Trachtenberg School of Public Policy & Public Administration
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

PPPA 6008: MPP and MPA Capstone
Spring 2021
SYLLABUS

INSTRUCTORS:

Lauren M. Eyster, PhD
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Class meetings: Monday and Tuesday, 6:10 – 8:00pm

Office hours: Available by appointment

Nancy Y. Augustine, PhD
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Class meetings: Wednesday and Thursday, 6:10 – 8:00pm

Office hours: Available by appointment

Teaching Assistants:

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Course Description

You are about to complete the Master of Public Policy, Master of Public Administration, or Master of Arts in Environmental Resource Policy program. During this program, you have developed competency in economics, statistics, and policy analysis, in addition to the specialized knowledge and skills of your chosen field of concentration. In this course, you will use these capabilities to analyze a policy or administration problem that an actual client is facing, and then develop evidence that informs the client's decision-making. In the process, you will gain a better understanding of your own role as an emerging member of the public service. Along the way, we will explore the following questions:

- How are you going to use what you learned in your degree program in your profession as a member of the public service?

- Why use evidence in policy and administration decision-making?

- How are you going to make the world a better place?

Eligibility
The Spring Capstone course is for MPA, MPP, and ENRP students who are on track to graduate in May or August, 2021. If you are uncertain of your eligibility, contact Prof. Augustine right away.

Student Learning Objectives
By the end of this course, you will know or be able to:

- Conceptualize a policy or administration problem as a research question that you can study.
- Conduct a well-designed, ethical research project that informs a client's decision-making.
- Incorporate the strengths and perspectives of team members into the project planning and execution processes.
- Communicate the results of research to a non-technical audience, orally and in writing.
- Apply competencies that you have developed during your public policy or public administration degree program.
- Value the use of evidence in understanding and developing responses to policy and administration problems.
- Develop your sense of self as a member of the public service.

Technological Requirements

To participate in this class, you will need a reliable, high-speed internet connection and computer or laptop sufficient to operate the following:

- Microsoft Word or a similar word processing program
- Camera and microphone for use during online class sessions and team meetings; earbuds with a microphone work well
- Quantitative and/or qualitative analytical software

If you have questions or problems with technology for this course, please consult GW Division of Information Technology (202-994-4948).

Course Workload: University Credit-Hour Policy

The university has adopted a policy on contact time and independent work time required for each credit-hour earned. The policy requires us to advise you how the time will be allocated for this course. This is an intensive course that requires student teams to work efficiently and effectively to complete an ambitious policy analysis project in a semester's time. **You should expect to spend an average of one hour/week either in class sessions or meeting with the course instructors, in addition to an average of 9-10 hours of additional individual or team work each week.** You may need to commit more time to this class at different phases.

Capstone Project

Research project (multiple parts): Working with a team, you will execute the project proposal that you developed. You will find that research in the real world is much messier and less definitive than you may have encountered in the classroom. Along the way, you will apply project management techniques and create strategies for working in a team setting.

Final oral presentation: The research is only as good as you can make it intelligible to the people who plan to use it. The processes of developing and then presenting the final oral presentation for faculty and students will give you perspective on how your work comes across to others.

Classroom Standards

Civility in the Classroom: Higher education works best when it becomes a vigorous and lively marketplace of ideas in which all points of view are heard. Free expression in the classroom is an integral part of this process. At the same time, higher education works best when all of us approach the enterprise with empathy and respect for others, irrespective of their ideology, political views, or identity. We value civility because that is the kind of community we want, and we care for it because civility permits intellectual exploration and growth.

Respect for Diversity: It is our intent that students from all backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. we strive to create an inclusive classroom and present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity including gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, culture, and political affiliation. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated.

Academic Integrity: We support and use GW's Code of Academic Integrity. All deliverables in this class must be your own work, either individually or as a team. Your deliverables must conform to GW's Code as well as other GW Policies that are listed on the last page of this syllabus. You must designate material quoted from other sources as a quotation and reference appropriately or we will consider it to be plagiarized. You must provide sources for facts.

Course Work

Week 1 – Introduction and Program Review

	Read before class: "Teamwork in Business," including "Show What You Know," https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/businessfuncdn/chapter/teamwork/.
	In class: We will discuss the main themes and skills that you have learned from your core courses, what the skills offer in answering policy and administration questions. You will have the opportunity to introduce specialized knowledge that you have learned in your electives.
Individual	**Write a 800-1000 word reflection** on your policy skill gaps as a policy or public administration professional and how the capstone project might address those gaps. Detailed instructions on Blackboard. **Submit CITI / IRB training.** Detailed instructions on Blackboard.
Team	**Submit team charter,** a mutually agreed-upon set of standards that will govern how you will work together. Detailed instructions on Blackboard **Submit team progress report,** summarizing progress towards developing your project. Detailed instructions on Blackboard

Week 2 – Ethics

	Watch before class: prerecorded lecture on ethics (posted on Blackboard)
	In class: Be prepared to discuss the CITI training and the readings. Also be prepared to discuss how the principles relate to your project.
Individual	**Write an 800-1000 word response:** Reading and prompts are posted on Blackboard.
Team	**Submit draft client agreement.**

Week 3 – Research Questions and the Literature Review

	Read and watch before class: Identifying Key / Guiding Literature Watch Prof. Rigby's mini-lecture on guiding literature and read the handout on annotate bibliographies. Familiarity with these concepts before class will help you grasp the techniques when we meet.
	In class: Identifying how previous literature has addressed the policy and administration questions at hand will be key to a successful project. This week will continue to build upon students' recollection of their core and elective MPP/MPA courses and offer an opportunity to conduct direct scholarly research. The interim chapters and final report of this Capstone class will include a formalized literature review, and this week is an opportunity to begin that process. In addition, each team, including partial teams, will report on their progress.

Team	**Create an annotated bibliography, synthesis matrix, and summary:** Conduct preliminary research on the client's policy problem and/or methodological approaches to a type of problem. The papers you review can be pertinent by either being topical or being methodologically appropriate. Detailed instructions on Blackboard. **Submit SIGNED client agreement.**

Week 4 – Research Design Proposal

	Read before class: Williams, Carrie. "Research Methods." *Journal of Business and Economic Research*, March 2007.
	In class: We will continue to talk about defining the client's problem and turning this problem into one or more research questions that you can study. Be prepared to present your team's progress towards developing a research design.
Team	**Develop a 1500-2000 word memo that describes your research design proposal.** Base the memo on your review of the literature, your understanding of the questions and decision context of your client. The research design will establish the scope of work. Detailed instructions on Blackboard.

Week 5 – Data and Information Collection

	Read and watch before class: NSF Data Collection Methods; video on data collection methods.
	In class: Before beginning ANY data collection, think carefully about how you will be collecting data, coding documents, structuring focus groups etc
Team	**Create a data collection plan:** Your instructor will work with your team to identify the research instruments that need to be developed and to help you structure them to be most effective. Detailed instructions on Blackboard.

Week 6+

	Check in every week with your advisor. We reserve the right to call a class meeting if circumstances warrant. As soon as you get approval from your client on your project proposal, you may begin creating the structure of your final report. In your submission, use the numbering below to identify each section.
Team	**Submit report sections.** Detailed instructions on Blackboard. ♦ Section 1 – project rationale, background, literature review, methodology: due week 8 ♦ Section 2 – analysis of findings: due week 11 ♦ Section 3 – conclusions and recommendations: due week 14 ♦ Final report – front matter, body, supplemental material: see Blackboard for dates ♦ Final presentations: see Blackboard for dates

This course uses a points-based grading schema, as shown below:

Week starting	Assignment	Point Value Per Assignment
Week 1: Jan 11	Week 1 reflection	25
	CITI / IRB training certificate	10
	Team charter	20
Week 2: Jan 18	Team progress report; *before class 2*	10
	Week 2 reflection	25
	Draft client agreement	1
Week 3: Jan 25	Annotated bibliography, synthesis matrix, summary	50
	Signed client agreement	9
Week 4: Feb 1	Research design proposal	100
Week 5: Feb 8	Data collection plan	50
Week 6: Feb 15 Week 7: Feb 22 Week 8: Mar 1	*Work in teams* Report section 1	100
Week 9: Mar 8	*Work in teams*	
	SPRING BREAK March 15 – 20	
Week 10: Mar 22	Report section 2	200
Week 11: Mar 29 Week 12: Apr 5	*Work in teams*	
Week 13: Apr 12	Report section 3	100
Week 14: Apr19	*Work in teams*	
Week of Apr 26	Final report	200
Week of May 3	Final presentations (during the week of finals)	100

Notes on the end of the semester schedule

- The last day of classes is Monday, April 26
- Make-up / reading day is Tuesday, April 27
- Designated Monday is Weds, April 28
- Make-up / reading days are Thurs, April 29 – Fri, April 30
- Finals are Monday, May 3 – Tuesday, May 11

The grading scale below, based on percent, determines your final letter grade.

Grading Scale (Based on percentage)		
92.5+	A	Excellent and exceptional work for a graduate student. Work at this level is unusually thorough, well-reasoned, creative, methodologically sophisticated, and well written. Work is of exceptional professional quality.
90.0 – 92.4	A-	Very Good: Very strong work for a graduate student. Shows signs of creativity and a strong understanding of appropriate analytical approaches, is thorough and well-reasoned, and meets professional standards.
87.0 - 89.9	B+	Good: Sound work for a graduate student; well-reasoned and thorough, without serious analytical shortcomings. This grade indicates the student has fully accomplished the basic objectives of this graduate course.
82.5 – 86.9	B	Adequate: Competent work for a graduate student with some evident weaknesses. Demonstrates competency in the key course objectives but the understanding or application of some important issues is less than complete.
80.0 – 82.4	B-	Borderline: Weak work for a graduate student but meets minimal expectations in the course. Understanding of key issues in incomplete. (A B- average in all courses is not sufficient to sustain graduate status in good standing.)
77.0 - 79.9	C+	Deficient: Inadequate work for a graduate student; rarely meets minimal expectations for the course. Work is poorly developed or flawed by numerous errors and misunderstandings of important issues.
72.5 – 76.9	C	
70.0 – 72.4	C-	
Less than 70.0	F	Unacceptable: Work fails to meet minimal expectations or course credit for a graduate student. Performance has consistently failed to meet minimum course requirements. Weaknesses and limitations are pervasive.

MPA and MPP Capstone Spring 2021 Seminar

Feedback on Final Report and Report Sections – Grading Matrix

Research Paper	*Excellent*: A	*Very good*: A-	*Good*: B+	*Adequate*: B	*Borderline*: B-	*Deficient*: C	*Unacceptable*: F
	Thorough, well-reasoned, creative, sophisticated, well written (with no errors), exceptional scholarly or practical quality.	Signs of creativity and a strong understanding of material, analytical approaches, etc. Thorough and well-reasoned and meets professional standards.	Sound work; well-reasoned and thorough, without *serious* analytical shortcomings. Report fully accomplishes basic objectives for the assignment for this course.	Competent work with some weaknesses. Demonstrates competency but understanding or application of some important concepts (or the like) is less than complete.	Weak but meets minimal expectations. Understanding, analysis or application is incomplete.	Inadequate work; Does not meet minimal expectations. Work is poorly developed and flawed by errors and mis-understanding of important issues.	Work fails to meet minimal expectations for credit. Weaknesses and limitations are pervasive.
Overall organization of paper							
Clarity of writing							
Responsiveness to client needs/request							
Project Rationale - Statement of the problem - Objectives of the research - Research questions							
Background - Summary of the topic/policy/program - Key information for project							
Methodology - Prior research informing research plan/design							

Research Paper	Excellent: A	Very good: A-	Good: B+	Adequate: B	Borderline: B-	Deficient: C	Unacceptable: F
- Detailed explanation of how study was conducted, justification for choices - Results of analysis							
Analysis of findings - Description of data - Findings (key relationships, case studies, etc.)							
Recommendations and Conclusion - Interpretation of the findings/key implications - Recommendations to client and how the findings inform them (alignment) - Research limitations - Next steps							

Relevant Trachtenberg School Policies

Syllabus: This syllabus is your guide to the course. If any questions arise, please check the syllabus before contacting me. Sound educational practice requires flexibility and I may revise content during the semester. Please be generous in sharing notes with each other.

Late or Missed Class: Attendance is required. Any unexcused absence will result in a deduction from your grade. If you are late or absent from class, you must obtain all announcements, assignments, and handouts from Blackboard or classmates.

Submission of Written Work Products: It is your responsibility to make sure that you are able to access Blackboard to make your submissions on time. All work must be submitted by the assigned due date in order to receive full credit. Only extreme circumstances warrant exceptions. Unexcused late submissions will be marked down for each day that they are late.

Academic Honesty: All examinations and other graded work products are to be completed in conformance with the George Washington University Code of Academic Integrity. It states, in part: "Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information." Note especially the definition of plagiarism: "intentionally representing the words, ideas, or sequence of ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise; failure to attribute any of the following: quotations, paraphrases, or borrowed information." For the remainder of the code, and for more information about standards for conduct as well as your rights as a student, see https://studentconduct.gwu.edu/).

Incompletes: You must request an incomplete no later than the last day of classes in the semester. You will fill out the CCAS contract for incompletes for both of us to sign and you will submit a copy to the School Director. Go to http://bulletin.gwu.edu/ university-regulations/university-regulations.pdf for the full policy on incompletes.

Changing Grades after Completion of Course: No changes can be made in grades after the conclusion of the semester, other than in cases of clerical error.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities: If you need extra time on exams or assignments due to a disability, let me know in the first week of class. Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should also contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Rome Hall, Suite 102, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: https://disabilitysupport.gwu.edu/.

University Counseling Center: The University Counseling Center (UCC), 202-994-5300, offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include: crisis and emergency mental health consultations; confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals. https://healthcenter.gwu.edu/counseling-and-psychological-services.

Security: In the case of an emergency, if at all possible, the class should shelter in place. If the building that the class is in is affected, follow the evacuation procedures for the building. After evacuation, seek shelter at a predetermined rendezvous location.

University Policy on Religious Holidays: Respect for diversity is one of GW's core values, extending to all aspects of our community. In keeping with this value, the university has adopted guidelines, recommended by the Faculty Senate, that ensure students and faculty may observe religious holidays without academic penalty:

- That students notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance;
- That faculty continue to extend to these students the courtesy of absence without penalty on such occasions, including permission to make up examinations;
- That faculty who intend to observe a religious holiday arrange at the beginning of the semester to reschedule missed classes or to make other provisions for their course-related activities;
- That, prior to each semester, the administration circulate to faculty a schedule of religious holidays most frequently observed by GW students;
- That student members of other religious groups are also entitled to the same courtesies and accommodations; and
- That the administration conveys this policy to students by including it in the schedule of classes and other places deemed appropriate.