

Syllabus: PPA 500 Fall 2017
California State University, Sacramento
Graduate Program in Public Policy and Administration

AIRC 3009

Class dates:

Tuesday, August 29 7-8:50 pm **PIZZA PARTY GOES UNTIL 7; LET'S MEET THERE**

Tuesday, November 21 6-8:50

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Office hours: Tuesdays 2:45pm-5:45pm
and by appointment (except October 17 and 31)

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 and Course Objectives

The sole goal of this course is to help you submit your thesis before the university deadline of December 1, 2017 at 3:00pm. Toward 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 and appropriate deadlines and support to help you complete your thesis. This is an unusual year, given the retirements of Professors Gossett and Kirlin; given how few faculty are in the Department this semester, the course will only be able to meet 2-3 times in person. I am holding PPA 500 classes before PPA 200 starts and after it ends, since Tuesday nights are the best for students in PPA 500 (but I am already teaching PPA 200 on Tuesday nights). It will be really important for you to work with your writing partner (and in groups that you set up on your own) and to seek me out during office hours.

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. As the instructor of record, I will provide general guidance and support, but your primary obligation is to your thesis readers. The class will meet 2-3 times during the term. You are expected to come prepared to discuss your own work and to support others as appropriate.

Prerequisites:

To enroll in this course, you must have completed all but one of the courses in the Public Policy and Administration Program (i.e., PPA 200, 205, 207, 210, 220A, 220B, 230, 240A and 240B plus two electives) with at least a B- in each course and an overall average of 3.0 or better. You must also have advanced to candidacy. 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. The department chair (currently Rob Wassmer) is authorized to modify these restrictions (except the advancement to candidacy mandate, which is a University requirement) in exceptional circumstances.

Primary and Secondary Advisors:

I expect that you will arrive the first day of class with your thesis question(s), readers identified, and your pre-thesis form (attached). We have found that students who do not have the first two chapters of their thesis drafted by the first day of class are unlikely to finish that semester.

While the Department aims to match you with thesis readers who best meet the needs of your particular project, we also intend to share the workload as equitably as possible among PPA professors. That is particularly an issue this year, given how few faculty are currently in the Department. Therefore, it is essential that you secure the permission of your desired advisors early. If a primary advisor already has a disproportionate share of thesis supervision he or she can suggest another PPA professor whom you should contact.

Each thesis requires a secondary reader as well as a primary advisor. Preferences about reading differ for second readers and different “pairs” of readers work differently. Some second readers are actively involved throughout the project, others prefer to provide input after individual chapters are completed and approved by the primary advisor, and still others prefer to review a complete draft. Some require a set timeline for drafts in order to calendar the time to read and provide constructive comments. You should make individual arrangements with your secondary advisor about the specific amount of interaction that will occur during the semester, and the timeline for those interactions. Remember that both your primary and secondary advisors must sign off on your final product. It is essential that at minimum they be both be “kept in the loop” throughout the semester.

All students are required by the first class meeting to have developed a draft 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. Understand that this is the bare minimum for beginning the seminar. A form for this purpose, which should be provided to Professor Wassmer, is included at the end of this syllabus.

Only active, full-time PPA faculty members may serve as primary thesis advisors. For fall 2017 this includes Professors Jez, Lascher, Venezia, and Wassmer, although Professor Wassmer is no longer accepting first reader advisees and Professor Lascher’s time is limited since he is Interim Dean fall semester. A secondary advisor can be chosen from among this same group.

Additionally, students may include as a secondary reader part-time instructors in PPA, faculty from other departments, and retired PPA faculty—in short, there is much more flexibility with respect to second readers. Please consult with your first reader before approaching someone other than a full-time PPA faculty member to serve as a second reader.

You will need to stay on schedule; if you slip, your readers may be unable to provide you feedback in sufficient time to meet the thesis deadline.

Research Partner: I will pair each PPA 500 student with another student who is registered in this class. Therefore, each person will have a partner to support finishing the thesis. In addition to the primary and secondary advisors, the partner will serve as a sounding board and a third set of eyes to read chapter and thesis drafts. 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.

Editors: Unless he or she has advised you otherwise, your primary thesis reader **is not the copy editor of your thesis**. He or she is there to help you with developing and focusing your research question, assisting with locating appropriate literature resources, addressing broad questions of organization and sequence, reviewing methodology, and ensuring that you maintain focus on the key issues and that you end up with a high-quality thesis. Thesis advisors are not there to catch spelling and grammar errors (although they may point them out if they see them). If you seem to be having substantial writing issues of this sort, your adviser may recommend that you turn to a classmate or that you hire a professional copy editor to assist you with this aspect of your thesis. Suzi Byrd can be a resource for you regarding copy editors, and there is more information here: <http://www.csus.edu/ppa/thesis-project/writing/index.html>.

Format of Class Meetings: This course will meet from 6:00 to 8:50 p.m. on two (and possibly three) nights during the fall semester.

This is neither a lecture-based course nor a traditional seminar; it is a workshop type course. All students are required to participate in class 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. There may be some brief readings assigned that are designed to address common obstacles and strategies for overcoming them. We may also be joined by students who are "sitting in" a term ahead of completion and those who completed 500 but who have not yet finished their thesis.

Assignments and Grading

There are only two grades that can be obtained in this class: reasonable progress (RP) or no credit (NC).

I will assign you the RP grade if:

1. You complete your thesis during the semester (Graduate Studies will convert the RP grade to "credit" after approving the final thesis); or
2. You have completed multiple chapters of your thesis and, in the judgment of your primary advisor, are likely to complete the entire thesis during the early part of next year (we will consult with your primary advisor about the status of your thesis if you have not completed it).

We will assign you a "NC" grade if you have not completed your thesis and are unlikely to do so in the near future. You may take PPA 500 one more time if you receive a "NC" grade. If you do

not “pass” the course a second time there will be consequences for your ability to remain in the MPPA program.

Reading Material

(1) CSUS Guide for Thesis Format, Latest Edition, Office of Research and Graduate Studies, CSUS, available for free on web at <http://www.csus.edu/gradstudies/CurrentStudents/Thesis-Project-Dissertation/FormattingWorkshops.html>. This site often changes near the beginning of the term so please check back regularly. **You are required to complete the workshop, fill out the certificate at the end, and turn the certificate in with your thesis.**

(2) A Pocket Style Manual, 7th Edition, 2014, Diana Hacker Bedford Books; available for purchase at bookstore or online. Click here to buy from Amazon. (Most PPA students have already purchased this manual for an earlier class.)

(3) **Recommended** – Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article: Second Edition; 2007, Howard S. Becker, Chicago Press. Click here to buy from Amazon.

(4) **Recommended** – How to Write a Thesis. 2015, Umberto Eco, MIT Press. (Available on Amazon)

Schedule:

Students who complete a more traditional hypothesis driven thesis are usually “done” with each chapter sequentially, as the first reader signs off. Other students will have good working drafts that may still require modifying previously “approved” chapters as they move along. We 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.

Prior to meeting:

Due on August 29 by 6pm via email: draft of first two chapters of thesis (best) or completed pre-thesis form (see end of syllabus).

Session 1 – August 29, 2017

Due in class:

(1) Prepare a 5-10 minute oral presentation about your thesis, using information provided in your pre-thesis form as a guide.

(2) Approved Thesis Question, Advisors’ and Research Partner’s Signatures Sheet (see end of syllabus). Approvals can be gathered electronically (no signature needed), simply turn in a paper copy with email approval printed so we have a complete record.

Class activities and objectives:

- Overview of course objective and related expectations;

- Pairing of students;
- Student pre-thesis presentations;
- Overview of traditional chapter formats for thesis;
- Strategies for success in research and writing;
- Review of APA format and expectations;
- Review of Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements; and
- Discussion of writing expectations for each chapter, how to integrate/synthesize information within and across chapters, including writing quality, the importance of an evidence-based narrative in the thesis, what it means to add your own analyses, problem definition, use of evidence, data collection, etc.

Since we cannot meet in person until the end of November (since PPA 200 is the same night and I am teaching that), I have created deadlines to try to keep you on track. Please feel free to come by my office hours on Tuesdays on your own or with your writing partner if you need additional support (see top of syllabus for office hours). **You will need to calendar these deadlines and follow up on them on your own.**

September 7 by 6pm: email me a plan for you and your reader partner to support each other over the course of the semester, with clear tasks, meeting times, and dates.

September 12 by 6pm: email me the agreed upon timeline for the thesis (approved by first and second readers).

September 19 by 6pm: email me annotated outlines for your entire thesis. This means all of your chapter titles with at least a paragraph describing each chapter.

October 24 by 6pm: email me an informal memo with any issues you are struggling with – and places where you feel stuck, and any questions you have for me.

Session 2 – November 21

Class activities and objectives:

- Consideration of remaining roadblocks to thesis completion
- Discussion of expectations for abstract, front material, and tables/figures
- Possibilities for publishing from your thesis research

November 28 by 6pm: For students planning to finish in the spring: email me annotated outlines for your entire thesis. This means all of your chapter titles with at least a paragraph describing each chapter.

Thesis Schedule

	Strongly encouraged deadline	Department requirement	University requirement	Check off when completed
Advancement to candidacy			X	Before registration for PPA 500
Thesis question with signature of primary and secondary advisor and research partner		August 29		
Graduation application turned in			October 1	
University Formatting Workshop (see http://www.csus.edu/gradstudies/currentstudents/thesis-project-dissertation/formattingworkshops.html)			October 5 10a-12p or October 11 6-7:30p or October 18 10a-12p or October 26 6:30-8p	
Grad Studies Format evaluation signoff * By appointment ONLY as specified on Grad Studies webpage: http://www.csus.edu/gradstudies/CurrentStudents/Thesis-Project-Dissertation/Submission-and-Deadlines.html			Limited: November 6-17 Regular: November 27-December 1	
Final copy to Grad Studies office			December 1, 3pm	

*This is likely to be a two-step turn in process. In addition, these dates are not yet finalized.

Appendix I

Suggested Five Chapter Outline for Traditional PPA Thesis

Ideally, you will want to avoid writing a thesis that comes across as formulaic. It is helpful, however, to have possible outlines to review; that can help you conceptualize what you plan to do. In that spirit, Appendices I, II, and III provide suggested outlines for different kinds of theses. Below is one way to think about the organization of Master's project in a traditional five-chapter format. You should work out the specific format of your thesis with your principal advisor.

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 II

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 primary advisor.

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, such as pictures, words and numbers.

Chapter 4: 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 III

Suggested Six Section Outline for Thesis Based on a 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

Appendix IV:
PPA Pre-thesis Form: outlining your thesis plans and integrating the pieces

Use this form to diagram or write a narrative to: a) answer each question and b) begin the process of integrating the concepts you have learned throughout the PPA program into a coherent approach to writing the thesis. This form will be used to start/continue conversations with faculty members to help you find a first reader who is a good fit, to help you think about a second reader who might fill in certain knowledge and skills the first reader might not have, and to make sure that you are on track to complete a high-quality thesis. You might want to fill out questions I-III and talk with your advisor before completing the rest of the form.

Your advisor(s) might ask you to revise this form multiple times to help you prepare for the writing process. *The intent of this part of the process is to make sure that you are conceptualizing the thesis process appropriately.* One component of writing an excellent thesis is having an over-arching framework that drives the structure; that is necessary to provide coherence across all of the chapters. You will then want to **synthesize and integrate** discussions of your issues of interest (variables) throughout, such as through the lens of the literature and your own analyses.

Feel free to read through theses in PPA's thesis bank to help you understand the expectations (see: <http://www.csus.edu/ppa/thesis-project/bank/>). You will notice quite a bit of variation across theses. The questions to address are as follows:

- I. What is your main research question(s)? What do you want to know? This can be a surprisingly difficult part of the process and framing a good question is critically important because it drives the rest of the process. Go back to *Approaches* from PPA 205 and re-read the information presented about research questions. You can use this space to test out a few ideas.
- II. Why do you think this topic is important (for policy, practice, etc.)?
- III. Do you have any hunches about what you might find out? If so, what is the evidence that supports your current assumptions? (It is ok if you do not have any hunches right now.)
- IV. What kinds of variables, issues, or criteria will you need to analyze/discuss in order to answer your research question(s)? Why are those the most important ones?
- V. What kinds of literature will you plan to read to prepare to write your thesis? Please list 3-5 examples of articles or books you will read and include a summary of how they will provide you with the information you need to describe the importance of your variables, issues, or criteria (this information will inform your introductory chapter). Some topics/questions have been extensively researched and, therefore, you will be adding to a body of existing knowledge. In other cases, you may need to think about

parallel issues or broader concepts to understand how to frame your question. ***These variables, issues, or criteria are the components that will help you create a framework that will drive the structure of your thesis.***

- VI. What are your initial thoughts about how you will gather/find and analyze data/information to answer your question(s). In other words, what kind of methodology(ies) are you planning to use? In your answer, please clearly discuss how you will operationalize/measure your variables, issues, or criteria discussed in IV above. Make sure your proposed methodology(ies) are appropriate for your research question. For example, if you want to investigate *what* relationships are between certain factors, you will likely use quantitative methods. If you want to look at *why* or *how* certain things are happening, you will likely want to use qualitative methods. If you want to do all of the above, you will probably want to use mixed methods. Your research question will drive your choice of methodology(ies), not the reverse.

Where will your data come from? Do they exist already? Can you get permission to access and use them? Do you have to gather data on your own? Will gathering data require human subjects review? If you have to gather data on your own, how will you do so (surveys, interviews, what will be your sample...)?

- VII. Please discuss your initial thoughts about the kinds of caveats or limitations you will need to anticipate, given the sampling/measurement choices you are planning to make. If you need help understanding this question, please re-read the discussions about sampling/measurement limitations in *Approaches* (from PPA 205). This is an area that will evolve as you do your research, so you do not need to anticipate everything now.

Appendix V
Writing an Analytical Paper for the PPA Program
(Part of the PPA 200 Syllabus)

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.

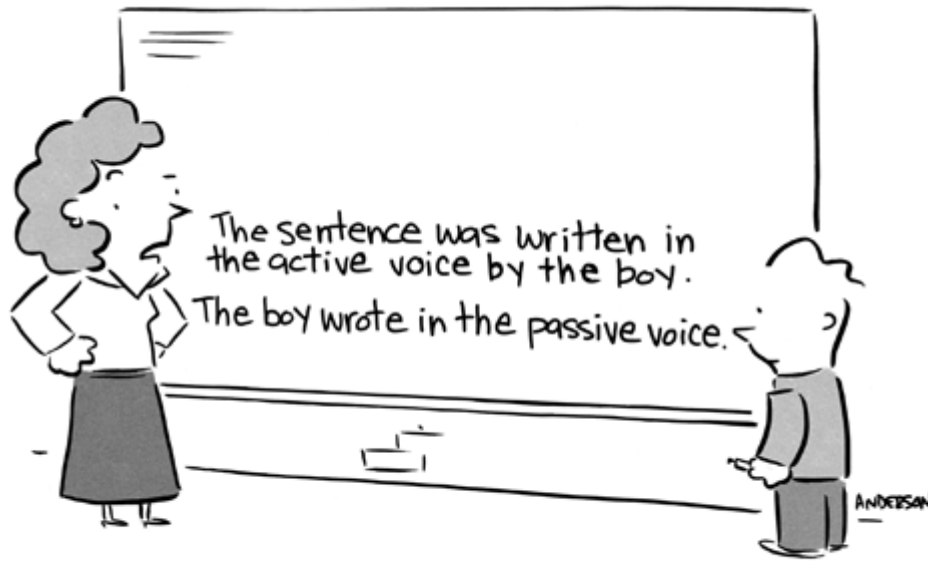
Make sure you know the difference between a semi-colon and a colon and that you use them appropriately.

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...).

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: _____