Graff & Birkenstein, *They Say/I Say* Chap. 2 Her Point Is-The Art of Summarizing pp.28-38.
3. Essay Writing. Retrieved from: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/685/1>
4. Hacker & Sommers, Pages 16-21, 80-87, 91-116

(Mon.) SESSION #5 Essays, Organization and Structure (Oct. 15)

Session #5 Topics:

- Topic 1: Types of essays
- Topic 2: Developing a thesis statement
- Topic 3: Organization and structure: introduction, body and strong conclusions
- Topic 4: Topic sentences, order of ideas and transitions ('Scramble' in-class exercises)
- Topic 4: Constructing arguments
- Topic 6: Using visuals to support and amplify your message
- Topic 7: Preventing, contextualizing and avoiding plagiarism (video)
<https://owl.excelsior.edu/plagiarism/plagiarism-how-to-avoid-it/>

Session #5 Required Reading:

- A. Please read material on Templates and Transitional Devices. (See postings on LATTE page)
- B. Please review the following online OWL resources on Avoiding Plagiarism:
 - Overview:
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/using_research/avoiding_plagiarism/index.html
 - Is it plagiarism?
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/using_research/avoiding_plagiarism/is_it_plagiarism.html
 - How to avoid plagiarism Open Polytechnic
<https://www.openpolytechnic.ac.nz/current-students/study-tips-and-techniques/apa-referencing-and-avoiding-plagiarism/referencing-and-avoiding-plagiarism/how-to-avoid-plagiarism/>
- C. Hacker & Sommers, Pages 16-21, 80-87, 91-116
- D. Essay Writing. Retrieved from: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/685/1>

(Mon.) SESSION #6 Citations and Zotero Practice (Oct. 22)
--

This is the 2nd of 3 library sessions led by Heller Librarian Maric Kramer

Session #6 Topics

- Topic 1: Zotero Refresher and in-class exercises
- Topic 2: Mastering citations

Session #6 Required Reading

1. Research to Action: How to Produce a Policy Brief

<http://www.researchtoaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/How-to-produce-a-policy-brief.pdf>

2. Research to Action: Is the Age of the Policy Brief Over?

<http://www.researchtoaction.org/2014/10/age-policy-brief/>

Assignment #6 Policy Brief Readings and Questions

Read the two articles on policy briefs listed in Required Reading Section. Then answer the following three questions. (Maximum 2 pages)

- 1) What is the main purpose of a policy brief?
- 2) What makes a policy brief effective?
- 3) In your view, what is the best way to influence policy makers? In the age of instant access to information, are policy briefs still necessary? What other communications strategies can be used to communicate research for policy influence?

Source: <https://moodle2.brandeis.edu/course/view.php?id=13881§ion=9>

- **DUE DATE: This assignment must be posted on LATTE by Sunday 8pm Oct. 28th**

Assignment #7 Part 1 Writing a Policy Brief

Select an urgent issue in your field (e.g. violence against women; HIV/AIDs) that requires further research, policy action and/or public advocacy.

Develop a policy brief that explains: In a maximum of two pages, explain: 1) what the issue is; 2) why it is important; and 3) what communications and/or interventions strategies (e.g. policy brief; media outreach) you would use to bridge the gap between research and action on the issue.

Remember to follow the principles of effective writing, structure and organization so that your paper makes a clear, coherent and strong argument.

Part 1: Identify your topic and describe the issue you will be advocating. Then develop an outline and identify sources you will be using for your policy brief.

- **DUE DATE FOR PART 1 POLICY BRIEFS: your assignment must be posted on LATTE by Sunday 8pm Oct. 28th**

Assignment #8 Part 2 Complete your Policy Brief

Part 2: Based on the research you have done and outline you have prepared, finish writing your policy brief. (Max 2 pages)

- **DUE DATE FOR ASSIGNMENT #7 PART 2 POLICY BRIEFS: your assignment must be posted on LATTE by Sunday 8pm November 4th.**

(Mon.) SESSION #7 Policy Briefs (Oct. 29)

Session #7 Topics:

- Topic 1: Purpose of a policy brief
 - Topic 2: Components of a policy brief
 - Topic 3: Using the policy brief as an advocacy tool
- **DUE DATE REMINDER: Your Assignment #7 Part 2 Policy Briefs must be posted on LATTE by Sunday 8pm November 4th.**

Additional Resources for Policy Briefs:

1. Poverty and Economic Policy: Guidelines for Writing a Policy Brief (useful for development students). [http://www.pep-net.org/sites/pep-net.org/files/typo3doc/pdf/CBMS_country_proj_profiles/Philippines/CBMS_forms/Guidelines for Writing a Policy Brief.pdf](http://www.pep-net.org/sites/pep-net.org/files/typo3doc/pdf/CBMS_country_proj_profiles/Philippines/CBMS_forms/Guidelines_for_Writing_a_Policy_Brief.pdf)
2. The Women's and Children's Health Policy Center. Writing Policy Briefs: A Guide to Translating Science and Engaging Stakeholders (useful for health policy students). http://www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/womens-and-childrens-health-policy-center/de/policy_brief/index.html
3. Young, John et al. (2014). Rapid Outcome Mapping Approach: A guide to policy engagement and policy influence. A comprehensive method for translating research to policy action. <http://www.roma.odi.org/introduction.html>
4. Recommended website for policy briefs: Center for Global Development, see policy briefs at: https://www.cgdev.org/section/publications?f%255B0%255D=field_document_type%3A2048&f%255B0%255D=field_document_type%3A2081&f%255B0%255D=field_document_type%3A2048

(Mon.) SESSION #8 Effective Office Communications (Nov. 5)

Session #8 Topics:

- Topic 1: Elements and Format of a Professional Memo
- Topic 2: Email 'etiquette'

Assignment #9: Memo on Syrian Refugees

Please read: UNHCR (October 2016) 'Mediterranean Death Toll Soars; 2016 Is Deadliest Year Yet'. Retrieved from: <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/latest/2016/10/580f3e684/mediterranean-death-toll-soars-2016-deadliest-year.html>

You are the Middle East Regional Director for a humanitarian relief organization. Write a 1-page memo to the Director and Board of Directors outlining your proposed organizational strategy to support Syrian refugees crossing the Mediterranean.

- **DUE DATE: This assignment must be posted on Latte by Sun. 8pm Nov. 11**

Session #8 Required Readings:

1. The Audience, Purpose, Parts and Format of a Professional Memo. Owl/Purdue. Retrieved from: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/590/1/>
2. Xavier de Souza Briggs, Effective Professional Writing: The Memo. Massachusetts Institute of Technology: Department of Urban Studies and Planning. Retrieved from: <https://ocw.mit.edu/courses/urban-studies-and-planning/11-201-gateway-planning-action-fall-2007/communication/memo.pdf>
3. University of Maryland. How to Write the Perfect Memo. Retrieved from: <http://www.umuc.edu/current-students/learning-resources/writing-center/writing-resources/memos/index.cfm>
4. The Writing Center at UNC-Chapel Hill Effective E-Mail Communication. Retrieved from: <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/effective-e-mail-communication/>
5. Mongan-Rallis, H. (2014). *Guidelines for Writing a Literature Review*. University of Minnesota: Duluth. Retrieved from: <http://www.duluth.umn.edu/~hrallis/guides/researching/litreview.html>
6. The Writing Center (2010). Literature Reviews. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina. Retrieved from: <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/literature-reviews/>

(Mon.) SESSION #9 Evaluating Sources (Nov. 12)

This is the 3rd of 3 library sessions led by Heller Librarian Maric Kramer

Session #9 Topics

- Topic 1: Evaluating Sources
- Topic 2: Elements of a Literature Review

Session #8 Required Reading:

1. Sample Proposal Excerpt will be provided by the guest speaker scheduled for Session #10
2. OWL Purdue: Introduction to Grant Writing. Retrieved from: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/981/1/>
3. UNC Chapel Hill. Grant Proposals. Retrieved from: <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/grant-proposals-or-give-me-the-money/>

(Mon.) SESSION #10 Proposals and Grants (Nov. 19)

This session will be taught by a guest lecturer.

Session #10 Topics:

- Topic 1: Interpreting an RFA/RFP (What does the donor want?)
- Topic 2: Your organization's strategic advantage and partnering

- Topic 3: Components of a proposal
- Topic 4: Strategic Frameworks
- Topic 5: Developing a technical approach
- Topic 6: Partnering, Workplans and Organizational Charts

Session #10 Required Reading:

1. DEVEX: Your Ultimate Global Development CV. Retrieved from:
https://pages.devex.com/rs/685-KBL-765/images/Your_Ultimate_Global_Development_CV_Guide.pdf

Assignment #10 Grant Writing

1. Complete the free online webinar and online course on introductions to grant writing, sponsored by The Foundation Center and available at:
<http://grantspace.org/training/courses/introduction-to-proposal-writing>

Prepare a brief summary (2-3 paragraphs) about what you have learned.

- **DUE DATE: This assignment must be posted on Latte by Sun. 8pm Nov. 25th**

(Mon.) SESSION #11 Job Search Writing #1 CVs (Nov. 26)

Session # 11 Topics

- Topic 1: Developing your Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- Topic 2: Developing your Personal Statement

Assignment # 11 CV

Using what you have learned from the readings and class discussion, update your CV (maximum 2 pages).

- **DUE DATE: This assignment must be posted on Latte by Sun. 8pm Dec. 2nd**

(Mon.) SESSION #12 Job Search Writing (continued) (Dec. 3)

Session #12 Topics

- Topic 1: Networking correspondence
- Topic 2: Assessing job postings
- Topic 3: Developing tailored cover letters and CV to specific job applications

Session #12 Required Reading:

1.UNC Chapel Hill Cover Letter Guide. Retrieved from:
<http://career.uncc.edu/sites/career.uncc.edu/files/media/cover-letter-guide.pdf>

Assignment #12 Cover Letter

Using what you have learned, draft a 1-page cover letter for a position you would be interested in applying for.

- **DUE DATE: This assignment must be posted on Latte by Sunday 8pm on Dec. 9th**

(Mon.) SESSION #13 Final Writing Assessment (Dec. 10)

Students will be reassessed for Core Competency in Professional Writing at the Heller School during the regular class time. This will be similar to the original writing assessment conducted on September 1. Students will be given an article ahead of time and will be asked to write an essay answering one of three questions.