

Syllabus*

California State University, Sacramento Graduate Program in Public Policy and Administration

*this is a living document that will evolve as the term goes along.

Revised versions will be posted on SacCT and emailed to the class, with changes marked
in yellow

As of May 31, 2017

PPA 200

Introduction to Public Policy and Administration

Fall 2017

INTENSIVE WEEKEND:

Friday, September 8th 5pm – 9pm location AIRC 3009

Saturday, September 9th 8am – 4pm location AIRC 3009

Sunday, September 10th 8am – 12pm group time (AIRC 3009)

GASPPA lunch on Saturday

Tuesday, August 29th PPA Pizza Picnic at Alumni Grove at 6pm

Tuesdays beginning September 5th 6pm – 8:50pm AIRC 3009

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Office hours: Tuesdays 2:45pm-5:45pm
and by appointment

The best ways to reach me are to come to office hours on Tuesdays from 2:45pm-5:45pm at Tahoe 3040, to email me at venezia@csus.edu, or to schedule a time to meet with me outside of office hours. I prefer emails rather than phone calls.

Introduction

Welcome to the PPA department and to PPA 200! This course serves as an introduction to the foundations of public policy and administration—to the issues and ideas that guide our understanding of public policy making and analysis, and to how public organizations implement those policies in pursuit of the public good. We will begin with a broad review of democratic institutions and the roles of policy making and administration, covering the State of California in some detail. We then progress to a project that allows you to practice examining a policy area in detail and produce oral and written reports about the topic. **This syllabus is very long, but please make sure to read it thoroughly, from beginning to end, before you start doing any reading for this class.**

PPA 200 also serves as an introduction to graduate study at Sac State and in PPA. The course will orient you to reading, thinking and writing analytically and through different disciplinary lenses. The course is designed to immerse you in both content and skills to

prepare you for later course work and for the thesis. Successful completion of this course, and of PPA 220A, is required before you progress to the balance of the program.

Course Objectives

Consistent with the overall plan for your Master's degree work, the objectives (knowledge and skills) of this course are as listed below. The expectation is not mastery per se, but beginning competency; there is likely wide variation in this class with regard to knowledge and skills in the areas listed below, so each person will have different strengths and weaknesses. You will continue to work on these objectives throughout the program. The objectives are that, during the course, you will begin to:

- Construct clear definitions of problems;
- Understand the difference between analysis and advocacy;
- Understand the significance of diversity in effective public governance in California;
- Consider the ethical dimensions of choices in public policy and administration;
- Work effectively in groups; and
- Write clearly and succinctly as appropriate to various audiences.

In addition, because this course is designated a writing intensive course, by the end of the semester, you will:

- Understand the major research and/or professional conventions, practices, and methods of inquiry of the discipline;
- Understand the major formats, genres, and styles of writing used in the discipline;
- Practice reading and writing within the discipline; and
- Practice reading and writing as a learning process that involves peer and instructor feedback, revision, critical reflection, and self-editing.

Format of Course and Expectations of students

This course is the introductory course in PPA. As graduate students, you will learn many theories and skills. There are few hard and firm rules in the practical application of public policy and administration, and you must rely on your own judgment to determine which theory or skill to apply to which problem (often after you have re-framed the problem). An objective of PPA 200 is to set you on a course to be able to read, analyze, and apply the materials you will learn in the coming two plus years. As a starting point for reading, please review the SQ4R technique at the back of this syllabus. You are not required to use SQ4R, but it might come in handy for some people – particularly for the reading over the summer, since there is quite a bit.

I teach this course in a seminar style. You are expected to come to class prepared to participate in conversations about the materials you have read. Study questions will be provided for some classes to give you a starting point for the class discussion.

At the end of summer, we will have a long weekend together (September 8-10th) designed to immerse you in background knowledge and baseline skills. **This weekend is intensive and you will have work due in advance. Please review the entire syllabus now and plan accordingly. You must do all the assigned readings ahead of time. My suggestion is that you take good notes as you read so that you do not need to re-read anything once the semester starts. Once the semester starts, you will be applying what you read, but I will not lecture about what you read.**

Since the intensive weekend front-loads quite a bit of class time, we will finish this course early—usually by mid-November. Understand that for those of you taking multiple courses, in the beginning of the semester, you may go to class for five or more days in a row because of the intensive weekend. Plan ahead by spreading preparation for all classes out over the month prior and anticipate that the first two weeks will be long (but it will pay off!).

I will never lecture for the entire class period; that is hard on all of us, and it will not help you engage in your learning. Rather, I will facilitate discussions and exercises designed to further your application of the learning. The readings will provide the foundation; most class time will be spent practicing applications of what we have read. My expectation is that you will have done it thoroughly enough to pull out main ideas. I suggest coming to class with the main points of each reading with you (thus the suggestion to take good notes). If you have not done the reading, you will not be able to participate. Consistent lack of participation will result in a reduced class participation grade. Absences are not allowed for the intensive weekend and I strongly discourage them for classes after that weekend.

I will make use of technologies available through SacCT (Blackboard) to do things such as make the course materials available online and send emails through that system. **This means that you will be expected to obtain and a Saclink account and check it regularly.** Most faculty use SacCT and My SacState to communicate with students -- it is your responsibility to check those locations regularly, even if you provided Suzi Byrd with an additional email. Once you have a Saclink account, you will be able to access your own courses through SacCT (these will usually be available one week before classes start and sometimes sooner).

While SacCT does not generally open until a week or so before classes start, PPA syllabi will be available by the first week in August and most instructors have reading assigned for the first day of class. Suzi will send an email to the listserv, but you should also check the PPA website.

Students are expected to complete all assignments in a complete and professional manner. I would like you to email me each of your out-of-class assignments using Word.

I edit papers using the comments/tracked changes functions in Word. Complete and professional means double-spaced, **proofread**, well written, appropriately cited, and on time. You can circulate your papers with peers to get some proofreading help; I do expect papers to be in great shape when I receive them (no typos, grammatical errors, etc.).

It is important to have naming conventions for files, both at work and at school. If you name your file “paper 1” and I save it like that, I then need to spend time searching the documents and the roster to figure out whose paper that is. **Therefore, make sure to put your name in the file name (“Smith Assignment 1”), and make sure to put your name on the first page of your paper. If you do not put your name in the file name, I will automatically deduct one point from the assignment.**

Anyone who does not meet the writing expectations will be notified early on and strongly encouraged to seek assistance, possibly at the campus Writing Center. Papers needing additional work may be returned to be re-done at the discretion of the instructor for partial improvement of grades. A major goal of the first semester is to support you to make sure you can write at the appropriate level. If that does not happen, we may request that you take a writing course as an elective in the spring.

Getting help. It is important that you understand the material we are covering in class. The class is structured as a series of building blocks. You do not want to miss a foundational piece. If for any reason, you do not understand the readings, it is essential that you gain clarity on the topic *during the time in which we are covering those topics*. You can speak up in class to ask for clarification or you can speak with me privately (via email, phone, in office hours, by appointment, or during class breaks). You are also welcome to seek help from your classmates. I am best reached via email, and I will do my best to return emails sent between Monday and Thursday within 48 hours. I travel a fair amount for work for EdInsights and that can create email backlogs for me, but I prioritize student emails.

Students with disabilities. Should you need assistance with portions of class due to a disability(ies), please let me know as soon as possible. The University offers services to student with disabilities and I would be glad to refer you to the appropriate campus unit.

Missing class. Missing a class will impact your final grade. There are no excused absences unless there you experience an emergency. We will be working closely with one another, sharing ideas, resources, and expertise. If you have to be late, leave early, or miss a class for an emergency, please let me know. Except under very unusual circumstances, a student who misses three classes will be penalized one entire grade (e.g., an A- for the course will become a B-), and a student who misses more than three classes will receive a failing grade.

Participation. All members in the class share responsibility for the success of this course. Therefore, you are expected to participate actively in each class session. Doing so requires you to attend every class session for the full period, having prepared by doing all assigned readings and projects. Readings offer us a common language with which to

explore our thinking. The reading materials themselves do not determine or create our thinking; that is your job as a learner. Good thinking comes from a critical eye willing to look beyond what is claimed to pursue a number of very important questions. Do you understand what is being explained? Do the ideas in the readings fit your experience of the world? Do they change how you think about the world? What are the implications of these ideas? How do they encourage you to act? What are the issues that emerge from these concepts and ideas? You will be asked to make thoughtful contributions in large and small group discussions and share your informed reactions to readings, speakers, and general class discussions. You are expected to read and think about the applications of the material and complete all assignments on or before their due date. You are expected to discuss and share insights about the important issues raised by the readings and throughout the class activities.

Late assignments. I will not accept late assignments (or allow for a make-up examination) unless a student experiences a highly unusual circumstance. At my discretion, a student who requests ahead of time to miss a deadline might be given a make-up assignment. Whether or not a penalty will be assessed depends on the reason (e.g., a family emergency constitutes a good reason; a competing requirement for another course does not). If there is not a compelling reason, I will not accept late assignments.

Distractions. Do not use cell phones or surf the web for non-class purposes while in class. Doing so is distracting for me and for your peers, and it is an indication that you are not paying attention. If you have a family emergency and need to take a call, please leave the class to answer the phone. If electronic devices are being used for non-class purposes in class, I may prohibit their use for all.

Academic Honesty. I take plagiarism and other acts of academic dishonesty very seriously. I reserve the right to fail students who are academically dishonest. Note that academic dishonesty can be grounds for dismissal from the university. Details are available at the University Policy Manual found at <http://www.csus.edu/ummanual/student/UMA00150.htm>. If you are unclear about what constitutes plagiarism, it is your responsibility to educate yourself and/or come talk with me.

Assignments and Grading

As stated above, I will not accept late work. I understand that many of you are working full-time and attending classes nights and weekends. If you must miss class when an assignment is due, you will need to submit it to me prior to class.

All papers should be sent by email (not through SacCT). Unless otherwise specified, homework is due by 5:59pm on the assigned day and must be time stamped as such (via email). Use Microsoft Word for all assignments so that I can edit them electronically. Do not finish an assignment during the beginning of class, email me your paper, and then come to class late. If you do that, I will dock your paper one full grade (such as from an A to a B).

I grade as follows:

Papers, memos, toolkit, and peer feedback	60%
Group presentation and paper	30%
Class participation (attendance/engagement in class discussion/activities)	10%
Total	100%

The PPA program uses the APA style (which is detailed in the Hacker style manual) for ALL papers and the thesis. Please familiarize yourself with this citation process quickly as it will be required for all papers.

Paper #1. Due August 28th. Please email it to me at venezia@csus.edu.

You should do this paper only after you have read all the material for the intensive weekend class. Identify a current public (governmental) problem that you are interested in and provide a decision maker (such as a state legislator or city council member) with a three-page (not including references) memo about the issue and possible options to deal with it. Be sure to tell me who your audience is. As appropriate, consider the ethical, economic, political, organizational, and policy dimensions of the issue (other dimensions are fine – those are examples); think about the readings that you did over the summer and how those authors discussed those kinds of issues. Help the reader understand the complexities of the issue as well as how the issue might be understood differently by different groups of interested people. In your analysis, be careful to distinguish between fact and opinion.

This paper will provide me with a baseline assessment of your writing and analytical skills. I will grade your paper quickly so that you will know early on in the semester if I have initial concerns about your writing. This first paper is worth 5% of your grade.

Please do not call or email me for additional instructions; the assignment is purposely a bit vague in order to mimic the kinds of work people often need to complete at work, and to give you flexibility to determine how best to complete it. This paper will provide me with an initial sense of your writing skills, and about the decisions you make when synthesizing information. Few people do a perfect job on this; that is not the goal. Just do your best and know that this is a fairly low stakes way for me to become familiar with your thinking and writing. We will use the papers to start thinking about policy-related writing and analysis.

Paper #2 First draft due September 8th and final paper due September 22nd

Like the first paper, you should do this paper only after you have read all the material for the intensive weekend class. The Baldassarre book identifies three underlying conditions that contributed to the Orange County bankruptcy. Beginning with those three conditions as a basis for your paper, think broadly about those conditions and, drawing on the contributions of Mathews/Paul, write a paper (no longer than five pages) that addresses the question of whether any (or all) of the three conditions still apply to the State of California today. If so, which ones and why (based on what evidence)? If not, why not (based on what evidence)? Please be sensitive to the importance of transferring “lessons”

from one context to another. In other words, do the lessons from a county-level experience transfer directly to the state level? Which changes must be made to make the lessons transfer? If you need a primer on the state's fiscal condition, review the State Budget introductory pages or the Legislative Analyst's budget discussions.

Bring a paper copy of your draft to class on the first night of the intensive weekend. We will work with the papers in class and the final paper will be due September 22nd. This paper is worth 15% of your grade (based on your grade for the final draft, not on the first draft).

Paper #3 Toolkit (due date TBD in October)

You will turn in your "toolkit" in addition to a 1-3 page paper explaining the 4-5 things in your toolkit, why they are important to you, and how you learned to use them. We will discuss this more as the semester progresses. Date to be determined at the start of the semester. This will be worth 10% of your grade.

Peer-reviewed memos (due dates TBD in September/October)

I will hand out topics during class and all the memos together will be worth 20% of your grade. I will assign 2-4 memos.

Peer feedback re: memos

You will circulate drafts of your papers/memos to classmates for feedback. You will review at least two papers/memos and possibly four. I will grade your written feedback based on the extent to which it is thorough and beneficial for the author. Each feedback exercise will be worth up to 5% of your grade, depending upon the number of reviews I assign. The total for feedback will be 10% of your class grade.

Group project (30%; due date TBD in November)

I will distribute details about this during the first intensive weekend. This project will include a 10-15 page paper in addition to an oral presentation.

Editing papers:

Some students are quite comfortable editing their own work multiple times prior to submitting it and therefore turn in fairly polished work. For others, editing will be a new skill. In order to reinforce the notion of submitting finished, edited, work, I *may* return papers for re-writing and/or editing. If you write a paper that requires further editing, you will not receive credit until you finish the required editing.

Important note about formatting papers:

All papers should be typed, double spaced, and fall within the page limits specified. Please put a cover page on each assignment containing your name, your email, and the assignment title. Use 12 point font with one inch margins (top, bottom, left, and right). I expect correct punctuation, spelling and use of citations. If you are unfamiliar with APA style, consult the Hacker style guide.

The majority of your papers will be analytical, using concepts from class to illuminate a particular situation, and then requiring you to synthesize, analyze, and integrate your own thoughts/reflections. Written presentation is very important. You will often be called upon to communicate your analysis and recommendations quickly, clearly and concisely in work environments—and for different audiences. Please take this opportunity to practice and perfect your writing!

Required Texts

The books will be available in the bookstore or you can purchase them online. Just make sure you purchase the correct edition. Please bring the appropriate readings to class, since we will often use them in exercises. This includes articles you retrieve electronically (electronic readings are embedded in the syllabus portion of the schedule, not here). You do NOT have to bring in theses; you will skim several of those to become familiar with the different ways students approach the thesis requirement.

Required:

Baldassare, Mark. (1998). *When Government Fails: The Orange County Bankruptcy*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Bardach, Eugene. (2011). 4th Edition. *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: the Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*, Washington, DC: CQ Press.

California Legislative Analyst Office. (2016). Cal Facts. Available at: <http://www.lao.ca.gov/Publications/Report/3511>. Make sure to click all the way through.

Hill, Marc Lamont. (2016). *Nobody: Casualties of America's War on the Vulnerable, from Ferguson to Flint and Beyond*, New York, NY: Simon & Schuster. [I am testing out this book with you all and will read it for the first time this summer, too.]

Mathews, Joe and Mark Paul. (2010). *California Crack Up: How Reform Broke the Golden State and How We Can Fix It*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Wheelan, Charles. (2010). *Naked Economics*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company. [We will not use this during class discussions or for class assignments. This is an easy and fun read—sort of a more sophisticated version of *Freakonomics*. We will not have time to cover it, but it will help you prepare for both PPA 200 and 220A.]

Recommended:

Hacker, Diane. (2011). *A Pocket Style Manual*. 6th Edition. Boston, MA: Bedford Books. (any version in the past 2-3 years will be sufficient, the basics do not change.)

Kettl, Donald F. and James W. Fesler. (2005). *The Politics of the Administrative Process*. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Kingdon, John W. (1999). *America the Unusual*. New York, NY: Worth Publishers.

Rainey, Hal. (2014). *Understanding and Managing Public Organizations* 5th Edition. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass. (Please keep this text as it will be used in the 240 sequence as well.)

NOTE: Some of these books are used in other classes (such as Hacker, Bardach, and Rainey), so do not get rid of books from the program until you are sure you will not need them again.

Draft Course Outline and Schedule

As of May 2017 [subject to change!]

Articles marked with one asterisk (*) will be available on SacCT closer to the start of the term. You can also locate most of these online yourself.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Readings</u>	<u>Deadlines</u>
Tuesday, Sept 5th	This will be our “prep” day for the intensive weekend. Make sure you have done all of the readings for the weekend and come to class on September 5 th with questions about the readings, PPA program, PPA, and the intensive weekend. Note that you have a paper due August 28 th and a draft of the second paper due on September 8 th . We will talk about both papers in class. Finally, come to class with three examples of policy briefs that you think are effective. I am defining a policy brief as a document for whom the intended audience is policymakers/policy staff and that is less than 5 pages long (excluding cover pages, references, etc. – 5 pages of text/narrative). Your three examples can be from any policy field (environmental policy, education policy, transportation policy, etc.). Please bring four copies of each piece and be prepared to talk about why you think the briefs are effective.	Draft of paper 2 due September 8 th (First paper due August 28)
Friday, Sept 8 5pm – 9pm Saturday, Sept 9 8am – 5pm Sunday, Sept 10 8am – noon. Please do <u>all</u> the work for these three days by September 5 th .	<u>You have all summer to do these readings:</u> Federalist Papers #10 and #51 available online at several sites including Yale’s Avalon Project (http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/fed.asp) Kingdon, John. <i>America the Unusual</i> , all. <u>Study question:</u> What are the key ideas that make the US political system unique? Review the Cal Facts publication about California (most current version please – link listed in list above) LAO Report on Local Taxation Overview of Local Government Skim the Sturmfels thesis Baldassare, all Mathews and Paul, all	

	<p><u>Study Questions</u>: Do the three factors that were important in the Orange County bankruptcy still exist in CA? What are the key ideas that make the CA political system unique? How have these also made governance complex?</p> <p>Skim the Esquivel thesis</p> <p>Bardach, all (but just skim the appendices)</p> <p>For a thesis using a version of the model suggested by Bardach skim the Dickinson thesis</p> <p>*Moore, Mark H. 2000. "Managing for Value: Organizational Strategy in For-Profit, Nonprofit, and Governmental Organizations." <i>Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly</i> 29:183.</p> <p><u>Study question</u>: What role do organizations play in the study of public policy and administration?</p> <p>Skim the theses by Foster and Fox</p> <p>ASPA Code of Ethics (available at http://www.aspanet.org, click on "About ASPA" and then click on "Code of Ethics" link)</p> <p>* McSwite, O.C., (2001) "Theory Competency for MPA-Educated Practitioners," <i>Public Administration Review</i>, Vol. 61:1.</p>	
September 12	<p>"Circle back" to discuss highlights of readings from intensive weekend and answer questions from intensive weekend.</p> <p><u>Writing for PPA</u></p> <p>"Betraying the College Dream," Venezia, Kirst, Antonio, available at http://web.stanford.edu/group/bridgeproject/betrayingthe_collegedream.pdf</p> <p>"On Balance...", Kirlin and Shulock, available at http://www.csus.edu/edinsights/PDFs/R_On_Balance_07_12.pdf.</p> <p>Stickiness graphic (Andrea to provide to class)</p>	<p>Peer feedback/memo assignment #1 possibly assigned. Will be due within 2-3 days.</p>

	<p>Think about: What is effective about each of those reports? What is not effective? Come to class with thoughts about what makes a narrative effective for you.</p> <p>Melzer & Lascher article (PDF is on SacCT)</p> <p><u>Thinking about causation</u></p> <p>NY Times article “Does This Ad Make Me Fat?” (URL on SacCT)</p> <p>Come to class with ideas about two factors/variables for which causation could go either way (or in both directions). For example, a lack of connection to a city could cause people not to want to buy a house. But a lack of home ownership could cause people to feel disconnected from a city.</p> <p>Miscellaneous</p> <p>Peer feedback assignment #1 assigned.</p> <p>Group exercises (to be handed out in class, depending on time available) – these will require you to utilize what you have learned from the readings you finished for the intensive weekend, so come prepared with your reading notes.</p> <p>Groups meet individually with Andrea, time permitting.</p>	
September 19	<p><u>Creating, understanding and using narratives</u></p> <p>Discuss executive summaries, introductions, abstracts, etc.</p> <p>Develop rubric for group project.</p> <p>Bring sketches/ideas for graphic to discuss (in preparation for September 29th class)</p> <p>Pair groups and discuss group presentations.</p> <p><u>Collaboration</u></p> <p>Groups meet individually with Andrea if we ran out of</p>	Final Paper 2 due September 22.

	time last week.	
September 26	Bardach – possible guest lecture	Outline of group project due. Peer feedback/memo assignment #2 likely assigned.
October 3	<u>Making Effective Presentations</u> <u>Adobe/PPT workshop – bring in your ideas about graphic</u> Bring in 25 copies of one graphic you find interesting and effective.	
October 10	<u>No class. Groups meet tonight on their own.</u>	
October 17	<u>Ethical Dimensions of PPA</u> * Walton, John R., James M. Stearns, and Charles T. Crespy, 1997. “Integrating Ethics into the Public Administration Curriculum: A three-step Process.” <i>Journal of Policy Analysis and Management</i> 16. pp. 470-483. <u>Study Questions</u> : Are public administrators held to a different or higher standard than private or non-profit administrators? Is this reasonable? Why or why not? Exercise in class.	Group project first drafts likely due. (Note: I will be co-running an intensive weekend for a new Education Policy Fellows Program in Monterey over the weekend, so I will not be as prompt as I would like re: feedback.)
October 24	<u>I meet with groups individually. Make sure to have your graphic/visual hand-out ready for review.</u>	Toolkits likely due. Draft presentation hand-out likely due.
October 31	<u>Halloween – no class!</u>	
November 7	<u>Dry run of presentations</u>	Do surveys during class.
November 14	<u>Presentations, evaluation of presentations, and brief celebration (we might go about 30 minutes over time).</u> Prospective students might join.	Final group project due.

Writing an Analytical Paper for the PPA Program

The easier parts:

Use proper grammar, capitalization, punctuation, source citation, italics, etc.

Never use contractions (e.g., “we’ve” for “we have”) in papers for this program or in professional writing.

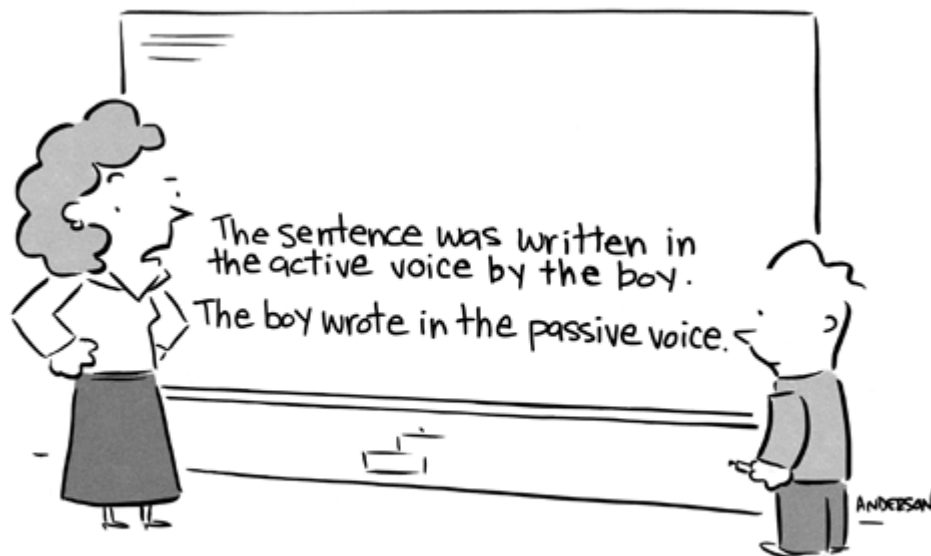
Make sure you know the difference between a semi-colon and a colon and that you use them appropriately.

Always read through your papers once for content and once for grammar before you turn them in. If Word is indicating that there is a grammar/space problem (when the red and green lines appear), pay attention and fix the problem. If you opt not to do so, have a good reason.

Do not mix singular and plural in one sentence. For example, do not write, “The student should complete the paper so that they can receive a grade.” “The student” is singular and “they” is plural. This happens frequently when a writer is trying to avoid using she/he throughout a paper, so watch for it diligently!

Avoid passive voice whenever possible (“The table will be set.” “The paper will be graded.”). Sometimes people think that using passive voice sounds more formal and academic, but it really makes writing convoluted, and it takes responsibility away with regard to the action discussed in the sentence. (If you can add “by zombies” at the end of your sentence, that is an indication that it is in passive voice.)

On a related note, PPA faculty members believe it is acceptable to write in the first person, at least to a limited extent (this means using the pronoun “I”). This is especially the case when you want to clarify your own claims and distinguish them from those of others. Thus, it is perfectly acceptable to use something like the following in a paper, “While some scholars have argued that urban sprawl leads to X and Y, I will argue that it results in Z.” Using the first person pronoun often makes it easier to write in the active voice.



"You're just messing with me, aren't you."

Passive voice	Active voice
The research was conducted...by zombies	
Data were analyzed...	
It will be done tomorrow...	
A cake is being baked...	
News reports were written...	
The room was decorated...	
A song was recorded...	

You can read more about passive voice online. See, for example:

http://www.slate.com/blogs/future_tense/2015/04/01/scientists_should_stop_writing_in_the_passive_voice.html.

Do not write that "someone feels" something when what you really mean is that someone "thinks" or "believes" something to be the case ("Students feel that there is too much homework."). Here's a NY Times Op Ed about this issue ("Stop Saying I Feel Like"):

http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/01/opinion/sunday/stop-saying-i-feel-like.html?_r=0.

Good paragraphs have the following components:

A topic sentence, usually at the beginning;

Supporting evidence; and

A transition to the next idea (but not an overly-simple transition, such as, “Now I am going to write about X.”).

Do not use the royal “we” if you are the sole author (“We will next discuss…”).

Answer the question asked. If it has multiple parts that are not rhetorical, answer all of them.

Tell the readers what you are going to say. It is much easier to read analytical work if you know where the author is going, and it is common to offer such direction in the very first paragraph. We will not be looking for you to write a mystery novel.

Note that writing for public policy and administration is much different than other types of writing in this regard. If you were in a fictional writing program we (faculty members *and* fiction readers) might cringe if you gave away too much of the story on the first page. You are not in such a program. Rather, you are in a program that assumes the audience has much to do, limited amounts of time, and needs to understand the argument at hand quickly and accurately. So get to the point.

Start at the beginning of the thought, not in the middle. (How much can you reasonably assume the reader knows? Who is audience and what is the purpose?)

Make statements that you can support with evidence as opposed to beliefs. Cite your evidence. Pick a method for citing references and use it consistently.

Every sentence should make or support a point—hopefully one that is connected to your overall argument.

Avoid long explanations of details that are irrelevant. This is probably not the time to dazzle someone with your specialized knowledge of a particular project.

Watch your choice of words. Both incorrect and unintended meanings can get you in trouble. Clarity is much more important than demonstrating such knowledge.

The harder parts:

Create a coherent framework for your papers—a line of thought and a structure that defines and answers the questions posed. **Use headings and subheadings.** This helps you make sure that your writing is logical and is flowing well and it creates a roadmap for the reader.

Use relevant literature (hopefully multiple authors) to ground your work.

Be analytical, not editorial or colloquial (unless your explicit task is to write an editorial or present ideas in a colloquial manner). This means that you will have to analyze and synthesize information, using a critical lens.

Take the time to edit your papers to make the writing crisp, the flow coherent and logical, and the document shorter and clearer. I suggest re-reading your papers at least two times before submitting them. I know that this is challenging given everyone's responsibilities in life, but you cannot do high quality work at school or work without multiple reviews. I also suggest peer editing whenever possible.

Make it easy on the reader by using consistent language. In other kinds of writing, it might be more interesting to change it up a bit by substituting a synonym here and there in the attempt to avoid using the same word repeatedly. But doing so in analytical writing may lead the reader to think that you are introducing a new concept. For example, if you are discussing "underrepresented" populations, use that term consistently (presumably having defined it) rather than switching to "underserved," for example, so that the reader will not wonder if you are introducing a somewhat different category.

Make sure you use solid evidence, and that you know the difference between using evidence and advocating for an issue.

Tips:

Think about the question(s) being asked for a few days.

Make an outline. Think about your headings and subheadings.

Write a draft. Edit it for content. Let it sit for a day (or at least a few hours). Do your headings and subheadings work now that you've written the paper? If not, move things around and do major editing. Read it again. Are you happy with it?

Once you are happy with the substance of your paper, read it again for grammar.

Have someone proofread it.

Do a logic check (This is a topic sentence and it is supported by the following evidence...This is the analytical tool I am using because...).

SQ4R

Reading for Comprehension for Graduate Students

The SQ4R technique is designed to help you read for comprehension and understanding. The goal is not to read faster; it is to read more effectively the first time and retain the important concepts. You do not have to use this if you do not want to. SQ4R stands for:

Scan:

The first task is to scan the material you are about to read to determine the point of the piece. Review the title, the table of contents, the book jackets, the preface, introduction and conclusion if appropriate. Well-written books and articles *tell you what they are going to tell you*. As you scan, look for context, topic, main ideas, the author's(') perspective or bias, main arguments made, etc. Think about: how does this fit with other material you have read about this topic?

Questions:

What question(s) is this author trying to tell you? What question(s) is the author trying to answer? What should you know or understand better as a result of reading the piece?

Many books and most articles at the graduate level have a particular perspective. Textbooks, of course, are a bit different, since much of what is conveyed is factual information rather than a perspective or viewpoint. Some texts will contrast several theories. Articles and most books, however, are trying to address a particular question or theory, or convey an idea.

Write down any questions you have identified before you begin to read and then look for the answers to your questions.

The 4 R's:

Read: Once you have your questions identified, begin to do the reading. First, glance at the material. Is it organized into subsections that are logical? If it is, then it may make sense to scan them for content. Much of the reading assigned at this level has a main point and the author tells you what it is in an introduction or overview chapter. Skim the areas that make sense at first glance and read more in depth in the areas you did not understand as well. Look at graphs, charts and tables as sources of summary information as well.

Remember what your questions are. Read sections of material at a time, not the whole thing from beginning to end (unless it is short). As soon as you find yourself straying mentally, stop reading! Stretch, get up—do whatever you need to in order to get your focus back. Review where you left off to make sure you did not start to stray much earlier!

The zebra stripe problem...

“Highlighting” can confuse you more than help you. Wait until you have completed the reading and answered any questions you made before you highlight. At that point, you will know what the important points are and you can annotate them with your own thoughts. Otherwise, you wind up with the dreaded zebra stripe... lots of yellow and white stripes with no real meaning.

Reflect: Think about what you just read. Can you answer your questions? A friend asks what you are reading. Can you say, "This chapter is about the way people behave in organizations; right now I am reading about how we motivate people," or would you need to say something very general (such as "I am reading about public affairs")?

Recite:

Saying things out loud can help you retain information. Tell someone the summary of what you just read, or say it to yourself out loud. Think of examples that help illustrate this point. Ideally, join a study group and share your questions and answers (after all of the people in the group have done their initial reading).

Review:

Review what you have written down. Is it in your own words? Does it make sense to you? Can you make sense of it three days later? What about three weeks later? Notes that do not mean anything to you, either from class or from readings, are not worth the time it took to write them down. If your notes do not make sense now, they never will. One hint about notes is to use your own words 99% of the time. Putting information into your own words can help you figure out if you understand the main point(s).

Sources:

Petrie, Trent A., Lisa Pinkenburg Landry, and Kimberly Bobinski Edwards. (1999). Achieving Academic Success, Ron Jon Publishing. Lecture notes from Dr. Ross Clayton and Dr. John Kirlin, University of Southern California (via Mary Kirlin).

Toolkits

What is a toolkit?

It is a compilation, in whatever form works for you, of those things that help you make sense of the world—the things that provide new perspectives, new insights, and allow you to understand the complex assortment of problems and questions that are raised in the public sector. Toolkits help you to look backward for understanding and forward to solve problems creatively.

Why do I need a toolkit?

If you are sitting in this class, you have some desire to learn, to get a better education, and perhaps to further your career goals. Sitting here one night a week will not make you a better manager or analyst, but finding ways to internalize what you learn in this program *will*. By internalizing, I mean making it part of how you think about the world. Bennis talks about how strong leaders force themselves to find time to reflect on what is going on in their lives—both in the past and projecting forward. Such leaders are seeking to identify lessons and look forward, with some thought, to what might be happening now. Your toolkit is a way of forcing reflection. When you come upon a problem you are not sure how to analyze or solve, look at your toolkit list while you ponder the problem.

What form can my toolkit take?

3x5 cards

A sheet of paper

A binder

A collage

The key to a toolkit is to have it visible frequently—someplace where you will use it—and start to incorporate it into the way you think every day, not just when you have the benefit of reflection.

What should be in my toolkit?

The most critical item about your tool kit is that it is yours. It is a list of tools that work for you. Your toolkit should contain the words and phrases and concepts that remind you of the bigger theme behind them. It should be brief, but meaningful.

For example, one of the items in a toolkit can simply be the word "incentives." Here is a story from a policy class at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government to illustrate this point. The professor was talking about a state in which roads were being torn up by cars and trucks. Policy wonks decided that it would be best to assess a fee to the vehicles that did the most damage. Naturally, trucks did the most damage, so the policy folks suggested that a fee per axle be levied against all trucks in the state. Makes sense right? Fine the people who do the damage. Well, if you charge a fee per axle, what is the incentive you create? For the truck drivers who want to reduce their costs, the incentive is to reduce the number of axles. As you reduce the number of axles, you increase the amount of weight per axle, further damaging the roads—the opposite of what the policy makers were trying to achieve.

"Incentive" logic can be applied to individuals as well. Understanding what motivates people can often help address workplace morale issues. Public organizations in particular seem to have trouble finding ways to reward effective employees monetarily. Eventually, it becomes clear that punching the clock and doing the minimum required gets you the same pay as going above and beyond the call of duty. So what is the incentive for an employee to work harder? What is the incentive for someone to continue to work there, to stay, or to work hard?

I also occasionally think about organizations when I see the word incentive. For example, what is it that drives this organization? Is it an organization that gets its revenues from charging fines to the people it regulates? If so, then what happens if the people being regulated disappear? Sometimes organizations have perverse incentives. For example, if the center I direct at Sac State were to fix all education problems, my colleagues and I would go out of business.

How can I use my toolkit?

Schon talks about being a reflective practitioner—that is, the people who are the most skilled are doing and thinking at the same time. Weick writes about this in his piece in the Executive Mind as well. Edward St. John discusses this as individuals framing, deconstructing, and then re-framing concepts. People learn something, take it apart so its pieces make sense to them, and then reconstruct it in a way that they can "carry around." This is the art of building a toolkit. An objective is to apply the information enough so that you internalize it and no longer need to put it on paper.