

**POLM 4012/5012  
Advocacy & Government Relations in Canada  
2025 Winter Term**

**I. Course Description**

Through applied exercises, case studies, guest speakers and a project focussed on an external organization, students will build the knowledge and skills required for advocacy and government relations in the private and not-for-profit sectors.

To elaborate, this course takes a practical but critical approach to understanding the practice of government relations in Canada. Students will work throughout the term in small teams to gradually develop an advocacy plan for one of five pre-selected organizations that work to influence Canadian public policy.

The course works through advocacy activities as a stepwise endeavour to determine an advocacy goal, develop rationale, identify target audiences and employ various tactics to gain influence.

The pre-selected organizations for Winter 2025 are:

[Automotive Industries Association of Canada](#)

[Canadian Medical Association](#)

[Invenergy](#)

[Telus](#)

[World Wildlife Fund Canada](#)

Note: Students may not choose an organization that they have any existing or expected affiliations with. Please consult with the instructor if you are unsure.

**II. Learning Outcomes**

Upon successful completion of the course requirements, students will be able to reliably develop an advocacy plan for any organization.

By undertaking this effort, students will gain:

- Clear understanding of the role stakeholders play in public policy development.
- Ability to plan how organizations may advocate with influence.
- Ability to assess an organization's probability of success.
- Perspective on ethical lobbying practice.
- Proficiency in writing documents commonly used in advocacy.

- Ability to communicate with various audiences with clarity and influence.
- Ability to conduct oneself in a professional manner in preparation for the workplace.

**Instructor’s Note:** This course is going to demand a lot of collaboration. You’ll be working as a member of a team to develop the advocacy plan for the duration of the term. There will be several milestones, of varying degrees of difficulty, to meet. You are expected to be a full and active contributor to the work required. If you aren’t able, for any reason, to work in this way then it is your responsibility to approach the course instructor before our second class to request an alternate and individual arrangement centered on a 5,000-word individual research paper.

### **III. Evaluation Overview**

#### ***Summary***

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Value (% of Course)</b>
Contribute value to class discussion and group assignments.	Throughout term	20%
Prepare as a lead discussant.	As assigned	10%
Submit issue audit, ask and rationale	Jan 30	5%
Submit interim written advocacy plan (four sections).	Mar 6	15% (best 2 out of 3)
Present advocacy plan.	Mar. 27 / Apr. 3	25%
Provide written advocacy plan.	Apr 4/9	25%
<b>Optional:</b> Shadow activities via Canadian Advocacy Network	Throughout term	7%

#### ***Assignments: Detail***

The assignments are designed to provide students with transferable skills that can be applied to advocate for any issue. Through completion of these assignments students will have the ability to bring value to the advocacy workplace by having knowledge and experience conducting high-value research, strategy development, content generation, and communicating effectively with a variety of audiences. At the end of the course, students will be able to reliably develop an advocacy plan for any organization.

The majority of assignments are based on group work. Sometimes issues do arise. Promptly raise any concerns to your teammates, or the instructor, so they can be resolved quickly.

It is this instructor’s intention to provide 30-60 minutes during most classes to allow for team-based work. Students’ critical analysis required for the completion of the advocacy plan will be aided through their responses to exercises which will be provided in-class each week. There will be an opportunity to ask questions of the instructor during this work period.

**1. Contribute value to class discussion. 20%**

*Items under consideration:*

- Attend class.
- Link questions and comments to your interpretation of class material.
- Identify themes in current affairs which demonstrate or refute findings from class material, when possible.
- Model tolerance, respect and inclusion of others in all questions, discussion and debate.
- Demonstrate flexibility in thinking when in receipt of new information.
- Comfortable asking questions or seeking more information when unsure.
- Contribute reliably, respectfully, and equitably in group work.

**2. Prepare as a lead discussant. 10%**

*Items under consideration:*

- With guest speaker: Student prepares questions which are thoughtfully designed to help the guest speaker elaborate on themes of relevance to the class.
- In advocacy presentations: Student prepares questions in response to a colleague's advocacy presentation from the perspective of a client, member or executive.

**3. Develop an advocacy plan.**

The main deliverable for the course will be to work in teams of 2-3 people to develop an advocacy plan on behalf of one of the pre-selected organizations provided (see above under "Course Description").

The advocacy plan will guide the organization's advocacy activities to advance its current priorities for Q1 and Q2 the 2025-26 federal fiscal year (April - March), and should be based in a "real world" scenario to the extent possible. Students will develop the plan from the perspective of:

- a consultant (presenting to a client for approval)
- an organization's in-house lead (presenting to organization leadership or the membership for approval).

The development of an advocacy plan is a cumulative exercise and will be organized into four parts:

**1) Undertake issue audit, define advocacy objective, and develop rationale. 5%**

This is an individual assignment. Guidance on how to develop this submission will be covered in class. The purpose is to assist students in applying their comprehension of the material covered thus far, and to provide guidance and direction in advance of future group submissions.

**2) Submit interim written advocacy plan (four sections). 15%**

This is a group submission. Guidance on how to develop each of the aforementioned sections will be covered in class.

The purpose of this assignment is to ensure your team is making sufficient progress towards the final submission. Students will receive feedback on items to consider when formulating the final plan.

*Three sections to be completed:*

- Landscape assessment
- Analysis of advocacy objective and associated rationale
- Stakeholder map

**3) Provide oral presentation of advocacy plan.**

**25%**

This is a group assignment.

*Items under consideration:*

- Clear grasp of advocacy goal, and ability to articulate rationale for strategy and execution.
- Sound explanation of any recommended pivots to the organization's existing objectives or activities.
- Ability to work with teammate(s) reliably and constructively in developing and presenting advocacy plan (this will be peer reviewed).
- Presentation should not exceed 15-17 minutes in length (plus 15 minutes Q&A).
- Ability to present to the audience clearly and succinctly, provide advice in a compelling and professional manner, and respond constructively during the Q&A portion.

Notes:

- When using “slide-ware” (such as PowerPoint, Canva etc.) during your presentation, be sure that it enhances the points you are making verbally. For perspective and tips, see, for example:

Briar Goldberg. “Before your next presentation or speech, here’s the first thing you must think about.” TEDx, October 29, 2019. <https://ideas.ted.com/before-your-next-presentation-or-speech-heres-the-first-thing-you-must-think-about/>

Amanda Miller. “6 dos and don’ts for next-level slides, from a TED presentation expert.” TEDx, June 13, 2019. <https://ideas.ted.com/6-dos-and-donts-for-next-level-slides-from-a-ted-presentation-expert/>

**4) Develop a written advocacy plan.**

**25%**

This is a group assignment. Submit only 1 (one) copy per group. Include the names of all contributing group members on the first page

*Items under consideration:*

- Demonstrate comprehension of feedback to-date, for thoughtful inclusion into advocacy plan.
- Ability to work with teammate(s) reliably and constructively in developing and presenting advocacy plan (this will be peer reviewed).
- Professional appearance, clearly and concisely laid out; suitable for client, member, or executive-level audience (you choose).
- Include references to class or other material whenever possible.
- Additional supporting material can be included in an Annex.
- No spelling or grammatical errors.

- Should not exceed 10-12 pages in length.
- Final submission includes an issue brief (“two-pager”)

Notes:

- Citations are required on all written work. You are encouraged to use footnotes with complete APA-style (or equivalent recognized citation style) for footnote entries.
- Please follow guidelines described in class regarding the structure and content of the advocacy plan.
- This is an academic assignment for credit; you must not seek remuneration from an organization for this specific work.

**Optional: Shadow activities via Canadian Advocacy Network (CAN)**

For those who may be interested in developing *ad hoc* advocacy consulting skills for extra credit, the Canadian Advocacy Network (CAN) is welcoming a limited number of student volunteers to shadow CAN volunteers supporting smaller not-for-profit clients.

If you are interested in learning more, please reach out to the instructor for more information early in the term. Available positions will be filled on a first-come-first-served basis.

**IV. Texts**

Students are not required to purchase textbooks or other learning materials for this course. All readings are available through **Ares, and provided below**. All students should come to the weekly meeting ready to discuss the assigned readings.

**V. Course Calendar**

*NOTE: This schedule is subject to change with notice. Please check the Brightspace site regularly for updates. Any information posted by the instructor is deemed to have been distributed to all students after 24 hours.*

**Weekly Routine.** In general, the standing agenda for each week will consist of:

- Prepare for class discussion (5 minutes)
- Instructor’s lesson (45 minutes)
- Guest speaker (45 minutes)
- Team-based work period (45 minutes)
- Two breaks (5-10 minutes each)

#	Date	Topics	Readings	Notes
1	Jan 9	<b>Course introduction and Advocacy overview</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class welcome</li> <li>• Syllabus review</li> <li>• Role of stakeholders in public policy development</li> <li>• Public policy in the public interest.</li> </ul>	Coffman (2015) De Bruycker (2020) Mulholland (2010)	Allocation of student roles before class 2.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocacy windows in the government cycle.</li> </ul> <p>Guest speaker: David Skinner on “cultivating trust in government relations”.</p>		
2	Jan 16	<p><b>Issue Audit</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducting a landscape assessment</li> <li>• Understanding organizational advocacy apparatus</li> <li>• Mapping probability of success</li> </ul> <p>Guest speaker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sabina Saini on “best practices for meeting with ministerial political staff”</li> </ul>	<p>Deraspe (2021) Gouin &amp; Kota (2020) Porter Magee (2020)</p>	<p>In-class assignment</p> <p>N.B. Last day for course registration and course changes (Jan 17)</p>
3	Jan 23	<p><b>Ask and Rationale Definition</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measuring alignment</li> <li>• Developing evidence</li> <li>• Asserting the advocacy goal</li> </ul> <p>Guest speaker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hardave Birk on “commercial GR within federally regulated sectors”.</li> </ul>	<p>Cairney (2018) Porter Magee (2020)</p>	<p>In-class assignment</p> <p>N.B. Last day to withdraw from course for full fee adjustment (Jan 31)</p>
4	Jan 30	<p><b>Stakeholders and Alliances</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder mapping</li> <li>• Coalition-building</li> <li>• Negotiations</li> </ul>	<p>Lagard (2020) Taylor (2024) WGCHD (2022)</p>	<p>Issue audit to be submitted on Brightspace by Noon ET</p>
5	Feb 6	<p><b>Audiences and Engagement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How governments decide</li> <li>• Contact plan prioritization</li> <li>• Method of communication</li> <li>• Maximizing meeting impact</li> </ul> <p>Guest speaker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matt Jeneroux, M.P. on “best practices on engaging Parliamentarians”</li> </ul>	<p>Baumgartner (2009) OBI (2024) Stachowiak et al. (2016)</p>	<p>In-class assignment</p>
6	Feb 13	<p><b>Communicating with Impact</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key materials used in advocacy</li> <li>• Understanding human behaviour</li> <li>• Speaking to persuade multiple audiences</li> </ul>	<p>Abrahams (2022) Albarracin &amp; Shavitt (2018) Alkis &amp; Temizel (2015)</p>	<p>N.B. Feb 17-21 - Winter Break</p>

		<p>Guest speaker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ross Hornby on “coalition-building across divisive issues”</li> </ul>	Clark <i>et al</i> (2019)	
7	Feb 20	*** No class ***	Whatever replenishes you	Winter Break
8	Feb 27	<p><b>Timing for Best Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Best practices within the government cycle: electoral, budget, and department-oriented advocacy.</li> </ul>	<p>Dobson-Hughes (2015) Dobson-Hughes (2016) Harper (2024)</p>	<p>Interim advocacy plan to be submitted via Brightspace by Noon ET</p> <p>In-class assignment</p> <p>N.B. Last day to be considered for financial assistance or scholarships etc (Mar 1)</p>
9	Mar 6	<p><b>Leveraging Multiple Public Affairs Channels</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When to lever various public affairs channels; i.e. - earned and owned media, grassroots, and digital communications</li> </ul> <p>Guest speaker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Robin Guy on “member-driven GR” and “preparing for a Poilievre government”.</li> </ul>	<p>Mazereeuw (2017) O’Malley (2018) Reher (2017) WGCHD (2022)</p>	In-class assignment
10	Mar 13	<p><b>Impact Evaluation, and Ethical Considerations in Lobbying Practice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Milestone mapping</li> <li>Ethical dilemmas</li> <li>Lobbying and the public interest</li> </ul>	<p>Kidder (2009) OECD (2024) Arensman (2019)</p>	<p>In-class assignment</p> <p>N.B. Last day for academic withdrawal from course (Mar 15)</p>
11	Mar 20	<p><b>Organizational Political Responsibility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transparency in corporate lobbying</li> <li>Public funding of advocacy</li> <li>Policy development in the public interest</li> </ul> <p>Guest speaker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marci Surkes on “advocacy across the budget cycle”</li> </ul>	<p>Taylor (2024) Zinnbauer (2022) Paikin (2023) Townsend (2022) CRA (2020)</p>	“Student Experience” evaluation survey

12	Mar 27	Group 1 Advocacy Plan Presentations	
13	Apr 3	Group 2 Advocacy Plan Presentations	Final day of classes
14	April 4	<p>** No class **</p> <p>Group 1 Advocacy Plans to be submitted via Brightspace before 5pm ET. (Note: 2% will be deducted if submitted after 7pm ET)</p>	
15	Apr 9	<p>** No class **</p> <p>Group 2 Advocacy Plans to be submitted via Brightspace before 5pm ET. (Note: 2% will be deducted if submitted after 7pm ET)</p>	
16	Apr 19	<p>** No class **</p> <p>Final marks uploaded on Brightspace</p>	