Course Description

Welcome to the CSUN Master of Public Administration program. This course serves as the introductory seminar in the study of public administration. The course is designed to provide an overview of the discipline and will serve as the foundation for all of the other MPA courses you will take. In particular, this course is intended to increase your awareness of theoretical and practical aspects of the field of public administration. The course’s seminar format ensures a student-centered learning experience, with a strong emphasis on discussion, analysis, and presentation by members of the class.

Course Learning Objectives

- Gain the ability to critically analyze, create or improve, and implement, effective public policy in public sector programs and services. Show that you are able to conceptualize and specifically identify a substantively important policy or organizational problem. Identify specific policy alternatives and solutions. Describe and prescribe an appropriate policy recommendation.

- Acquire the foundation knowledge needed to understand the distinctive character and responsibilities of public sector administration in a democratic society. Discuss accurately and in details the theories in public administration and policy and their relevance to the real world policy and organizational problems. Use public administration concepts in meaningful and accurate ways to analyze distinctive character and responsibilities of public sector administrators. Discuss the specific public administration value conflicts and dilemmas that administrators encounter in decision making.

- Acquire the breadth and depth of knowledge about the challenges and model practices of contemporary public sector administration needed to be effective in that context. Make accurate and detailed social scientific observations about a series of public sector problems and issues. Using scientific or systematic analysis, describe leadership and management approaches to solving these problems.

- Acquire an understanding of the special challenges and opportunities of public sector administration in a diverse urban context. Through reliance on various social, policy and organizational variables, discuss emerging policy issues in the region. Linking these variables, provide a specific unitary approach in solving social, political, policy and organizational problems in the region.
Required Materials


Books are available in the CSUN bookstore and online. Additional readings will be made available on Blackboard.

Grading and Course Requirements

The central theme of the CSUN MPA program is to effectively educate the “reflective professional.” We want you to get a strong academic foundation in public administration and then go on to relate the reading and classroom experience to your professional work life and your personal growth. Every conversation that we have had with city managers and other public employers emphasizes that the basic skills of speaking effectively, analyzing insightfully, and writing clearly are essential skills for success. The assignments in this course are designed to further develop those skills.

*All assignments must be completed in order to receive academic credit for this course. This course will utilize the +/- grading system (B+, B, B-, etc.).*

- Class Participation.................................................................15%
- 3 Memos....................................................................................15%
- 3 Memo Reviews......................................................................15%
- Midterm Exam..........................................................................15%
- Term Paper..............................................................................30%
- Oral Presentation of Term Paper...............................................10%
- Plagiarism Tutorial and Test......................................................no credit for course unless completed

Class Participation

This course will be conducted as a seminar rather than as a lecture (although I will begin each class with a brief lecture that will help to guide our group discussion). As such, it depends upon the regular and meaningful participation of each member of the class. Since we will be completing an entire semester’s worth of graduate coursework in only 8 weeks, it is absolutely essential that you attend every class meeting. It is also essential that you complete the required readings and assignments prior to the class for which they are scheduled.

Come to class prepared to discuss the readings critically and be prepared to draw on your own experience as it relates to the course material. Your prepared participation will be expected in every class meeting. Your class participation will be evaluated not just on the quantity of your participation, but also on the quality and originality of your participation. Your class participation grade will also include an evaluation of your memo presentations (each student must act as a discussion leader at least once during the course—see below). The class will be more productive and more fun the more you participate in a meaningful way.
Memos and Memo Reviews

Successful public administrators have strong problem solving, communication, and leadership skills. This assignment promotes the development of those skills by encouraging students to improve their critical thinking skills through writing and peer review each week.

Throughout the course, students will write 3 brief memos in response to an assigned question. In addition, students will anonymously review and evaluate 3 of their colleagues’ memos throughout the course. Students will alternate between memo-writing and memo-reviewing each week, depending on the group they are assigned to in our first meeting. In other words, each student will EITHER write a memo each week OR review a memo each week. The review process will be anonymous, meaning that students will not know whose memo they are reviewing or who is reviewing their memo. Memos and memo reviews will be evaluated on a pass/no pass basis. Memos and memo reviews earning a “no pass” must be rewritten to earn credit.

Memos

Memos should be no more than 2 pages long, typed in a standard size 12 font, double-spaced, and have 1 inch margins. Students should follow these guidelines when writing memos:

- Begin with a clear introduction that gives a brief overview of the readings assigned for that week, putting your response to the question in context.
- Then, make a clear argument that addresses the question and can be supported with evidence from that week’s readings.
- Next, use evidence from all of the assigned readings (including the case study) for that week to support your argument. You should also draw on any relevant readings from earlier in the course. You are also encouraged to draw on your own experiences as evidence to support your argument.
- Finally, don’t forget to draw some conclusions based on your assessment of the problem and briefly summarize your response to the question.
- Whenever you use an idea or words that are not your own, be sure to cite them properly using the APA citation style. You do not need to include a reference page with your memo.
- Include your student ID number on each page of your memo, but do not include your name in the file. When saving your memo, use your student ID number as the file name (e.g. 456743864.doc). This will ensure anonymity in the review process.
- Memos must be submitted online at turnitin.com by 6 pm the Monday before our class meeting.
- Memos will be evaluated based on the following criteria:
  - Whether you made an argument that addressed the question.
  - Whether you provided evidence from the assigned readings and your own experience that supported the argument.
  - Whether it was clear that you completed and understood all of the assigned reading for the week.
  - Your analytic ability and the overall quality of your writing, including grammar, style, organization, and clarity.
Memo Reviews

Memo reviews involve editing the memo, using a feedback form to assess how well the memo met specified requirements, and writing a formal response of no more than 1 page to the memo. Instructions and guidelines for reviewing and evaluating memos are included in the Peer Review Feedback Form, which is posted on Blackboard.

Effectively reviewing and evaluating the work of your colleagues is an essential skill for leaders in the public, non-profit, private, and academic sectors. This assignment has numerous benefits for both the writer and the reviewer. Peer-review...

- Improves the reviewer’s skills in critical thinking, assessment, and revision.
- Trains the reviewer to be constructive and sensitive when evaluating the work of his/her colleagues.
- Improves the ability of the reviewer to identify and solve some of his/her own writing issues.
- Improves problem solving skills by introducing both the reviewer and the writer to different perspectives.
- Improves the writing and critical thinking skills of the writer, who benefits from the valuable feedback he/she receives on the strengths and weaknesses in his/her paper.

Memos will be available to reviewers the Tuesday morning before our class meeting. The 1-page response must be submitted to turnitin.com by 5pm on the day of class. In addition, the following items must be paper clipped (not stapled) together in the order below and brought to class:

1. Two (2) copies of the completed feedback form
2. Two (2) copies of your 1 page formal response
3. One (1) edited copy of the memo you reviewed

Memo reviews will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- The quality, thoroughness, and constructive nature of the feedback given on the feedback form and in the formal response.
- Whether it is clear based on your feedback and response that you completed and understood the assigned reading for the week.
- Whether you offer a different perspective on or analytic approach to thinking about the question that can be supported with evidence from class materials.
- The overall quality of your writing, including grammar, style, organization, and clarity.

Memo Presentations

In addition to enhancing your critical thinking, writing, and assessment skills (which every good leader needs), the weekly memos and reviews are also intended to open a dialog on the problem at hand and facilitate our class discussions. Each week, 3 memo-writers will volunteer to present their memos informally in class. These informal presentations involve sharing the argument made in their memos and summarizing the evidence from class materials and their own experience that was used to support their arguments. The presenters will serve as discussion leaders whose role is to raise interesting issues or topics from the assignment and to encourage everyone to participate in their consideration. Presenters will get credit toward their class participation grade. Each student is required to present at least one memo during the course.
Midterm Exam

The Midterm Exam will consist of short answer and essay questions drawn from course materials and class discussions. The Exam will cover readings from weeks 1 through 5.

Term Paper

In the term paper, students will take the first step toward preparing for the comprehensive exam by selecting and answering one of the questions below, which come from the “General Public Administration” field listed in the “Guidelines for Comprehensive Examination Preparation.” The term paper should be 8 to 10 pages long and typed in a standard size 12 font, double-spaced, with 1 inch margins.

1. Compare and contrast public administration and business administration. From reading and experience, what do you believe to be the most important similarities, and the central differences? What is the direction of change? Are the differences becoming sharper or less distinct? Explain.

2. Describe the goals and objectives of public administration as they have developed historically. What are some of the central issues facing the field at the present time, and what trends are shaping its future? Briefly comment on whether you judge American public bureaucracy to be a success or failure.

3. Discuss the relationship of public administration to politics, exploring both external and internal effects. Using both readings and experience, analyze the ways in which public managers must take account of politics.

Term papers must utilize course materials as well as appropriate additional resources. The paper should make a clear argument that addresses the question and can be supported with evidence from class materials and relevant outside sources. It should discuss the issue in terms of public administration theory and practice, evaluate our knowledge and understanding of the issue, and reach some conclusions based on that knowledge. Do not simply summarize what others have said on the issue—evaluate their contributions in light of the evolving literature and make your own contribution. The reading list for this course, as well as the reading list toward the end of the exam preparation handout, will be helpful in identifying important books and articles in the field. It is expected that your term paper will cite about a dozen relevant academic sources in the field drawn from both class materials and outside sources. All sources must be appropriately cited using APA citations and references.

Term papers must be submitted online at turnitin.com by 5pm on the due date. In addition to submitting an electronic copy, please bring two hard copies of your term paper to turn in at the beginning of our last class meeting. If you would like me to mail your paper to you once it has been graded, please bring a self-addressed and stamped envelope.

Term Paper Proposal and Draft

In week 3 of the course (or earlier), students will submit in hard copy a term paper proposal of no more than 1 page (typed in a standard size 12 font, double-spaced, with 1 inch margins) that includes the following:
I. The question from the list above that you will answer in your term paper.

II. A list of the parts of the question (in other words, what exactly is the question asking?). For instance, Q1 has four parts; Q2 has five parts; and Q3 has four parts, (more or less). Do your best to identify each part of the question. This will help you outline your paper and come up with a thesis statement. It will also prepare you for the comprehensive exam, when you’ll need to identify what the question is asking so that you can answer all parts of it.

Once you’ve got a list of the parts of the question, you can brainstorm to come up with concrete answers to each part that are based on the readings (rather than your own opinion, unless you think you can find evidence to support it). You do not need to include your brainstorming ideas in your proposal, but you’re welcome to as long as your proposal doesn’t exceed 1 page.

III. A thesis statement that addresses all parts of the question. Your thesis statement needs to be very explicit. Remember, the thesis statement is made up of the 1 to 3 sentences that state very clearly what your argument is so that you can organize your paper around each of the claims.

In week 5 of the course, students will submit a draft of their term papers for anonymous peer review. Drafts do not need to be in final condition, but they should be in formal essay form (rather than outline or notes form) and they should be at least 4 pages long. They should include standard APA citations and a reference page. All sources must be properly cited in the draft.

Drafts must be submitted online at turnitin.com by 5pm on the due date and in hard copy at the beginning of class (we will be reviewing them in class). Include your student ID number on each page of your draft term paper, but do not include your name in the file. When saving your term paper, use your student ID number as the file name (e.g. 456743864.doc). This will ensure anonymity in the review process.

The proposal and draft will not be graded but are required as part of your term paper grade. Failure to turn in the proposal or draft will result in a reduction of your term paper grade.

*Oral Presentation of Term Paper*

Students will present their term papers in class using Microsoft Office PowerPoint and will be graded on the presentation. The presentation will be graded on how effectively you outline and explain your term paper and on the amount of preparation put in to the presentation. More information on the presentations will be presented at the beginning of the term.

*IUB Plagiarism Tutorial and Test*

In this online assignment, you will complete an online tutorial that will help you recognize, understand, and avoid plagiarism. You will then take a test based on the tutorial. You can take the test as many times as it takes to score 100%. Once you score 100% on the test, you will be able to view a web page with a certificate confirming that you completed the test. Print this certificate, sign it, and turn it in. You should keep a copy for yourself, as it is the only record you will have that you completed the tutorial and test and other instructors may request it from you in future courses. If you have already completed the tutorial and test for another course, you may turn in a copy of your signed certificate. The tutorial can be found at the following website:

http://www.indiana.edu/~istd/index.html
Course Websites

- **http://csun.blackboard.com**
  - Blackboard is the web-based e-learning platform that is used to present and access your online course components such as the class syllabus and required readings. Instructions for accessing your account were emailed to you by the MPA office.

- **http://www.turnitin.com/**
  - Turnitin.com is a university endorsed online plagiarism prevention resource. The program identifies any material in a paper that may have previously appeared in published or web form or in another student paper in the secure database. Students are required to submit all written assignments (with the exception of the term paper proposal) using turnitin.com. To create an account, follow the steps below:
    - Go to [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com)
    - Either log in if you have used the website before or click New User at the top right if this is your first time using the website.
    - Enter the **class ID number: 2784522**
    - Enter the **class enrollment password: mpaf09**

- **http://www.csun.edu/~kmichaud/**
  - My website has the syllabus, links to the websites above, and some helpful resources.

Student Conduct and Ethics

Students are expected to conduct themselves in a way that is appropriate for an institution of higher learning. This includes maintaining academic integrity and professionalism and refraining from any sort of behavior that is disruptive to me or your fellow students.

Plagiarism is a growing problem in the university. The university, and the MPA program, takes plagiarism very seriously. The university catalog defines plagiarism as intentionally or knowingly representing the words, ideas, or work of another as one’s own in any academic exercise. University policy states that cheating or plagiarism in connection with an academic program is an offense for which a student may be expelled, suspended, or given a less severe disciplinary sanction. Any student in my class found to have plagiarized any portion of submitted work will receive an F for the class and will be referred to the Office of Student Affairs for further disciplinary action.
Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Part I: The Nature of Public Administration

Week 1 (8/20) Defining Public Administration: The Practice and the Study
Readings
- Kettl and Fesler, Chapter 1

Assignments Due
- A Memo
- B Memo Review
- Plagiarism Certificate

Week 2 (8/27) Defining Public Administration: The Practice and the Study, cont’d
Readings
- Goodsell, The Case for Bureaucracy
- Hacker, Chapter on AP Papers (pages 155-195 in 5th ed.)

Assignments Due
- A Memo
- B Memo Review
- Plagiarism Certificate

Week 3 (9/3) The Political Context and Structure of Public Administration
Readings
- Kettl and Fesler, Chapters 2 and 3

Case Study

Assignments Due
- A Memo
- B Memo Review
- Term Paper Proposal

Week 4 (9/10) The Political Context and Structure of Public Administration, cont’d
Readings
- Kettl and Fesler, Chapters 6 and 14

Case Study

Assignments Due
- A Memo
- B Memo Review
Part II: Organization Theory

Week 5 (9/17)

Readings
• Kettl and Fesler, Chapters 4, 5, and 7

Assignments Due
• Draft of Term Paper
• Midterm Exam

Part III: Program Management and Implementation

Week 6 (9/24)

Decision Making
Readings
• Kettl and Fesler, Chapter 10

Assignments Due
• B Memo
• A Memo Review

Week 7 (10/1)

Human Resources
Readings
• Kettl and Fesler, Chapters 8 and 9

Case Study

Assignments Due
• A Memo
• B Memo Review
• In-Class Term Paper Presentations

Week 8 (10/8)

Budgeting and Implementation
Readings
• Kettl and Fesler, Chapters 11 and 12

Case Study

Assignments Due
• B Memo
• A Memo Review
• Final Draft of Term Paper (2 copies)
• In-Class Term Paper Presentations