



Maternal and Child Health Policy and Advocacy

PHLT 234W/PSCI 231W

If we don't stand up for children, then we don't stand for much.

Marian Wright Edelman, Founder, Children's Defense Fund

Tuesdays & Thursdays 2:00 – 3:15 pm

LeChase 184

Prof. Molly McNulty
Spring 2024

This course applies public policymaking models to government decisions, laws, and policies for mothers, children, and adolescents. This course focuses on the public policymaking process in government, and the role of advocacy in the policymaking process. This course is an Upper-Level Writing course, as well as a Level III community-engaged course. Development of this course was supported by an Innovative Teaching Award 2019-2020 from the Association of Teachers of Maternal Child Health, www.atmch.org.¹

This course emphasizes research and writing skills essential for those seeking to bring health justice through reform of public health policies affecting women, children, and adolescents. We will follow hot topics in maternal and child health policymaking, including the mental health needs for infants, debates about requiring COVID vaccinations for school entry, racial disparities in maternal mortality, and more.

This course will be co-taught by policy leaders from [Common Ground Health](http://CommonGroundHealth.org). Common Ground Health is a Rochester area non-profit agency whose mission is “Through regional collaboration and partnerships, we bring greater focus to community health issues via data analysis, resident engagement and solution implementation.” Ms. [Jenn Biedeman](http://JennBiedeman.org), MPA, Director of Whole Child Health Advocacy, and Prof. [Stephanie David](http://StephanieDavid.org), JD, MPH, IMH-E, Director of Early Childhood Policy will be leading classes focused on two of their current advocacy campaigns: development of Infant Mental Health Awareness in the Finger Lakes region, and licensing of Speech Language Pathologist Assistants across New York State.

¹ Grateful thanks to Drs. Arden Handler, Joan Wightkin, and Sonya S. Brady, for making their syllabi available; this syllabus is based in part on their work. Special thanks to Kay Johnson for the background materials and guest talks, and to U of R undergraduates Devin Hott, Madeline Bordo, Meg Curtis, Tommy Oddo and Onika Phillips for their teaching assistance.

INSTRUCTOR

- Prof. [Molly McNulty, JD](#), Assistant Professor of Public Health Law and Policy
- Email: m.mcnulty@rochester.edu
- Office Hour: Thursdays 12:00pm – 1:30pm in Morey 206F, or by appointment scheduled through my “[Book A Time To Meet With Me](#)” link.
- Working From Home Schedule: Generally, I work from home on Fridays.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Create a profile of an MCH problem through strategic selection of indicators and through creating a frame for that data (MCH Indicators and Problem Frame assignment)
- Identify leading MCH policy challenges by researching policy literature (Policy Literature Research Bibliography)
- Create a policy landscape scan to identify policy approaches adopted by other jurisdictions (Landscape Scan Policy Brief)
- Improve quality of written communications (Redraft of Landscape Scan Policy Brief following Review exercise)
- Create a legislative history in support of a proposed MCH bill (Legislative Literature Research Report)
- Research and write a single-issue advocacy-oriented fact sheet (Advocacy Fact Sheet)
- Create a social media post or blog (Social Media Post or Blog)

COURSE ASSESSMENTS

ASSIGNMENT	WORTH (% OF GRADE)
MCH Indicators and Problem Frame	10
Policy Literature Research Bibliography	15
Landscape Scan Policy Brief	15
Redraft of Landscape Scan Following Review	10
Legislative Literature Research Report	15
Advocacy Fact Sheet	15
Social Media Post or Blog	15
Participation including Attendance	5

COURSE MATERIALS

Required Textbooks

Smith Writing Public Policy: A Practical Guide to Communicating In the Policymaking Process
PLEASE NOTE: Rush Rhees owns only ONE physical copy of this book, and no e-book licenses. Therefore, You must purchase or rent this book.

Why required? “This is a workbook that “is a practical, concise guide to writing and communicating in public policy processes. Designed to help students understand and perform common types of communication used in solving public problems, this text explains the

standards and functions of communicating in the public sector and teaches the use of selected public policy communication genres. .. presents a general method for planning, producing, and assessing communications in a variety of real-life contexts and situations of public policy work...teaches know-how and techniques needed to effectively communicate in the democratic process of making public policy.”

Recommended (links are to Rush Rhees library)

Kirby [Kotch's Maternal and Child Health](#)
 Snyder [Advocacy For Public Health Policy](#)
 Tobin-Tyler [Essentials of Health Justice](#)
 Wilensky [Essentials of Health Policy and Law](#)

CLASS SCHEDULE

DATES	TOPIC
Module 1	MCH Policymaking and Advocacy Defined
18-Jan-24	Intro/Moms Sharing
23-Jan-24	What Is Policy? How Is It Made? Who Are Policymakers?
25-Jan-24	History of MCH Policy Field; History of the Family
30-Jan-24	Evaluating MCH Policy: Rights, Justice, and Equity
1-Feb-24	Guest, Intro to Policymaking and Advocacy (Part I)
6-Feb-24	Guest, Intro to Policymaking and Advocacy (Part II)
8-Feb-24	MCH Poverty and Its Impact
13-Feb-24	Lab: How To Collect Policy Indicators
Module 2	Child Health: Birth to Kindergarten
15-Feb-24	Guest, Infant Mental Health Policy and Advocacy
20-Feb-24	Lab: How To Frame A Policy Problem
22-Feb-24	TBA
27-Feb-24	The Major Health Policies for Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers
29-Feb-24	Guest, Speech and Language Pathologist Assistant Licensing Campaign
5-Mar-24	Lab: How To Do Policy Literature Review

7-Mar-24 Vaccine Policy Debates

19-Mar-24 Lead Poisoning Prevention: Policy and Advocacy

Module 3 School Aged Children

21-Mar-24 The Major Policies for Children K - 6

26-Mar-24 Lab: How To Do A Policy Landscape Scan

28-Mar-24 Social media and bullying

Module 4 Adolescents

2-Apr-24 The Major Health Policies for Adolescents

4-Apr-24 Lab: How To Research Legislative History

9-Apr-24 Vaping Policy Challenges

Module 5 Reproductive and Women's Health

11-Apr-24 Definitions and Concepts of Womanhood

16-Apr-24 Racial Disparities in Maternal and infant Mortality

18-Apr-24 Access to Family Planning

23-Apr-24 TBA

25-Apr-24 TBA

30-Apr-24 Wrap-up

COURSE POLICIES

Honesty and Ethics: I take cheating and plagiarism very seriously; it constitutes theft of ideas and unfair advantage over other students. (I used to sit on my College's Academic Honesty Review Board). Please take [Honesty Quiz # 1](#) to test your knowledge of the [University's Academic Honesty code](#) . Students MUST comply with **the Academic Honesty Code**. This includes refraining from copying and pasting material written by others without explicit attribution (e.g., footnotes). **This is a particular temptation when studying law and policy, which can be confusing to the novice.** Ask when you are confused. This is what office hours are for. As Albert Einstein said, "If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough."

- The University requires this language in a syllabus:
 - “At Rochester, we are committed to academic excellence, which depends on academic honesty. Academic honesty means being truthful in our academic pursuits, maintaining ownership of our own work, and acknowledging our debt to the work of others. All assignments and activities associated with this course--including, but not limited to, collaboration, citation, and use of outside resources--must be performed in accordance with the University of Rochester's Academic Honesty Policy.
 - Please review the [Academic Honesty policy](#)”

Time Students are expected to do extensive reading and writing in this course; to direct their own acquisition of knowledge through this reading and writing and should budget a **minimum of 9 to 12 hours per week** (including class time) (per NYS Education legal standards for 4 course credits).

Participation Students are expected to be autonomous and "active" learners. This means speaking up in class, managing your times so that you submit your best work before the deadlines, and completing all reading before class.

Attendance Required attendance - Something to think about if you're thinking of skipping - each class costs students (or your parents - or the government) **\$270**. In general, you're expected to **attend every class** and complete each assignment on time. With that said, please communicate to Prof. McNulty **12 hours in advance** if you need to miss class or turn in work late for any reason. Extensions will be given for illness and emergencies only (e.g., for medical emergencies, but not for poor time planning).

Disability Statement Your success in this course is important to me, and it is the policy and practice of the University of Rochester to create inclusive learning environments consistent with federal and state law. If you have a documented disability (or need to have a disability documented), and need an “accommodation,” please contact me (m.mcnulty@rochester.edu) *privately* as soon as possible so that we can discuss with the relevant office how to meet your specific needs and the requirements of the course. If you're not sure what counts as a disability, check out this page: <https://www.rochester.edu/college/disability/faculty/common-disabilities.html> General information about disability support services is here: <https://www.rochester.edu/college/disability/>. PLEASE NOTE: Mental health problems, such as anxiety or depression, *do count* as disabilities and the University is legally required to accommodate these disabilities through provisions such as extended testing times, and notetaking assistance.

Technology and Devices Please bring a laptop to class, as you'll use it for various Lab activities. However, **cell phones must be turned off** (not just silenced), and I will be monitoring your usage to make sure you are paying attention.

Late Work Policy

There will be a 1-point deduction for every day that the assignment is late. After 7 days, your submission will not be accepted, and you will be given a zero for that assignment. If you feel that your situation might warrant an extension, please email Dr. McNulty **ahead of time** to request an extension with the reason for your request.