

Managing Public Disputes

Fall 2020 Syllabus

PADM 7341 Section 01

Course Description and Prerequisites

This graduate-level 3-credit-hour course teaches knowledge and skills necessary for effective management of multi-party public policy disputes and for collaborative problem solving in the public sector. The course is an elective for both the Master of Public Administration Program and the Graduate Certificate in Conflict Mediation.

The course examines theory regarding public issues and policy conflicts; explores effective methods for analyzing and framing public issues; and describes step-by-step procedures for engaging in dialogue and deliberation, managing public policy disputes, and solving problems collaboratively. Numerous case studies and real-world examples are discussed and analyzed.

The course will appeal to public sector managers, dispute resolution professionals, managers of nonprofit or private organizations, and others who work toward public goals in partnership with organizations and individuals with divergent and sometimes conflicting interests.

In addition to written assignments, the course requires active participation in class discussion, role-plays, and in-class small group exercises.

Location

As of now (August 24, 2020) this class is designated as a hybrid class. As such, **most of the class will be conducted via Zoom and Blackboard**. My hope is that by November when our 2nd block of weekend classes was originally scheduled we can meet one day – probably Sunday November 8 – for the public meeting simulations. However, **all is in flux and if by then COVID is still raging and any of us does not feel comfortable attending in person, we will work something else out.**

Original Schedule

This class is generally taught in an alternative format course that meets in six parts on two weekends. The original schedule was as follows. As such, **I have tentatively scheduled assignment due dates around this schedule.**

October 9, 2020	Friday	5:00 pm - 9:00 pm
October 10, 2020	Saturday	8:30 am - 6:00 pm
October 11, 2020	Sunday	9:00 am – 4:30 pm
November 6, 2020	Friday	5:00 pm - 9:00 pm
November 7, 2020	Saturday	8:30 am - 4:30 pm
November 8, 2020	Sunday	9:00 am – 6:00 pm *

- If we are able to meet in person at all, it will probably be on this day.

Instructor Information

Christina (Christy) C. Standerfer, PhD
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Dr. Standerfer is Professor Emerita from the University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public Service. While a professor at the Clinton School she taught Communication and Social Change and advocacy in Social Change and was Faculty Director of the Office of Community Engagement. Her BA and MA degrees were in Speech and Communications at UALR, and her PhD degree was in Communication at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Her research centers on the rhetorical construction of civic engagement, public issues, and public opinion – how citizenship and civic engagement become engaged in political talk.

Course Materials

Required textbook (buy or borrow this):

- Carpenter, Susan L. and W.J.D. Kennedy (2001). *Managing public disputes*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Other required reading (will be made available through the instructor):

- Dewey, J. (1927). *The public and its problems*. Athens, OH: Swallow Press. (Chapter 1)
- Gusfield, J.R. (1981). *The culture of public problems: Drinking-driving and the symbolic order*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Chapter 1)
- Various case studies and related readings

Student Responsibilities

Actively, thoughtfully, and respectfully engage with each other, me, and the material when we meet either virtually or in person. This whole semester will be an experiment ☺. As such, your active participation, your curiosity, and your critical thinking about and talking about things you read or we discuss is paramount to this experiment being a success ☺

Keep up with the reading. The Carpenter & Kennedy text is generally atheoretical and, therefore, a quick read. The Dewey and Gusfield pieces are more difficult but offer a decent theoretical foundation for why public disputes occur and what our responsibilities are as citizens, public officials, and public servants in managing these disputes.

Submit written assignments electronically as MS Word documents and in a timely manner.

Possible Assignments and Tentative Due Dates**TBD**

Engage: By the end of the first week in September, I will ask you to complete a Doodle Poll to set up a short (45-60 min) Zoom meeting so that we can discuss the flow of the work for the class and possible pairings/teams for a few assignments. You will be expected to attend this meeting.

Due by Friday October 9

Read: Dewey and Gusfield Chapters (will be provided either by email or on Blackboard by middle of September)

Write: Answer at least *two of the reading questions provided for Dewey and two of the reading questions provided for Gusfield* citing specific passages in the reading to back your claims. Post your answers on Blackboard.

***Engage:** Post at least one comment re: Your reaction(s) to others' posts. See note below.

Due by Saturday October 10

Read: *Managing Public Disputes* Part One and Part Two (pp. 1-154).

Write: In teams, pairs, or by yourself outline or summarize the main points of your assigned chapter(s). Post the outline/summary on Blackboard.

***Engage:** Post at least one comment re: Your reactions to others' outlines/summaries. See note below.

Due by Sunday October 11

Read: Clarkson Airport Authority Case.

Write: Write a memo to Angela Johnson, the Public Affairs coordinator of the Clarkson Airport Authority, explaining why you would or would not take the assignment as chair of a citizen's advisory committee. You basically have three choices: take the assignment as offered, take the assignment with modifications (change/modify/add to/subtract from the conditions outlined in 5th paragraph), or decline the assignment. Make sure you offer specific reasons for your choice. Base those reasons on information gained from readings. Post your memo on Blackboard.

***Engage:** Post at least one comment re: Your reaction(s) to others' memos. See note below.

Due by Friday November 6

Write: 5-10 page paper (double-spaced) detailing the analysis of a state or local public issues case. Your assessment should be thorough and include references to the textbooks and other sources. Provide textual evidence for any claims you make. Post your paper on Blackboard.

***Engage:** Post at least one comment re: Your reaction(s) to others' analyses. See note below.

Due by Saturday November 7

Read: *Managing Public Disputes* Part Three (pp. 155-277).

Write: In teams, pairs, or by yourself outline or summarize the main points of your assigned chapter(s). Post the outline on Blackboard.

Engage: Post at least one comment re: Your reactions to others' outlines/summaries. See note below.

****Due by Sunday November 8**

Facilitate: Come to class prepared to facilitate a meeting related to a public dispute

Write: Bring to class your agenda for the meeting and any other materials you created to lead the meeting.

* Alternatively, we could meet via Zoom to discuss (?)

** Activities/assignment subject to change based on COVID as we approach this date. Don't worry! ☺☺

Grading Points

Participation through thoughtful posts/comments	10
Dewey/Gusfield Answers	5
Chapter summaries (outlines) 2 @ 10 points each	20
Clarkson Airport Authority memo	15
Public conflict assessment paper	25
Facilitation exercise (or alternatively detailed agenda for a public meeting, etc.)	25
Total points	100

Learning Outcomes

The student who completes the Managing Public Disputes course should be:

Familiar with theories distinguishing public problems and issues from private issues

Familiar with the concepts of collaborative public management and participative governance

Knowledgeable about the characteristics of public conflicts

Competent to use basic communication and conflict management techniques

Knowledgeable about participatory and collaborative processes

Familiar with the ways in which collaborative public management and participative governance are used to address potentially divisive public issues

Competent to assess disputes to determine what types of conflict management or collaborative processes are appropriate

Master of Public Administration (MPA) Program Mission and Goals

This course, an elective in the UALR/MPA program, is designed as an integral part of the effort to prepare graduates for professional management and leadership careers in state and local government and nonprofit agencies in Arkansas. To accomplish this mission, the MPA program strives to provide knowledge about public and nonprofit administration; develop management skills and technical expertise; and, develop conceptual skills and provide analytical tools for problem-solving and decision-making.

Professional Memberships Recommended

MPA students are encouraged to join the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA). Applications may be obtained from the MPA secretary. The Arkansas Chapter of ASPA meets monthly and provides regular opportunities for professional and social networking.

Students with Disabilities

It is the policy of UALR to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal law and state law. Any student with a disability who needs accommodation, for example in arrangements for seating, examinations, note-taking should inform the instructor at the beginning of the course. It is also the policy and practice of UALR to make web-based information accessible to students with disabilities. If you, as a student with a disability, have difficulty accessing any part of the online course materials for this class, please notify the instructor immediately. The chair of the department offering this course is also available to assist with accommodations. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Disability Support Services, telephone 501-569-3143 (v/tty), and on the Web at <http://www.ualr.edu/dssdept/>.

Discrimination Policy

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Contact one of the following if you have a question or a complaint about possible discrimination:

Dr. Jerry Stephenson, MPA Coordinator. 569-3037. Ross Hall 640.

Dr. Anne R. Williamson, Director, School of Public Affairs. 569-3331. Ross Hall 642.

Dr. William “Cody” Decker, Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs. 569-3328. DSC 215B.