

CMNS3520: Public Affairs

Newcastle City Precinct
Semester 1 - 2024



The School of Humanities, Creative Industries and Social Sciences is committed to providing an inclusive environment in which all cultures are accorded respect, and all students and staff are expected to act with honesty, fairness, trustworthiness, and accountability in dealings with others. The School recognises and respects the unique histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their unbroken relationship with the lands and the waters of Australia over millennia, and the validity of Aboriginal ways of knowing. We are dedicated to reconciliation and to offering opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to access and succeed in higher education.

OVERVIEW

Course Description	The course explores the processes of communication as they relate to structures of government and to other socio-political and institutional forces within society. It examines responsibilities and relationships between tiers of government and probes processes of decision making and policy making. The course considers concepts related to power, influence, ideology and values, political involvement, and active citizenship. Through contemporary issues and events, consideration is applied to the Australian system of government, and how political power is contested, gained, exercised, and resisted. The role and influence of social and political movements as methods of organising political ideas and action will be examined.
Academic Progress Requirements	Nil
Assumed Knowledge	CMNS1090 Media Storytelling/Foundations of Professional Writing
Contact Hours	Newcastle City Precinct Lecture Face-to-face on campus 1 hour per week for 2 weeks in Week 1 & Week 7 Tutorial Face-to-face on campus 2 hours per week for 11 weeks in Weeks 2-12
Unit Weighting	10
Workload	Students are required to spend on average 120-140 hours of effort (contact and non-contact) including assessments per 10-unit course.

COURSE OUTLINE

CONTACTS

Course Coordinator **Newcastle City Precinct**
Ms Alysson Watson
alysson.watson@newcastle.edu.au
Consultation: Via email

School Office **School of Humanities Creative Industries and Social Sciences**
NU Space, Level 4
409 Hunter Street
Newcastle
HCISS@newcastle.edu.au
+61 4985 4500

SYLLABUS

Course Content Content explores the significant institutions and forces that shape political society and their role in contemporary public affairs. Topics covered will include:

- Local, regional, and national systems.
- The role and operation of the various spheres of government.
- Political parties, campaigns, and elections.
- The parliamentary, executive, and judicial arms of government.
- Electoral systems and voter behaviour.
- The public and private sectors.
- Interest groups, not-for-profits, and non-government organisations.
- The formulation of public policy.
- The role of communication professionals in public affairs.

Course Learning Outcomes **On successful completion of this course, students will be able to:**

1. Identify and describe the major components and responsibilities of local, regional, and national systems of government, and key forces involved in contemporary public affairs.
2. Effectively communicate how these components, responsibilities, and forces inter-relate.
3. Identify and explain the role and contribution of professional public affairs communication in contemporary policy formation.
4. Analyse and interpret current events and issues in the light of this understanding.
5. Outline and explain the role of communication professionals in public affairs.

Course Materials Required text: *Australian Politics & Policy* (Jun Ed), Sydney University Press, free online.
News media: Australian newspapers accessed through University of Newcastle library.

Other resources will be provided on the Canvas website.

SCHEDULE

Week	Week Begins	Lecture 1 hour	Tutorial 2 hours	Assessment Due
1	26 Feb	Intro to Public Affairs: the concept & the course	<i>No tutorial Week 1</i>	
2	4 Mar		Australian political history Australian political thought	
3	11 Mar		Institutions of government Parliaments & parties The media's role in democracy	
4	18 Mar		Federalism Comm-state relations Local government	
5	25 Mar		Political sociology: Gender, sexuality, religion, multiculturalism, Indigenous. Govt-business relations Voters & young people	Log due Sunday midnight March 31, 1600 words (4x400) 20%
6	1 Apr		Making public policy Implementing & evaluating Inquiries & submissions Crisis governance & Covid	
7	8 Apr	Working in public affairs	Work in government & politics Lobbying & activism	Essay due Sunday midnight, April 14, 1500 words, 20%
Mid-Semester Recess				
Mid-Semester Recess				
8	29 Apr		Student presentations on health, social policy	Student presentations due by tutorial time on Turnitin/Canvas per roster, Weeks 8-12 10 mins, 20%
9	6 May		Student presentations on education, employment policy	
10	13 May		Student presentations on defence & foreign policy	
11	20 May		Student presentations on environment, economic policy	
12	27 May		Student presentations on law & order and immigration	
13	3 Jun		<i>No tutorial Week 13</i>	Group submission due Sunday midnight June 9, 3000 words, 40%
Examination Period				
Examination Period				

ASSESSMENTS

This course has 4 assessments. Each assessment is described in more detail in the sections below and on Canvas.

	Assessment Name	Due Date	Involvement	Weighting	Learning Outcomes
1	Essay	23:59 Sunday Week 7 April 14	Individual	20%	3, 4, 5
2	Written Submission	23:59 Sunday Week 13 June 9	Group	40%	3, 4, 5
3	Presentation	Rostered in class Weeks 8-12	Individual	20%	2, 3, 4
4	Log/Workbook	23:59 Sunday Week 5 March 31	Individual	20% (4x5%)	1, 2, 4

Late Submissions

The mark for an assessment item submitted after the designated time on the due date, without an approved extension of time, will be reduced by 10% of the possible maximum mark for that assessment item for each day or part day that the assessment item is late. Note: this applies equally to week and weekend days.

Assessment 1 - Assessment 1 - Essay

Assessment Type	Essay
Purpose	To demonstrate understanding of issues relating to the making of public policy in a particular policy area and contributions by various parties in the process.
Description	Students will individually write a 1500-word essay that demonstrates familiarity with issues relevant to an assigned case study.
Weighting	20%
Length	1500 words
Due Date	23:59 Sunday Week 7 April 14
Submission Method	Online
Assessment Criteria	See Canvas for rubric
Return Method	Online
Feedback Provided	Online

Assessment 2 - Assessment 2 - Written Submission

Assessment Type	Case Study / Problem Based Learning
Purpose	To demonstrate understanding of the process of public policy making and contributions by groups within society to influence that process.
Description	Students will work in a group to prepare a group submission to an inquiry on behalf of a designated organisation.
Weighting	40%
Length	3000 words
Due Date	23:59 Sunday Week 13 June 9
Submission Method	Online
Assessment Criteria	See Canvas for rubric
Return Method	Online
Feedback Provided	Online

Assessment 3 - Assignment 3 - Class Presentation

Assessment Type	Presentation
Purpose	To demonstrate understanding of issues and parties involved in the formulation of a particular area of public policy and how this is represented in the media.
Description	Students will provide an individual presentation in class that elaborates on a particular area of public policy and how it is represented in the media. They will also lead class discussion.
Weighting	20%
Length	10 minutes
Due Date	Rostered in class times in Weeks 8-12
Submission Method	Online In Class
Assessment Criteria	See Canvas for rubric
Return Method	Online
Feedback Provided	Online

Assessment 4 - Assignment 4 – Reflective log

Assessment Type	Log / Workbook
Purpose	To demonstrate understanding of the Australian political system, ideas underpinning democratic government and issues related to public policy making.
Description	Students will write 4 reflections of 400 words each on aspects of the Australian political system and ideas underpinning, and issues relevant to, public policy making in Australia covered in readings and tutorials in Weeks 2 to 5.
Weighting	20% (4x5%)
Length	1600 words total (4 x 400 words)
Due Date	23:59 Sunday Week 5 March 31
Submission Method	Online
Assessment Criteria	See Canvas for rubric
Return Method	Online
Feedback Provided	Online

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Grading Scheme

This course is graded as follows:

Range of Marks	Grade	Description
85-100	High Distinction (HD)	Outstanding standard indicating comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the relevant materials; demonstration of an outstanding level of academic achievement; mastery of skills*; and achievement of all assessment objectives.
75-84	Distinction (D)	Excellent standard indicating a very high level of knowledge and understanding of the relevant materials; demonstration of a very high level of academic ability; sound development of skills*; and achievement of all assessment objectives.
65-74	Credit (C)	Good standard indicating a high level of knowledge and understanding of the relevant materials; demonstration of a high level of academic achievement; reasonable development of skills*; and achievement of all learning outcomes.
50-64	Pass (P)	Satisfactory standard indicating an adequate knowledge and understanding of the relevant materials; demonstration of an adequate level of academic achievement; satisfactory development of skills*; and achievement of all learning outcomes.
0-49	Fail (FF)	Failure to satisfactorily achieve learning outcomes. If all compulsory course components are not completed the mark will be zero. A fail grade may also be awarded following disciplinary action.

*Skills are those identified for the purposes of assessment task(s).

Attendance

Attendance/participation will be recorded in the following components:
Tutorial class roll marked.

Communication Methods

Communication methods used in this course include:

- Face to Face: Communication will be provided via face-to-face meetings or supervision.
- Email: Students will receive communications via their student email account.
- Canvas Course Site: Students will receive communications via the posting of content or announcements on the Canvas course site.

Course Evaluation	Each year feedback is sought from students and other stakeholders about the courses offered in the University for the purposes of identifying areas of excellence and potential improvement.
Oral Interviews (Vivas)	As part of the evaluation process of any assessment item in this course an oral examination (viva) may be conducted. The purpose of the oral examination is to verify the authorship of the material submitted in response to the assessment task. The oral examination will be conducted in accordance with the principles set out in the Oral Examination (viva) Procedure . In cases where the oral examination reveals the assessment item may not be the student's own work the case will be dealt with under the Student Conduct Rule .
Academic Misconduct	All students are required to meet the academic integrity standards of the University. These standards reinforce the importance of integrity and honesty in an academic environment. Academic Integrity policies apply to all students of the University in all modes of study and in all locations. For the Student Academic Integrity Policy, refer to https://policies.newcastle.edu.au/document/view-current.php?id=35 .
Adverse Circumstances	<p>The University acknowledges the right of students to seek consideration for the impact of allowable adverse circumstances that may affect their performance in assessment item(s). Applications for special consideration due to adverse circumstances will be made using the online Adverse Circumstances system where:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. the assessment item is a major assessment item; or2. the assessment item is a minor assessment item and the Course Co-ordinator has specified in the Course Outline that students may apply the online Adverse Circumstances system;3. you are requesting a change of placement; or4. the course has a compulsory attendance requirement. <p>Before applying you must refer to the Adverse Circumstance Affecting Assessment Items Procedure available at: https://policies.newcastle.edu.au/document/view-current.php?id=236</p>
Important Policy Information	The Help button in the Canvas Navigation menu contains helpful information for using the Learning Management System. Students should familiarise themselves with the policies and procedures at https://www.newcastle.edu.au/current-students/respect-at-uni/policies-and-procedures that support a safe and respectful environment at the University.

This course outline was approved by the Head of School. No alteration of this course outline is permitted without Head of School approval. If a change is approved, students will be notified, and an amended course outline will be provided in the same manner as the original.

© 2024 The University of Newcastle, Australia