

University of Arkansas at Little Rock

School of Public Affairs

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Office Hrs: M/T 4-5:30 pm & by appt.

Course #: PADM 7373 & 7374
Title: MPA & GCNM Capstone
Semester: Fall 2019
Meeting date/time: Monday 6:00-8:40 pm
Location: Ross Hall 118

Course objectives

The capstone provides students a service learning experience in public and nonprofit 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 expose students to the rigors of public management and policy analysis. 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 familiarizing 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 analytical tools for suitable to situation
- Engage students in practical public administration problem solving
- Have students complete a professional quality study

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

- Develop an original research question to lead inquiry
- Determine and select appropriate methodological and 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 or nonprofit 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.

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, usually at the site of the sponsoring client. Thus, there will be times when students will have to meet outside of normal working 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: kaleach@ualr.edu. Or you may see me during my office hours or by making an appointment. I have an open-door policy, so please feel free to come by my office outside of my scheduled office hours.

Blackboard – A Blackboard site is setup for this course. Each student is expected to check the site multiple times every week during the semester. Blackboard will be the primary venue for outside classroom communication between the instructor and students. Students can access the course site at: <https://blackboard.ualr.edu/>
If you do not use Blackboard and UALR's email, please be sure to forward messages from those accounts to the email or social media account that you use. I will also place course assignments, handouts and PowerPoint slides on the course Blackboard site whenever possible.

Google Docs – The client and I will setup a google docs site for the class to access shared documents. Here you will find client specific documents. **Some of these documents may be proprietary** and it is imperative that **these documents not be shared outside of the class**.

Course materials

Books: You are required to have one book for this course:

Bardach, Eugene. 2009. *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*. 3rd ed. Washington: CQ Press. (Other editions are also acceptable).

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

CITI Training

Ethics training – must complete **MANDATORY** IRB certification training **BEFORE** proceeding

To successfully complete this course you will be required to engage in some fieldwork for data collection [this may take the form of interviews, focus groups, observations etc]. In some cases, it will require the fieldwork to be integrated with survey data. Depending on the direction of the project you will be required to develop a narrative to support your proposed data collection method.

Prior to data collection, ALL STUDENTS will be required to complete the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) in the Protection of Human Research Subjects. This training is required of ALL FACULTY, STAFF AND STUDENTS, doing research projects involving human subjects. You are required to Register for the online CITI course at www.citiprogram.org You will affiliate with the University of Arkansas Little Rock and assign yourself a username and password. All researchers working with human subjects are required to complete the modules in “Group 1. Social and Behavioral Research Investigators and Key Personnel”. Upon completion of the CITI Training course you will receive a certificate. Please forward that certificate to my attention by the date listed on the syllabus. Please visit the UALR Institutional Review Board site <https://ualr.edu/irb/home/required-training/> for additional information. If you have already completed CITI Training please ensure that your certificate has not expired.

Attendance – Our course requires active participation and discussion. Therefore, it is important that you come to class and be prepared to discuss the project, timelines, obstacles & challenges etc. If you are unable to attend class because of work, family or other obligations please email me at: kaleach@ualr.edu. Multiple absences from class and client meetings will lower your grade. Please be aware that you are responsible for arranging your schedule and transportation to be present at course meetings and events.

Note: the final presentation to the client will be held off campus!

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 an appointment, 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.

The final technical report due to the client on:

The final oral presentation to the client will be on: at the client's office; **time TBD**

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 for collaborating on project documents. The project team leader[s] is responsible for submitting work on behalf of the team for me to review and grade by emailing it to me kaleach@ualr.edu. Late work will receive a penalty of one letter grade (10 percentage points) for each day late.

Project timeline key deliverables – 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 **September 16th**.
- A research plan and annotated bibliography for the project is due on **September 30th**.
- A draft of the technical report is due on **November 18th**.
- A draft of your planned PowerPoint oral presentation is due on **December 3rd**.

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.

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

Students with Disabilities – 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 document a disability) 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. (UA Little Rock Policy 404.9)

Classroom culture

Electronic devices – Electronic and wireless devices have become an integral part of modern life. However, it is important that electronic/wireless devices are used appropriately. In consideration of your fellow students and to maintain an optimal learning environment, please silence cell phones while you are in class. **The use of electronic/wireless devices in class is a privilege and restricted to in-class activities**, including taking notes, viewing the lecture slides presented by the instructor, or accessing the internet for class-related information.

It is expected that **learning** in our class will depend on **active participation and vigorous discussion**, but in **an atmosphere of mutual respect** among students and the instructor. Be creative and question what you read. All ideas and contributions are encouraged. **We will cover controversial social topics**. It is important to recognize that others may have different opinions and that we should discuss these issues in a cooperative and respectful manner. Students should feel free to challenge the instructor and one another assured that **the classroom is a safe environment to explore not only technical, but also controversial and provocative ideas**.

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. The needs of the client as well and the methodological approach may require additional references. Please check the course site and your UALR email regularly for changes to the course schedule & syllabus.

Working schedule and readings

Week	Date	Topic / Readings & Assignments
1	Aug 19	Awkward ice breaker; overly dramatic intros; and what we're doing over the next few weeks ... #ReadTheSyllabus Meeting with project client
2	Aug 26	Reading: Bardach, Appendix C, "Understanding Public and Nonprofit Institutions: Asking the Right Questions" Meeting with project clients
3	Sept 2	Labour Day -
4	Sept 9	Developing goals & roles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a memorandum of understanding • Tasks and Area Assignments • Focusing the Project: Considerations and Caveats Reading: Bardach, "The Eightfold Path"; example memorandum CITI Training completed: email certificates and courses to kaleach@ualr.edu
5	Sept 16	Research plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prepared to discuss proposed project direction and ideas • Tasks and Area Assignment Reports (oral)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Finalizing the MOU – send MOU to Client</u> <p>Reading: Bardach, "Assembling Evidence"</p>
6	Sept 23	<p>Research plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working towards a research plan and bibliography • Individual progress reports on research plan <p>Reading: Bardach, "Smart (Best) Practices"</p>
7	Sept 30	<p>Research plan and investigation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final research plan / project outline and bibliography due • Research investigation tasks • Beginning research investigation <p>Client Progress Meeting</p>
8	Oct 7	<p>Research Investigation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress reports on research investigation • Beginning draft on problem statement and analysis
9	Oct 14	<p>Research Investigation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress reports on research investigation • Continuing draft on problem statement and analysis • Beginning draft on methods and approaches
10	Oct 21	<p>Research Investigation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress reports on research investigation • Continuing draft on problem statement and analysis <p>Draft Technical Report Outline Due</p>
11	Oct 28	<p>Research Investigation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress reports on research investigation • Continuing draft on problem statement and analysis • Continuing draft on methods and approaches • Beginning draft on findings and recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Include support/justification materials & information <p>Client Progress Meeting</p>
12	Nov 4	<p>Review & rewriting of draft report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigning tasks for rewriting and revising • Developing oral presentation • Review of draft PowerPoint slides • First practice session for oral presentation <p>Draft PowerPoint presentation due Draft Technical Report Due</p>
13	Nov 11	<p>Rewriting and revising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress reports on rewriting assignments • Practice session for oral presentation (Communication Skill Center feedback)

14	Nov 18	Draft Technical Report Edits continue Full dry run for oral presentation; sample question and answer
15	Nov 25	Fall Break ... make good life choices!
	Dec 2	Consultation week Final technical report due for printing and distribution Final presentations of findings to the client: location & time TBD