

Syllabus*
California State University Sacramento
Graduate Program in Public Policy and Administration

* Any changes to the syllabus will be posted on webct.

PPA 500
Thesis Seminar Fall 2009
Thursday 6-8:50 pm (only the Thursday's listed in the schedule)
Location TBA

Mary K. Kirlin
278-4209 (o)
480-0525 (h)
email: kirlinm@csus.edu

Office: Tahoe Hall 3036
Office hours: Tuesday 3-5
and by appointment *

Introduction and Course Objectives

The goal of this course is to have student's complete their thesis by the deadline **December 4, 2009**. To that end, the course provides faculty and peer guidance in preparation of material to satisfy the Master's thesis requirement. This includes clarification of general program expectations, familiarization with research resources, presentation of models of effective policy and administrative analytical reports, and provision of basic support in a structured environment of feedback.

Format of Course and Expectations of Students

Each class session will include interactive sessions involving students reporting on progress and problem solving with peer feedback and consultation. Students are required to complete all assignments and consult with their thesis committee throughout the semester.

Depending upon how much you have completed at the beginning of the course, besides the three hours of classroom time required every other week in the first two-thirds of the semester, the successful completion of this course will require an additional **minimum** of 10 hours a week of work outside of the classroom. This amount is likely to **grow larger** in the weeks leading up to the deadline.

There are university-wide thesis writing groups that you can also join. They are described at http://www.csus.edu/wac/thesis_groups.stm.

Prerequisite:

To enroll in this course you must have completed all but one of the courses in the Public Policy and Administration Program [PPA 200, 205, 207, 210, 220A, 220B, 230, 240 (or 240A and 240B if appropriate), plus two electives] with at least a B- in each course and an average grade of B or better in all. Accordingly, students cannot enroll in PPA 500 until their last semester of course work and are no longer allowed to take more than one course (other than an internship course) in addition to PPA 500. It is also necessary to have advanced to candidacy before enrolling in PPA

500. Chair Rob Wassmer is authorized to modify these restrictions (but not the advancement to candidacy mandate, which is a University requirement) in exceptional circumstances.

Internet Access:

Access to the Internet is also required for this class. If you do not have it at work or home, access is provided to students at the university library. Some of the links given here require the use of a Sac Link account to access.

Primary and Secondary Advisors:

All students are required by the first (preferred) or second (mandatory) meeting to have developed a thesis question and named primary and secondary advisors who have agreed to supervise and assist in the completion of the assignments required for this class. A form for this purpose, which must be turned into me, is included at the end of this syllabus. A primary advisor can be drawn from Professors Jez (new Fall 2009), Hodson, Kirlin, Lascher, Leach, Shulock, Wassmer, and Waste. A secondary advisor can be chosen from among this same group, part-time PPA instructors Detwiller and Booher, and other part and full-time professors and instructors at CSUS. In some cases you may work with retired PPA faculty. Please note that Dr. Lascher is now the Associate Dean of the college and in that role is taking on only a very few theses.

I strongly suggest you work on developing your thesis question and lining up your advisors in the break preceding the class (if you have not done so already). We intend to have primary advisor roles divided up equally among PPA professors and thus it is essential that you secure the permission of your desired advisors early. If a primary advisor already has their share of thesis supervision they can suggest another PPA professor that you should contact.

You should be in regular contact with your primary advisor throughout the semester. All the assignments listed here are to be given to them and me on the due dates. Your advisor should get comments back to you by the next week's meeting.

Preferences about reading differ for second advisors. Some like to see each piece, others prefer to see a complete draft. Individual arrangements should be made with your secondary advisor on the specific amount of contact to occur during the semester, but all assignments should also be shared with that person and a meeting with the secondary advisor should occur at least once a month. Remember that both your primary and secondary advisors must sign off on your final product. It is essential that they be both be "kept in the loop" throughout the semester.

Research Partner:

Each student will be paired with another who is in this class. This person will serve as a partner in their quest to finish the thesis. Besides their primary and secondary advisors, this partner will serve as a sounding board, confidant, and a third set of eyes to read all that is written. This is meant to be a reciprocal relationship where your help will be equally rewarded by the help of another. Please secure this person's signature also on the sheet attached to syllabus.

Format of Class Meetings:

This course will meet a total of five times from 6 to no later than 8:50 p.m. on five Thursday nights throughout the semester. It is essential that you attend class meetings. This is absolutely not a

lecture-based course. All students are required to participate in these discussions and should come prepared to class each week with a summary of progress in the previous week(s), and questions/concerns that need to be addressed. Expect to be called on often to make such a report.

*Note regarding office hours. I will be happy to meet with students at mutually agreeable times and will often be available on Thursdays before 5. However, in my role as a Faculty Senator, I need to hold Thursday's from 3-5. Please contact me by email if you want to set up another time to meet.

Assignments and Grading

Grades:

There are only two grades that can be obtained in this class: satisfactory progress or fail. I will ask your primary advisor what they feel you should get and assign that grade. In the past a satisfactory progress meant that you either finished your thesis this semester, or were capable of finishing over the break before the next semester. Please talk to your primary advisor to find out what his/her expectation is.

If you do not receive a passing grade in 500 you may take it one more time. If you do not pass the course a second time you will be evicted from the University and will have to petition for reinstatement. Let's not do this.

In addition to making satisfactory progress on your thesis, you must complete a 4-6 page assessment paper. This is a relatively new requirement although you only do it once (if you are taking 500 for second and final time you do not need to do another assessment). It is due the first day of class and will become part of your permanent file. It may be emailed to me at kirlinm@csus.edu. The entering PPA 200 cohort is given an identical assignment. You may not work with others on this assignment. I realize you are likely distracted by your thesis but this is an important portion of our program assessment. You may use your thesis topic as the topic for the paper.

Assessment Paper:

Identify a current public (governmental) problem/issue that you have some interest in and provide a decision maker with a briefing memo about the issue and possible options to deal with it. As appropriate, consider the economic, political, organizational and policy dimensions of the issue. Help the reader understand the complexities of the issue as well as how the issue may be understood differently by different groups of interested people. Be careful to distinguish between fact and opinion in your analysis. How you would recommend appropriate option(s) to deal with chosen problem/issue 4-6 pages. Due first day of class, please send it electronically.

Underlined items are hyperlinked. Assignments in red are due at the start of class and a copy should be emailed to me and your primary advisor.

Required Reading Material:

(1) *CSUS Guide For Thesis Format*, Latest Edition, Office of Research and Graduate Studies, CSUS, available free on web at www.csus.edu/gradstudies/forms/Thesis.pdf ;

(2) *A Pocket Style Manual*, 2000, Diana Hacker, Third Edition, Bedford Books; available for purchase at bookstore or online. Most PPA students have already purchased this manual for an earlier class;

(3) *Writing Literature Reviews*, 2006, Third Edition, Jose Galvin, Pyczak Publishing; available for purchase at bookstore or online. (Note, there is a more recent edition but it is much more expensive, no need to get this newer one. There should be used editions in the bookstore. Please do not spend more than \$20 on this book, share if you need to. It is also on reserve in the library for up to 3 day loan periods.)

(4) Optional - *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article*; 1986, Howard S. Becker, Chicago Press; available for purchase online.

Schedule:

Note that while specific assignments are listed throughout the semester, beyond the first two assignments, the order and number may be modified with the consent of your primary thesis advisor. This should be done in the schedule that is to be turned in at the second meeting (an example of such a schedule is given in the appendix). I recognize that particular students may have needs that are best met by modifying the general pattern set forth for completion of the master's project.

Session 1 – September 3

Background and Goals

[Memo on PPA Culminating Project/Thesis Guidelines](#)

Process

[CSUS Guide for Thesis Format](#)

[CSUS Workshop requirements](#)

[Review of PPA Department Human Subjects Guidelines](#)

Reading:

Galvin, all. You should review this book before you start writing your literature review. You will note from the suggested schedule that I recommend you complete your literature very quickly. If you haven't already done so, please familiarize yourself with the literature surrounding your topic. This will lead to clarity about the question as well. In other words, immerse yourself in the literature over the break. The Galvin book will help you tremendously when it comes to organizing the work and doing the write up

Assignment Due: (1) one-page prospectus/memo defining your problem and explaining why it is important, who is affected, and the general scope of issue (see example offered in appendix- you will also be asked to make a two minute statement on your thesis question) and (2) draft or final

completion of Thesis Question, Advisors' and Research Partner's Signatures Sheet (included here for you to fill out).

If you are farther along in the process you may submit a complete working draft of your Introduction and Literature Review in lieu of (1) above.

Session 2 – September 10

Thesis and Report Examples. I am hoping to add a thesis bank to the PPA website. Stay tuned.

Ask your primary advisor for relevant examples from PPA students they supervised in the past. I also have some.

Assignment Due: (1) Five minute presentation before class on thesis question, outline of sections contained in your thesis, and proposed dates of completion (bring enough paper copies of outline and schedule for all – an example is given in the appendix to this syllabus) and (2) Final Completion of Thesis Question, Advisors' and Research Partner's Signatures Sheet to be turned into me.

Session 3 – October 1

Assignment Due: Draft of Chapter (2) "Literature Review" or Section (1) "Define the Problem" or alternative agreed upon with primary advisor (each person to make a five minute presentation).

Session 4 – October 29

As a class we will review the University thesis formatting requirements. The University now requires that students take a formatting course or complete the online class. If you do this in class you get a signoff sheet at the end.

Assignment Due: Draft of Chapter (3) "Methodology" or Sections (2-4) "Environment," "Alternatives," and "Criteria" or alternative agreed upon with primary advisor (each person to make a five minute presentation).

Session 5 – November 19

Discussion

If you are on schedule, this session will largely discuss final logistics.

Assignment Due: Draft of Chapter (4) "Results" or Section (5) "Analysis of Alternatives" or alternative agreed upon with primary advisor (each person to make a five minute presentation).

Thesis Schedule

	Strongly encouraged	Department requirement	University requirement	Check off when completed
Advancement to candidacy			X	<u>Before</u> registration for PPA 500
Thesis question with signature of primary and secondary advisor and research partner		X		
4-6 page assessment memo September 3		X		
Graduation application turned in by October 1			X	
Proposed schedule for completion with advisor signature September 10	X			
Literature/Background chapter	September 10			
Methodology/approach chapter	October 1			
Formatting Workshop (in class October 29)			X	
Data/Findings chapter	October 22			
Complete <i>working</i> draft with conclusion	November 1			
Complete draft signed off by advisors	November 30			
Evaluator signoff *November 30-Dec 3			X	
Final to Grad Studies December 4, 2009 3:00 pm			X	

Appendix I: Prospectus Example

Prospectus for Thesis on Teenage Birthrates

Deborah Franklin

Working Title: Teen Birthrates in California: What Really Matters?

Major Advisor: Rob Wassmer

Secondary Advisor: Nancy Shulock

Why study teenage birthrates?

Over the last decade, the issue of teenage birthrates has received attention in the media, legislatures, and political speeches. An article on world population problems in a recent issue of *National Geographic* (2001) included the United States as an example of a nation with a worsening population problem, its teenage birthrate.

How large is the problem of teenage childbearing in the U.S? The teenage birthrate in the U.S. is five percent, which is five percent of teen girls aged 15 to 19 give birth each year. The U.S. has the highest teenage birthrate in the industrialized world. Since 1960, the teenage birthrate has tripled among unmarried females aged 15-19.

Teenage childbearing is expensive. Welfare, food stamps, and Medicaid expenditures for families begun by a teenage mother totaled \$37 billion in 1995. In 1996, The Robin Hood Foundation estimated that teenage parenthood in America cost taxpayers \$6.9 billion a year in increased costs for welfare and food stamps benefits, medical care, incarceration, and foster care. The 1996-97 California State budget included \$73 million in teen pregnancy prevention programs. Funding for prevention programs continues in this year's budget. Despite prevention efforts, in 1997 in California 59,851 births were to teenage mothers, a birthrate of 56.7 births per 1000 women aged 15-19.

One of the costs related to teenage childbearing is dropping out of high school. Hoffman, Foster, and Furstenberg examined the costs of teenage motherhood and found that teen mothers completed fewer years of education. Only 54% graduated from high school, but an estimated 71% would have graduated if they had delayed childbearing until they were 20 years old. Conversely, dropping out of high school has an effect on teenage childbearing. Leibowitz, Eisen, and Chow (1998) studied pregnant teens in Ventura County and reported that teens who reported higher grades in high school were more likely to choose abortion, and teens that had already dropped out of high school were more likely to give birth. Plotnick (2002) considered the attitudes of teens and its effect on decisions to abort, give birth before marriage, or give birth after marriage. Interestingly, the variables for educational expectation were significantly and positively related to both abortion and marriage before birth. The relationship between teen birthrates and high school dropout rates is both complicated and important to our understanding of teenage childbearing.

The success of efforts to lower the teenage birthrate depends on an understanding of the factors that influence the birthrate. While the teenage birthrate has been steadily dropping in California, it is still high enough to generate concern among policymakers and residents. In my research, I will look for some of the underlying factors that contribute to our state's teenage birthrate and then consider their implications for public policy.

The Question

Teenage Pregnancy and Birth in California: Trends and Characteristics provides an excellent overview of teen birthrates in California. It concluded that, in general, birthrates vary by race/ethnicity and poverty level. For my thesis, I am interested in other factors that may be related to teenage birthrates. My research for PPA 207 indicates that the high school dropout rates are an important factor. However, teenage birthrates and high school dropout rates have an endogenous relationship. For my thesis I plan to focus my efforts on finding the distinct factors related to each of those rates. The central question that I will be addressing is what cultural, economic, educational, and home and community environmental factors are related to the teenage birthrate. Another question that I will be addressing is what cultural, economic, educational, and home and community environmental factors are related to high school dropout rates. I also want to examine how teenage birthrates and dropout rates impact each other and the magnitude of one's impact on the other.

Methodology

Building on my PPA 207 paper, I will be using regression analysis of aggregate data at the county level as my primary research method. I plan to increase the variables in my original county birthrate variance regression analysis by including a variable for the rate of population change in each county. I will also include a variable for accessibility to reproductive health services. I also plan to use aggregate county level data and regression models to analyze factors related to high school dropout rates. From these multivariate regression models and the theory underlying the models, I hope to be able to draw inferences about the relationship between teenage birthrates and high school dropout rates.

Appendix II: Suggested Five Chapter Outline for Traditional PPA Thesis

Below is one way to think about the organization of Master's project in a traditional six-section format. You should work out the specific format of your thesis with your principal advisor. Ten to 12 pages would be the suggested lengths for each section.

Chapter 1: Introduction

What is the question you are investigating? In theory and application, why is this question important? Relate the topic to the public policy and/or administrative material you have learned in this program, cite general interest publications that raise the importance of this topic. Describe how the rest of your thesis/project will flow.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

What is already known about this issue? Review a select sample of academic literature, existing reports, and/or policy/administrative history of this issue. Reference the material you have been exposed to in the program. Conclude with a summary of what gaps in our understanding/knowledge of the topic your research will fill. Identify the specific variables involved in your study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

What is the method you will use to gather the facts to answer your research question? Include data collection and data analysis methods. Be specific and detailed.

Chapter 4: Results

Present your findings with an analysis. Save the major findings and conclusions for Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Implications

Summarize what you have done in each of the previous chapters and then draw conclusions. What does your analysis say? What are the answers you have derived to your research questions? What surprised you? What could you not find? Any suggestions you could offer on how to do differently?

Appendix III: Suggested Outline for PPA "Project" thesis

A project thesis may look different than a traditional thesis. The information below is designed to give you an idea what probably needs to be included. Your particular project may have additional sections or chapters, it will depend on what your audience needs to know. You should work out the specific format of your thesis with your principal advisor. Ten to 12 pages would be the suggested lengths for each section.

Chapter 1: Introduction

What is this project trying to address? What is the genesis of the project? Who is the audience? What issue(s) are you investigating? Most project oriented theses have a clear practical application, what is it? And how will you be using more traditional theory and research to help inform the issue? Relate the topic to the public policy and/or administrative material you have learned in this program, cite general interest publications that raise the importance of this topic. Describe how the rest of your thesis/project will flow.

Chapter 2: What do we know and what am I adding -- a somewhat modified literature review and methodology section

What is driving the need for this project, what background information is important? What is already known about this issue? Review existing reports, and/or policy/administrative/political history of this issue. As you talk about how you're going to tackle the issue (your approach or methodology) you will likely be including some "theory" or framework. Make sure you talk about this literature as well. Reference the material you have been exposed to in the program as appropriate.

What is the method you will use to gather the facts to answer your research question? Include any data collection and data analysis methods. Be specific and detailed.

Chapter 3: Results/analysis/Your Work

Describe your work? What did you discover? Present your findings with an analysis. This should be readable! Remember to show your information/findings in multiple formats, "pictures, words and numbers". Tufte-ize your findings, may them a delight to read.

Chapter : Conclusions

Summarize what you have done in each of the previous chapters and then draw conclusions. What does your analysis say? What are the recommendations and/or implications of what you found? What surprised you? What could you not find? What else needs to be done by practitioners and researchers to help address this issue? Make sure you return to the big questions you raised at the beginning about why the issue needed to be addressed.

Appendix IV: Suggested Six Section Outline for Thesis Based On Cam Analysis

Below is another way to think about the organization of Master's project in a six-section format. You should work out the specific format of your thesis with your principal advisor. Ten pages would be the suggested lengths for each section.

Section 1: Define the Problem

- I. Specific problem
- II. Larger context and background
- III. Others' experiences
- IV. Literature review

Section 2: Environment

- I. Political environment and constraints
- II. Legal mandates and issues
- III. Economic factors
- IV. Social issues

Section 3: Alternatives

- I. Analyze causes of problem
- II. Define the variables inherent in alternatives
- III. Reduce and simplify number of alternatives

Section 4: Criteria

- I. Select and justify criteria for evaluating alternatives (e.g. cost/benefit, equity, political feasibility, accountability)
- II. Relative weighting of criteria
- III. Methodology

Section 5: Analysis of Alternatives

- I. Project outcomes of all alternatives
- II. Analyze outcomes in terms of criteria
- III. Summarize and contrast alternatives
- IV. Confront the trade-offs

Section 6: Recommendation and Conclusions

- I. Tailor recommendation to proper audience/clients
- II. Long-term versus short-term issues
- III. Pay attention to implementation

PPA 500

Thesis Question, and Advisors' and Research Partner's Signatures

Student's Name: _____

Thesis Question:

Primary Advisor's Signature: _____

Secondary Advisor's Signature: _____

Research Partner's Signature: _____

Reviewing Thesis/Project Checklist For University Requirements

Paper

_____ 50 - 100 % Cotton Paper (prefer 24 lb.)

Print Quality – Laser printer quality or 600dpi inkjet printers (no dot matrix)

_____ Must use black ink

Form and Style

_____ Blank page (Front and back of manuscript)

_____ Overall Consistency (does not switch from one font style to another)

_____ Font Type (Times New Roman or similar preferred)

_____ Font Size (10 or 12)

_____ Illustrative Materials (see detailed info in format guidelines)

Anything submitted that can't be bound within the document itself (CD's, DVD's, CD-ROM's, large maps, slides, etc.) should be submitted in duplicate with the title, name of student, and semester clearly marked.

Page numbers (before Chapter 1)

_____ Title page (serves as first page – do not place number at bottom of this page) –
See more details below on content for this page.

_____ Lower case Roman numerals, centered one inch from bottom of page beginning on the approval page (or copyright is applicable) that is numbered “ii” and continue through until the last page before Chapter 1

Page numbers (Chapter 1 to the end of the document)

_____ First page of text uses the Arabic number “1” and pages thereafter carry consecutive Arabic numbers, including **ALL** pages in the Appendices and the Bibliography/References

Margins

_____ Left = 1.5 inches _____ Right = 1 inch _____ Bottom = 1 inch

_____ Top = 1.5 inches (page # should be 1 inch down, text begins ½ inch lower)

*Left margins must be 1.5 inches for binding purposes

Title page

- _____ Correct semester for graduation term
- _____ Correct degree name as listed on CMS & SIS+
- _____ Concentration is typed in lower case and placed inside parenthesis
(concentration)
- _____ Name on title page should match name on thesis/project receipt form identically
- _____ No page number (implied number “i”)
- _____ Title is single spaced

Copyright Page (optional – see examples online)**Approval Page**

- _____ Check for all signatures and page number (usually “ii”)

Format Approval Page

- _____ Check for all signatures and page number (usually page “iii”)

Abstract

- _____ Check for signatures and page number (usually page “iv” and/or “v”)
- _____ Double-spaced text

Preface (optional)**Dedication** (optional)**Acknowledgement** (optional) Doubled spaced text, if included**Table of Contents**

- _____ Do **not** include title page, approval page, format approval, abstract or table of contents on the table of contents itself
- _____ Include (if applicable) preface, dedication, acknowledgements, list of tables, list of figures, and list of illustrations AND all Chapters or Section Headings

Appendices and Bibliography/References

- _____ Appendix heading - 1.5 inches from the top
- _____ Chapter headings (do not use bold type)

Thoughts from a recent alum... Spring 2009

Helpful:

1. Having the problem statement defined and signed off by both advisors on the first night of class
2. Having completed review of literature (though not necessarily having it written up) when class began
3. Having thought through the entire research process (sampling, methodology, analysis)
4. Having developed a schedule of completion
5. Updating advisors frequently (about every other week) even if it is to tell them bad news
6. Once beginning writing process, just sitting down and writing whatever came into my head and not worrying about how it sounded, citation, etc.
7. Writing for social scientists (red book) - this for me because I was really nervous about sitting down and writing
8. Having good working relationship with advisors
9. If you are doing a survey, get the university paperwork going right away. Also I recommend a trial run to make sure you are going to get meaningful responses to the questions.
10. Getting the formatting right from the beginning. Changing formatting midway can really mess with your text and table alignment.
11. Have person other than (and before and after) your advisors proofread your thesis for clarity and grammar.

About the thesis completion process:

1. Pay the microfilm and binding fee at the Student Financial Services Center (Lassen Hall) as soon as the student feels confident he/she will finish the thesis. That is just one less thing to do on the day of submitting the thesis.
2. Plan to go to the graduate studies thesis sign-off people at least twice (once with a final draft on regular paper, and once with the final draft on the pretty paper). Plan to spend a couple hours there each time.

3. Before going in for graduate studies thesis check, do use a ruler to check your margins on every page. Check the margins for the page numbers, text, and tables.
4. Kinko's in east Sacramento has the pretty paper in stock and it is not that expensive to have them print. I would recommend this over trying to print at home because of the many problems one can have with a home printer, plus the cost of ink. Kinko's can print from a flash drive easily. Buy a few extra sheets of blank pretty paper and be sure to get sufficient extra copies of the signature pages (you may even want an extra set for your own bound copy).
5. Coordinate availability with your advisors and the department chair (Rob) so that you can get all of your signatures on time and without running around to fifty different places.