PADM 6700: Capstone Project in Public Administration

Fall/Spring 2XXX

Course Instructor: Public Administration Faculty
Email:
Office Phone:
Office: Department of Public Administration (Avon Williams Campus)
Office Hours:

THIS SYLLABUS IS A SAMPLE – THE ACTUAL SYLLABUS FOR YOUR COURSE WILL BE GIVEN TO YOU BY THE INSTRUCTOR AND IS CONTROLLING, IT MAY HAVE CHANGES.

The Role of this Syllabus

This syllabus establishes the expectations for the capstone course. Successful completion of the capstone project (including a grade of C or better in this course) is required to receive the MPA degree, and there is no permitted substitute to meet this graduation requirement. The capstone experience represents the culminating demonstration of the skills, knowledge and abilities you have developed throughout your MPA studies. Furthermore, completion of the project involves working on a project of interest to an external organization (public or nonprofit); thus all students enrolled in this course take on the responsibility of representing the program and the University, as well as themselves, through their work. Students should use this course syllabus as their first guide/reference for questions related to the course. Please read it carefully, and promptly contact the course instructor with any questions or sources of confusion. You are asked to sign the memorandum of understanding at the end of this document, which attests to your understanding of the content contained within this syllabus. Please note, if for any reason you do not agree with the information and requirements discussed within this document and are unable or unwilling to sign the Memorandum of Understanding, you should consult the course instructor immediately.

Course Description

The Capstone Project offers each student the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of the theory and practice of public administration by applying the knowledge and skills gained in the MPA program to a client-based project of the student’s choice (pending course instructor approval). This involves completing a project report for the client organization that reflects application of knowledge, skills, and abilities developed in the MPA program to the project. The written products from this course are intended to serve as tangible evidence of a graduating MPA student’s qualifications and expertise. The course is intended only for students who are completing their Masters of Public Administration (MPA). In order to enroll in this course, students must have completed PADM 6130 (Research Methods), PADM 6500 (Internship) if required, and be no more than one (1) semester away from graduating. Therefore, a student who wants to graduate in the Spring, could take this course during the Spring when they expect to graduate or during the preceding Fall semester. Students who are unsure about whether or not they are eligible to take this course should consult their advisor.

1 Changes may be made to this course syllabus at the discretion of the Course Instructor. If changes are made, students will be promptly notified and a new syllabus will be issued.
Course Goals

- To demonstrate knowledge gained throughout the MPA program and to apply that knowledge to a relevant public management, nonprofit management, or policy problem.
- To produce a report that demonstrates critical thought, exhibits a level of analysis appropriate to a master’s degree, and displays a high level of professionalism and competence both in the written and oral presentation deliverables.

Mission of the MPA Program

Our MPA program prepares students, as ethical public and nonprofit managers and leaders, to respond equitably, effectively, and efficiently to the needs of a diverse society. We recognize the goals of our students working in, or preparing for, public service by emphasizing flexibility and quality in teaching and learning. We teach the core concepts of public administration with a focus on practical application, while strengthening students’ ability to solve problems analytically. Students may build specialized skills on one of the program’s areas of expertise: public policy, leadership, or nonprofit management. As instructors and advisors, we work closely with students to support both their classroom and career achievement; in return, students are expected to pursue academic excellence and demonstrate integrity. As scholars, we engage in research and service to the University, community, and profession. By building relationships with public and nonprofit organizations in Middle Tennessee and beyond, we enhance our ability to develop students as professionals.

Values of the MPA Program

Public Service Values Statement. The guiding public service values of the MPA program in the College of Public Service at TSU are:

- EQUITY – Public servants should practice impartiality and fairness in their daily work, while balancing that pursuit with the need for effectiveness and efficiency.
- EFFECTIVENESS – Public servants should work in a proficient and productive manner towards the common good, setting transparent performance outcomes to measure progress while balancing that pursuit with the need for equity and efficiency.
- EFFICIENCY – Public servants should be careful and innovative stewards who seek to create the most public value out of scarce resources, while balancing that pursuit with the need for effectiveness and equity.
- DIVERSITY – Public servants should understand, value, and respect both individual differences and commonalities, working to create and maintain inclusive organizations and communities.

Course Content – Competencies Connection

Tennessee State University’s College of Public Service’s MPA degree is NASPAA-accredited. NASPAA has established five program competency domains that they believe are essential for students to develop through their MPA studies. Courses in the MPA curriculum are designed around specific student learning objectives, developed by the faculty to operationalize these five program competencies. The full MPA Course Competency Map is available online and included in the appendix.
The deliverables of all capstone projects are directly related to SLOs 5.1 and 5.2 of Program Competency 5, “Each MPA graduate will be competent to communicate and interact effectively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry.” However, students must choose the additional competencies which will directly relate to the specific project they develop with the client organization when the project is developed. These linkages must be addressed in the reflective Program Competencies Memo at the completion of the project (distinct from the final project report).

**Instructional Methods**

The Capstone Project course has four mandatory meetings: (1) a pre-semester meeting where students will meet with the course instructor to discuss the structure of the capstone program, as well as brainstorm ideas for project topics; (2) an orientation session early in the semester; (3) a milestone meeting in the middle of the term at a date specified by the Course Instructor; and (4) the final session at which students present their projects. Each student will work independently, and since the project is intended to represent the culmination of the student’s work in the MPA program, each student will be responsible for designing and conducting all aspects of the project (in consultation with the Course Instructor, second reader, and client organization liaison). During the semester the Course Instructor will be available as a coach, mentor, and resource person. In particular, the Course Instructor will review a written draft of each principal section of the student’s project report and provide detailed comments and suggestions to the student. Once the Course Instructor reviews a given draft section of the report, the student must use the comments and suggestions in the development and preparation of the final report. The Course Instructor will generally not review and comment on a student’s completed revision of a given section; it is the student’s responsibility to make appropriate revisions and to integrate each section into a final written report. Students should expect to revise their papers several times before completion of the final project. It is the responsibility of the student to initiate meetings as needed with the second reader (another PA faculty member) and third reader (the client organization liaison). Students who experience difficulties in consultation with second and third readers, should immediately consult the course instructor. The student is expected to develop a project that meets professional standards for quality and validity. The report is expected to meet professional standards for writing and style. The oral report may be presented using handouts and software such as PowerPoint, and will last 10-15 minutes. Detailed instructions on the oral report will be provided later in the semester. Because of the independent nature of the capstone project, much communication between students and the Course Instructor will occur via e-mail and/or telephone. Draft sections for review should be submitted in MS Word format in the manner required by the instructor, by the date and time indicated on the course schedule listed below.

**Project Types**

There are many different approaches that a student could take and successfully complete the Capstone Project. The following is a partial list of approaches and methodologies that a student could employ:

**Possible Approaches**

- Case study
- Action research
- Management analysis study
- Performance measure development
- Policy analysis study
- Work process analysis/process improvement
- Organizational analysis

**Possible Methodologies include…**
Project Outline

Regardless of the project approach and methodology used, the final project should explicitly apply concepts drawn from MPA course work, reading and practice that aid in understanding the political, social, economic, managerial, or other factors relevant to the context of the project. The outcome should be improved understanding of professional practice in a public or non-profit organization or program. The project may also result in recommendations for action that could inform change. The MPA capstone is not simply a research paper nor is it a research-focused master’s thesis, but instead should be a client organization-focused project that prioritizes the application of concepts and skills acquired during MPA coursework.

Each student’s final product will be a report divided into seven sections as described below.

1. Executive Summary: [Written last] This section provides the reader an overview of the organization and/or policy, the problem/issue/topic, and why it is important; analytical framework and literature upon which the project relies; and the nature of the research project itself and how it will be presented in the paper. (approximately 1 page)

2. Introduction: Describes the issue being studied within the client’s organization, including its development over time and the political and/or organizational context. Describes the relevance or significance of the issue, problem, or project. Presents a concise and clear statement of the issue the project is intended to address (1-2 pages)

3. Analytic Framework/Literature Review: Presents a review of theoretical and practice-oriented concepts drawn from appropriate scholarly and professional literature, comparing and contrasting different perspectives and analyzing their application to the project issue. This is sometimes referred to as the “literature review.” The purpose of a review of previous research and various theoretical approaches to a topic is to develop an analytic framework that establishes the elements of the project, identifies relevant theoretical perspective(s), and integrates the project into the larger body of systematic knowledge about public and nonprofit management. The References section (see #7 below) should be turned in at the same time as this section. Please remember, this section is not simply a summary of scholarship related to your project topic, rather it is meant to help you frame your project topic, identifying shortcomings in the existing research. There should be a tight connection between the analytic framework and the methodological approach. (3-5 pages). **You can still add additional references to the work as you proceed after the draft is provided.**

4. Methodology: Describes the project approach and methodology (see earlier list for ideas). Carefully describes the specific steps taken to ensure the appropriateness of the project methodology, and the credibility and utility of the expected data generated for the client’s organization. (2-3 pages)

5. Analysis and Results: Describes the project findings and their interpretation. Will very likely include tables and/or figures to aid in communication of findings. (3-5 pages)

6. Recommendations: Presents implications and recommendations for the client’s organization, derived from the findings, as appropriate. These recommendations should be supported by the research analysis and results, as well as previous studies, literature from the field, and best practices. Relates the findings to previous research,
existing theory, and current practices within the client’s organization. Identifies limitations in project design. Discusses the potential impact of the research on practice within the client’s organization, as well as the public interest.

(3-5 pages)

7. **Conclusion**: A summary of each major component of the Capstone project paper, including recommendations (1-2 pages)

8. **References**: A complete and accurate list of references must be included, in the style of the American Psychological Association Publication Manual. In-text citations and reference format must all follow APA format, but other requirements of the APA style guide for overall paper format are not relevant.

9. **Tables**: Any tables, figures or graphics should be included in the body of the report as close as possible to the text discussion of the item. Please also make sure that you reference the tables and figures in the text. Furthermore, be careful to provide source citations for any tables or figures drawn from references or based upon reference data. It must be clear to the reader whether you created the table or figure based upon source information from a source (i.e., you created the table or figure drawing upon information from a source) or if the table or figure is instead copied from a source.

10. **Appendices**: Appendices may be used to include lengthy and detailed material not directly discussed in the body of the report. This might include material such as transcripts of in-depth interviews, frequency distributions of survey item responses, or special computations related to the project. All Appendices should be referenced in the main text.

When submitting each section, please include all prior sections so that the course instructor may examine the continuity among the sections.

**Recommended/Optional Books**

- There are no required books to purchase for this course. Instead, students are expected to utilize key books and texts from their MPA coursework, as well as conduct original research using peer-reviewed journal articles and other appropriate professional resources. Appendix 2 contains a list of recommended or optional books that students could seek to borrow from the library, rent, or purchase to assist them with their project. Nonetheless, the specific texts and resources needed will largely be determined by the nature of each student’s project and determined in consultation with the course instructor and through the student’s research.

**Course Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Semester Meeting</th>
<th>Students will meet with the course instructor to discuss the structure of the capstone program, as well as brainstorm ideas for project topics.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week #1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Deadline #1 – First Friday of the Semester</strong></td>
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<td>Students must submit the <strong>Memorandum of Understanding</strong>, the <strong>Project Information Sheet</strong>, and students must have completed the <strong>CITI training</strong> provided via TSU’s IRB</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week &amp; #</td>
<td>Meeting/Deadline</td>
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<td>Week #2</td>
<td>Meeting #1</td>
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<td>Week #4</td>
<td>Deadline #2</td>
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<td>Week #6</td>
<td>Deadline #3</td>
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<td>Week #7</td>
<td>Meeting #3 – Milestone Meeting</td>
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<td>Week #9</td>
<td>Deadline #4</td>
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<td>Week #12</td>
<td>Deadline #5</td>
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<td>Week #14</td>
<td>Meeting #3 – Project Presentations</td>
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<td>Week #15</td>
<td>Deadline #6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finals Week</td>
<td>Deadline #7</td>
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**Procedures & Resources**

**Institutional Review Board (IRB)/CITI Training**

- The Course Instructor files a “blanket” IRB proposal for all capstone projects in a given semester. As long as a capstone project falls within the expedited or exempt categories of research, then the student is covered by the Course Instructor’s “blanket” IRB. The final determination of whether or not a student’s capstone project is exempt from full IRB review or qualifies for expedited review is ultimately made by the Course Instructor; however, students can learn more about these two categories of research by visiting Tennessee State University’s IRB website ([Exemption from IRB Review Checklist](#) and [Expedited IRB Review Checklist](#)). If a student wants to conduct a Capstone Project that does not fall within the exempt or expedited research categories, they must consult with the Course Instructor. All students are required to complete the on-line CITI Training. This is free for TSU students, and can be accessed at [https://www.citiprogram.org](https://www.citiprogram.org). Students are required to complete three (3) training modules by the first Friday in the semester: (1) **Social & Behavioral Research Investigators**: Choose this group to satisfy CITI training requirements for Investigators and staff involved primarily in Social and Behavioral research with human subjects, (2) **Social and Behavioral Responsible Conduct of Research Course**, and (3) the **Students and Lab Personnel Conflicts of Interest course**. Completion of these courses will result in the student receiving a CITI certificate, which must be uploaded to the appropriate area on the eLearn course page.

**The Writing Center**

- Students needing assistance with writing skills should seek assistance from the TSU Writing Center. The purpose of the center is to support those members of the University community who are seeking to become strong, independent writers. If the Course Instructor determines (based on review of section drafts) that the student needs assistance with writing, then the student may be required to schedule and attend a session with a TSU Writing Center Tutor. The Writing Center is located on the 3rd Floor of the Student Success Center (also known as the Harold M. Love Learning Resource Center), and they operate Monday – Friday, 8:00am – 6:00pm. They also offer a Virtual Writing Center for those unable to attend an appointment in person and University-wide workshops and in-class workshops at the instructor’s request.

**Grade of Incomplete**

- Timely completion of each assignment according to the course schedule listed above is required for the student to continue on to the next phase of the project. Students who fall behind in the course, or whose work is not deemed to be sufficiently completed at each stage, may be asked to withdraw at the course instructor’s
discretion. Students who are unable to complete their project, but have been both timely and maintained good-faith efforts to complete each phase of their project, with an estimation by the course instructor of approximately 80% of course assignments having been completed with a passing grade, may be approved by the course instructor to receive a grade of “I” (incomplete) at the end of the semester. No student should assume that the “I” will be an option available simply based on getting behind in course requirements; getting busy at work; or performing poorly on early assessments; that is not the function of the Incomplete grade, which is intended to address unusual situations such as medical emergencies arising in the last few weeks of the semester.

**Required Assignments**

Your capstone assignment will take the form of a client-focused project, which will be composed of two elements (a paper and a presentation). Additionally, you will develop a Program Competencies Memo.

**Client-focused Project**

Students will undertake a client-focused project that meets the following guidelines: (a) the project is for a client public or non-profit organization, which has been approved by the Course Instructor; (b) the project should be of significance and practical use to the client organization; (c) while the written paper is designed to be of use to the client organization, it must still meet the purpose of this Capstone Project Course by integrating scholarly knowledge from the MPA program and external research; and (d) client-focused projects may **NOT** be conducted as part of a student’s ongoing work responsibilities. An individual from the client organization must be designated as the liaison for the purposes of the project; that person must have a role and responsibilities appropriate to the needs and level of the project (and the backing of the organization to work with the student on this project, as well as ability to provide access to organizational information or personnel needed for successful completion).

The issue/topic to be addressed via the Capstone Project, developed in consultation with the client and the Course Instructor, should directly relate to the student’s current or prospective professional career. The project may concern a subject *internal* to the client’s organization (e.g. human resources management, financial analysis, strategic planning) or *external* to the client’s organization (e.g. evaluation of a public policy that impacts the organization, implementation of a program related to the organization). Discussions with potential clients, fellow capstone course class members, and the course instructor will help students sort out what topic may be best to address with the project.

To begin, the student should:

1. Identify potential client organization.
2. Schedule meetings with representatives of no more than two (2) client organizations to discuss possibly using that organization for the capstone project.
3. Finalize selection of a client organization and liaison, based on feedback from the Course Instructor.
4. Schedule a series of meetings with the liaison to determine the organization’s goal(s) for the project.
5. Explore materials from MPA coursework, as well as external research, to develop a background/contextual understanding of the issue/topic being addressed for the project.
6. Utilize research to design a methodological approach that aligns with the issue/topic being addressed, and respects the organizational need and context.
7. Review progress, draft reports, and/or other products with the liaison.
8. Ensure that the liaison agrees to be the Third Reader on the project, and that the liaison can attend the oral presentation at the end of the semester.
• Paper Overview
  o The quality, depth, and sophistication of the final Capstone Project Paper should be higher than that of a traditional course paper. It must represent the best of your work, a concrete demonstration of the value of the degree in which both you and the faculty have invested. In comparison to a typical course paper, many more hours will be spent conducting literature searches, reading related articles and reports, meeting with others for input, collecting data/information, developing and interpreting findings, and writing results. Unlike a term paper that you may write only once, your section drafts will be reviewed by the Course Instructor (and potentially the second and third readers), and you will then be asked to revise those sections for use in the final draft of the Capstone Project Paper. Therefore, students should be prepared to complete multiple revisions. The value of feedback from the Course Instructor and others is contingent on the effort put into the drafts submitted, so each draft and section should be taken seriously. Students are expected to demonstrate writing proficiency, and should seek assistance from the TSU Writing Center if needed (or required by the Course Instructor).

• Paper Formatting
  o At minimum, Capstone Project Papers should adhere to the following guidelines:
    ▪ Final projects should not exceed 25 double-spaced pages (excluding references and any appendices)
    ▪ All pages should be numbered
    ▪ Proper APA in-text citation and references style must be used
    ▪ Check spelling and grammar (at a minimum, use your word processing program’s grammar and spelling check functions)
    ▪ Proofread for awkward sentence styles and construction
    ▪ Use 1-inch margins (top, bottom, left, and right)
    ▪ Use a standard 12-point font (Arial not allowed)
    ▪ Do not write in the first person, or use the personal person/use of “I” in a formal paper
    ▪ Left-justify text
    ▪ All final written projects should be converted into a single PDF file, and emailed directly to the Course Instructor who will distribute to the second and third readers.

• Presentation
  o An oral presentation of your project is required. All presentations will occur on the date and time designated in the course syllabus. Students are required to inform their client of the date and time when their presentation will be held, and extend a professional invitation to the client.
  o A draft presentation must be shared with the Course Instructor at least 5 days in advance. Feedback will be returned no later than 48 hours prior to the presentation, and feedback must be acted upon by the student.
  o Students should dress professionally, and treat the presentation as though it is occurring in a workplace. To that end, students are strongly encouraged to practice their presentation in advance.
  o Presentations must be 10-15 minutes in length, and handouts of the presentation (including any supplemental materials) must be provided to (at minimum) the Course Instructor, Readers, and Client.

Program Competencies Memo
In addition to the Capstone Project Paper, students are required to develop a Program Competencies Memo (2-3 pages), wherein the student reports how the competencies (at least 3 PC’s), knowledge, and skills gained from MPA courses impacted the student’s ability to complete their project. Please refer to full list of MPA Program-level competencies at the end of this syllabus. A more detailed grading and guidance sheet will be distributed in the second half of the semester.
Committee Composition and Roles

Your Capstone Project Committee is comprised of three individuals: (1) Course Instructor, (2) DPA faculty member of the student’s selection (pending approval from the Course Instructor), and (3) Liaison from the client organization. All three readers assist in guiding the student during the semester, as well as evaluating submitted work. Students must finalize selection of their second and third readers by <insert date>. Students are required to share the reader agreement form with each reader, and have him/her/them confirm with the Course Instructor by signing that form (to be directly submitted to the Course Instructor).

Second Reader

The second reader will be another full-time DPA faculty member who is not the Capstone Project Course Instructor for the given semester. In order to ensure that no one DPA faculty member is serving on too many committees, students must seek and secure approval for second readers from the Capstone Project Course Instructor. It is highly suggested that students find their second reader as soon as possible, and select a second reader who has substantive content knowledge or interest related to the capstone project issue/topic. Students are required to give the second reader the “Reader Information” document, and secure a signed copy of the “Reader Agreement Form” for submission to the Capstone Project Course Instructor.

Third Reader

The third reader will be the liaison from the client organization for the capstone project that was selected and approved by the Capstone Project Course Instructor. The third reader is considered an outside expert. Students are required to give the third reader the “Reader Information” document, and secure a signed copy of the “Reader Agreement Form” for submission to the Capstone Project Course Instructor.

Second and Third Reader Responsibilities

While the Capstone Project Course Instructor has the primary responsibilities for supervising the student’s project, the second and third readers will have responsibility for:

1. Reviewing the student’s capstone project proposal.
2. Commenting on and approving the final project report.
3. Attending the oral presentation.
4. Evaluating both the oral and written project.

Assignments & Points (225 total points)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Information Sheet</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complete CITI Training</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduction Section</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analytic Framework Section</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>Methodology Section</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>Findings Section</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conclusion Section</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Executive Summary Section</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance/Participation</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Competencies Memo</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Presentation</td>
<td>25</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

These are the individual section papers that students submit during the semester.
Calculating Course Grade

*Final letter grades are based on the following scale:*

- 202 < = A
- 180 - 201 = B
- 157 - 179 = C
- 135 - 156 = D
- < 135 = F

Late Submissions

Late assignments will not be accepted without prior approval from the Course Instructor. The Course Instructor reserves the right to not accept late submissions, which is why all deadlines are announced far in advance.

Academic Integrity

The tenets of Tennessee State University’s Statement on Academic Integrity will be strictly enforced in this course, and all assignments shall be subject to stipulations of the statement. For more information, please see [www.tnstate.edu/graduate/academicintegrity.aspx](http://www.tnstate.edu/graduate/academicintegrity.aspx). All written course assignments will be examined via TurnItIn.

Disability accommodation statement

TSU is committed to creating inclusive learning environments and providing all students with opportunities to learn and excel in their course of study. Any student with a disability or condition which might interfere with his/her class performance or attendance may arrange for reasonable accommodations by visiting the Office of Disability Services (ODS). ODS is located in Kean Hall, room 131 and can be reached at 963-7400 or [www.tnstate.edu/disabilityservices](http://www.tnstate.edu/disabilityservices). You will be required to speak with ODS staff and provide documentation of the need for an accommodation. If you qualify for an accommodation you will be provided with a document stating what type of classroom accommodations are to be made by the instructor. It is your responsibility to give a copy of this document to the instructor as soon as you receive it. Accommodations will only be provided after the instructor receives the accommodation instructions from ODS; accommodations are not retroactive. You must follow this process for each semester that you require accommodations.

Student ID

TSU students at all levels are expected to have their IDs with them any time they are on campus, and security officers may ask you to show it when you enter the building ([ID office and policy](http://www.tnstate.edu/disabilityservices)). You may obtain your ID at AWC by appointment early in the semester; call 859-963-7001 to make an appointment.

TSU Graduate School Policies…a reminder

All TSU graduate students are subject to a set of policies regarding admission, retention, graduate probation and suspension, definition of good standing, admission to candidacy (i.e. for MPA and certificate students, this refers to the...
completion of the Program of Study form with your advisor) and a variety of other matters. You are responsible for knowing and abiding by these policies, described in the front portion of the Graduate Catalog. Departmental/program level policies also apply, described in the College of Public Service section of the Graduate Catalog, and you should know and abide by these policies as well. Many helpful resources, required forms and FAQs are made available to you regarding our program on the CPS website; these include the MPA handbook and the PhD handbook; and program information for the graduate certificates in public policy, nonprofit management, public administration executive leadership, and healthcare administration and planning (no new healthcare students are being accepted, but existing students may complete program). Students should seek advising regarding course selection prior to each semester to ensure they are on track, given their program of admission.

A few things to keep in mind from Graduate School policy are summarized here for convenience (NB: this document does not supersede the applicable Catalog, and not all policies are summarized here). You will not complete any program or degree to which you have not been admitted, meeting all admissions conditions. You may not complete the program of study, sit for the comprehensive exam, or receive a degree or certificate if you do not have a cumulative TSU graduate GPA of 3.0 or better (i.e., you are not in “good standing”). You may only take a given course once to replace a grade, and the second grade replaces the first. You may only retake a total of two courses counting towards satisfaction of program curricular requirements. Grades of D or F count towards the GPA but do not count towards meeting certificate or degree curricular requirements (note that the PhD has more stringent GPA requirements for good standing; see the CPS section of the Graduate Catalog). Incomplete or “I” grades turn to an F automatically within one semester if the student does not satisfactorily complete the agreed-upon course activities determined by the instructor on the required timeline. MPA completion is expected to be within 6 years and certificate completion within 3 years; use of courses outside of this window to meet program requirements may require appeal to Grad School and a plan for demonstrating the material has been retained. Program of study for the MPA degree should be completed when the student has completed 9 credits in the program (must be in good standing; have no conditions outstanding on admission; no I grades outstanding). Program of study for a certificate should be completed in the first or second semester at latest (same other conditions apply as for the MPA). Students must apply for graduation inside myTSU (Banner Services link; create separate graduation applications for MPA and certificate, if applicable) at the beginning of the semester in which they intend to graduate, by the deadline specified on the University website. If a student does not actually graduate in that semester, they must reapply in the subsequent semester in which they plan to graduate. See Catalog for details and information on other program elements such as comprehensive exams.

Course evaluations

University-wide student course evaluations at TSU are conducted online inside myTSU (fall and spring). It is expected that all students in the course will complete the brief online evaluation process in order to provide important feedback to the instructor and the University, which will benefit future students. Student course evaluations are found at mytsu.tnstate.edu.

Every semester (Fall, Spring, Summer), students taking PADM courses are also requested to complete a departmental end-of-course survey which is focused on the course content. This survey may be accessed at http://bit.ly/tsu_dpa_eoc; complete it one time for each course taken during the semester. Technical issues with the departmental survey may be reported to Dr. Streams at mstreams@tnstate.edu.

Sexual misconduct, domestic/dating violence, stalking

TSU recognizes the importance of providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or is experiencing any of these incidents, there are resources to assist you in the areas of accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and making referrals for assistance with legal protective orders and more.
Please be aware that most TSU employees, including faculty and instructors, are “responsible employees”, meaning that they are required to report incidents of sexual violence, domestic/dating violence or stalking. **This means that if you tell me about a situation involving sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, I must report the information to the Title IX Coordinator.** Although I must report the situation, you will still have options about how your situation will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. Our goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and have access to the resources you need.

You are encouraged to contact TSU’s Title IX Coordinator to report any incidents of sexual harassment, sexual violence, domestic/dating violence or stalking. The Title IX coordinator is located in the Office of Equity and Inclusion, McWherter Administration Building, Ste. 260 and can be reached at 963-7494 or 963-7438. For more information about Title IX and TSU’s SART or policies and procedures regarding sexual, domestic/dating violence and stalking please visit: [www.tnstate.edu/equity](http://www.tnstate.edu/equity).

If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, who is not required to report, you can contact the TSU Counseling Center, located in the basement of Wilson Hall, at 963-5611 or TSU Student Health Services, located in the Floyd Payne Campus Center room 304, at 963-5084. You may also contact the following off campus resources: Sexual Assault Center of Nashville at 1-800-879-1999 or [www.sacenter.org](http://www.sacenter.org) or the Tennessee Coalition to End Domestic & Sexual Violence at 615-386-9406 or [www.tncoalition.org](http://www.tncoalition.org).

**Harassment & discrimination**

Tennessee State University is firmly committed to compliance with all federal, state and local laws that prohibit harassment and discrimination based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, disability, religion, retaliation, veteran status and other protected categories. TSU will not subject any student to discrimination or harassment and no student shall be excluded from participation in nor denied the benefits of any educational program based on their protected class. If a student believes they have been discriminated against or harassed because of a protected class, they are encouraged to contact the Office of Equity and Inclusion at McWherter Administration Building, Ste. 260, 615-963-7494 or 963-7438, [www.tnstate.edu/equity](http://www.tnstate.edu/equity).
Appendix I – Public Administration Journals

Below is a list of acceptable academic journals that can be used to meet the external research requirements. Use of an article from any other journal must first be proposed to and accepted by the Course Instructor.

Please do not hesitate to propose use of an article from another journal, this list is simply a reminder or starting point. Journals that are more specific to a particular content or policy area will typically also be relevant or appropriate, given the nature of a particular project or client organization. It is important, however, to pay attention to the quality of a journal, as in the internet era many online for-profit “journals” have appeared which do not hew to accepted standards of expertise, peer-review and scholarship. The course instructor can help you vet potential sources.

- Public Budgeting & Finance (PB&F)
- Public Administration Review (PAR)
- Administration & Society
- Administrative Science Quarterly
- Administrative Theory & Praxis (ATP)
- Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory (JPART)
- Public Administration Quarterly (PAQ)
- International Journal of Public Administration
- American Review of Public Administration (ARPA)
- Journal of Policy Analysis and Management (JPAM)
- Canadian Public Administration
- State and Local Government Review
- Public Administration (UK)
- Public Integrity
- Public Personnel Management
- Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs
- Public Finance Review
- American Journal of Political Science
- Journal of Politics
- Policy Studies Journal
- Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations
Appendix 2 – Recommended/Optional Books

These books, along with many other texts, could be useful resources for students in the Capstone Project course.


- Also a dictionary, a thesaurus, and a writer’s guide/college-level English composition text.
Memorandum of Understanding

I understand that this syllabus acts as a contract of understanding between the Course Instructor (<insert name>) and me for the Fall/Spring XXXX Capstone Project Course. I have read the syllabus and understand what is required of me during the duration of this course. By signing this memorandum of understanding, I agree to abide the content herein.

Student’s Name (please print):

Student’s Signature:

Date:

Contact Information

Mailing Address:

Mobile Phone:

Work Phone:

Email:

Project Information Sheet
Student’s Name:

Email:

Project Title/Topic:

MPA Program Competencies to be incorporated, beyond PC 5 “Communicate...” which is relevant to all projects (see matrix on following page):

1.
2.
3.

MPA Courses to be incorporated:

1.
2.
3.

Brief Description of Project:

Description of the Client organization:

Second Reader Information (name, contact information, etc.)

Third Reader/Liaison from the Client Organization Information (name, title, contact information, etc.)
# MPA Course Competency Mapping

Block blocks indicate the competency is a major emphasis in the course, tied to at least one major graded course element. That course element may be used as an artifact for student learning assessment on that competency/associated SLO at the program level.

Grey blocks indicate the competency is relevant to the course as taught, but is not a major emphasis of a graded course element.

AP = graduate certificate in Public Policy; ANP = graduate certificate in Nonprofit Management; AEEL = graduate certificate in PA Executive Leadership

## Program-level competencies (PCs) & Student learning outcomes (SLOs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PC 1</th>
<th>Each MPA graduate will be competent to lead and manage in public, nonprofit, or public affairs governance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SLO 1.1</td>
<td>Analyze organizational behavior to improve systems and manage performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLO 1.2</td>
<td>Apply theories that can inform leadership and management in organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLO 1.3</td>
<td>Understand intergovernmental and intersectoral relationships, which characterize modern public administration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PC 2</th>
<th>Each MPA graduate will be competent to participate in and contribute to the policy process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SLO 2.1</td>
<td>Recognize and articulate public economics rationales for policy choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLO 2.2</td>
<td>Understand institutional, legal, and political dynamics of the policy process</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PC 3</th>
<th>Each MPA graduate will be competent to analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions appropriate to public or nonprofit administration settings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SLO 3.1</td>
<td>Identify and apply appropriate decision tools to support data-informed management, evaluation and policy choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLO 3.2</td>
<td>Employ and interpret data analytics and statistics appropriately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLO 3.3</td>
<td>Apply systematic research processes to novel problems and produce research in written format</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PC 4</th>
<th>Each MPA graduate will be competent to articulate and apply a public service perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SLO 4.1</td>
<td>Assess practical situations in public administration and take ethical positions founded in public service values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLO 4.2</td>
<td>Appreciate the foundations and context of the field of public administration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PC 5</th>
<th>Each MPA graduate will be competent to communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SLO 5.1</td>
<td>Clearly and accurately express problems, concepts, analysis, and recommendations in written or oral communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLO 5.2</td>
<td>Prepare written and oral communications in appropriate voice, medium, and depth for a variety of audiences and stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLO 5.3</td>
<td>Identify and explain issues of cultural diversity given the changing demographics of society</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## MPA Core Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6110</td>
<td>Seminar PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6130</td>
<td>ORG TIP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6210</td>
<td>POLICY ANALYS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6220</td>
<td>PUBL POLICY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6230</td>
<td>FINANCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6240</td>
<td>POLITICAL ECONOMICS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6250</td>
<td>T &amp; S METHODS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6260</td>
<td>RESEARCH METHODS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6270</td>
<td>STUDIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6280</td>
<td>DEMOGRAPHICS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## MPA Elective Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6410</td>
<td>DECISION TOOLS TOOLS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>