

The Graduate School of Political Management

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

M.P.S. Legislative Affairs

Fall Semester 2016

August 29 – December 12

Course Name

Course Number Legislative Writing & Research

LGAF LH6

3 Credits

Wednesdays, 6:00 – 8:00p.m.

Hall of the States

[Except September 9th, 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 or 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.

Academic Integrity

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If we experience some an emergency during class time, we will try to stay at this location until we hear that we can move about safely. If we have to leave here, we will meet at **[fill in proximate location]** in order to account for everyone and to make certain that everyone is safe. Please refer to Campus Advisories for the latest information on the University’s operating status: <http://www.campusadvisories.gwu.edu/>.

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 | 202-994-4545

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

Suzanne Farrand
Director of Academic Administration, GSPM
sfarrand@gwu.edu | 202-994-9309

THE COURSE

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 & suggested):

- **Adam Garfinkle**, *Political Writing: A Guide to the Essentials*, Routledge, 2012 (required).
- **Catherine F. Smith**, *Writing Public Policy*, 4th ed., Oxford University Press, Oxford University Press, 2015 (required).
- **Ada S. Cornell, et al**, CRS Report, *Legislative Research for Congressional Staff: How to Find Documents and Other Resources*, R43434, June 22, 2015 (required).
- **Christopher M. Davis**, CRS Report, *House Committee Hearings: Witness Testimony*, 98-338, August 10, 2015 (required).
- **Jerry W. Mansfield**, CRS Report, *Researching Current Federal Legislation and Regulations: A Guide to Resources for Congressional Staff*, RL33895, November 9, 2015 (required).
- **Meghan M. Stuessy**, CRS Report, *Statements of Administration Policy*, R44539, June 21, 2016 (required).
- **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 (suggested).
- **Sidney M. Milkis & Michael Nelson**, *The American Presidency: Origins and Development, 1776-2014*, 7th Edition, CQ Press, 2015 (suggested).
- **Roger H. Davidson, et al**, *Congress and Its Members*, 15th Edition, CQ Press, 2015 (suggested).
- **Barbara Sinclair**, *Unorthodox Lawmaking: New Legislative Processes in the U.S. Congress*, 5th Edition, Sage CQ Press, 2016 (suggested).
- **Jeffery A. Jenkins & Eric M. Patashnik (editors)**, *Congress and Policy Making in the 21st Century*, Cambridge University Press, 2016 (suggested).

- **Rosa Brooks**, *How Everything Became War and the Military Became Everything*, Simon & Schuster, 2016 (suggested).
- **Ann Majchrzak & M. Lynne Markus**, *Methods for Policy Research: Taking Socially Responsible Action*, 2nd Edition, Sage, 2014 (suggested).
- **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 | 202-994-1149

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

Suzanne Farrand
Director of Academic Administration, GSPM
sfarrand@gwu.edu | 202-994-9309

Week 1: August 31

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 7

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 14

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 21

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 28

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 5

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 12

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 19

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 26

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 2

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 9

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 16

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 23rd – No Class [Thanksgiving Break]

Week 14: November 30

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 7 [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.

Unless explicitly allowed by the instructor, course materials, class discussions, and examinations are created for and expected to be used by class participants only. The recording and rebroadcasting of such material, by any means, is forbidden.