Writing Development Initiative

2022‐2023 Proposal Application Form

Submitted by Assistant Professor Alison Smith, Department of Political Science

Please answer all of the following questions as clearly and concisely as possible, filling in your responses immediately below each question.

When you have answered the questions, please indicate Chair approval in the space provided at the end of the form, and send the completed version of the form as a Word document to Michael Kaler (michael.kaler@utoronto.ca).

If you would like to see proposals from previous years, there is a selection here: <https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/asc/wdi-archives>.

If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact Michael.

**Deadline:** Proposals must be submitted by **April 15th, 2022.**

1. Please indicate the course code:

POL318F: Power and Conflict in Federalism (taught by Alison Smith, alisonmary.smith@utoronto.ca)

1. Please briefly (150 words maximum) introduce the course, its position in its program, and writing assignments or instruction that have typically been used.

This is a third year class that builds directly on required Introduction to Canadian politics courses and complements courses on public policy, urban governance, and comparative politics. It is a study of complex policy-making, we cover important theories of governance, including federalism, Indigenous governance, urban governance, and multilevel governance, and consider how those theories apply to complex areas of policy such as housing, homelessness, health, poverty, and policing. The class is lecture based, with many opportunities for discussion. Last year, the main writing assignment was a creative book review, students were assigned novels that related to an area of policy we considered in class (Five Little Indians, Scarborough, and Brother) and were given the option of writing a formal book review or of doing a creative response, such as a poem, art, music, or a podcast. There was a final assignment that required them to apply theories of governance to an area of policy that we had not covered in class.

1. Please indicate the desired learning outcomes for the proposal (as distinct from the course as a whole), and how these learning outcomes relate to the course or program’s learning outcomes: that is, indicate how the proposal complements student learning viewed holistically.

Desired learning outcomes for this proposal are to help student to write about complex policies with nuance and precision. This requires them to identify debates and disagreements, represent them fairly and accurately, and position themselves in those debates. The learning objectives of the course are to understand the political system and distribution of power in Canada, to engage with political processes, and to understand different perspectives. Writing clearly is very important to all of these objectives, which includes not only understanding the political system, but also engaging with it, which requires clear and nuanced writing.

1. Please provide a basic overview of the strategies that will be used to improve students’ writing.

For this class, I am proposing a two-pronged approach. The first is a combination of reading and writing. I will ask students to create careful and well-written annotated bibliographies. They will read 5 academic articles, and will be asked to write up summaries of those articles that will be one page maximum. The summaries will require them to put the article’s research question, methods, evidence, findings and conclusions in their own words, and they will be required to do this in written paragraph format. I will rely on existing resources online, notably an excellent academic and writing blog by Raul Pacheco-Vega, which has a number of templates for students at all levels to write summaries of articles in their own words. This annotated bibliography will be an extra assignment that will be graded by a TA.

I will then ask students to use those resources (as well as others) in their final research paper. In this paper, they will be asked to not just summarize these articles, but to put them in conversation with one another. I will use class time to instruct them on how to do this, and will use the excellent book They Say/I Say to give templates for how they can write effectively. I will expect them to rely on the annotated bibliography for this paper.

In my own experience with academic writing, revision is a fundamental step, and I think this is true in other types of writing as well (journalism, policy, etc). Without an understanding that revision is a part of the process, feedback and revisions can be seen as critiques or demonstrations of failure as opposed to opportunities to improve. So I will use extra TA hours to add in a crucial step, which will be to first submit a draft that will be ungraded but on which extensive comments will be provided. Students will then have 2 weeks to revise their papers in accordance with the comments, and to also write a response to the feedback they received. That final paper will be graded and the TA will provide further feedback. I think this is a very valuable step that will allow students to really implement feedback in a way they don’t have the opportunity to do when feedback is given with a final grade.

1. As of September 2020, UTM has begun offering a first-year writing course, ISP100H5 *Writing for University and Beyond: Writing About Writing*. For the 2022-2023 school year, this course will be required by the Departments of Anthropology, Chemical and Physical Sciences, Mathematics and Computational Science, Political Science, and Visual Studies for admission to some of their Specialist and Major programs. If you are proposing a project for a first-year course in any of these Departments, please be sure to consider how the project would complement or reinforce instruction offered in ISP100H5. For further details about ISP100H5, please contact Michael Kaler (michael.kaler@utoronto.ca).

*This is not a project for a first year course.*

1. Please indicate how Teaching Assistants will be used in the project.

TAs will be used to grade the annotated bibliography (an extra assignment I have not previously asked for), to provide feedback on a first draft of the research paper, and to grade the final research paper and reviewer response.

1. Please indicate whether additional TA training (beyond the WDI Writing TA Training session for new TAs) will be required and, if so, indicate the number of hours/TA (maximum 4), content of the training, and its relationship to the proposed student assessment or instruction.

I do not anticipate additional TA training will be required for this.

1. Please describe the writing tasks incorporated as a direct result of the additional funding requested, and provide details on any writing instruction to be provided that relates to these tasks. If the funding is supporting an increased number of graded writing assignments, please indicate the number of additional words students will write.

As noted in question 4, I will ask students to create a detailed annotated bibliography, which will be more descriptive writing, as well as a revised research paper, which will be based on an argument and evidence. I have learned in past years that dedicating some in class time (usually 1 hour per assignment) to writing guidelines is a very good use of time. For both of these assignments, I will spend one hour each in class explaining how to do the assignment. I have found that walking students through the assignment is extremely helpful, and in the moment they ask very specific questions that show that they are engaging with what I am saying and planning their own work. So for the annotated bibliography, I will use a reading we have already read, and I will do the annotation exercise in class with them to show them how to identify the research question, method, evidence, findings and conclusion. I will also, in class, write up the paragraph descriptive summary of the article, and will provide them with templates from online blogs and books to help them use when they are doing the bibliography on their own. The annotated bibliography will be a total of 2000-2500 additional words.

For the research paper, I will also run a writing workshop in class to explain to students how to identify scholarly debates, represent different viewpoints accurately and fairly, and to position themselves in those debates. To do this, I use templates from They Say/I Say to ask them to first put authors with different perspectives in conversation with one another, and then to put themselves in conversation with those authors. We will use their annotated bibliographies to do this, which will help them directly in developing their final papers (which will draw on the sources used in their annotated bibliography). Students will then be based to write a draft paper and submit it shortly after reading week. Within one week, they will receive detailed feedback from their TA, and they will have two weeks to incorporate the feedback into their paper and submit a final version. This revise and resubmit process will be for the same paper, but will result in TAs essentially reading each research paper twice, the equivalent of an additional 3000 or so words.

1. Please clearly state the number of students participating in the project, if the proposed project is course‐based. Indicate the maximum enrolment for the relevant course(s) and the final enrolment in the courses the last time they were offered. Please also indicate the course’s relationship to the broader program of study.

The project is course based, in the past this class has had up to 70 students enrolled (because of Covid the class was broken into an online and in person class, with my online portion having 38 students and about an equal number of students in person).

This is a third year class, which builds directly on the required introduction to Canadian politics classes (215 and 216). It will also help prepare students for upper year classes, which are seminar and reading based.

1. Please provide details on how the funded activities will impact and support students, if the proposed project is not restricted to a specific course (or courses).

This project is related to POL318, but I do anticipate that the annotated bibliography and revise and resubmit process will help students in future course work as well as in future writing, whether that is academic or not.

1. Please indicate any other resources you will use to support your project (library, RGASC, online resources, etc.).

I always use resources from the library and RGASC in my classes, including writing workshops, academic integrity workshops, and introduction to library resources. I plan to continue to do so. I also use and adapt resources available in books or online, including Raul Pacheco-Vega’s online blog about academic writing as well as academic writing books that contain templates and guides.

1. Please provide a detailed budget. Please indicate TA resources in terms of TA hours, not dollar figures.

I anticipate that each annotated bibliography will require 25 minutes of grading time.

I anticipate that reading and providing detailed comments on draft papers will require 45 minutes of grading time.

I anticipate that reading and providing comments on final papers will require 30 minutes of grading time.

This is an additional 100 minutes of grading. Assuming 70 students, this means 7000 minutes or 117 hours. TA wages are $47.17 per hour plus 4% vacation pay, totalling $49.05/hour. Total requested for this project therefore is $5738.85.

1. Please include this sentence in your application: “I confirm that I approve this proposal.”

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1. Please also include this sentence in your application: “I confirm that my Chair supports this proposal.”

I confirm that my Chair, Andrea Olive, supports this proposal.