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 by utilizing different theories and decision tools to identify and analyze management and public sector problems.
2. Participate in and contribute to the policy process by successfully analyzing policy alternatives and use policy models, instruments and management tools to address social problems.
3. Analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions by utilizing analytical tools to analyze, present, and interpret data, including appropriate design, statistical, and evaluative techniques for both organizational decision making and policy decisions.
4. Articulate and apply a public service perspective to administrative and policy decisions and actions by engaging public service principles that include inclusiveness; shared power and responsibility; public deliberation; accountability; aspiring to do the “right” thing rather than just do things right; respect and appreciation for diverse values and
perspectives; wise stewardship of public resources, and an appreciation for lifelong learning.

5. Communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry by effectively communicating issues to a diverse set of stakeholders, in a manner that is accurate, clear, and concise, while also being tailored to varied audiences.

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 student learning objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. 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 case.

This will be done through preparation and discussion of these cases 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. Case Study Presentation
Student will be assigned in groups of two to lead a case study during the semester. Students should present their case study as completed, but focusing particularly on SLO 5 and the ability to effectively communicate issues to a diverse set of stakeholders, in a manner that is accurate, clear, and concise. Presenters should present a summary of the case, identify keys stakeholders and the issues the stakeholders bring to the table, identify the decision at hand, appropriate criteria and factors and their conclusions. This should be be done in 15 minutes or less. Then presenters are to lead a discussion of the case for at least 45 minutes afterward. Then present a summary of the classroom discussion.
3. **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. This part of the project focuses on SLO’s 2, 3, & 4.

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. Additionally, 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. This part of the project focuses on SLO 5

4. **Self-Assessments and Essay.**
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 should be included in the essay below. 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. This assignment focuses on SLO 4, particularly a commitment to the public service perspective and lifelong learning.

Below are the maximum points that can be earned for each course requirement:

**1. Case Study Portfolio**
Case studies turned in via BlackBoard
6 @ 10pts. 60 pts.

**2. Case Study and Discussion**
15 pts.

**3. Capstone Project and Presentation**
Instructor scoring 15 pts
Average of student assessments 5 pts.
Total 20 pts.

**4. Self-Assessment Essay**
5 pts.

**Total Points Possible**
100

The rubric used to assess each of these requirements will be posted under the assignments in BlackBoard. No extra credit work will be allowed. All assignments must be turned in using the appropriate BlackBoard assignment portal. Acceptance of late hand-ins or postings is at the sole discretion of the instructor. Points will be deducted for late hand-ins.
REQUIRED READINGS

The book below has been ordered as required for this course through the bookstore:

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATOR'S COMPANION; EDITION: 10; By EMERSON
PUBLISHER: CQ. ISBN: 9780872899094

This book should be an excellent summary of the concepts you have learned while in the MPA program and will be looked upon as the minimum standard for passing the course when I am assessing your use and application of public administration concepts and theory within the course.

From time to time I will also post applicable articles and information on BlackBoard.

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.

9. 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:
   a) 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.
   b) 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.
   c) 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.
   d) 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.

January 25: Course Introduction: and 1st Class meeting, Discuss course progression and expectations.

February 1: Class Discussion: Required Qualities of an MPA for class you should complete the following skills assessment sheets and be prepared to discuss your findings: 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.

February 8: Project Planning and Discussion: Presentation on project by clients, determine the scope of the project and how we are going to complete tasks.

February 15: Project Planning and Discussion 1st half of class; Demonstration Case discussion first half of class;

February 22: Project Planning and Discussion: We will assess where we are in getting the project done. We will definitely meet this day!

February 29: Case 1 Due; Case 1 Discussion first half of class. Case 2 Due; Case 2 Discussion second half of class.

March 7: Project Planning and Discussion: Will determine need to meet in person or online depending on project progression. Dr. Jorgensen will be available in office for individual consultation if class does not meet.

March 14: Spring Break!

March 21: Case 3 Due; Case 3 Discussion first half of class; Project Planning and Discussion, second half of class

March 28: Case 4 Due; Case 4 Discussion first half of class; Case 5 Due; Case 5 Discussion second half of class.

April 4: Project Planning and Discussion: Will determine need to meet in person or online depending on project progression. Dr. Jorgensen will be available in office for individual consultation if class does not meet.

April 11: Case 6 Due; Case 6 Discussion first half of class. Case 7 Due; Case 7 Discussion second half of class.
April 18: **Project Planning and Discussion:** We will assess where we are in getting the project done. All data gathering must be completed! We will definitely meet this day!

April 25: **Project Workshop:** Clean up analysis, review of draft progress and discuss PowerPoint presentation.

May 2: **Project Workshop:** Meeting to discuss final issues and full run through of presentation with PowerPoint

May 9: **Capstone Presentation Due:** Final Deliverable, PowerPoint, and Self-assessment essay.

May 11: Last day to turn in anything you want credit for.

May 14: **Graduation?**