PA 8082
WORKING GROUP
for
HHH Students writing Professional Papers in
International Development, Social Policy, Women & Public Policy,
Policy Analysis, and Global Policy

Professor Deborah Levison
PA 8082, Section 3. Spring 2016. 3 cr. A/F only.
Wednesdays 8:15-11 am in HHH 30 (and HHH 274)

Course objective: to help 2nd+ year masters students finish high-quality, well-written individual Professional Papers by the end of Spring semester.

Students working in Economic & Community Development, Social Policy, Women & Public Policy, and Policy Analysis concentrations are the target audience of this working group. Some Global Policy students may also find this working group appropriate for their topics. If I am supervising your Professional Paper, I expect you to participate in this working group.

What is a professional paper?
An individual professional paper is an analysis of a real world issue. It is not a long paper – it should be about 30 pages of text, not including tables, figures, and bibliography (and should never exceed 50 pages) – but it should be very well-written. The topic should be relevant to your chosen concentration. You should have a clearly defined hypothesis / question of interest. You should use evidence to reach a conclusion and policy implications, drawing upon the relevant literatures.

While students are not necessarily expected to conduct original research, the professional paper should reflect substantial research (if only of secondary sources), should be revised substantially in consultation with the supervisor, and should reflect graduate level analysis.

Grading and Performance Requirements: I expect students to:

• Attend every meeting of the class. Anyone who cannot attend due to illness should contact one of us via email or phone (leave a message) before class begins. Unexcused absences and systematic lateness will lower your grade.
Complete assigned reading, such as Howard Becker’s *Writing for Social Scientists* (which is fun reading, believe it or not, as well as being useful). Because we expect you to be reading extensively in the area of your paper topic, we assign relatively little additional reading – but we expect you to do it before the class for which it is assigned. We will discuss assigned reading in class.

Report-in at each class. Questions asked each week include: What goals did you have for today? Did you meet them or not? What are reasonable goals for next week? Are those goals consistent with your work plan for the semester?

Post your latest draft to Moodle (an outline, a written page or two, a table, a figure, etc.) **by Sunday night** for volunteers who will give you feedback on them.

Give verbal feedback to group members at each meeting, including questions and suggestions.

Review short drafts (e.g., outlines, text, tables, figures) and provide written feedback for 1 or 2 other students, before the next meeting, with a goal of making supportive suggestions and clarifying edits. Your comments must be posted on Moodle by **Tuesday night**.

Comments and suggestions for improvement may address:
- Clarity and coherence of topic justification
- Breadth and quality of sources in lit review
- Amount of information: sufficient? too much? relevance?
- Clear connection between paper purpose and selected methods?
- Quality of writing: orderly, logical progressions? smooth transitions?
- Does the paper have focus?
- Are some ideas over- or under-emphasized?
- Does the theory / methodology fit the question(s) of interest?
- Are underlying assumptions clear and valid?
- Do some sections need clarification, expansion, condensation or omission?
- Are results presented in an accurate and professional manner?
- Are tables and figures clear and useful?
- Objectivity and relevance of statements and conclusions
- Public policy significance

Post a weekly worksheet each week, before class. Consider bringing the draft version of next week’s worksheet to class for your own notes.

In one class, make a brief (2 minute) presentation summarizing the most important points in the assigned reading(s), and lead a short discussion.
about them. The instructors will help to lead the discussion, but we’d like you to think of two questions or issues that would be helpful to discuss as a group.

• **Make regular progress on professional papers.** Doing no work on the paper for three weeks then working hard for one week is unacceptable. Effort is expected to be regular, even if progress is sporadic. Sporadic progress will lower your grade even if the final product is good.

• **Produce grammatically correct writing.** If you have trouble with grammar, you will need to ask someone to help you make corrections. Your classmates will help you to some extent if you ask them, but typically not enough to catch all the problems. You may need to get help from someone outside of class. UM’s Center for Writing may be of assistance: [http://writing.umn.edu/sws/index.htm](http://writing.umn.edu/sws/index.htm), but they will not edit your paper for you. They will help you learn how to write better, however.

Students who complete each requirement of each week, in a timely manner, will get an A in the class. The two hardest things to do are (1) make progress each and every week; and (2) give high-quality feedback to your classmates.

**What usually happens in class:**
We will begin with discussion of the assigned readings. Then, each student will have a chance to “report-in,” ask for suggestions of various kinds, determine a plan for the coming week, and be assigned volunteers to review whatever you drafted in the previous week (writing, tables, etc.). Reporting-in will sometimes happen in small groups. If the group decides that presentations should be assigned, those will happen before reporting-in.

**Required books:**


Professor Deborah Levison:
Office: 266 Humphrey Center
Email: dlevison@umn.edu
Office telephone 612-624-3540

Office hours:
Please feel free to make an appointment with me if you cannot come to my office hours.

What is the instructor's role? Comments from Deborah:
I help students to understand the process of finding a topic, writing, and finishing a professional paper. I give advice when requested (and often without being requested!) on a variety of topics ranging from relevant literatures to possible sources of data to potential committee members. I help keep students “on track” for an oral date no later than May. I review the written comments and advice that students give to each other and help students learn to give better feedback. When the class has had a required reading – all of which are related to improving one’s writing – I help lead the discussion about that reading. I read outlines and drafts, giving comments using a tape recorder (I cannot write much due to injuries.)

I do not need to be on your committee. While I require students whose papers I am supervising to take this working group, other students may be writing on topics on which I have less expertise. I encourage students to find experts in their areas of interest for paper supervisors and committee members. If you feel that you want me on your committee, please feel free to ask me; if you do not ask, I will assume that I am not on your committee.

While I am happy to meet with you outside of class, I cannot promise to do so as soon as you might like. As a faculty member with other teaching, research and service responsibilities, I am juggling many commitments. I will fit you in as soon as I can do so.

There are other things that I do not do. I support students’ choice of a topic that requires data analysis, but I do not provide programming support for Stata or SPSS, etc. If I am not on your committee, I will not necessarily read the final version of your paper, although I will read drafts during the semester.

Grading policy. To earn an A, students must fulfill all the performance requirements described above. Students who miss classes or are late, who do not consistently complete class readings, who do not talk much in class, who do not give high quality feedback to peers, who do not make regular progress on
their papers, or who do not take grammatical editing seriously can expect to earn a grade no higher than a B, even if the final professional paper is good.

**Paper topic approval form:** Students submit a Paper Topic Approval form to Graduate Student Services, with the following information:

- Paper topic summary
- Proposed timeline for the completion of the project, to include interim stages of when research will be completed, drafts submitted, allotted time for revision of completed draft and date for completion of the final draft.
- The research strategy
- What you based your paper on (i.e., reworking of class paper, expansion of workshop paper, independent study)

The paper proposal must be signed by the student's academic adviser and the paper supervisor (if different from the academic adviser) and be submitted to the director of graduate studies for approval.

**Your committee.** The student selects her/his orals committee in consultation with the academic adviser. Usually, committee members are identified and recorded on the Paper Topic Approval form. Changes may be made prior to the oral presentation.

The committee for an individual option consists of two Graduate Faculty members: the paper supervisor and a second member. At least one of the committee members must be a Humphrey School Graduate Faculty member and one must be the student's paper supervisor. (These may be, but do not have to be, the same person).

Students are strongly encouraged to verify committee members' participation by the middle of the semester in which they plan to graduate and to set dates for their final oral presentation.

**The Oral Examination.** The oral presentation, which usually lasts about an hour, will often begin with a brief presentation of the professional paper by the student to the committee. A discussion will follow.

- It is not unusual for committee members to ask students for changes in the paper.
- Each committee member signs the paper’s title page when the paper is judged satisfactory (after revisions, if necessary).
The Final Examination Report form and the paper are submitted to the GPO (Suite 280) once the paper has been signed by the committee members and is ready to be bound.

**Disabilities.** Any student with a documented disability (e.g., physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, etc.) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations must contact the instructor and Disability Services, preferably before the beginning of the semester. All discussions will remain confidential. For further information contact the University of Minnesota Disability Services website at [http://ds.umn.edu/students/](http://ds.umn.edu/students/) or call 612/626-1333 (V/TTY).

**Maintaining good mental health.** As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student’s ability to participate in daily activities. University of Minnesota services are available to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Student Mental Health Website at [http://www.mentalhealth.umn.edu](http://www.mentalhealth.umn.edu).

**Policy on Incompletes.** An incomplete grade is permitted only in cases of extraordinary circumstances and following consultation with the instructor. In such cases an “I” grade will require a specific written agreement between the instructor and student specifying the time and manner in which the student will complete the course requirements. Extension for completion of the work will not exceed one year.

**Statement on Scholastic Dishonesty.** Students are responsible for knowing the University of Minnesota Board of Regents’ policy on student conduct and scholastic dishonesty: [http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/academic/Student_Conduct_Code.pdf](http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/academic/Student_Conduct_Code.pdf)

Scholastic dishonesty as defined in the policy and will be reported to the Office for Student Conduct and Academic Integrity ([http://www1.umn.edu/oscai/conduct/student/index.html](http://www1.umn.edu/oscai/conduct/student/index.html)) and will result in a grade of “F” for the entire course.

Plagiarism is an important element of this policy. It is defined as the presentation of another’s writing or ideas as your own. Serious, intentional plagiarism will result in a grade of “F" or “N" for the entire course. Students are urged to be
careful that they properly attribute and cite others’ work in their own writing. For guidelines for correctly citing sources, go to http://tutorial.lib.umn.edu/ and click on “Citing Sources”.

Original work is expected in this course. It is unacceptable to write a paper in the working group and use it in another course (or vice versa) unless both instructors have agreed in advance. Building on a line of work begun in another course or leading to a Professional Paper is acceptable. If you have any questions, consult the instructors of this course.

Resources:

A link to finished Humphrey Professional Papers: http://conservancy.umn.edu/handle/43903
-- you can search by topic or just browse the collection.

Tips for Success: (from the website: “Successful Academic”)

**Procrastination.** “In my experience, when academics are unable to achieve their goals they expect more of themselves in the future. This is a recipe for getting stuck. For example, Jane, a student in sociology, was preparing for her comps and wanted to read five articles each day. On Monday she only read two articles, although they were long, dense, took four hours to complete and although she took good notes on both articles. Even though Jane had worked hard, she was discouraged because she had not met her goal. She decided that she needed to read eight articles on Tuesday to "keep up". Soon she was so behind her own schedule that she gave up completely and read no articles for the rest of the week.”

**Setting your goals too high is setting yourself up to fail.** “Think of weightlifters in training: If a weightlifter tries on Monday to bench press 200 pounds and can't lift the bar, does she try to lift 250 pounds the next day? No! She takes weights off the bar until she finds an amount that she can lift. It is only slowly, with practice, that she can build up her muscles and increase her load. **If you are consistently unable to meet your goals, reduce your expectations and then slowly build up your achievement muscles.** Remember, too, that the best weightlifters do not work out every day. Cross-training and days off are essential for optimal performance.”

**The Internet Deferment Decree: Avoid Addictions.** “Most academics find that the most devious time-wasting activities are web searches and email checks. How often do you say, "I'll just check my email quickly before I start writing" and
then find that you spent a half hour responding to messages that could have waited?

How often do you say, "I'll just do a quick search for another reference" and find yourself spending an hour in fascinating but irrelevant Internet sidetracks?

This is the way to avoid Internet addictions: work first. Use the Internet as a reward rather than a precursor to your toughest tasks. Even if you are waiting to see if you've gotten your grant, are expecting an important message from your advisor, or need to do a new literature search on the computer, first work on your most important academic project for just ten minutes before "examining" anything else."

**List of class members (N)**

*Name – email address – phone*
SCHEDULE for Spring 2015

The working group will meet every Wednesday 8:15-11 a.m.

Note: 2014 students chose to do one or two presentations. First, (#1) optional presentations are 5-10 minute presentations starting about Week 3 (before Spring Break). The second (#2) presentations are 15-20 minutes long, are meant to be dry-runs for oral presentations, and are video-recorded (after Spring Break). Times are strictly enforced.

WEEK 1 – January xx:
Participants should be prepared to talk about their ideas for topics and should bring outlines of their work plans for the semester.

WEEK 2 – January xx:
Required reading: Howard Becker, Writing for Social Scientists, Chapters 1-5 and The Craft of Research, pp. 35-48 – Chapter 3 (2nd ed: pp. 40-52). Readings discussion: Chris (Becker) and Sean (Craft). Snacks: Jenny

WEEK 3 – February xx:
Required reading: Howard Becker, Writing for Social Scientists, Chapters 6-8 and pp. 164-172 of Chapter 9. (Chapter 9 pages are not in 1st edition.) Readings discussion:

Also, The Craft of Research, pp. 51-67 – Chapter 4 (2nd ed: pp. 56-74). Snacks:

Presentations (#1):

WEEK 4 – February xx:
Required reading: The Craft of Research, pp. 84-100 – Chapter 6 on “Engaging Sources.” Readings discussion:

Snacks:

Presentations (#1):

WEEK 5 – February xx:
No readings for this week.

Snacks:

Presentations (#1):

WEEK 6 – February xx:
Required reading: The Craft of Research, pp. 108-151 – Chapters 7-10. Readings discussion:

Snacks:

Presentations (#1):
WEEK 7 – March xx:
Readings discussion: Deborah
Snacks:

Required: email a claim, reason & warrant related to your paper to Deborah by March 2nd.

Presentations (#1):

WEEK 8 – March xx:


Presentations (#1):

SPRING BREAK

WEEK 9 – March xx:

Likely visit from Alicia George, Student Services Officer, GSS

Presentations (#2):

WEEK 10 – April xx:

Bring to class: 2 hard copies of your cover page, in HHH format, with a working title (to share in class, get feedback)

Presentations (#2):

WEEK 11 – April xx:

Presentations (#2):

WEEK 12 – April xx:

Presentations (#2):
WEEK 13 – April 22:
Required reading: McCloskey, *Economical Writing*, pp. 61-89. Readings discussion:
Snacks:

Presentations (#2):

*Note: Freeman-Stassen Award nominations are usually due at the end of April. Lloyd B. Short Award nominations are usually due about May 1st.*

WEEK 14 – April 29:
Snacks:

Presentations (#2):

WEEK 15 – May 6:
Snacks:

Course evaluations.

*Class potluck? When?*

“Final” date for completing orals: May 23, 2014