**PADM 7373--- Seminar: Master of Public Administration Capstone**

**Spring 2019**

**Professor Michael Craw**

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Class time: Thursday 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Class room: 209 Ross Hall

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**Course objectives**

This seminar provides students a service learning experience in public management. In an effort to combine students' academic preparation with practical, applied experience, students are introduced to public management through a project sponsored by an area government or nonprofit agency. With this approach, we aim to expose students to the rigors of public management. Such a course experience permits students to develop decision making skills for resolving problems, enhance group interaction abilities, and prepare a document for presentation to the government or nonprofit client. The goal of this course is to capitalize on students’ academic preparation by familiarize them with public administration and the varying managerial strategies used in managing in the public sector on a ‘real time’ project, paying particular attention to the dynamics (personal, professional, organizational, social, and political) that affect management decisions in this sector.

This course seeks to:

* Train students in problem solving and issue resolution in Public Administration and Policy
* Prepare students to use analytic tools suitable to practical situations
* Engage students in practical public administration problem solving
* Complete a professional quality study

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

* Develop an original research question to lead research
* Determine and select appropriate analytical tools
* Evaluate and conduct independent research
* Use all elements of the MPA curriculum to assess and resolve issues and problems
* Prepare a thorough, concise, and clear policy report
* Provide an effective oral presentation of project findings

**Course plan**

We will meet these objectives by completing a team project on behalf of a public sector client. Students in this course are responsible for assessing the needs of this client, developing and executing a project that responds to these needs, and producing a technical report and oral presentation that describes the outcomes of this project.

Hence, we will refer to classes as "Information/Work Sessions" to better reflect what occurs during class sessions. Information/Work sessions are service-oriented discussions, lectures, and/or other items related to the project as well as class progress on the assigned project. These sessions generally provide students information and direct their efforts relative to the assigned project. We will occasionally invite guest speakers to assist students with advice, direction, and information concerning the project; students are also encouraged to arrange for speakers to attend class (subject to scheduling constraints and approval of instructors). In other sessions, I will work with you on items related to the project and/or hear reports from students on their progress. Information/work sessions will sometimes be scheduled at off-campus locations, such as at the site of the sponsoring client. Thus, there will be times when students will have to meet outside of normal class hours to engage the client (e.g., at a commission meeting, board meeting, etc.). These will be announced in advance of the meeting.

**Communications**

I encourage and expect contact from you over the semester. The easiest way to reach me is by e-mail ([mccraw@ualr.edu](mailto:mccraw@ualr.edu)). You may also reach me at my cell number above during reasonable hours (between 9 a.m. and 11 p.m.). Or you may see me during my office hours or by making an appointment to see me. I frequently am at my office beyond my posted office hours, so please feel free to come in at other times when my office door is open.

I frequently use UALR e-mail and the course Blackboard system to conduct course business. If you do not use Blackboard and UALR’s e-mail, please be sure to forward messages from those accounts to the e-mail or social media account that you use. I will also place course assignments, handouts and PowerPoint slides on the course Blackboard site whenever possible (usually within 24 hours after class).

**Course materials**

We will have additional reading assignments for some class sessions. These will be announced in class or over email and will be made available on the course Blackboard site.

**Course requirements and grading**

To pass the course, students must satisfactorily complete all the following requirements:

1) Course participation: 50 points

2) Team project: 55 points

3) Individual project contribution: 45 points

Provided that all work for the course is completed, your grade is determined by the number of points you earn out of 150:

A - 135 to 150 points

B - 120 to 134 points

C - 105 to 119 points

F - fewer than 105 points

**Attendance**: I tolerate 2 absences without penalty; every absence after the second lowers your **course grade** by 10 percentage points (one letter grade). Please be aware that you are responsible for arranging your schedule and transportation to be present at course meetings and events.

**Course participation:** Since the primary product of the capstone is a team research project, course participation is weighted heavily in your course grade (50 points, or 33%). You demonstrate effective course participation in the following ways:

--- *Collegiality*: Showing respect for your peers by being in class on time, staying through the entire class, cell phones off, and respecting the views of others in class discussion.

--- *Preparation*:  Completing reading before class, coming to class prepared with assignments and reading materials, active participation in discussion and small group work.

--- *Teamwork*: Effective collaboration with your peers on project tasks (e.g. following through on commitments, timely response to communications from team members).

--- *Leadership*: Effectiveness in developing original ideas, managing others in particular tasks, and assuming responsibility for quality of work carried out by the team.

--- *Engagement out of class*: Class sessions are not the only opportunity to discuss course ideas with me. I want to know if you are having trouble with the material and what you like and don’t like about the course. You may reach me by e-mail, see me during office hours, make a lunch appointment with me, or drop by anytime my office door is open (I frequently work at my office beyond my posted office hours).

**Team project:** A portion of your grade (55 points, or 37%) will represent the overall quality of the technical report and oral presentation your team provides for the client. This portion of the grade is assessed for the team as a whole. The report and oral presentation will respond to a question or set of questions that the client would like to see addressed. Both the report and the oral presentation will be assessed based on how effectively it responds to the client’s questions and on how well both adhere to the norms for professional quality work in the Central Arkansas region. The final technical report is due on **Thursday, May 2**.

*Project timeline:* Your team will complete this project in the following stages. A memorandum of understanding that describes the purpose of the project and the work your team will carry out for the client is due on **Saturday, February 16**. A research plan and annotated bibliography for this project is due on **Saturday, March 2**. A draft of the technical report is due on **Saturday, April 13**. And a draft of your planned PowerPoint oral presentation is due on **Saturday,   
April 27.** I will not grade these products, but successful completion of each counts towards your course participation grade. I will provide feedback to your team on each of these products that you can use to revise your work.

**Individual project contribution:** In addition to the team project grade, a portion of your grade (45 points or 30%) is an assessment of the quality of your individual contribution to the project. Each team member will have designated responsibilities to the project as determined by the team. I will assess this portion of the grade in terms of your scope of responsibility and the quality of work in your area of responsibility (i.e. accuracy, analytic depth, written style and organization, and adherence to best practices). To assess this, I will make use of a self-evaluation of your contribution; peer evaluations of your work; and instructor observation of your work in class and of your communications with your team.

**Submitting assignments**

I will set up a document-sharing platform for the team to use in collaborating on project documents. The project team leader is responsible for submitting work on behalf of the team for me to review and grade. S/he can submit work by emailing it to me ([mccraw@ualr.edu](mailto:mccraw@ualr.edu)) and/or by providing a hard copy to me at my office or to my mailbox on the 6th floor of Ross Hall. Late work will receive a penalty of one letter grade (10 percentage points) for each day late.

**Academic integrity**

Cheating, plagiarism and other violations of academic integrity standards will not be tolerated. Any student turning in work that is in violation of UA Little Rock academic integrity standards will automatically receive a grade of zero in the course and the matter will be referred to the MPA program coordinator for disciplinary action. An overview of academic integrity standards and UA Little Rock’s academic integrity policy are at <http://ualr.edu/deanofstudents/index.php/home/academic-integrity/> .

**Accessibility**

Your success in this class is important to me, and it is the policy and practice of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock to create inclusive learning environments consistent with federal and state law. If you have a documented disability (or need to have a disability documented), and need an accommodation, please contact me privately as soon as possible, so that we can discuss with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) how to meet your specific needs and the requirements of the course. The DRC offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process among you, your instructor(s) and the DRC. Thus, if you have a disability, please contact me and/or the DRC, at 501-569-3143 (V/TTY) or 501-683-7629 (VP). For more information, please visit the DRC website at [ualr.edu/disability](http://www.ualr.edu/disability).

**Course schedule**

Due to the unique nature of this course, assignments and weekly subjects change often and are reorganized at the instructors' discretion. Topics are not limited to only those listed. Please check the course site and your UA Little Rock email regularly for changes to the course schedule.

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| **Date** | **Tasks** |
| **Thursday, January 24** | **Course introduction** Reading: Harvard Business Review, "The Four Phases of Project Management" (Blackboard) Bardach, Appendix C, "Understanding Public and Nonprofit Institutions: Asking the Right Questions" (Blackboard) |
| **Thursday, January 31** | **Meeting with project client** |
| **Thursday, February 7** | **Goals and roles** Developing a memorandum of understanding Tasks and Area Assignments Focusing the Project: Considerations and Caveats Reading: Heagney, "Developing a Mission, Vision, Goals, and Objectives for the Project" (Blackboard) |
| Thursday, February 14 | **Research plan** Be prepared to discuss proposed project direction and ideas Tasks and Area Assignment Reports  Finalizing the MOU |
| **Saturday, February 16** | **Memorandum of Understanding due at 11 p.m.** |
| Thursday, February 21 | **Research plan** Working towards a research plan and bibliography Individual progress reports on research plan |
| Thursday, February 28 | **Research plan and investigation** Finalizing the research plan and bibliography Research investigation tasks Beginning research investigation |
| **Saturday, March 2** | **Research plan and annotated bibliography due at 11 p.m.** |
| Thursday, March 7 | **Research Investigation** Progress reports on research investigation Beginning draft on problem statement and analysis |
| Thursday, March 14 | **Research Investigation** Progress reports on research investigation Continuing draft on problem statement and analysis |
| **Thursday, March 21** | **Spring Break (UALR Closed)** |
| Thursday, March 28 | **Research Investigation** Progress reports on research investigation Continuing draft on problem statement and analysis Beginning draft on methods and approaches |
| Thursday, April 4 | **Research Investigation** Progress reports on research investigation Continuing draft on problem statement and analysis Continuing draft on methods and approaches Beginning draft on findings and recommendations |
| Thursday, April 11 | **Finalizing the draft report** Progress reports on research investigation Continuing draft on problem statement and analysis Continuing draft on methods and approaches Continuing draft on findings and recommendations |
| **Saturday, April 13** | **Draft technical report due at 11 p.m.** |
| Thursday, April 18 | **Review of draft report** Assigning tasks for rewriting and revising Developing oral presentation |
| Thursday, April 25 | **Rewriting and revising** Progress reports on rewrites Review of draft PowerPoint slides |
| **Saturday, April 27** | **Draft PowerPoint presentation due at 11 pm** |
| **Thursday, May 2** | **Final technical report due for printing and distribution Full dry run for oral presentation** |
| **Thursday, May 9 (tentative)** | **Presentation of findings (place/time TBA)** |