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 series of case studies that address the five competencies required of graduates from the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) programs. 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 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. **On-line Discussion of Professional Competencies (25% of grade)**

   Students will participate in five on-line discussions of the MPA professional competencies so that they can better understand how what they have learned in the MPA program links to the practice of public administration.

2. **Competencies e-Portfolio (20% of grade)**

   As part of the Capstone Course, students will create an e-portfolio of their work in the MPA program that demonstrates that they have met each of the student learning outcomes above. The e-portfolio should provide a structure for you to reflect on your learning in the MPA program and how that it relates to your academic, personal and professional development. Portfolios as a whole will be assessed by the entire MPA faculty for evaluative purposes at the end of the course.

3. **Case Studies (25% of grade)**

   Students will complete 5 case studies regarding public administration issues and concepts during the semester. For each of the case studies the student must individually summarize the case, identify key stakeholders, the issues the stakeholders bring to the table, identify the public administration concepts and issues in the case, the decisions at hand, use public administration theory and concepts to solve the case, establish appropriate criteria and factors to measure case outcomes and their conclusions.

4. **Case Study Presentation (10% of grade)**

   Students will be assigned to groups of two or three to lead a case study during the semester. Presenters should present a joint summary of the case, identify key stakeholders and the issues the stakeholders bring to the table, identify the public administration concepts and issues in the case, the decisions at hand, use public administration theory and concepts to solve the case, establish appropriate criteria and factors to measure case outcomes and their conclusions. This should be done in 30 minutes or less. Then presenters are to lead a discussion of the case for at least 45 minutes afterward.

5. **Capstone Simulation (10% )**

   On the designated night of the Capstone final exam students will participate in a computer simulation exercise of a public administration problem.
6. **Regular Participation (10%)**

Learning cannot be done in absentia, you must be engaged in the classwork in terms of meetings, on-line discussions and work groups. Students are expected to log on to the BlackBoard Capstone page regularly and attend classroom exercises. Each absence from a classroom activity will lower the student’s participation score by 2 points. Each week that a student logs on fewer than 2 days in the week will reduce the student’s participation score by 1 point. The maximum reduction of the two participation grades is 10 points for the semester.

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**

From time to time I will 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:** As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, a student who believes that she or he has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon
the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, (available at http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C2.01_student_grade_appeal_procedure.pdf). For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.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. The lack of class attendance will affect student learning and, hence your overall grade will be reduced as stated above in course requirements.

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.

August 31  **Course Introduction**: and 1st Class meeting, discuss course progression and expectations. The MPA core competencies, what you should know and how you should demonstrate it, preparing for the discussions and e-Portfolio. Using case studies to demonstrate what you know.

September 7  **On-Line Discussion of MPA Core Competency 1**.

September 14  **Class Discussion**: Case 1 presentation and Case 1 due.

September 21  **On-Line Discussion of MPA Core Competency 2**.

September 28  **Class Discussion**: Case 2 presentation and Case 2 due.

October 5  **On-Line Discussion of MPA Core Competency 3**.

October 12  **Class Discussion**: Case 3 presentation and Case 3 due.

October 19  **On-Line Discussion of MPA Core Competency 4**.

October 26  **Class Discussion**: Case 4 presentation and Case 4 due.

November 2  **On-Line Discussion of MPA Core Competency 5**.

November 9  Class Discussion: Case 5 presentation and Case 5 due.

November 16  **Class Discussion**: Handout Simulation Project: Discuss groups, roles and expectations.

November 23  Thanksgiving!!!

November 30  **Class Discussion**: Simulation Project e-Portfolio due.
December 7:  Capstone Simulation Project

December 14: Hooding

December 16: Graduation?