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Donald C. Hellmann Task Force Program

TASK FORCE

Student Handbook

2021

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# Task Force 2021 | Student Handbook

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## CONTENTS

- 1. Introduction: Why Task Force Matters To You – and To Us!**
- 2. Why Task Force is Different from Any Other Class**
  - A. You Have to Hit the Ground Running – on January 4<sup>th</sup>!*
  - B. You Have to Complete your Report in Seven Weeks – by March 4<sup>th</sup>!*
  - C. Others Depend on You – and You Depend on Them!*
  - D. The Final Report is One Big Collaborative Project – and You Have to Help!*
- 3. The Organization of Your Task Force – and Your Role In It**
  - A. The Instructor*
  - B. The Coordinator and the Editor*
  - C. Sub-Groups within Your Task Force*
  - D. Individual Task Force Members*
    - *The Poster Team*
    - *The Dinner Speaker*
- 4. Getting Ready for Task Force: Autumn Quarter and Winter Break**
  - A. Deadlines!*
  - B. Choosing your Task Force*
  - C. Readings and Assignments During Winter Break*
- 5. Managing Your Task Force Quarter: To-Do's, Deadlines, and Deliverables**
  - A. The First Meetings of Your Task Force*
  - B. The UW Libraries Workshop*
  - C. Doing Your Own Research and Writing*
  - D. Writing, Editing... and Re-Writing... and Editing Again...*
  - E. Creating Your Own Policy Recommendations*
  - F. Creating the Final Report*
- 6. How Your Task Force is Evaluated**
  - A. Evaluation Day – **Friday, March 12***
  - B. Who Is Your Evaluator?*
  - C. Your Task Force Report is written for Your Evaluator*
  - D. Preparing for Your Evaluation*
  - E. The Two-Hour Final Evaluation*
  - F. The Task Force Dinner*
  - G. Your Final Grade*
- 7. Five Tips on How to Make the Most of Task Force**
- 8. One-Page Calendar of Key Deadlines, To-Do's, and Deliverables**

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## Task Force Resources

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Task Force website: <https://jsis.washington.edu/task-force/>

**Task Force reports** from 2016 – present as well as updated program information can be found online at the JSIS Task Force page: <https://jsis.washington.edu/task-force/task-force-archive/>

Students can also access past Task Force reports from 2010-present on the **UW library ResearchWorks** site:

<https://digital.lib.washington.edu/researchworks/handle/1773/4630/browse?type=dateissued>

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THE HENRY M. JACKSON  
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

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UNIVERSITY *of* WASHINGTON

## 1. Introduction: Why Task Force Matters To You – and To Us!

The International Studies Program at the Jackson School introduces students to international issues through rigorous coursework in a wide variety of disciplinary and cross-disciplinary settings. The Program seeks to equip its students with the conceptual and analytical tools and knowledge needed to help make sense of complex global issues and processes. We recognize that many of our graduates will want to help shape the world that they have studied – and, for this, they will need to be effective advisers, researchers, or managers in the arenas of policy and advocacy. This recognition is the inspiration for our capstone projects. Task Force, is a required course offered only in Winter Quarter for International Studies majors.

Task Force has been part of the International Studies major since 1983. The original format was modeled on the Presidential Commissions common in policymaking in the United States. In these, U.S. Presidents appoint groups of experts to provide them with substantive policy recommendations based on rigorous research and evaluation. In recent years Task Forces have investigated a wide range of topics and provided recommendations to various branches and offices of the U.S. government, as well as to international, multilateral, and non-governmental organizations.

Task Forces consist of small groups of students, numbering between 12 and 15, who investigate a real-world policy issue and produce a final report and practical policy recommendations. These recommendations are then evaluated by a visiting outside expert – typically a serving or retired high-ranking U.S. diplomat, policymaker, NGO leader, or prominent think tank member. Task Force students prepare and present a 2-hour oral briefing for their expert evaluator. The evaluator arrives for the briefing having read the final report. After the briefing the evaluator engages students in discussion and debate and provides feedback on the content and presentation. All Task Forces are evaluated on the same day (Friday, March 12) and, later that same day, all Task Force students, instructors and evaluators gather for a formal dinner which offers more opportunities for professional conversations and connections.

Past generations of International Studies majors have greatly valued the opportunities and the challenges of working together in small groups with clear goals and tight deadlines – an environment intended to mimic the real-world activities and workplace experiences that our students will encounter upon graduation. Task Force quarter has been a unique, memorable and valuable experience for our majors for more than thirty years – and we hope that your own Task Force in Winter Quarter 2021 will provide the same for you!

## 2. Why Task Force is Different From Any Other Class

### *A. You Have to Hit the Ground Running – on January 4, 5, or 6!!*

Your Winter quarter **JSIS 495** is unlike any other class in the International Studies major. In a typical class the quarter will start off quite slowly with a gradual build-up towards midterms and finals, be they in-class exams or research papers. In other words, regular classes are typically *back-*

*loaded* in terms of the distribution of effort and work (and stress!) during the quarter. The Task Force class, on the other hand, is heavily *front-loaded*: your work on organization, management, research and writing has to start immediately and intensively right at the beginning of the quarter. In fact, instructors will typically assign readings over the Winter break and ask students to come to the first class meeting prepared to help work out the content and structure of their Task Forces. It is important that you keep this in mind as you plan your Winter Quarter. It is not uncommon for students to experience a lot of stress as they try to balance the demands of Task Force with the demand of other classes -especially during the month of February when everyone is trying to finalize their own contributions to the final report while peer-editing the writings of others and carrying out extra tasks such as editing, coordinating, or creating PowerPoint slides for the Task Force's final presentation to the evaluator on Task Force Evaluation Day.

### ***B. You Have to Complete your Report by Thursday, March 4, 2021!***

Yes, *seven weeks* – between the second week of Winter Quarter and the end of the eighth week of the quarter. That's all the time a Task Force has to do the required research, to create multiple drafts of all the writing, to provide each other with feedback and comments – and to produce a final neat and copy-edited version of the report that can be sent and presented to a busy professional expert who is visiting Seattle and UW for the sole purpose of hearing your presentations. So, seven weeks is not the time you have to write your own contribution to the final report – *it is the time you have to write your own contribution AND to help put all the contributions together AND to create a presentable final report for your Task Force as a whole.* The to-do's and deadlines for all Task Forces, as outlined in the 2021 Task Force Calendar at the end of this handbook, are mandatory and immovable for everyone, including instructors and International Studies program staff.

### ***C. Others Depend on You – and You Depend on Them!***

Task Force is a group effort and a group project. You are not able to choose any of the other members of your Task Force – but you do have to work with them over the course of a very intense quarter in which all of you have other classes and other commitments. Task Forces are managed and coordinated largely by you and your fellow students, with guidance, advice and input from faculty instructors. This means that everybody has to work together and support each other in often stressful conditions as the final (and immovable) deadline for the final report rapidly approaches. Free riders and shirkers are a serious threat to any Task Force, as are any students who are unwilling or unable to create time in their schedules for the many different jobs and assignments required to make Task Force work. Everybody's experience (and grade!) suffers if anyone refuses to pull their weight.

### ***D. The Final Report is One Big Collaborative Project – and You Have to Help!***

Your Task Force team works together to create one comprehensive final report. The final report contains research and recommendations from all the students in the group. The page limit of the

report is set at 100 - 125 pages long. The report page limit does not include the executive summary or the appendices.

A final Task Force report consists of the chapters produced by individual students, plus the executive summary, an introduction and a conclusion, and a comprehensive bibliography. Students do all the writing, and editing, and reviewing, and proof-reading, and then turn it into a professional-looking report that is submitted to an external evaluator with deep experience of the topic. Unlike in most other classes your own contribution does not stand alone, it has to fit into the overall report which you have to help create.

### 3. The Organization of Your Task Force – and Your Role In It

Different people have different roles in your Task Force. And *that includes* you! You are not just a student dropped into a class: you are an active participant in creating the organizational structure of your Task Force – and making it work!

Below you will find a list and descriptions of the different positions and jobs and groups that make up a Task Force. For students these roles are not all mutually exclusive – actual arrangements and assignments will depend on decisions made by your particular Task Force team and your instructor. But, apart from the instructor's role, *all of these jobs will have to get done – by you* and your fellow Task Force members!

#### A. The Instructor

Your Task Force instructor is a member of the UW faculty – he or she might be a full-time faculty member or an affiliate professor appointed to lead a Task Force. Your instructor created the topic of your Task Force based on their own interests, background and expertise. He or she will provide you and the other Task Force students with substantive guidance on the Task Force topic, research sources and resources, and the policy context. Your instructor will assign readings and tasks to you which you will complete over Winter break. As well, your instructor might spend a class or two at the beginning of Winter quarter providing you with essential background knowledge and will otherwise be available during and outside class meetings to give advice and feedback on the research you are doing for your contribution to the final report. Your instructor will also help you create the structure of the final report, provide guidance on its content, connect you with experts, and help get the group ready for its final presentation to the outside evaluator (who was identified by your instructor.)

#### B. The Coordinator and the Editor **by Friday, January 8**

Task Forces appoint a small team of 2-3 students to carry out the jobs of coordinating and editing. No more than one coordinator and editor per each Task Force group. The team can share both tasks, or divide them up – and this choice is left to individual Task Forces to decide. **Read this section carefully** to see if you are interested in one of these positions – *they will need to be filled*

very quickly, in the first week of Winter Quarter (i.e. by **Friday, January 8<sup>th</sup>** at the latest!). These positions are absolutely essential to the smooth and effective running of the Task Force. They are not vanity positions! If you enjoy, and are good at, managing a project or editing the writings of others then you may be a good fit for one of these positions. Both require an even temper and a

lot of dedication and good will! Your instructor will determine the process by which the editor/coordinator team is appointed.

Being an editor or coordinator does not mean that you will not have independent writing responsibilities of your own to do. In most Task Forces the editor/coordinator team is also responsible for the final report's executive summary, introduction, and conclusion – all of which are typically written right before the final report goes to print. **Note:** be wary of having too many editors/coordinators. Students from previous Task Forces found that having more than three editors and one coordinator causes more miscommunication than necessary within the group.

The **coordinator** acts as a kind of project manager who oversees the overall workflow of the Task Force and is essential in enforcing deadlines and tracking individual contributions and overall progress. The coordinator typically creates a calendar of tasks based on the common to-do's and deadlines outlined in the Task Force Calendar, manages and enforces internal deadlines for drafts, peer-editing (students reading and editing each other's work), and any meetings outside of class time. The coordinator is also a liaison between the students and the instructor and between the Task Force and International Studies program staff. In this capacity the coordinator collects and passes on any required information about copyright, meal preferences for the formal reception on March 12<sup>th</sup>, or the printing of the final report.

The **editor** is essential in ensuring that the final Task Force report is of high and even quality. This involves providing continuous feedback to individual students on their contributions, enforcing a uniform citation system and style, managing the peer-editing process, and integrating all the individual contributions in the final report. In doing all of this, editors will have access to the advice and guidance of professionals at the UW Libraries and the Odegaard Writing Center. A special drop-in session for editors and coordinators will be provided by UW librarians.

### *C. Sub-Groups within Your Task Force*

At the beginning of Winter quarter most Task Forces create sub-groups of students working on similar or related areas within the Task Force's overall topic. For example, there might be three sub-groups looking at the impact of an issue on three different regions or countries, or separate groups exploring different aspects of the same problem. These small sub-groups can more easily peer-edit each other's work, under the guidance of the Task Force's overall editor. Creating sub-groups can help make Task Forces more manageable, and allow students to cooperate more closely based on their interests and backgrounds.

## D. Individual Task Force Members

If you are not an editor or a coordinator then you will be contributing your own chapter or section to the final Task Force report – typically as part of a sub-group of three or four students. Chapters and sections (and therefore groups) are usually defined and assigned at the beginning of the Winter Quarter based on the interests and backgrounds of individual students and on the overall vision and goals of the report as developed between the instructor and the students. Task Forces have some latitude in determining their division of labor and the length and nature of individual contributions – but, typically, you will be responsible for a written section of about 10-12 pages in length. You will carry out the research for your chapter, locating and managing your sources and references in a neat bibliography compiled according to your Task Force’s chosen citation style (for example MLA or Chicago.) It is recommended that you all use the same compilation program to keep citations together from the very first week you start research. The UW Library website offers a variety of different programs <http://guides.lib.uw.edu/research/citations/citation-tools> students can access to organize their citations so that no one is left scrambling to try and create a bibliography for the large document at the end of the Task Force timeline. You will write and rewrite and edit as you receive feedback from the instructor, the editor, or other students in your group. You will make sure that your contribution meshes and fits well with all the others as the final report is compiled, making adjustments and changes as needed and as advised. You will have to keep an eye on deadlines and make sure you do not jeopardize your group’s collective efforts to produce a presentable report free of plagiarism, typos, and errors. You will keep in mind that you are writing not for your instructor but for an evaluator with considerable professional experience who will judge your group’s report on its academic and professional merits.

In addition you will be asked to create content for your Task Force’s final briefing – which is typically a PowerPoint presentation. You will have to create a slide (or slides) with your own key findings and recommendations.

*Two special assignments* – and feel able – to carry them out. Both of these assignments give you the opportunity to present the work – and convey the process – of your Task Force to a broader audience on Evaluation Day. This audience may include students in other Task Forces, other instructors, and other evaluators. Both of these assignments have to be combined with the normal workload of research and writing.

- The **Poster Team**: the findings and recommendations of your Task Force are presented on a poster that will be on display at the formal dinner on Friday, March 12<sup>th</sup> and we will also post it on the Jackson School’s Task Force website. Students will work on condensing the report for presentation on the poster in a visually effective and appealing way - a challenging task!
- The **Dinner Speaker**: one student from each of the eight Task Forces will speak during the formal dinner on Friday March 9<sup>th</sup>, briefly introducing their group and talking about the work of their Task Force, in an informal mood, for about three minutes.

## 4. Getting Ready for Task Force: Autumn Quarter and Winter Break

### A. Deadlines!

Keep in mind Task Force **DEADLINES**. In other classes instructors might give you extensions or cut you some slack. In Task Force there is no slack to cut. All Task Forces are evaluated on the same day – on **Friday, March 12<sup>th</sup>** – and Evaluation Day ends with a formal dinner for all students, instructors and evaluators. Final reports have to be delivered to program staff by **12:00pm** on **Friday, March 5<sup>th</sup>**. Since it takes time to produce a presentable, readable, neat and professional-looking report, and it will need to be printed...

...you have a total of **SEVEN WEEKS** to do ALL the research, writing, editing, rewriting, formatting...

...after which you have about one week to prepare and rehearse your final presentation which should look professional (as should you!), with a clear and informative slide presentation and a concise script.

This '**Seven Week Clock**' starts ticking at the beginning of the second week of Winter Quarter – on – since the first week of the quarter is dedicated to determining the direction and structure of the final report.

So it is important that all the Task Forces (and you!) hit the ground running on the first meeting of your Task Force (which will be Jan, 4, 5, or 6 depending on your class times) so that research and writing can start as quickly as possible.

### \*Here are the key dates to keep in mind:

First Meeting of Task Forces:	<b>Monday, January 4<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday, January 5<sup>th</sup> or Wednesday, January 6<sup>th</sup>.</b>
End of 'Seven Week' Period for Research, Writing, and Editing – The Final Version of Task Force Report Must Go To Print on:	<b>Thursday, March 4<sup>h</sup></b>
<b>12:00 P.M. DEADLINE ON MARCH 5:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>email the final PDF version of the report to your group's evaluator and to LD.</li> <li>deliver 2 hardcopies of the TF report to LD in <b>THOM 111</b> and deliver the third copy to your instructor.</li> </ul>	<b>Friday, March 5<sup>th</sup></b>
Evaluation Day (Presentation to Evaluator and Task Force dinner):	<b>Friday, March 12<sup>th</sup></b>

## B. Choosing your Task Force

Around the beginning of Fall quarter 2019 you will receive information about the topics of all the 2021 Task Forces, with short descriptions, along with an online Google survey asking you to rank the available Task Forces according to your preferences. This will help the JSIS Office of Academic Services assign you to a particular Task Force.

## C. Policy Memo

Your own contribution to your Task Force's final report will combine academic research and writing with policy writing. Policy writing means writing for an audience of decision-makers: you are providing background for a set of recommendations that will help others make a decision. In the "real world" this often means producing a very short policy briefing in the style of a memorandum (or "memo") – which might not be longer than one page. Developing this skill is important for professional work in a wide variety of settings – in policymaking, consultancy, or in the corporate and the non-profit worlds. After graduation most of you will not be spending much time writing 25-page research papers but almost all of you will be asked to provide very clear and concisely written input that synthesizes a large amount of literature or data or research for someone else's practical use in guiding an important decision or choice (and one day YOU may be that 'someone else!').

In your Task Force you will typically be asked to preface your chapter with a very brief summary which condenses and digests your chapter's main points and findings. The final report must be prefaced by an overall Executive Summary which you may be asked to write (if you are an editor) or to help write or edit. This requires the ability to write in a style that is concentrated, clear, crisp and concise.

## D. Readings and Assignments During Winter Break

Most students are unfamiliar with the topics they will be researching and reporting about in their Task Forces. To make sure everybody starts from a similar baseline your instructor will assign readings for you to complete by the first day of Winter classes (typically over Winter break). Your instructor may also ask you to prepare a preliminary written work based on the readings. Your instructor will be in touch with you before the end of Fall quarter with details. *Some instructors may want to meet with their Task Forces before the end of Fall quarter. In any case, be ready and make time to do some preparatory work for your Task Force before Winter quarter begins.*

It is highly recommended that you familiarize yourself with your task force topic and relevant policy issues before Task Force begins. The librarians prepare a study guide for each Task Force course and these will be ready by the End of Autumn Quarter. Visit these sites online during break. Though you will have practiced WRITING policy memos by this time, you need to also be familiar with READING them. This will give you an idea of how to structure your document as you go, as well as what articles and sources you should be reading. Most importantly, reading policy

reports will help you understand what your evaluators will be critiquing. Many students receive feedback that their policy memos are not grounded in reality or have been tried unsuccessfully in the past. Use your time wisely to acquaint yourself with this before the writing aspect of Task Force picks up – and you will avoid trouble with your policy recommendations down the road.

## 5. Managing Task Force Quarter: To-Do's, Deadlines, and Deliverables

### *A. The First Meetings of Your Task Force*

Winter Quarter has finally arrived and you have your first official meeting with your instructor and the other members of your Task Force in the first week of the quarter (January 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup>): **Do not arrive on campus late for Winter Quarter!** Work on Task Force begins right away and you are part of a team. You have to come to the first class meeting prepared and ready to sign up for tasks and jobs!

The first few meetings of your Task Force should be dedicated to:

- Defining and delineating the scope of the final report, keeping in mind for whom the report is being written
- Defining the building blocks of the final report, including the scope and content of individual chapters and report sections (groupings of individual chapters)
- Selecting and appointing the editor and coordinator from among the students
- Creating a project timeline, and understanding and reinforcing important deadlines
- Creating tools and procedures to manage the Task Force and the communication between members. We recommend that your team adopt a project management tool, which could be something as simple as Google Drive and a shared Google Calendar or more complicated and sophisticated, like BaseCamp. There are also some good books on project management, e.g. [HBR Guide to Project Management](#)
- Your team should pick a citation software management tool. This could be Zotero, EndNote, Refworks, Mendeley. Links to these can be found on the UW library page: <http://guides.lib.uw.edu/research/citations/citation-tools>.
- Reading example policy recommendations so you know what works well and what does not when creating recommendations for your final document.
- Consider developing a collaborative peer review and editing process and structuring ways for multiple eyes to view documents. At the same time, acknowledge and agree that the editor's job is to integrate all written work and make the report sound like one voice.
- Consider building interviews with real stakeholders into your research agenda. This makes the project far more relevant and exciting.

Doing all this work effectively in the first week of the quarter means that research and writing can begin in the second week of the quarter (the week of January 11<sup>th</sup>): that's when the clock for the seven-week research/writing/editing phase of the Task Force starts to tick.

## B. The UW Libraries Workshop

Every year we work with the staff at the UW Libraries creates a series of workshops to help students get started on the research they will need to do for their reports. The relevant subject librarians create a tailor-made workshop for each Task Force. In your workshop you will be introduced to your subject librarians and to the tools you need to work effectively on your specific topic. There is a dedicated UW Libraries page for each of the Task Forces which is an excellent portal with easy access to a wide variety of sources and resources:

<https://guides.lib.uw.edu/taskforce2021>. Getting to know your subject librarian is essential: they are a great resource when you need to do a lot of research under time pressure. UW has one of the best library systems in the country – make the most of its people and resources!

Your Task Force's workshop will take place at the beginning of Winter quarter – **during one of the first four class meetings**. The workshops take place in the Suzzallo or Allen Libraries and we will let you know on what day and where your workshop takes place.

## C. Doing Your Own Research and Writing

Task Force is a collective effort. This means that your own topic and your own research and writing have to fit into the overall structure of your Task Force's final report. The editor and coordinator are tasked with managing the process and helping you ensure that all the pieces fit together. But it is your responsibility to carry out your own research and writing diligently, carefully and thoroughly so that the final report is of a high and consistent quality.

To be effective you will start by carrying out a survey of the relevant sources and information for your topic – a literature review. You cannot write a policy-relevant paper without showing that you know what you are writing about. For your chapter to inspire confidence you will have to demonstrate to your audience (your evaluator) that your information is *relevant, authoritative, and up-to-date*. Otherwise your policy recommendations and advice cannot be taken seriously.

### **Here are a few essential tips:**

Look at past Task Force Reports which are available online via the International Studies Task Forces page on the JSIS website and on the Odegaard Library Research Works Archive:

<https://digital.lib.washington.edu/researchworks/handle/1773/4630/browse?type=dateissued>

- Use the links and databases available to you from your Task Force's resource page (created for your Task Force by a UW Librarian) to get started
- Talk to your instructor about the scope of your chapter and about essential sources
- Talk to your subject librarian for additional guidance on sources
- Coordinate and work with other members of your group (especially those working on related sub-topics) to share important sources and information

- Maintain a clean and neat bibliography of the sources you consult, and maintain it in the citation format your Task Force has chosen so that it can easily be incorporated into the final report's overall bibliography – and used by others if necessary
- Maintain good and clear research notes...so you don't have to go back and re-take any notes or re-check any bibliographic information
- Maintain good and clear research notes...so you don't inadvertently commit plagiarism by failing to distinguish between other authors' quotes and your own writing. Be wary of cutting and pasting!
- Look for good and helpful and up-to-date visual information, such as graphs, charts and maps, which will help bring your chapter to life and can save you a lot of descriptive writing
- Keep track of where you found your information – you will need to sign a copyright form to ensure that you are using this information ethically
- Think about ways of creating your own visual information (tables, charts etc.) – it can be a very effective and efficient way of summarizing and presenting information. If you are good at this offer your help to others; otherwise find out who in your Task Force has some experience with this or skill in this area.

#### *D. Writing, Editing... and Re-Writing... and Editing Again...*

Your chapter (and with it the final report) will evolve and develop over the course of the 'Seven Weeks' as you write and re-write a number of drafts. You will typically produce three or four drafts before the final version of your contribution goes into the final report.

Since everybody is doing this there is a lot of editing to do in a short time. Editors cannot do all this work by themselves – so they will ask small groups of students to peer-edit and review each other's drafts. Instructors will also help. The editor and the coordinator will create and maintain a timeline and schedule for producing and submitting drafts so that the process is synchronized – and a platform (such as Catalyst ShareSpaces and/or Google Docs) for doing this so that drafts can be submitted and picked up online and everyone can work on the report from different locations and at different times.

Be aware that there will be many bursts of intense writing, reading and editing. You will meet with others outside of your regular Task Force class times to review and discuss progress. It can be stressful at times because the deadline is drawing near and there are other things you have to do in your life. But you will need to prioritize Task Force because it is a team effort. You will need to get along with others or the whole project is in jeopardy.

#### *E. Creating Your Own Policy Recommendations*

When everyone has completed their final drafts your Task Force will have to produce its **overall set of policy recommendations**. They are typically part of a concluding section which the editor will oversee and write. This section is of course key to your report and your evaluator may well read that part first!

The policy recommendations should be few, clear, concise, and evidence-based – and they should give direction on actual steps that might be taken. Recommendations have to be backed up by the material that you presented and discussed in the individual chapters and sections. All Task Force members have to agree to these policy recommendations; achieving this consensus will typically involve some discussion and debate during a class meeting. Your policy recommendations should be clearly prioritized and sequenced and reflect your awareness of constraints. Decision-makers have scarce resources and may need to do just a few things – simply producing a long ‘laundry list’ of recommendations undermines the usefulness of your report.

Remember that your evaluator is a policy professional with considerable experience in the “real world.” Don’t just give them a list of nice-sounding platitudes of the ‘motherhood and apple pie’ variety (“*Persuade warring factions that peace is in their best interest*”) or completely unrealistic ‘pie-in-the-sky’ recommendations (“Immediately lower international carbon emissions by 50% to prevent sea level rise”).

## *F. Creating the Final Report*

Eventually the editor and coordinator will ask for your final-final draft in a standardized format (fonts for main text, headings and sub-headings, font size, citation style, margins) which will then be merged with all the other contributions and the surrounding sections (introduction, conclusion/policy recommendations, and the executive summary). Pagination will have to be checked, spelling and grammar will have to be checked, visual information will have to be put in the right places and properly referenced, the bibliographies will have to be checked (and in many cases merged to create a single section of references.) The final report will then have to be emailed to the Copy Center (in the basement of Communications) by **Thursday, March 4<sup>th</sup>**. The editor and coordinator will need help with all this. Be ready to step in and take responsibility during this crucial phase when the submission deadline is just a few days away!

Often the weekend preceding the submission is stressful and filled with last-minute edits. Don’t let the editors and coordinators shoulder this alone – otherwise you risk turning in a sub-par report. ALL Task Force members should be on hand during this crucial time period to make small edits and help the core team finalize the end product. Follow their lead, pitch in where they ask you to, and make yourselves available to help with the final-final draft. You don’t want to be part of the notorious group that submits 5 minutes before the deadline because someone didn’t turn in a section in time, or the editors wasted an entire day re-doing the bibliography because the sources were all formatted differently.

**Important:** Each Task Force report should have no more than **12** pages with color. This means you must choose carefully which graphs, maps, photos, etc., your group wants in color. Your cover page should be in color and is included in the total number of pages allowed in color.

## 6. How Your Task Force is Evaluated

Your completed Task Force report is expedited to your evaluator about one week before Evaluation Day (which is on Friday, March 13<sup>th</sup>, the last day of Winter quarter classes.) This gives your external evaluator time to read and digest the report and its findings – and to formulate questions and comments to put to you during the formal oral evaluation. This section will tell you more about the evaluation process and about the things that happen on Evaluation Day.

### *A. Evaluation Day – Friday March 12<sup>h</sup>*

You must make sure you are available on Evaluation Day – all day! Your Task Force will be given a two-hour time slot during which you will present to your evaluator. Evaluations start as early as 9:00 a.m. and end as late as 4.30 p.m., depending on room availability. The evaluations are held at the HUB and Thomson Hall 317 with a conference style set-up that looks and feels professional. You or other members of your Task Force will be involved in hosting your evaluator which may involve escorting them to and from their hotel and between appointments such as the evaluator luncheon, the evaluation session, and the formal reception. The formal dinner event in 2021 will be in one of the HUB ballrooms; it begins around 6:00 p.m. and ends around 9:00 p.m. and includes all instructors, evaluators and students, and other Jackson School program faculty and staff. The formal reception is part of the professional experience of Task Force: you are expected to dress nicely and comport yourself in a professional and presentable way that shows you, your Task Force, and the School in the best possible light!

### *B. Who Is Your Evaluator?*

Your evaluator is an experienced professional who works in the field or in the region defined by your Task Force's topic and 'brief'. Many past evaluators have been retired diplomats or senior government officials (who may have some experience of universities and academic research), or senior members of NGOs and advocacy organizations. Your instructor will identify the appropriate evaluator.

You will know early in Winter quarter who your evaluator is. This will help you focus your research and writing. It is recommended that someone in your group do a bit of research on your evaluator. Getting to know their background, areas of interest and specialties, and their particular connection to your topic will ensure that the policy recommendations you ultimately help to create are tailor-made to fit both your audience and your subject matter.

### *C. Your Task Force Report is Written for Your Evaluator*

In most of your classes you produce written reports or papers for your instructor, or for your TA (who reads and grades on your instructor's behalf.) In your Task Force you are writing for your external evaluator. Task Force research and Task Force final reports are directed at a notional or

actual client who will use the report for practical purposes. There are two possible formats for this, and your Task Force will use one of them:

- The final report can be written for a branch or organization in the U.S. government (e.g. the White House, or the EPA, or the DoD) to inform and influence the U.S. policymaking process. In this case your evaluator will have some experience of that organization or be familiar with its workings as a policy or think-tank professional for example as a senior diplomat, a member of Congress, or a government official (who might be retired.)
- The report can be written for an organization that is not part of the U.S. government, such as a multilateral institution, a corporation, an NGO or international NGO, or a foreign government. For this type of Task Force the client organization is involved during the preparation and execution of the Task Force, and your evaluator will be a senior representative of that client organization. Examples of this in recent years include a Task Force reporting to the International Budget Project (on accountable and transparent budgeting in poor countries) and a Task Force reporting to the advocacy group FairVote (on electoral reform in Washington state); in both cases senior members of those organizations evaluated the Task Force reports and the format of the report was tailored to the practical needs of those organizations.

### *D. Preparing for Your Evaluation*

Between the completion of your final report and Evaluation Day you will be involved in preparing for your evaluation. Under the guidance of the instructor and your editor/coordinator team you will create slides for a professional-looking PowerPoint presentation. You will also rehearse (typically twice) the entire presentation so you can be confident that it is effective and flows smoothly on the day. Every student should have a very short script ready, and preferably memorized, for their part of the presentation. Most Task Forces decide to give every student a speaking slot during the evaluation – so you will have to create one very clear and concise PowerPoint slide for your own contribution and make sure the format and length are comparable to those prepared by other students.

### *E. The Two-Hour Final Evaluation*

There are multiple goals for students during the evaluation. However, a primary goal is for each student to offer a brief oral argument to the evaluator - this could be during the formal presentation or during the Q&A session. Please be sure to organize your presentations and the Q&A in such a way that will make sure that all TF students make an oral presentation of some form. Remember, because each of you has become an expert on some aspect of the Task Force Report, each of you can offer an oral presentation formally or during the Q&A.

Making a very brief presentation is a challenge, and rehearsals will help you get it right. Most Task Forces make a presentation of (at most) one hour's length to the evaluator and leave one hour for questions, comments and feedback. Hearing from your evaluator *is the key part* of the evaluation:

your evaluator may direct questions at individual students, ask for clarification, and provide constructive criticism of any part of your report – especially the recommendations.

Your group must make name tents to place in front of each student so the evaluator knows who you are. The atmosphere is professional but courteous; it is neither confrontational nor hostile! Your evaluator has read your report and will listen to your presentation as they would in their professional lives, and treat you as they would treat another professional. They have not met you before and do not know you except through your contribution to the report and the evaluation.

The quality of the content and the presentation are therefore essential, and preparing it thoroughly is well worth the effort. You should see the final evaluation as an opportunity to develop and sharpen the kinds of skills you will need in your own professional life: speaking clearly and confidently, taking responsibility for your work, building your professional relationships, and being willing to learn from others who have more experience than you do.

### *F. The Task Force Dinner – Friday March 12, 2021*

After your evaluation, comes the formal Task Force Dinner in the evening. The event is a *professional social event*, and attendance is required for all students. You will dress smartly and behave professionally. You will be seated at a table with your own Task Force – including the instructor and the evaluator, and any guests they might bring. You will enjoy food, drink, and an opportunity to reflect and talk about the challenges and successes of the past quarter. There will be opening remarks by the director of the School and the chair of the I.S. program. During the event, one student from each of the Task Forces will briefly talk about and showcase their group with some informal and light-hearted impressions of what their TF did and how the work went; this is also an opportunity to thank the instructor and evaluator.

It is important that you do not treat this event as an opportunity to let your hair down and party – you are free to do this after the dinner is over and you move to other, more casual venues! Please note that there will be no alcohol served to students at the dinner – and that you are not allowed to bring any alcohol of your own.

### *G. Your Final Grade*

Final grades are awarded by the instructor, as in any other course. Your instructor will let you know about the specific criteria they will use to grade you and the other students in your Task Force. In general, though, your overall course grade in JSIS 495 will reflect your *participation in the Task Force process as well as your contribution to the final report and the final evaluation*. Instructors will use the evaluators' feedback and comments in creating the students' grades, taking into account any special efforts or contributions that individual students have made over the course of the quarter. Doing well in Task Force means more than just producing good research and writing: your Task Force is effective and works well only if everyone is also a 'good citizen', contributing

more than just their own chapter. Instructors know this and use the grading scheme to reinforce it and provide incentives not just for rigorous and conscientious work, but for good citizenship.

## 7. How to Make the Most of Task Force: Five Tips

1. **In Winter quarter, budget and manage your time in a smart way.** Task Force has to take priority over other classes and commitments since it is a team effort and other people depend on you (even more so if you decide to become a coordinator or an editor in your group).
2. **Important: Don't just do the minimum.** Be a good citizen in your group and stand ready to help out with any jobs that have to be done – especially during 'crunch time' when the final report is being assembled from all the individual contributions; a lot of this work will have to be done during week eight of the quarter.
3. **Accept and enjoy the challenge of working on a topic that is outside your comfort zone.** Not everybody is assigned to their top-ranked Task Force – and even if you are you may be asked to work on a topic that is new or unfamiliar to you, or that you did not think you were that interested in. That's life! You will often face challenges like that in your professional career, so try to roll with it. Many Task Force students have found that doing good research and writing in a dedicated group of peers is its own reward – and many issues become interesting and important once you start working on them.
4. **Take pride in producing a good report.** Task Force reports are published electronically by the UW Libraries, so future students will consult them before they take their own Task Forces. Your evaluator will give your report the scrutiny they would apply to any professional report. These are two good reasons for trying your best to create a professional product of high quality and lasting value.
5. **Create strong academic and professional connections.** Task Force is a great opportunity to make a strong and lasting impression on your instructor and on your evaluator. During Task Force instructors get to know their students' abilities and potential very well indeed – something that can result in a strong, personal and convincing letter of recommendation in the future. Many students have been able to strike up helpful and useful relationships with their evaluators through the final presentations and conversations on Evaluation Day. There are many opportunities for networking in Task Force, more than in most of your other classes.

## 8. One-Page Calendar of Key Deadlines, To-Do's, and Deliverables

On the following page you will find a **concise external program calendar** for the Task Forces in Winter quarter. There may be small changes in dates but all the deadlines are fixed and immovable! Key to abbreviations: **TF** = Task Force **LD** = Lauren Dobrovlny | THO 111 | [ldobro@uw.edu](mailto:ldobro@uw.edu)

Week	Dates	To-Do's, Deadlines and Deliverables
1	Jan 4 - 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First meeting with instructor and Task Force team</li> <li><b>By, Jan 8</b>, Appoint your group's editor(s) and coordinator(s)</li> <li>UW Library – Research and Writing Workshops</li> <li>Make sure all students are available on <b>March 12</b> <b>**ALL DAY**</b> for evaluation and reception</li> </ul>
2	Jan 11 - 16	
3	Jan 18 - 22	
4	Jan 25 - 29	
Research, writing and editing period <b>SEVEN WEEKS</b>		
5	Feb 1 - 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>By Feb 5</b>: Complete TF group personal release form (signed by all students and your instructor). <b>Important</b>: please drop off a hard copy of the personal release form to LD in <b>Thomson 111 by 4:00 p.m., Friday, Feb 5</b>. it's okay to leave the report title blank on the form if your group has not yet settled on a title. LD will fill in the report title at the final deadline (see week of Feb 24).</li> <li><b>By Feb 5</b>: Evaluation rooms and times assigned to TF groups by LD. All Task Force evaluations will be held in the HUB or Thomson 317. Expect rooms to be set-up conference style with A/V capability.</li> <li><b>By Feb 5</b>: Coordinators, please enter Task Force dinner entrée preferences for your group in the Google spreadsheet.</li> </ul>
6	Feb 8 - 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Copy Center: check deadline for submitting Task Force report in time for <b>March 5</b> binding.</li> </ul>
7	Feb 15 - 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>By Feb 21</b>: The JSIS reserves THOM 317 for Task Force evaluation practice runs beginning the week of <b>Mar 9</b>. Coordinators: review with your group, the available time slots for THOM 317 in LD's Task Force Google spreadsheet. Enter your group's reservation in the spreadsheet once a practice run-time is determined. The reservations are confirmed by a first serve-first reserve basis. THOM 317 is set-up conference style and has A /V capability. <i>Alternatively</i>, Task Force groups have the option to do practice runs in their classrooms during regularly scheduled class times.</li> <li><b>By Feb 24</b>: Take class photo. Students are responsible for coordinating the logistics of the photo and securing a camera to take the photo. Email TF group photo to LD.</li> </ul>
8	Feb 22 - 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By <b>Feb 24</b>: Enter exact title of TF report in the Google spreadsheet.</li> <li>By <b>Feb 24</b>: Enter name of your TF dinner presenter in the Google spreadsheet.</li> <li>Mid-to-end-of week: final versions of chapters to editors/coordinators.</li> <li>Collation and merging of individual chapters, formatting final report MS.</li> <li><b>By Feb 26</b>: Poster team email poster to LD for review. One week remaining to work out any design and content issues.</li> </ul>
9	Mar 1 - 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>MAR 4</b>: please email your TF report as a PDF document to the Copy Center by <b>Noon</b> and order <b>three</b> copies of the report (remember no more than <b>12</b> pages with color throughout the report).</li> <li><b>March 4</b>: Poster team- Email final poster version to LD by end of day. Please have your Instructor sign off on poster content.</li> <li><b>Mar 5</b>: Email the final PDF electronic version of the report to your group's evaluator and to LD. Then, please deliver the <b>two</b> hardcopies of the TF report to LD in <b>THOM 111</b> and deliver the <b>third</b> copy to your instructor.</li> </ul>
10	Mar 8 - 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Entire week: Practice evaluations with PowerPoint presentation</li> <li><b>March 12</b>: TASK FORCE EVALUATIONS between <b>9 am and 4 pm</b> (HUB TF evaluation rooms will be open by 8:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.)</li> <li><b>Task Force Dinner</b>: HUB Lyceum, dinner starts @ 6:00 p.m.</li> </ul>

**FRIDAY, MARCH 12**: Two-hour evaluation of TFs with outside evaluators  
Dinner 6-9:00 p.m (professional/business attire)

# Enjoy your **Task Force** Experience!



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