

PLS 422, Sect. 742: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICE MGSP COURSE—ONLINE, HYBRID—SPRING 2023

I. Course Instructor:

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Pronouns: he, him, his

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Office Hours: Wed (1:00-3:00pm) or by Appointment

(<https://msu.zoom.us/j/92461100332>) Pswd: YesPLS

II. Course Description and Objectives:

This course is a component of the Michigan Government Semester Program. This course is designed to help you develop professional skills to enhance a possible career in or related to public service. Students interning and working in the public sector are often required to communicate (orally and in writing) in ways they are not typically trained via traditional academic courses. As such, this course will provide you opportunities to compose bill analyses, policy memos, speeches, press releases, and written testimony. You will also provide oral testimony before a mock legislative committee hearing and consider the role of social media and ethics in government. These class exercises will further hone your communication skills and allow you to provide feedback to your peers on their written work. You will simultaneously strengthen your applied understanding of government, politics, and public policy. The hope is that these activities will also benefit your internship placements as these assignments mirror the projects that interns are typically required to complete.

As such, you should leave this course with the following competencies:

- You should be able to communicate with the public and constituents from the perspective of public servants and governmental institutions.
- You should develop an understanding of and ability to execute different writing tasks expected of various government employees and positions within or around government.
- You should be able to communicate effectively using different writing and oral techniques common to state and local government.
- You should foster a deeper understanding of the role of the media, including social media, in state government and how government officials interact with the media and the press.
- You should appreciate the importance of ethics in government and consider how to handle possible ethical situations and dilemmas as a public servant.
- You should strengthen your understanding of the inner workings of government, politics, public policy, and the law at the state and local levels, as well as a deeper knowledge of public opinion, political psychology, and political decision making.
- You should become a *critical* consumer of news, data, and social science research results, and learn how to make sense of the daily deluge of data and information. You should also enhance your numerical literacy skills, understanding and questioning basic representations of data and information.
- You should be knowledgeable about current events and understand how politics at the state and local level impacts residents in real, meaningful ways.

PLS 422, Sect. 742: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICE MGSP COURSE—ONLINE, HYBRID—SPRING 2023

- You should learn how to become a more active and engaged citizen and be able to articulate your perspective on a host of issues and debates. And you should improve your ability to express your political views both verbally and in writing. You should also develop an appreciation for civility, tolerance, and discourse, being open to political ideas and opinions in contrast to your own while simultaneously reflecting on and updating your own beliefs and positions.

III. Course Modality:

PLS 422-742's mode of instruction is ONLINE, comprised only of asynchronous components. However, this course is also connected to PLS 422-741, which contains synchronous meetings twice a week. We will frequently discuss this course's components during those synchronous sessions.

You will prepare by reading assigned materials, listening to podcasts, or watching pre-recorded lectures for this course. As a writing-intensive course, you will also complete eight applied module assignments. You will also be asked to review your peers' draft work product providing constructive feedback. These collective assignments are intended to further your professional development and strengthen your communication (oral and written) skills for the public sector.

See the Course Requirements and Course Schedule sections for more details.

IV. Tips for Taking an Online Course:

Online courses are great for one simple reason—they afford you more flexibility in your schedule. You can participate in the course when you are available and at your pace. (And you get the added benefit of doing preparatory work while sitting in your pajamas.) But make no mistake about it—online courses are NOT easier. They are much more challenging than in-person classes. Why? Because you are left to your own devices. Of course, I'll be following up with you, trying to engage you, reminding you of due dates, and providing feedback. But an online environment makes it easier for you to ignore me. So, if you want to be successful in this (and all of your online courses this semester), this is what I suggest:

- A. Make a plan for when you are going to do the readings, listen to the recorded lectures, complete the draft and final versions of required writing assignments. What days and times are you going to do this? And don't leave it to Fridays or Sundays on the days that assignments are due!
- B. Second, while listening to podcasts, doing the readings, or completing the writing assignments, here are some dos and don'ts:
 - Refrain from opening emails, texting, or browsing the web.
 - Choose a space where you will not encounter distractions, which could include roommates, laundry, dirty dishes, or a busy street outside your window.
 - Avoid sitting on a comfortable couch or bed.
 - Ensure you have a strong connection to the internet and that your computer won't crash or update on you. Make a backup plan in case this does happen, perhaps using your phone as an alternative.

PLS 422, Sect. 742: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICE MGSP COURSE—ONLINE, HYBRID—SPRING 2023

- Don't wait until the day something is due to start it. You will engage the material much more by doing the readings and listening to online lectures days earlier, letting the information sit with you, and then engaging it during the assignment.

V. Course Materials:

You do not have to purchase any textbooks or materials for this course. All assigned materials—e.g., book chapters, research articles, news reports, video links—will be made available via the course website.

The course website is Desire2Learn (hereafter D2L): <http://d2l.msu.edu>. You can access the assigned readings and activities on D2L. Grades will be posted periodically on the course website. I will also announce schedule or course changes here. Assignments will also be due via D2L. Please check our course website regularly. If you need technical assistance with D2L at any time, you should call MSU's IT support at 517-355-2345; they provide excellent and speedy support.

Also, I have created a Professional Development Question & Answer Discussion Forum (under the Communication, then Discussion tab). Feel free to pose general questions or answer your colleagues' questions there. This forum can be your first place to look for answers to general questions about the reading material, lectures, writing assignments, peer-review, guest speakers, your internships, among other topics. *You can also subscribe to this forum so that it emails you when questions are posed or answered.*

VI. Course Requirements:

WRITING PRE-ASSESSMENT SURVEY (0%): You will be asked to complete a short (~ 5 minutes) writing pre-assessment questionnaire to indicate your knowledge and apprehension around writing for the professional arena. Although there are no points associated with this survey, please complete it as it helps me evaluate the effectiveness of the course materials and benefits future MGSP students.

COMMITTEE MEETING REPORT (10%): You will be asked to attend a legislative committee meeting of your choice (a House or Senate Committee Hearing, in-person or online). You will then be asked to pen a Committee Meeting Report to describe the meeting, the legislation discussed, identify the main actors, summarize any outside testimony, and evaluate the process.

BILL ANALYSIS (15%): You will be asked to draft a bill analysis, peer review a colleague's bill analysis (via ELI Review), and submit a final version of your bill analysis (having incorporated your colleague's and instructor's comments). A bill analysis is a document that summarizes a new piece of legislation (i.e., bill) in layperson's terms. There are variations on what is required, but bill analyses typically comprise the bill information, bill summary, analyses, and conclusion. Whether working for a legislative office, the governor, a bureaucratic agency, a lobbying firm, a nonprofit group, or a business, governmental affairs personnel frequently have to summarize new policies for colleagues and others. Bill analyses provide this critical tool to communicate with others about pending legislation.

**PLS 422, Sect. 742: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICE
MGSP COURSE—ONLINE, HYBRID—SPRING 2023**

POLICY MEMO (15%): You will be asked to draft a policy memo, peer review a colleague's policy memo (via ELI Review), and submit a final version of your policy memo (having incorporated your colleague's and instructor's feedback). Policy memos are a means to convey information, analysis, and recommendations on a course of action regarding a particular problem or situation in a well-organized, clear, and concise manner to a decision-maker. You will have to identify the problem the policy addresses, the stakeholders impacted by the policy, the benefits and trade-offs of the policy, barriers to passage, consideration of implementation and evaluation, among other components.

ETHICS EXERCISE OR SOCIAL MEDIA EXERCISE(10%): Pick one of these two options. **Ethics Exercise:** You will be asked to read four fictional case studies, each involving different ethical questions faced by fictional state or local government officials and employees. Then you will be asked to assess the scenarios presented in the stories and answer the questions pertaining to these vignettes. **Social Media Exercise:** Social media has become a ubiquitous outlet for political officials to communicate with constituents and voters. You will be asked to identify a member of Michigan government's Facebook and/or Twitter accounts and evaluate the type of and content of posts, photos shared, reactions, etc. You will also be asked to interpret the image you think the government official is projecting, whether anything is inappropriate, too partisan, or too personal. Finally, you will be asked to make recommendations for the official's social media accounts.

SPEECH (15%): You will be asked to pen a speech, peer review a colleague's speech (via ELI Review), and submit a final version of your speech (having incorporated your colleague's and instructor's feedback). The speech should be intended for the person or entity you are interning for, should be about 10-15 minutes long, consistent with the person or entity's views and style. You can choose the audience for the speech (e.g., local high school, environmental group, women's group, local Chamber of Commerce, labor union, gun club, civil rights group, church or religious group) as well as the topic for the speech (e.g., COVID, state of the economy, roads and infrastructure, employment, right to work, gun control, education, health care).

PRESS RELEASE (10%): You will be asked to write a press release, presumably for your internship placement. A press release is a statement about events or ideas of interest that the writer wants to broadcast to a large audience via local or national mass media. Individuals or departments within an organization may produce press releases. Nonprofit groups may use press releases to announce fund-raising events. Editors of newspapers and journals and television and radio directors, use press releases to help them decide what stories or events they will report. Editors receive competition for time and space, so they are apt to print better-written submittals. This is less work on their part. You will be allowed to choose the topic of the press release: e.g., announce changes, new policy, upcoming event, introduction and explanation of a bill, explain the adverse effects of a policy, general information for the public.

ORAL/WRITTEN TESTIMONY GROUP PROJECT (25%): Providing oral and written testimony during a legislative Committee Hearing is an essential component of policy advocacy and evaluation, as well as a critical tool to communicate with policymakers and represent your (or others') interests. As such, you will be asked to form a team of four students (you and three other members). Each group will then choose an issue being debated from the current Michigan legislative agenda. Your team will research the issue and together write a testimony/position paper on the topic. You will then present your testimony to a "mock legislative committee." The committee will be composed

**PLS 422, Sect. 742: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICE
MGSP COURSE—ONLINE, HYBRID—SPRING 2023**

of some of our guest speakers and members of the Michigan legislature. Collectively, your team will have 15 minutes to testify. Each student on the team will be expected to testify at the mock testimony and answer the mock committee’s questions. Time limits will be imposed. More details will be placed on D2L, but the project is broken up into four phases: (1) Team Formation, (2) Testimony Proposed Topic, (3) Testimony Draft, and (4) Oral / Written Testimony Final.

WRITING POST-ASSESSMENT SURVEY (0%): You will be asked to complete a short (~ 5 minutes) writing post-assessment questionnaire to indicate your knowledge and apprehension around writing for the professional arena at the end of the semester (following all of the assignments). Although there are no points associated with this survey, please complete it as it helps me evaluate the effectiveness of the course materials and benefits future MGSP students.

VII. Student Evaluation and Grading:

Grading Weights—your point total will be determined using the following weights:

- Writing Pre-Assessment Survey 0 points (0%)
- Committee Meeting Report: 100 points (10%)
- Bill Analysis 150 points (15%)
 - Bill Analysis Draft 75 points
 - Bill Analysis Peer Review 25 points
 - Bill Analysis Final Draft 50 points
- Policy Memo 150 points (15%)
 - Policy Memo Draft 75 points
 - Policy Memo Peer Review 25 points
 - Policy Memo Final Draft 50 points
- Ethics Exercise or Social Media Exercise 100 points (10%)
- Speech 150 points (15%)
 - Speech Draft 75 points
 - Speech Peer Review 25 points
 - Speech Final Draft 50 points
- Press Release 100 points (10%)
- Oral/Written Testimony Group Project 250 points (25%)
 - Proposed Testimony Topic & Research 50 points
 - Written Testimony Draft 100 points
 - Oral Testimony (and Written Testimony Final Draft) 100 points
- Writing Post-Assessment Survey 0 points (0%)
- TOTAL: 1000 points (100%)

Grading Scale:

4.0	90 – 100	2.5	75 – 79	1.0	60 – 64
3.5	85 – 89	2.0	70 – 74	0.0	Below 60
3.0	80 – 84	1.5	65 – 69		

**PLS 422, Sect. 742: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICE
MGSP COURSE—ONLINE, HYBRID—SPRING 2023**

*This is the grade scale that I will use to guide my grading decisions. If you earn the percentage listed above, you are assured at least that grade. However, I reserve the right to curve the final grades upward should I deem it necessary.

VIII. Course Outline & Schedule:

The outline below is subject to changes as necessary to account for the unique dynamics of our course. If changes are made, they will be announced with notice via email and documented on D2L.

Week	Topic	Assigned Activities & Due Dates
1. Jan. 9 – 15	Writing Pre-Assessment Survey & Committee Hearing Report	Complete: Writing Pre-Assessment Survey on D2L Read: A Citizen’s Guide to State Government Read: For the People, By the People. How State & Local Govs. Operate Attend: Legislative Committee Meeting (House or Senate). See schedule here . Write Committee Meeting Report. Details on D2L Due: Writing Pre-Assessment (~ 5 minutes)
2. Jan. 16 – 22	Committee Hearing Report	Read: AP Style Guide Read: Communicating in Government Read: Constituent Letters Due: Committee Meeting Report, Fri. Jan. 20 @ 11:59 pm
3. Jan. 23 – 29	Bill Analysis	Read: Bill Analysis Guidelines, Resources, & Rubric Read: How to Give Peer Feedback Due: Bill Analysis Draft, Fri. Jan. 28 @ 11:59 pm Due: Peer Feedback on Bill Analysis Draft, Sun. Jan. 30 @ 11:59 pm
4. Jan. 30 – Feb. 5	Bill Analysis	Read: Policy Memo Guidelines, Resources, & Rubric Read: How to Write a Policy Memo Due: Final Bill Analysis, Fri. Feb. 4 @ 11:59 pm
5. Feb. 6 – 12	Policy Memo	Review: Oral/Written Testimony Guidelines & Rubric Read: Interpreting Data to Support Policy Arguments Due: Policy Memo Draft, Fri. Feb 17 @ 11:59 pm Due: Peer Feedback on Policy Memo Draft, Sun. Feb. 19 @ 11:59 pm Due: Testimony Team Formed (3 or 4 members), Fri. Feb. 17 @ 11:59 pm
6. Feb. 13 – 19	Policy Memo	Read: Testimony
7. Feb. 20 – 26	Policy Memo	Read: Testimony

**PLS 422, Sect. 742: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICE
MGSP COURSE—ONLINE, HYBRID—SPRING 2023**

		Read: Elements of Effective Testimony Due: Final Policy Memo, Fri. Feb. 25 @ 5:00 pm
8. Feb. 27 – March 5	Ethics Exercise OR Social Media Exercise Oral/Written Testimony Proposal	Read: Ethics Exercise Guidelines, Resources & Rubric Read: Social Media Exercise, Guidelines, Resources, & Rubric Due: Ethics Exercise OR Social Media Exercise, Friday March 3 @ 11:59 pm Due: Testimony Proposed Topic, Fri. March 3 @ 11:59 pm
9. March 6 – 12	Spring Break	No Assignments
10. March 13 – 19	Speech	Read: Speeches Guidelines, Resources, & Rubric Read: Talking Points, Remarks, & Speeches
11. March 20 – 26	Speech	Due: Speech Draft, Fri. March 24 @ 11:59 pm Due: Peer Feedback on Speech Draft, Sun. March 26 @ 11:59 pm
12. March 27–April 2	Speech	Read: Press Release Guidelines, Resources & Rubric Read: Press Releases Due: Final Speech, Fri. March 31 @ 11:59 pm
13. April 3 – 9	Press Release	Due: Press Release, Friday April 7 @ 11:59 pm
14. April 10 – 16	Oral/Written Testimony Draft	Due: Written Testimony Draft, Fri. April 14 @ 11:59 pm
15. April 17 – 23	Oral/Written Testimony Project Practice	Due: Practice Oral Testimony, Thurs. April 20 (During Class Time – 2 hours)
16. April 24 – 30	Final Oral/Written Testimony Project	Due: Final Oral Testimony, Mon. April 24 (During Class Time – 2 ½ hours) Due: Writing Post-Assessment (~ 5 minutes)
17. May 1 – 5	Finals Week	No Final Exam

IX. Course Policies and Procedures:

Intellectual Property of Course Content: My lectures, notes, handouts, quizzes, essays, assignments, and displays are protected by state common law and federal copyright law. They are my original expression or have been borrowed from colleagues who have given prior consent. Students are authorized to take notes in my courses; however, this authorization extends only to making one set of notes for your personal use and no other use. You may not copy course material, make

PLS 422, Sect. 742: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICE MGSP COURSE—ONLINE, HYBRID—SPRING 2023

commercial use of them, or upload any course material to online study sites without prior permission from me.

Expected Civil Decorum: Politics can be controversial. And you will engage in controversial issues from time to time. I desire to create a space where meaningful and constructive dialogue is encouraged, and your opinions are shared. However, this requires mutual respect, a willingness to listen, and tolerance of opposing viewpoints. I expect that respect for individual differences and alternative points of view will always be maintained in this course and at your internship site. One's words and use of language should be tempered and within acceptable bounds of civility and decency.

Late Work or Make-up Assessments: I expect students to make every effort to turn in assignments and activities on time and as scheduled. The only exceptions that will be made pertain to medical emergencies experienced by you or someone in your immediate family that necessitate your absence, participation in a College-sponsored event or activity, or observance of a religious holiday. If you know in advance you will miss or be late for a course requirement, you must notify me in advance. If you are ill or other extenuating circumstances cause you to miss a required graded activity, notify me as soon as possible and provide appropriate documentation (e.g., doctor's note) that allows me to verify your claim.

Please note that for those assignments or activities turned in after a deadline (that do not meet the exceptions mentioned above), I will apply a 25% penalty to your assignment grade for every 24 hours beyond the due date and time.

Internet Access: I understand that internet accessibility is an essential consideration for this online course. Given this, I understand if you are inadvertently disconnected from our Zoom synchronous classes. I encourage you to try to reconnect or to call into the Zoom meeting using your telephonic device. I also understand if you would prefer not to show your video to preserve bandwidth. Zoom meetings will be recorded in case you encounter technical difficulties. If you experience an internet outage during a timed exam, please let me know as soon as possible via email. In the United States, hotspots are available for a low price and often carry one month of free internet connection. Some assistance might also be available through the Office of Financial Aid or Student Services because connectivity will effectively become a requirement for the course. A map of free hotspots in Michigan is available here:

<http://cngis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=0d69accbb5ff422a82ecce2c9101b69d>.

Communication with the Instructor: I care about you and your success during the internship, in this course, at Michigan State University, and beyond. I welcome suggestions, comments, questions, and conversations about your internship experience, the course, policy studies, political science, graduate school, or the professional arena outside academia. Feel free to participate in my virtual office hours (office hours are listed above), set up an appointment, call, or email me. I will try to respond to all emails within 24 hours, although it may take longer on the weekends. I will also use email and our D2L site to frequently communicate with you about course assignments, activities, and any changes to the course schedule or syllabus.

**PLS 422, Sect. 742: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICE
MGSP COURSE—ONLINE, HYBRID—SPRING 2023**

Grade Appeals or Challenges: I am not infallible and make grading errors, including grading miscalculations, from time to time. If you have a question or concern regarding your performance on an assignment or your standing in the course, I am happy to discuss this with you.

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism and other academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. I expect all work to be original and not previously or simultaneously turned in for credit in another course (unless you get explicit permission from me beforehand). All students at MSU are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policies of this institution. Violations of this policy may include cheating, plagiarism (including “patchwriting”), aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. Students that violate the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member (including but not limited to a zero for the assignment and/or course, being reported to the Dean’s office) and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to probation, suspension, or expulsion from the university).

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities (from the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities (RCPD): Michigan State University and I are committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. Requests for accommodations by persons with disabilities may be made by contacting the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at 517-884-RCPD or on the web at www.rcpd.msu.edu. Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a Verified Individual Services Accommodation (“VISA”) form. Please present this form to me at the start of the term and/or one week before the accommodation date (test, project, etc.). Requests received after this date may not be honored.

Religious Observation Policy:

<http://www.hr.msu.edu/documents/facacadhandbooks/facultyhandbook/religiousobservance.htm>

Sexual Harassment or Assault: Michigan State University and I are committed to fostering a culture of caring and respect that is free of relationship violence and sexual misconduct, and to ensuring that all affected individuals have access to services. For information on reporting options, confidential advocacy and support resources, university policies and procedures, or how to make a difference on campus, visit the Title IX website at www.titleix.msu.edu.

I am available if you would like to speak to me about an incident of sexual harassment or assault that occurred while you are a student at MSU. However, it is essential to note that all MSU faculty members (and teaching assistants) are mandatory reporters through Title IX (the law that prohibits sex discrimination, including harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking). If you speak to me about a personal experience, I am required to report my knowledge of the incident to the Title IX coordinator.

You may want to call MSU’s 24-Hour Sexual Assault Crisis Line **(517) 372-6666** or visit <https://centerforsurvivors.msu.edu/>. An additional resource outside MSU to consider if you need one-on-one crisis support is the Michigan Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence’s Voices4 Hotline. The Hotline provides confidential and anonymous support for all victims/survivors, their significant others, and those professionals who serve them in the state of Michigan 24 hours a day, seven days a week. These services are secure and available in real-time. You can reach the Hotline via phone, chat, text, or TTY (Teletypewriter).

**PLS 422, Sect. 742: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICE
MGSP COURSE—ONLINE, HYBRID—SPRING 2023**

Hotline: [1-855-VOICES4 \(1-855-864-2374\)](tel:1-855-VOICES4)

TTY: [517-381-8470](tel:517-381-8470)

Chat Line: <https://mcedsv.org/hotline/hotline-chat/>

Text Line: [1-866-238-1454](tel:1-866-238-1454)

Finally, Equal Rights Advocates have put together an excellent toolkit for survivors:

<https://www.equalrights.org/issue/student-survivor-toolkit/>.

Mental Health Services: Students often experience issues that may interfere with academic success, such as academic stress, sleep problems, juggling responsibilities, life events, relationship concerns, or feelings of anxiety, hopelessness, or depression. If you or a friend is struggling, we strongly encourage you to seek support. Helpful resources are available on campus, and most are free of charge.

- Drop by Counseling & Psychiatric Services (CAPS) main location (3rd floor of Olin Health Center) for a same-day mental health screening.
- Visit <https://caps.msu.edu> for online health assessments, hours, and additional CAPS services.
- Call CAPS at **(517) 355-8270** any time, day or night.
- 24-Hour MSU Sexual Assault Crisis Line **(517) 372-6666** or visit <https://centerforsurvivors.msu.edu/>.