SEMINAR IN PUB ADMIN: CAPSTONE

COURSE DESCRIPTION
The Capstone Course offers each student the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of the theory and practice of public administration by applying the skills and knowledge gained in the MPA program. This course is designed to allow students to apply the concepts in public administration literature to actual management and/or policy problems. Students accomplish this by reading and reflecting on theoretical readings in public administration, and completing a Capstone Project. The Capstone Project can be a research study, a case study, an organizational assessment, a policy analysis or service-learning project that demonstrates a student’s knowledge and skills. All projects must be about public service, which is defined broadly to include efforts of governments, community-based organizations, and non-profit organizations.

To enroll in this course, students must have successfully completed at least 30 hours of coursework in the MPA program including all core courses and be in his/her last long semester prior to planned graduation.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

As a member of the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) students must demonstrate five universal required competencies related to the current needs and status of the public service. Student learning outcomes mirror those five domains below.

Capstone students will demonstrate the ability to:

1. Lead and manage in public governance;
2. Participate in and contribute to the policy process;
3. Analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions;
4. Articulate and apply a public service perspective;
5. Communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry.

MAJOR COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Case Study Portfolio As part of the Capstone Course, students will create a case study portfolio that serves to demonstrate and highlight student learning during the MPA program and the five student learning objectives. The portfolio will be a collection of case studies that demonstrate the skills and competencies to demonstrate you are a well-prepared professional public administrator with the ability to provide leadership for the next generation of public servants.
Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the underlying concepts and principles of each case and evaluate and interpret them in the appropriate context of the Texas Coastal Bend community, the state or the nation;

Demonstrate the ability to interpret, evaluate and present qualitative and quantitative data, develop lines of argument and make sound judgments in accordance with theories and concepts of public administration in each case;

Evaluate the appropriateness of policy and management options related to each case and communicate results accurately, reliably and with structured coherent arguments;

Conduct and implement budgeting operations, policy and program analysis as appropriate for each case.

This will be done through preparation and discussion of these cases either in an on-line forum or in the classroom setting. Students will keep all of their work, calculations and problem solving notes in the BlackBoard Content Module in the course shell. Individual assignments will be graded by the course instructor. Portfolios as a whole will be assessed by the entire MPA faculty for evaluative purposes at the end of the course.

2. Capstone Project. To complete the requirements of the Capstone course for the MPA degree, students must write a major research paper of relevance to the public or nonprofit sectors or participate in a significant service-learning project or research paper. The scope, content, student groups, if any, and other details of the Capstone Project will be determined by the course instructor. Students will receive a grade of Incomplete if any part of the research paper is graded as unacceptable by the MPA Faculty.

The final project paper due date is noted in Blackboard and must be formatted as a Word document using Times New Roman 12 point font, double-spaced using APA formatting. Only one paper need to be turned in per project. Papers should not exceed 50 pages or be less than 20 pages long (without bibliography and appendices). The paper must include a bibliography and be a final product of the student’s work. Late papers will not be accepted.

3. Self-Assessments. As part of the Capstone Course, students will create a portfolio that serves to self-assess competencies necessary for project management in the BlackBoard Content Module named Self Assessments. The assessments will be discussed during designated class meetings. Findings from these assessments along with findings from the case studies should be included in the essay below.

4. Essay. The final day of the course students will turn in a professional development essay of three to five pages which discusses what the student learned during the MPA program, areas in which the series of self-assessments in this course suggest there are strengths and weakness and present a plan for continuing to development of competencies in their career. Specific due dates and case assignments will be posted on the Blackboard calendar.
5. Final Oral Presentation. Students will present their findings of their service learning or research project to the MPA faculty, students and public at the end of the semester. The presentation will be a professional summary of the objectives and finding of the project at hand.

A rubric for each of the above areas will be posted with the BlackBoard system. The percentage contribution to the final grade is set out below:

1. Case Study Portfolio 40%
2. Capstone Project 40%
3. Self-Assessments 10%
4. Professional Development Essay 5%
5. Final Oral Presentation 5%

REQUIRED READINGS
Required readings that pertain to the subject covered on a weekly basis will be posted on the course BlackBoard page.

ACADEMIC ADVISING
The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call 361-825-3466.

DISABILITY SERVICES
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall, Room #116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

GRADE APPEALS PROCESS
Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website http://cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s Office.
COURSE POLICIES
1. Syllabus Disclaimer and Changes. The instructor reserves the right to make changes in the syllabus. Such changes will be announced in class.

2. Attendance Policy. No points are deducted for student absences but, the lack of class attendance will affect student learning and, hence, performance.

3. Late Hand-in. Acceptance of late hand-ins or postings is at the discretion of the instructor. Points will be deducted for late hand-ins.

4. Distance Learning. This class is a hybrid course; electronic, on-line learning is substituted for in-class lectures on approximately a 50% basis. Students are responsible for on-line access and activity on a regular basis and participating in on-line activities and assignments.

5. Contacting the Instructor. The preferred way of contacting the instructor is through e-mail or during office hours. I check my e-mail almost daily (except when on travel), and will respond. If you send an e-mail, I may ask you for a phone number to contact you for follow-up, if necessary.

6. Student Conduct. Students should conduct themselves in ways that are consistent with promoting an efficient learning environment for themselves and everyone else. Students should be conscientious, helpful, properly motivated to learn, honest, and respectful of others and their opinions at all times. Such conduct is consistent with generally regarded norms of professionalism, including those found in graduate, professional degree programs. Points may be deducted for inappropriate conduct, and students referred to the University for further investigation of the matter.

Students should also familiarize themselves with the university Code of Student Conduct. Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to give an unfair academic advantage to the student (such as, but not limited to, submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructors, providing false or misleading information in an effort to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment), or the attempt to commit such an act. Other acts of misconduct are stated in the Code of Student Conduct. Please note that plagiarism is a serious academic offense that may result in a student being expelled from an academic program or institution.

7. Academic Honesty.
All responses and worked turned in to the instructor are to be your own personal work product. You are expected to understand and uphold the Academic Honor Code published in the Student Handbook. In addition to information listed in these sources, you are advised that:

a. If, on a rare occasion, you take material that is not yours, from any source whatsoever, and copy it into assignments for this class, you must provide a footnote, endnote, or parenthetical reference to the source of the material. I specifically expect you to use the styleguide of the American Psychological Association.

b. Any material which quotes verbatim from other sources must be enclosed in
quotation marks and its source attributed as noted in rule #1 above.

c. Material not taken verbatim from a text but paraphrased must also be
attributed as in rule #1.

d. Violations of these rules in any assignment may be subject to a minimum penalty
of a grade of zero (0) for the assignment and may result in a grade of "F" for the
course.

e. Violations of these rules can also result in administrative removal from the
MPA program and the University depending on the instance.

8. Statement of Academic Continuity. In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major
hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi;
this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus
and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University
facilities (i.e., emails, web sites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing
of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a
primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.

11. Tips for Success. This is a challenging course for most students, and most students will
experience one or more episodes of moderate to severe confusion. Though these are normal
occurrences in the completion of a graduate course, the sources of confusion must be identified
and addressed. To reduce such episodic discomfort and promote learning efficiency, students are
required to adhere to the following rules: (i) Students must come to each class prepared, that is,
having fully familiarized themselves with the reading material and any assignments, specifically,
identifying passages that are unclear and hence require extra attention during the classroom period.
Students who fail to identify unclear passages prior to class typically experience a deceptive sense
of ease during the class, only to be followed by intensified confusion at some point in subsequent
weeks. Remember: Preparing for class means that you know what you don’t know. (ii) Students
should always study with other students before and after each class. You can make a study group,
or simply call each other a day or two before and after each class. The nature of such interaction
can vary from joint reading, to verifying each other’s understanding of the material, and addressing
points of uncertainty. (iii) Students who are unclear about material should generally first consult
other students before contacting the instructor. Questions that remain unclear after consultation
with other students should be brought to the attention of the instructor, who generally will discuss
the matter at the beginning of the next classroom period. The preferred way of contacting the
instructor is through e-mail. (iv) As the saying goes, technology fails you when you need it most.
Files become unreadable or simply disappear. Software programs fail to open, and computers go
on the blink. Successful students plan ahead and allow for unexpected failures and crises to occur.
Specifically, you should plan to complete your homework several days before the deadline!

SYLLABUS – COURSE OUTLINE
COURSE CALENDAR (tentative) – It is your responsibility to monitor your Blackboard
account regularly to keep up with the course progression and announcements.

September 1:  Course Introduction: and 1st Class meeting. Discuss project options.
September 8:  Class Discussion: Required Qualities of an MPA
Due:  21st-Century Leader Qualities, Toolset pp 5-10; How Are You Listening?
Toolset pp 20-21; Attitude Assessment. Toolset; Project Management Aptitude Exercise pp 54-56, Leadership Competencies – Emotional Intelligence and Toolset Emotional Intelligence Domains and Associated Competencies, Toolset pp 63-65.

September 15: **Class Discussion:** Project Status
September 22: **Presentation on project by clients**  
**Due:** Case 1

September 29: **Class Discussion:** Getting projects started, establish scope, deliverables and due dates for deliverables.

October 6: **Project Workshop** – No formal class meeting unless otherwise announced.  
**Due:** Case 2, Project scope statements, literature reviews and research methods plans turned in.

October 13: **Class Discussion:** Project status.  
**Due:** Full literature review and research methods sections completed.

October 20: **Project Workshop** - No formal class meeting unless otherwise announced.  
**Due:** Case 3

October 27: **Class Discussion:** Data gathering issues and data analysis.  
**Due:** A written report on the data gathering process and initial analysis

November 3: **Project Workshop** – No formal class meeting unless otherwise announced.  
**Due:** Case 4

November 10: **Class Discussion:** Data gathering must be complete, review of draft progress and discuss PowerPoint presentations.

November 17: **Project Workshop** – Meeting to discuss final issues and clean up analysis etc.

November 24: **Class Discussion:** Review requirements of papers and presentations.  
**Due:** Final drafts of all projects must be completed and turned in for review.

December 1: **Class Discussion:** Full run through of presentations.  
**Due:** PowerPoint Presentations

December 8: **Capstone Presentation**  
**Due:** Final Deliverable, PowerPoint, Self-assessment.

December 9: Last day to turn in anything you want credit for.

December 12: **Graduation?**