

## **COS: Health Care, Law & Strategic Communications**

**Instructor: Professors Kris Brown and Joseph V. Sakran**

**Classroom:**

**Office:**

**Class times: Tuesday, 4:30pm-07:10pm**

**Office Hours: By appointment**

**E-mail:**

### **Course Description:**

This course will examine the intersection of health policy and law, preparing students to critically think of how best to navigate these complex waters -by examining the often challenging policy, law and strategic communications issues that surround the public/private nature of health policy and law

The course will begin by providing students with an overview of public health, health policy, and related legal considerations. We will then layer in an understanding of principles of strategic communications, and examine how the role of strategic communications interplays with critical health care issues that have been considered in the last several decades. We will follow that portion of the class with providing students a broad understanding of how the executive, legislative and judicial branch further or limit health policy, and the role of the private sector and non-profits in strategic imperatives related to the health care system. The remainder of the classes, relying on the understandings provided in the first part of the course, will focus on simulated exercises focusing on key policy debates and issues related to health care and will conclude these discussions through the lens of a mock Congressional hearing where class participants will play different roles as advocates, Congressional witnesses and examiners. The class will feature guest lecturers who are experts in public health, law, policy and strategic communications.

At the end of the semester, students will have a strong understanding of the relationship of branches of the US government, the private and non-profit sectors in shaping public opinion and outcomes to any public policy issue, including particularly the health care space. They will have a strong sense of the communication strategies to deploy and consider in examining any public policy issue. And students will be more effective and fluent communicators—in writing, presentation, and formal documentation. In short, they will be better prepared to excel in examining critical public policy, health and communications issues, whether at the undergraduate or graduate degree level, or more generally, in an increasingly demanding political and policy environment.

### **Prerequisites:**

There are no pre-requisites for this course. Students are expected to have varying levels of familiarity with certain concepts in political science and policy analysis. In any case, the course provides references to all literature that would bring students up to speed with ease.

**Assessment Requirements:**

Class participation and activities (20%)

One short policy memo due on October 14<sup>th</sup> (20%)

Class simulation projects due on November 3<sup>rd</sup> (20%)

Final Exam – Mock Congressional Hearing December 9<sup>th</sup> (40%)

*Short memo should be submitted electronically before the commencement of class on the due dates. Students are also asked to bring a hard copy to class. All assignment details and grading rubrics will be distributed in class sessions.*

**Late assignments:**

All assignments will be docked three percentage points for each day they are submitted late.

**Writing Emphasis:**

This course places an emphasis on student's articulation of their ideas for a professional policy audience. For students who want a quick refresher on expository writing "rules" and some useful tips, please see Robert Strunk, Jr., and E.B.White's *Elements of Style*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition (Longman: 1999). For students who have had less practice writing and who want or need more extensive guidance on producing effective prose, please see Sarah E. Skwire and David Skwire's, *Writing with a Thesis*, 11<sup>th</sup> Edition (Cengage: 2010). A recent primer on writing public policy analyses is Catherine Smith's *Writing Public Policy: A Practical Guide to Communicating in the Policy Process*. All are available in the SPGIA Library.

**Reading Materials:**

This course will provide an electronic folder that contains all reading materials. Additional reading will be recommended as optional.

**Required Reading:**

**Strategic Communication: Planning for PR & Marketing, Laurie J. Wilson**

**The Medium is the Massage, Marshall McLuhan**

**Basics of the US Health Care System, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, Jones & Barrett Learning**

**The Trillion Dollar Revolution, Ezekiel Emanuel & Abbe R. Gluck**

**Thank You For Smoking, Christopher Buckley**

**Inventing Conflicts of Interest: A History of Tobacco Industry Tactics, Allan M. Brandt**

**Gunfight: The Battle Over the Right To Bear Arms In America, Adam Winkler**

**Grading and Expectations:**

The policy memo will be marked for the strength and structure of student analysis and defense of the recommendation for policy action, not the recommendation itself. Students' work will be evaluated on its rigor, the depth of its evidence, its organization and clarity, and the contextualization of its ideas amongst the others being studied. Students should take care to ensure that they avoid spelling and grammar errors. With respect to the video, students will be evaluated on how clearly they articulate their message, and if they utilize the communication skills discussed throughout the class.

Throughout the course, we will discuss, analyze and debate key topics. This requires that all course participants come to class fully prepared, having done the assigned readings, completed the required written assignments, and having considered the issues and materials. It also requires that students contribute their thoughts and ideas to the collective conversation, engaging openly, thoughtfully, and respectfully.

This course is dependent heavily on content delivered and discussed during weekly meetings. Consequently, attendance is mandatory. Participants are expected to notify the instructor in advance when their other responsibilities will prevent class attendance. Student grades will be lowered for unexcused and uninformed absences.

If your schedule or professional obligations require you to miss more than two classes, you should consider enrolling in another elective or taking this course in a different semester.

**Office Hours:**

Students are encouraged to arrange office hours anytime by appointment. Email queries are also very welcome.

**Feedback:**

This course is meant to be intellectually stimulating, idea-based, open-minded, and real world relevant. It is very useful to receive student feedback about the progress of the course. There are three primary avenues for giving feedback, and students are encouraged to make use of them all: (1) An anonymous mid-term survey; (2) Book an appointment for office hours; (3) Students may stay shortly after class to discuss their ideas. Your input is valuable.

**University Honor Code:**

Per the University's honor code, cheating, plagiarism, and lying will not be tolerated. These are defined in the University Catalog as follows:

- A. Cheating encompasses the following:
  - 1. The willful giving or receiving of an unauthorized, unfair, dishonest, or unscrupulous advantage in academic work over other students.
  - 2. The above may be accomplished by any means whatsoever, including but not limited to the following: fraud; duress; deception; theft; trick; talking; signs; gestures; copying from another student; and the unauthorized use of study aids, memoranda, books, data, or other information.
  - 3. Attempted cheating.
  
- B. Plagiarism encompasses the following:
  - 1. Presenting as one's own the words, the work, or the opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgment.
  - 2. Borrowing the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought of someone else without proper acknowledgment.
  
- C. Lying encompasses the following:
  - 1. The willful and knowledgeable telling of an untruth, as well as any form of deceit, attempted deceit, or fraud in an oral or written statement relating to academic work. This includes but is not limited to the following:
  - 2. Lying to administration and faculty members.
  - 3. Falsifying any university document by mutilation, addition, or deletion...

**SPGIA Policy on Plagiarism:**

The following is SPGIA policy regarding plagiarism ([www.gmu.edu/facstaff/handbook](http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/handbook)):

“The profession of scholarship and the intellectual life of a university as well as the field of public policy inquiry depend fundamentally on a foundation of trust. Thus, any act of plagiarism strikes at the heart of the meaning of the university and the purpose of the SPGIA. It constitutes a serious breach of professional ethics and it is unacceptable.

“Plagiarism is the use of another's words or ideas presented as one's own. It includes, among other things, the use of specific words, ideas, or frameworks that are the product of another's work. Honesty and thoroughness in citing sources is essential to professional accountability and personal responsibility. Appropriate citation is necessary so that arguments, evidence, and claims can be critically examined.

“Plagiarism is wrong because of the injustice it does to the person whose ideas are stolen. But it is also wrong because it constitutes lying to one's professional colleagues. From a prudential perspective, it is shortsighted and self-defeating, and it can ruin a professional career.

“The faculty of the SPGIA takes plagiarism seriously and has adopted a zero tolerance policy. Any plagiarized assignment will receive an automatic grade of “F.” This may

lead to failure for the course, resulting in dismissal from the University. This dismissal will be noted on the student's transcript. For foreign students who are on a university-sponsored visa (e.g., F-1, J-1, J-2), dismissal also results in the revocation of their visa.

“To help enforce the SPGIA policy on plagiarism, all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit student's work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. The SPGIA policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Codes; it is not intended to replace it or substitute for it.”

#### **Academic Accommodation for a Disability:**

The following is SPGIA policy regarding accommodation for a disability:

“If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.”

#### **Use of Electronic Devices in Class:**

Seminar participants are expected to focus their attention entirely on seminar discussion during class meetings. They are expected to refrain from carrying on other professional or personal activities while the class is meeting. Students engaged in other professional or personal activities during class time will be asked to leave the classroom until they are finished with such activities and to return only when they are prepared to participate in the seminar.

Use of mobile phones in class is not permitted, unless otherwise specified. Seminar members who, for professional or other reasons, need to carry a mobile phone with them must turn these devices off or set them to “vibrate.” The use of computers or other electronic devices while class is in session is permitted but limited to seminar-related purposes.

Students with disabilities that necessitate the use of other electronic devices should inform the instructor and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS). All accommodations must be arranged through ODS.

#### **Weekly Theme and Class Materials:**

Lectures will not recapitulate course reading materials. They will apply, debate and discuss the implications of related concepts, arguments and evidence. Therefore, students should ensure that they read all assigned materials in their entirety before the beginning of each class.

#### **CLASS SCHEDULE:**

The course will consist of 15 (2 hour and 40 minute) classes that are divided into two parts over the semester.

August 24<sup>th</sup>: Introduction to class, professors and discipline of strategic communications

Part 1: Intro to class

Part 2: Intro to strategic communications

August 31<sup>st</sup>: Overview of public health, health care in US and intersection with law/public policy

Part 1: Overview of public health and health care in the United States – Sakran

Part 2: Overview of intersection of law and public health/health care in the United States  
Brown (key cases, and legal constructs)

September 7<sup>th</sup>: Understanding role of Legislative, Executive and Judicial branches and application to health issues

Part 1: Understanding the role of Congress, courts and executive branch - Brown / Sakran

Part 2: Application of particular public health issues and examination of outcomes in Congress, courts & executive branch (Vaccine – emergency use authorization)

September 14<sup>th</sup>: Understanding the intersectional role of private sector & non-profits in health care

Part 1: Understanding the role of the private sector & non-profits related to health care issues Brown and Sakran

Part 2: Application of particular public health issues and examination of role of private sector & non-profits (AHA, Inova – Steve Jones)

September 21<sup>st</sup>: Applying understanding of strategic communications to health care issues

Part 1: Understanding role of strategic communications in shaping messaging related to health care – Steve and Brown and Sakran

Part 2: Application of particular public health issues and examination of role of strategic communications (Steve Plus Health Commissioner)

September 28<sup>th</sup>: Understanding Political Determinants of Health and illustrating health care simulation examples

Part 1: Describing health inequity across America (Daniel Dawes – SHLI)

Part 2: Overview of issue areas we will cover in simulations (ACA, vaccines, tobacco & Guns) highlighting automobile fatalities

October 5<sup>th</sup>: Class simulation on Affordable Care Act passage in Congress (group presentations)

- Part 1: Explanation of final exam presentations, assigning of groups. Providing a Foundation for ACA – Kavita Patel (Brookings Institution)
- Part 2: ACA simulation – Kavita Patel and Anton Gunn

October 12<sup>th</sup>: Class simulation on passage of stronger tobacco laws (group presentation)

- Part 1: Understanding the dynamics around tobacco use
- Part 2: Tobacco simulation – Ad Council

October 19<sup>th</sup>: Class simulation of vaccine approval by Congress and FDA (group presentation)

- Part 1: The complexity around vaccine production (Sarah Depres)
- Part 2: Vaccines approval simulation

October 26<sup>th</sup>: Class simulation on shaping gun reform as public health issue (group presentation)

- Part 1: Guns in America – Firmin DeBrabander
- Part 2: Approaches to Gun Reform Simulation – Lucy McBath and Patrick Hope

November 2<sup>nd</sup>: Overview of rapid response techniques and focus areas / Congressional Hearing

- Part 1: Techniques for rapid response—focus on nuts and bolts of Congressional Hearing (Ian Hunter / Heather O'Reilly)
- Part 2: Briefing members of Congress before Congressional hearing - Don Beyer, Jason Crow, and Robin Kelley

November 9<sup>th</sup>: Overview of rapid response techniques and focus areas / Private Sector

- Part 1: Techniques for rapid response – managing crisis from the c-suite perspective
- Part 2: Briefing executives before Congressional hearing – Private Executives

November 16<sup>th</sup>: Understanding the approach from Press and Public Advocacy Groups to Congressional Hearing

- Part 1: Techniques for rapid response – instituted by Press
- Part 2: Techniques for rapid response – instituted by Advocacy Groups

November 30<sup>th</sup>: Beginning of final exam presentations

- Part 1: Final Exam Mock Congressional Hearing 1
- Part 2: Final Exam Mock Congressional Hearing 2

December 14<sup>th</sup>: Final exam presentations (Last Day Class)

- Part 1: Final Exam Mock Congressional Hearing 3
- Part 2: Wrap Up – Connecting the dots and obtaining feedback