

# The Graduate School of Political Management

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

## M.P.S. Legislative Affairs

Fall Semester 2017

August 28 – December 11

## Course Name

Course Number Legislative Writing & Research

LGAF LH6

3 Credits

Wednesdays, 6:00 – 8:00p.m.

Hall of the States

[Except September 9<sup>th</sup>, Room 302, Gelman  
Library]

## BASIC INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

**Instructor:** Julius W. Hobson, Jr., Adjunct Professor

Professor Hobson has over 45 years of experience in the public policy process. He is currently Senior Policy Advisor, Polsinelli PC, where he lobbies on behalf of clients in areas of Appropriations, Budget, Financial Services, Health Care, Immigration, and Tax Policy. Mr. Hobson previously served as Director of Congressional Affairs for the American Medical Association. He has worked in both the U.S. House of Representatives, as a chief of staff and subcommittee staff director, and the United States Senate. Mr. Hobson has handled Congressional Affairs for Howard University and the District of Columbia Government. He previously served as an elected member of the D.C. Board of Education. His family is profiled in *The Washington Century: Three Families and the Shaping of the Nation's Capital*, by Burt Solomon (2004). Mr. Hobson is one of several lobbyists profiled in *Lobbying in Washington, London, and Brussels: The persuasive Communication of Political Issues*, by Connor McGrath (2005). Mr. Hobson has taught Lobbying at GSPM since 1994. He previously taught Advanced Strategy Lobbying, Electoral and Legislative Processes, and Fundamentals of Political Management. A native Washingtonian, Mr. Hobson received his B.A. (History) from Howard University and his M.A. (Legislative Affairs) from George Washington University.

## Contact Information

Phone Number: (202) 626-8354 (o); (202) 364-8866 (h)

Email: [jhobson@polsinelli.com](mailto:jhobson@polsinelli.com) or [Julius.hobson@verizon.net](mailto:Julius.hobson@verizon.net)

## Communication

Office: By appointment

## Blackboard Site

A Blackboard course site has been set up for this course. Each student is expected to check the site throughout the semester, as Blackboard will be the primary venue for outside classroom communications between the instructors and the students. Students can access the course site at

<https://blackboard.gwu.edu>. Support for Blackboard is available at 202-994-4948 or [helpdesk.gwu.edu](https://helpdesk.gwu.edu).

### **Academic Integrity**

*All members of the university community are expected to exhibit honesty and competence in their academic work. Students have a special responsibility to acquaint themselves with, and make use of, all proper procedures for doing research, writing papers, and taking exams. Members of the community will be presumed to be familiar with the proper academic procedures and will be held responsible for applying them. Deliberate failure to act in accordance with such procedures will be considered academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty is defined as “cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one’s own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” Acts of academic dishonesty are a legal, moral, and intellectual offense against the community and will be prosecuted through the proper university channels. The University Code of Academic Integrity can be found at <http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>.*

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### **Attendance Policy**

Attendance will be taken the first two weeks as a means of verifying registered students. Thereafter no attendance will be taken. If a student is absent from class, she/he will be responsible for acquiring missed material from fellow classmates.

### **Course Evaluation**

At the end of the semester, students will be given the opportunity to evaluate the course through GW’s online course evaluation system. It is very important that you take the time to complete an evaluation. Students are also encouraged to provide feedback throughout the course of the semester by contacting any/all of the following:

Dr. Lara Brown  
Director, Political Management Program, GSPM  
[larambrown@gwu.edu](mailto:larambrown@gwu.edu) | 202-994-4545

Dr. Jack Prostko  
Associate Dean for Learning and Faculty Development  
College of Professional Studies  
[jackp@gwu.edu](mailto:jackp@gwu.edu) | 202-994-3592

Suzanne Farrand  
Director of Academic Administration, GSPM  
[sfarrand@gwu.edu](mailto:sfarrand@gwu.edu) | 202-994-9309

## **THE COURSE**

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### **Legislative Affairs Program Objectives**

Upon completion of the Master's degree in Legislative Affairs, students will:

1. Gain both theoretical and practical knowledge related to the U.S. Congress, general issues in the legislative arena, and how to effectively advance legislation;
2. Hone their oral and written communication skills in both theoretical and technical aspects of legislative affairs;
3. Be able to conduct cutting-edge research and engage in effective problem solving by learning critical thinking skills;
4. Learn how to work effectively with others, the value of collaborative work, and will understand ethical issues involved in the legislative arena.

### **Graduate School Expectations**

Students enrolled in a graduate program should take their academic responsibilities seriously and be prepared to meet the following expectations:

1. Utilize effective time management skills so as to complete and submit their assignments on their required due dates and times.
2. Have attained a mastery of written communication skills including proper sentence structure, grammar, spelling, and word usage.
3. Understand how to properly format in-text citations and references for resources and information integrated into their written assignments.

### **Course Description and Overview**

Two skills are most valuable for professionals whose careers are focused on legislative affairs: the ability to find and use government and non-government documents and resources, and the ability to communicate to a sophisticated, policy-driven audience. This course is designed to help students in Legislative Affairs accomplish both of those goals.

Students will learn to use specialized research databases and policy journals, such as Lexus-Nexus Congressional, *Congressional Quarterly*, *National Journal*, Congressional Research Service reports, materials from the U.S. General Accountability Office, Congressional Budget Office, THOMAS, and many others. Students will prepare congressional testimony, write press releases and position papers, create decision memos and talking points, and prepare floor statements.

Each student will prepare six written assignments, varying in length and detail. For each of the assignments, we will bring in a guest authority to give us a fuller appreciation of the complexity and pitfalls of such assignments.

### Course Learning Objectives

1. Students will learn how to sharpen legislative research skills. Students will learn about and use the most relevant databases and resources that cover Congress, the legislative process, the executive branch, the federal agencies, politics and public policy.
2. Learn Sharpen your legislative research skills. Students will learn about and use the most relevant databases to write for a variety of audiences in the legislative arena. Students will learn how to write press releases, congressional testimony, and a variety of other products, and will learn how to tailor them to various audiences: legislators and their staff, the press, policy watchers, and the general public.
3. Students will learn how to sharpen oral presentation skills. Students will have several opportunities to present writings before fellow class members. Part of project grades will include an oral presentation.

### Course Requirements

There will be no examinations, no quizzes, and no grade for class participation. The entire grade will depend on the written product students turn in and the defense of it during class sessions. Several times during the semester, there will be guest experts who will advise on how to think about legislative writing and research, and how to conduct it.

### Evaluation and Grading

Assignment	Learning Objective(s) Addressed	Due Date	Weight
Press Release			10%
Congressional Testimony			20%
Issue Brief/Position Paper			30%
Decision Memorandum			10%
Op-ED			10%
Floor Statement			20%
Total			100%

Following is the grade scale for all GSPM classes:

Grade*	Grading Standard
A 94-100	Your work is outstanding and ready for submission in a professional

		environment. Your material, effort, research, and writing demonstrate superior work.
A-	90-93	Represents solid work with minor errors. Overall, excellent work.
B+	87-89	Very good. Represents well-written material, research, and presentation, but needs some minor work.
B	83-86	Satisfactory work, but needs reworking and more effort. Note that although not a failing grade, at the graduate level, anything below a “B” is viewed as unacceptable.
B-	80-82	You’ve completed the assignment, but you are not meeting all of the requirements.
C+	77-79	Needs improvement in content and in effort. Shows some motivation and concern.
C	73-76	Needs reworking, improved effort, and additional research. Shows minimal motivation and concern.
C-	70-72 (lowest grade to pass)	Poor performance. Major errors, too many misspellings, problems with accuracy, etc.
F	Below 70	Unacceptable performance, or inability to submit the assignment.

\*Please note that you will be penalized for late submission of assignment(s).

### Readings

- **Required:**
- **Adam Garfinkle**, *Political Writing: A Guide to the Essentials*, Routledge, 2012.
- **Catherine F. Smith**, *Writing Public Policy*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., Oxford University Press, Oxford University Press, 2015.
- **Ada S. Cornell, et al**, CRS Report, *Legislative Research for Congressional Staff: How to Find Documents and Other Resources*, R43434, June 22, 2015.
- **Christopher M. Davis**, CRS Report, *House Committee Hearings: Witness Testimony*, 98-338, August 10, 2015.
- **Jerry W. Mansfield**, CRS Report, *Researching Current Federal Legislation and Regulations: A Guide to Resources for Congressional Staff*, RL33895, November 9, 2015.
- **Meghan M. Stuessy**, CRS Report, *Statements of Administration Policy*, R44539, June 21, 2016.
- **Thomas H. Neale & Dana Ely**, CRS Report, *Speechwriting in Perspective: A Brief Guide to Effective and Persuasive Communication*, 98-170 GOV, April 12, 2007.
- **Judy Schneider**, CRS Report, *Legislative Planning: Considerations for Congressional Staff*, RS20991, January 27, 2017.
- **Jennifer E. Manning**, CRS Report, *Legislative Support Resources: Offices and Websites for Congressional Staff*, RS20120, January 6, 2016.
- **Audrey Celeste Crane-Hirsch**, CRS Report, *Finding Quotes for Speeches: Fact Sheet*, R44200, June 15, 2017.

- **Suggested:**
- **Frank R. Baumgartner & Bryan D. Jones**, *The Politics of Information: Problem Definition and the Course of Public Policy in America*, University of Chicago Press, 2015.
- **Sidney M. Milkis & Michael Nelson**, *The American Presidency: Origins and Development, 1776-2014*, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition, CQ Press, 2015.
- **Roger H. Davidson, et al**, *Congress and Its Members*, 16<sup>th</sup> Edition, CQ Press, 2017.
- **C. Danielle Vinson**, *Congress and the Media: Beyond Institutional Power*, Oxford University Press, 2017.
- **Barbara Sinclair**, *Unorthodox Lawmaking: New Legislative Processes in the U.S. Congress*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, Sage CQ Press, 2016.
- **Jeffery A. Jenkins & Eric M. Patashnik (editors)**, *Congress and Policy Making in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Cambridge University Press, 2016.
- **Rosa Brooks**, *How Everything Became War and the Military Became Everything*, Simon & Schuster, 2016.
- **Ann Majchrzak & M. Lynne Markus**, *Methods for Policy Research: Taking Socially Responsible Action*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Sage, 2013.
- **Newspapers, Magazines, and Online News Letters:** *Washington Post, New York Times, Washington Times, Newsweek, Time, Politico, The Hill, Roll Call, Los Angeles Times, CQ, Morning Consult, National Journal, Political Wire, Wall Street Journal, Financial Times, Bloomberg Businessweek, and The Economist*, etc.

### **Tentative Course Calendar\***

\*The instructor reserves the right to alter course content and/or adjust the pace to accommodate class progress. Students are responsible for keeping up with all adjustments to the course calendar.

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Director, Legislative Affairs Program  
[sbillet@gwu.edu](mailto:sbillet@gwu.edu) | 202-994-1149

Dr. Jack Prostko  
Associate Dean for Learning and Faculty Development  
College of Professional Studies  
[jackp@gwu.edu](mailto:jackp@gwu.edu) | 202-994-3592

Suzanne Farrand  
Director of Academic Administration, GSPM  
[sfarrand@gwu.edu](mailto:sfarrand@gwu.edu) | 202-994-9309

### **Week 1: August 30**

Topic and Content Covered: Overview of legislative and policy resources and databases.

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: Introduction and overview of the course; overview of legislative and policy resources and databases.

Assignment(s) Due Today: None

Reading Assignment: Garfinkle, Chapters 1, 2, & 3

Smith, Chapters 1, 2 & 3

**Week 2: September 6**

**Class will meet at the GWU Gellman Library [Room 302] for a presentation on research and policy resources by David Ettinger, PhD, International Affairs & Political Science Librarian**

Topic and Content Covered: Research Resources

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: Learn about various legislative and policy research resources.

Assignment(s) Due Today: None

Reading Assignment: Smith, Chapters 4 & 5  
Cornell, et al, CRS Report  
Mansfield, CRS Report

**Week 3: September 13**

Topic and Content Covered: Congressional Testimony

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: What is congressional testimony? What makes for outstanding testimony? What pitfalls have to be avoided?

Assignment Due Today: None

Reading Assignment: Smith, Chapter 9  
Garfinkle, Chapter 7  
Davis, CRS Report

**Week 4: September 20**

Topic and Content Covered: Preparing Congressional Testimony

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: Preparing oral testimony to be read within a limited timeframe (five minutes).

Assignment Due Today: Each student will prepare a five-page opening statement to be read before a congressional hearing. Unfortunately, your boss—who tends to be belligerent and confrontational, hates politics, and does not understand Congress—has to be prepared with a measured reasonable opening statement that he will read. Some students will be called on to read their statements and defend same in class.

**Week 5: September 27**

Topic and Content Covered: The Washington Press Release

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: Opportunities and pitfalls of writing a press release.

Assignment Due Today: None

**Week 6: October 4**

Topic and Content Covered: Writing a press release

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: Opportunities and pitfalls of writing a press release.

Assignment Due Today: Each student will hand in a one-page single spaced press release on an assigned topic. Students will be chosen to read and defend their press releases in class.

**Week 7: October 11**

Topic and Content Covered: Decision Memorandum

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: What goes into a succinct, accurate, and unbiased decision memorandum?

Assignment Due Today: None

Reading Assignment: Garfinkle, Chapter 9  
Smith, Chapter 8

**Week 8: October 18**

Topic and Content Covered: Writing a Decision Memorandum

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: How to prepare a decision memorandum which presents relevant sides of an issue.

Assignment Due Today: Students will write a one-page memorandum, no more than four paragraphs (12 point type) outlining the key issues and the alternative decision choices. Issues are complex, fraught with political landmines, with hidden agendas, and unknown factors lurking everywhere. You have to lay out for your CEO the salient issues; the CEO has to make the right decision, based on your analysis.

**Week 9: October 25**

Topic and Content Covered: Preparing Floor Statements

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: Crafting a powerful, carefully written statement that will be read on the Floor of the House.

Assignment Due Today: None

Reading Assignment: Garfinkle, Chapter 7

**Week 10: November 1**

Topic and Content Covered: Writing a floor statement

Learning Objective(s) Addressed:

Assignment Due Today: Students will write a four-page floor statement that will be read by the Member. House rules permit Members to speak up to five minutes. Students will be trying to make the most of this opportunity. Some students will be required to read their floor statement orally in class and to defend same.

**Week 11: November 8**

Topic and Content Covered: Op-ED (Opposite the Editorial Page)

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: How to write an opinion editorial, boiling down a complex issue into its most important points.

Assignment(s) Due Today: None

Reading Assignment: Garfinkle, Chapter 6

**Week 12: November 15**

Topic and Content Covered: Writing an Op-Ed

Topic and Content Covered: Op-ED

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: Assignment Due Today: Op-Ed

**Week 13: November 22<sup>nd</sup> – No Class [Thanksgiving Break]**

**Week 14: November 29**

Topic and Content Covered: Preparing an issue brief/position paper, offering maximum impact on Members of Congress and the public.  
Position Paper/Issue Brief

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: Students will learn how to research and write a position paper on an assigned topic.

Assignment Due Today: None.

Reading Assignment: Smith, Chapters 6 & 10  
Garfinkle, Chapter 4

**Week 15: December 6 [Last Class Meeting]**

Assignment Due Today: Each student will submit a ten-page issue brief/position paper on an assigned topic via email by 9:00 pm.

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