CRP 5850/Special Topics
Fall, 2015
Monday: 2:30-4:30 pm
Sibley 318
3 credits (You may want to sign up for more credits with your exit project adviser)

Research and Writing for Policy Applications

Susan Christopherson Office: 106 West Sibley Hall
Email: smc23@cornell.edu
Office Hours: Tuesday and Wednesday pm (by appt)

Prerequisite: MRP Exit project identified and adviser form on file

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This seminar course will focus on research methods and writing in policy and applied research. This type of research project is driven by a policy issue or question and often defined by a client. These research and writing projects require many of the same components as an academic research paper – literature review, hypothesis, data collection and analysis. They differ in requiring the ability to communicate with a non-academic audience and in the defined time frame required for completion. This course is particularly directed at second year students in the Master’s in Regional Planning program who need to complete an exit project this academic year. By the end of the Fall semester you should have a draft exit project paper and a plan for completion by March 2016.

Skills you will acquire in this course:

Critical thinking - clear and precise problem formulation; the ability to gather and assess relevant information and to use abstract ideas; and to come to well-reasoned conclusions

Writing/Communication – ability to write a policy research paper or brief, communicating with a broad audience

Presenting Research Findings to a Client - oral and written policy presentations

Time Management – planning and working to deadline

Course Reading:

This is primarily a writing course but we will use one book in this course to inform our discussions about research and writing. The book is a classic in laying out how to think about, conduct and write about research

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

The course grade will be based on completion of a series of assignments to be posted on the blackboard site, leading to a draft of a policy-oriented research paper, policy brief or client project due Tuesday December 8th. There will be no incompletes in this course.

Honor Code and Citations

In this course, students are expected to turn in original work. As such, all assignments should properly cite the work of others (this includes work gleaned from electronic sources as well as books and articles). Please refer to a style guide for details on citations. Please review the university’s honor code: http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/Academic/AIC.html.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Part I: Introduction

Week 1

August 31: Introduction to the Course. What are the Steps Ito Complete a Policy-oriented Research Paper or Client Project? Do you want to set up a writing group?

Course resources, Blackboard sign-up, writing a policy brief, a list of potential topics; what is your adviser’s role?

Reading: Booth et al, pp 3-67

From Topic to Question, The Hypothesis as a Promising Answer

Assignment #1: A two-paragraph summary of your exit project. What is your topic? What is your research question? Do you know the difference?
How will you answer your question? Due September 11th. Put on Blackboard and send to your advisor.

Week 2

September 7: Labor Day
No class

Week 3:

September 14:

Topic A: Response to Topic and Hypothesis

Topic B: From Problems to Sources

What is a Literature Review? Why should you do one? What are the limits? How do you know when you know enough? Why pay attention to what other people have said about your topic and question?

Reading: Booth et al, pp 68-101

Assignment #2: Write a 3-5 page critical literature review on your topic and your question. What is known? Where are the gaps in knowledge? How does your topic relate to what is known in this area? Post on Blackboard. You will be asked to review a set of your colleague’s lit reviews in order to pose constructive questions.

Due: September 25

Week 4:

September 21

What is a Research Argument?

How do you make claims and support them? How do you assemble and use evidence.

Reading: Booth et al, pp 105-138
Week 5:

September 28

Group work
Presentation of Literature review findings. What is known about your topic? What are the unanswered questions and gaps in knowledge? What are you adding?

Week 6:

October 5:

How Do You Acknowledge Competing Points of View?

How do you think about relevance and warrants?

Reading Booth et al. pp 139-170

Assignment #3: Write 4-5 pages laying out evidence from your research. What have you found? How does this exercise affect your research question?

Due October 30th

Week 7:

October 12

Fall semester Break No class

Week 8:

October 19

Discussion of “presenting your evidence”. What problems are you having?

Week 9:

October 26:

Writing for a policy audience. How is it different?
Guest speaker: Robin Blakely – Armitage Editor of Community and Regional Development Institute Research and Policy Brief series: http://cardi.cals.cornell.edu/publications/research-policy-briefs/

**Week 10:**
**November 2**

Topic A: Thinking ahead to the final product  
What does the graduate school expect?  

Visual Presentation of Evidence: Options, Techniques and Ethics

Booth et al: pp 213-231

Guest: Tina Nelson

Topic B: Responses to your evidence

**Assignment #4: 25-30 page draft due Tuesday December 8**

**START DRAFTING:**

**Week 11:**

**November 9**

Getting stuck?  
Ideas to keep your work in progress  
Guest Speaker: Elliot Shapiro, Director, Writing in the Majors  
The Knight Writing Institute for Writing in the Disciplines

http://www.arts.cornell.edu/knight_institute/walkin/resources.htm

**Assignment #5 Send preliminary draft to your advisor and arrange meeting for week of November 23rd or November 30th**

**Week 12:**
**November 16:**

Introductions and Conclusions  
How are they structured? Why do you usually have to throw away the introduction you wrote initially and write a new one?

Booth et al: pp 232-248
Week 13:
November 23rd
No class
Thanksgiving Holiday Recess

Meet with your advisor after sending draft
Identify a second committee member and meet with that person

Week 14:
November 30
No class

Meet with your advisor after sending draft
Identify a second committee member and meet with that person

Revised Drafts due on Blackboard Tuesday December 8